

BloodLine 951

Chapter 951: Thunderflame Faction

From MC's Perspective:

After receiving advice from both of them, we continued deeper into the area.

The surroundings reminded me of a campus, but it was clear this was a private area, reserved for more exclusive purposes.

The air here felt heavier with importance, a subtle reminder that we were entering a place where only select few were allowed.

We finally arrived at the Main Building.

Its architecture was striking an arch-shaped structure that towered over the nearby buildings.

The height alone commanded respect, and the intricacy of the design hinted at the building's significance.

"Zack, follow us inside," Clinton instructed, his tone firm but casual.

I gave a nod of acknowledgment and trailed behind them as we crossed the threshold into the building.

As soon as I stepped inside, my eyes began to scan the area, taking in every detail.

The room was reminiscent of the one where we had previously met the Dean, though this one was smaller.

Unlike before, the room wasn't empty.

People were already present, seated in a semi-circle ahead of us.

My gaze moved upward, and I saw five individuals seated on ornate chairs that resembled thrones, their presence immediately commanding attention.

The room seemed to radiate their authority, making it clear they were the ones in charge.

There were five of them two men and three women.

My eyes first landed on the men.

One of them was an elderly man with a bald head and a long, flowing white beard.

His age was evident in the deep lines etched across his face, yet his eyes sparkled with sharp intelligence.

He wore simple white robes, but what stood out was the white flame crest emblazoned on his chest, a symbol that likely represented his element or affiliation.

Beside him sat a man who appeared to be in his forties, though his presence was much more imposing.

His long black hair, streaked with a few strands of silver, framed his face, and he was clad in a black uniform that resembled armor.

The edges of the armor were trimmed with golden patterns, adding an air of regality.

What caught my eye was the golden bolt crest on his chest an unmistakable symbol of power.

Lightning immediately came to mind, and I wondered if he was somehow connected to that element.

Shifting my gaze, I turned my attention to the three women seated alongside them.

The first was a woman in her mid-forties, her features mature and sharp.

She had long black hair and piercing dark eyes, with a skin tone that leaned toward a warm tan.

Her black uniform matched the fiery black flame crest on her chest, giving her an aura of control and intensity.

The second woman appeared much younger, likely in her late twenties.

Her sky-blue hair shimmered under the room's light, matching her equally striking blue eyes.

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Her skin was fair, and she wore a uniform that matched the hue of her hair.

A crest on her chest a symbol of ice and fire intertwined immediately drew my attention.

It was clear she held an affinity for both elements, a rare combination.

Finally, my eyes settled on the last woman, who appeared to be in her fifties.

Her green hair was pulled back, and her pale skin had a soft, ethereal quality to it.

Dressed in flowing green robes, she carried an air of quiet wisdom.

The green tree crest on her chest symbolized life, growth, or nature a powerful contrast to the others seated beside her.

As I stood there, taking in the weight of their presence, I couldn't help but wonder what role each of them played and how they would judge the purpose of our visit.

The silence stretched on for a moment longer, heavy with expectation.

As I continued observing, I quickly became aware that their gazes had shifted to me as well.

Each of their eyes bore into me, assessing, analyzing though none of them had the same overwhelming force that I had felt from the Dean's gaze earlier.

Still, there was a weight behind their stares, a sense that they were peeling back layers, trying to discern who I was beneath the surface.

Clinton and Sally stood silently at my side.

Before we arrived, Clinton had already sent a message to the Elders, notifying them of our approach.

Yet, from the way he stiffened slightly, I could tell he hadn't expected them all to be gathered here, awaiting us.

The fact that they were now focused on me kept him silent.

He didn't want to interrupt the moment, and it seemed Sally had made the same decision, standing quietly beside him.

A few tense seconds passed, the silence stretching before it was finally broken by a burst of laughter.

"Ha...Ha...Ha!" The sound was rich and full of joy, coming from the old man dressed in white.

"I didn't expect the little boy to be a warrior of triple elements!" His laughter continued, filling the room with a lightness that cut through the previous tension.

The middle-aged man seated next to him, the one in black armor with the golden bolt crest, responded with a firm, almost possessive tone.

"He has purple lightning," he said, his voice steady.

"I'm the only one here who can guide him." His words were matter-of-fact, as if this was already settled in his mind.

The room remained silent for only a moment longer before the older woman, the one with green hair and the tree crest, let out a sharp sound of disapproval.

"Hmph!" She folded her arms across her chest, her voice carrying an air of authority.

"I'm here as well.

The kid has a healing element, and I'm the only one here with experience in healing."

Her comment sparked a ripple of amusement among the others, and a soft chuckle passed through the room.

Despite the brief bickering, there was an undeniable sense of harmony between them.

The banter wasn't born from rivalry but from deep camaraderie.

It was clear that, despite their differing opinions, they respected each other, and their unity as Elders was strong.

The atmosphere lightened considerably as the laughter faded, leaving behind a sense of calm.

This subtle display of their personalities, along with their good-natured teasing, revealed more than just their abilities.

It showed the strength of their bond, a bond that had clearly been forged over many years.

Despite the easygoing exchange, I couldn't ignore the significance of their words.

Each of them had laid a claim, in some way, over my future path.

This was no small matter.

The fact that I had caught their attention meant that my powers the triple elements, the purple lightning, the healing had placed me squarely in their sights.

What came next would be critical.

"Wait!" the old man in white suddenly called out, raising his hand slightly to halt the conversation.

His eyes gleamed with wisdom as he glanced at the others, then back to me.

"Before we make any decisions, let us explain our faction to this young man.

And Clinton and Sally deserve recognition for bringing such a special seed to our Thunderflame faction," he added, his tone turning solemn as he acknowledged their efforts.

Clinton gave a respectful nod, while Sally remained quiet, her gaze fixed on the Elders.

It was clear that they both took great pride in being able to bring me here.

The old man's focus returned to me, his eyes warm but serious.

"Little guy," he began, "you've likely heard of the various halls in our university the Outer Hall, the Inner Hall, the other Halls.

But what you may not know is that beyond these halls, different factions exist within the university, each with its own focus and expertise.

These factions aren't bound by rank or status.

It doesn't matter whether a student belongs to the Outer Hall or the Higher Hall."

He paused for a moment, as if to let that sink in, before continuing.

"In our faction, the Thunderflame, we welcome those with affinities for lightning, fire, or healing elements.

These elements are our foundation, and we strive to nurture the talents of those who carry them.

You, young one, possess two of these elements lightning and healing.

This makes you uniquely qualified to join our ranks." His voice grew more intent, and I could feel the weight of his words.

The room seemed to settle as the importance of the old man's explanation dawned on me.

This wasn't just an invitation; it was an opportunity that could shape my future within the university.

The Thunderflame faction clearly held significant power, and the fact that I had been singled out because of my dual affinities was no small thing.

The middle-aged man in the black armor with the golden bolt crest, who had spoken earlier, nodded in agreement.

His intense gaze hadn't left me for a moment.

"The purple lightning you possess isn't just any form of lightning," he said.

"It's a rare and powerful variation.

If you join our faction, I can personally guide you in mastering it.

No one else in this university understands lightning like I do." Chapter 952: Guidance of 2 Elders

From MC's Perspective:

ThunderFlame Faction Hall

Seated at the head of the room, the elder in white robes leaned forward slightly, his eyes gleaming with anticipation.

His aura, though calm, radiated authority.

"So, young man," his voice was both soft and commanding, "what's your decision?"

His question cut through the stillness, and every eye in the room turned to me, the weight of their gazes heavy.

My heart pounded, but not from fear.

It was excitement.

An opportunity like this wasn't something to pass up lightly.

ThunderFlame was one of the most powerful factions in the University and the thought of belonging to it stirred something deep within me.

Elder Clinton and Sally, who I'd come to trust, were already key figures here.

Their presence gave me a sense of security, but beyond that, there was potential here for growth, for mastery.

The guidance I could receive in lightning and healing elements would be invaluable.

It was only a shame the blood element was so elusive.

I doubted there was anyone here who could help me develop that power further.

I could feel my resolve harden as my thoughts aligned.

There was no more room for hesitation.

The old man watched me intently, his eyes flickering with an almost imperceptible gleam of expectation.

"I'm happy to join the ThunderFlame faction," I said, my voice steady, each word carrying the weight of my decision.

The room shifted.

There was a collective release of breath, a ripple of surprise and joy flashing across the faces of those gathered.

Whispers broke out, some of the elders exchanging knowing glances.

“Good!

Good!” The elder in white chuckled, his face brightening with satisfaction.

“You’ve made the right choice.

Rest assured, the ThunderFlame faction will be your strongest ally from this day forward.”

I barely had time to digest the words before the middle aged man in black armor stepped forward, his movements precise, like a predator marking its territory.

His eyes, sharp and calculating, locked onto mine.

“Now that he’s joined,” he declared, his voice deep and resonant, “he’ll be under my wing.”

Before I could react, another voice cut through, firm yet graceful.

The green-haired woman, whose eyes gleamed with the unmistakable light of ambition, smiled.

“He won’t be solely under your wing,” she said.

“A warrior with his talent in the healing element deserves my guidance as well.”

I blinked, caught between the subtle tug of their words.

The room felt heavier, more charged.

They weren't just elders they were powerful figures, each vying to mold me, each wanting a stake in my future.

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And yet, a part of me was eager to learn from both, to drink in the knowledge they had to offer.

"You'll both teach me?" I asked, trying to mask my surprise, though I could feel the weight of their expectations settling on my shoulders.

The elder in white smiled but said nothing, his eyes glinting as if he'd already predicted this turn of events.

The armored man nodded curtly.

"Of course.

You are a rare talent.

It would be foolish to limit your training."

"Indeed," the green-haired woman added, her gaze soft but determined.

"Healing is a gift not many possess.

It must be cultivated."

I drew in a breath, letting the moment sink in.

As promising as this all sounded, there was something else gnawing at me, something I had to address.

“Actually,” I said slowly, my gaze shifting to each of them, “I want to focus on all three elements.”

The room fell silent again.

This time, the quiet was different tense, charged with surprise.

For a moment, even the crackling energy in the air seemed to still.

The elders exchanged looks, but not of disbelief.

Their eyes gleamed with curiosity, some with approval.

Clinton and Sally, standing off to the side, exchanged glances as well.

They knew.

They had seen his physique.

They knew his body strength was unusual, lightning essence equally formidable.

And they have realized, like the elders did, that there was more to him than just a dual element warrior.

The elders weren't truly surprised.

I could see it in their faces.

They had already know seen the ancient runes on my skeleton.

The green-haired woman, I realized, knew exactly what she was getting into when she laid claim to training me.

The elder in white finally spoke again, his voice calm but tinged with amusement.

“Ambitious.

But not impossible.

The path ahead will be difficult, young man.

But with all of us guiding you, perhaps you will achieve what others deem impossible.”

His words hung in the air, and I couldn’t help but feel a thrill at the challenge.

“Very well,” I said, my voice unwavering.

“I’m ready.”

The elders nodded, and for the first time, I felt a true sense of belonging.

The journey ahead would be long and arduous, but I knew deep down this was the beginning of something extraordinary.

The elder in white, Clifford, the true leader of the ThunderFlame faction, stood calmly at the center of the room, his presence commanding despite his modest demeanor.

"I think it's best for Zack Lockwood to learn from both Elders," Clifford began, his eyes scanning the room, resting briefly on Elder Austin and Elder Ann.

"Elder Austin can guide him in his lightning element," he continued, nodding toward the stern man in black armor, whose eyes glinted with approval.

Elder Austin gave a slight nod in response, his face calm but thoughtful.

He was a man known for his mastery over the lightning element, a figure of respect and intimidation within the faction.

Clifford then turned his gaze to Elder Ann, the green-haired woman who had been watching me with a measured intensity.

"And Elder Ann can guide him in his healing element."

Elder Ann smiled, a soft, knowing smile that hinted at the pride she already felt in mentoring someone with such a rare gift.

Healing was a delicate and invaluable art, and her role in guiding me was not lost on her.

Clifford's expression turned somber as he continued.

"It's a pity," he said, his voice quieter, "that we don't have anyone with the blood element in the University right now." His eyes met mine, and I could see the sincerity in them.

"You are the first to appear with the blood element after a long time.

The previous elder who carried that legacy died in battle a hundred years ago."

Then, from the side, the middle-aged female elder, Leola, who had been quietly observing the proceedings, stepped forward.

Her eyes narrowed slightly in thought, and her voice, though soft, carried a subtle edge of ambition.

“What about taking him as a personal disciple?”

A murmur rippled through the hall at her suggestion.

Leola’s words carried weight, and her reasoning was clear.

A warrior blessed with three elements, one of them as rare as the blood element, was not just a talent.

He was a legacy, a seed to be cultivated with the utmost care.

Clifford paused, his eyes turning thoughtful as he considered Leola’s suggestion.

Before he could respond, another voice interjected.

“It’s too early for that,” Elder Cathy, the ice-and-fire elder, spoke, her voice cold and clipped, much like the elements she commanded.

Her expression was unreadable, but her words carried caution.

“Taking him as a personal disciple now would draw too much attention.

It would be unwise.”

I could sense the undercurrent of tension in the room.

The decision of whether to formally take me under someone's personal tutelage was more than just a matter of prestige.

It could shift the balance of power within the faction, and perhaps even beyond it.

Sally, who had been silent until now, stepped forward, her face unusually serious.

"If we don't protect him carefully, he'll be easily targeted by other factions," she said, her voice steady but laced with concern.

At the mention of the other factions, the mood in the room shifted drastically.

Every elder's expression turned solemn, and a heavy silence settled over the hall.

The reality of the political landscape at the University was something none of them could ignore.

The ThunderFlame faction wasn't alone.

Other factions each based on the mastery of different elements vied for power and influence within the University's walls.

And their rivalry wasn't just confined to the elders.

It permeated every hall, every classroom, every training ground.

The internal politics were fierce, and students were often caught in the crossfire, whether they liked it or not.

And someone like me an unpolished talent with the potential to wield three powerful elements would inevitably become a target.

Clifford's brow furrowed slightly, and I could see the gears turning in his mind.

He understood the risks, perhaps better than anyone.

Finally, he spoke, his voice calm but firm.

"Sally is right.

We must be cautious.

Zack's talents will draw attention, and not all of it will be friendly."

The elders exchanged silent glances.

They knew the stakes, and they knew what was at risk.

Rival factions would stop at nothing to either sway me to their side or eliminate me before I could grow into a threat.

Clifford continued, his gaze meeting mine.

"For now, we will proceed with the plan.

You will train under both Elder Austin and Elder Ann.

But we will take every precaution to ensure your safety, Zack.

The ThunderFlame faction will protect you.”

I nodded, the weight of my situation settling in.

Chapter 953: Becoming Personal Disciple

From MC’s Perspective:

Just as everything seemed settled, the old man Clifford raised his hand, as if a last-minute thought had struck him.

His eyes glinted with a sharp, calculated look before he spoke again.

“Austin, Ann,” he began, his voice steady but carrying the weight of authority, “you both can register Zack Lockwood as your personal disciple.

But for the time being, do not disclose this to anyone, not even the other elders in our faction.”

A wave of surprise rippled through me, though I kept my expression neutral.

I had expected some form of acknowledgment or apprenticeship, but personal discipleship this was a rare honor, a significant elevation in status.

And yet, for now, it was to remain a secret.

I didn’t fully understand why, but the seriousness in the old man’s tone left no room for questions.

“Set his information as classified,” Clifford continued, his voice dropping slightly, as though discussing something sensitive.

“Only we and the Dean should have access to it.”

Elder Austin and Elder Ann exchanged brief, questioning glances but quickly nodded in agreement.

I could sense their confusion.

From the way things were unfolding, it seemed even they hadn’t expected this turn of events.

Earlier, it had seemed Clifford was inclined to keep my status a bit lower-profile, but now his mind had shifted.

Despite their confusion, I could see a hint of relief in both elders’ eyes.

After all, being allowed to register me as a personal disciple was a major responsibility and a sign of trust from the faction leader.

“Are you happy now?” Clifford’s piercing gaze landed on me, as if testing my reaction to his decision.

I nodded, suppressing the growing excitement within me.

Personal disciple! The words echoed in my mind.

This was an opportunity not easily given, and I could feel the weight of it settling on my shoulders.

It was a mixture of pride and pressure, knowing that I was being singled out for something more than just being another faction member.

Clifford gave a satisfied nod before turning toward Clinton and Sally, who had been standing quietly to the side.

"Clinton, Sally," Clifford commanded, "take Zack to his new residence.

From today onward, he will be recognized as a full member of our Thunderflame Faction."

With that, Clifford produced a sleek device from his robes, tapping a few commands before updating my profile in the faction's database.

My official status had now changed, though few would know the full truth behind it.

"Yes, Elder.

Zack, follow us," Clinton said with a nod, gesturing for me to follow.

Without hesitation, I fell into step behind them, my mind still racing from the weight of what had just transpired.

As we walked, the faint murmurs of conversation between the elders faded behind us.

Glancing back briefly, I noticed the Ice and Fire Elder, Cathy, still watching Clifford closely, her arms crossed as she observed him.

"Something troubling you, Cathy?" Clifford asked, his voice cutting through the silence like a knife.

Cathy's gaze didn't waver.

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"A moment ago, you almost agreed with my original plan.

But then, I see you changed your mind.

Why?" Her tone was blunt, though not confrontational.

Clifford chuckled lightly, though there was a certain gravity behind his words.

"I realized something important, Cathy.

If we don't register him as a personal disciple now, we risk losing him to other factions." His eyes hardened, the strategist in him shining through.

"It's not just about strength anymore.

With his talent and his blood element, he could easily be poached by someone else."

There was a flicker of understanding in Cathy's expression.

The old man wasn't wrong.

Even within their faction, rivalries between elders could lead to offers or enticements that would be hard to refuse for someone like Zack.

In the larger university, where various factions vied for power, it was even more dangerous.

"So, to protect our interests, we keep this quiet.

For now," Clifford finished, his voice lowering conspiratorially.

"But don't be mistaken, many will be watching him closely."

At his words, the rest of the elders nodded in agreement, before vanishing into the shadows as if they had never been there.

Meanwhile, with Clinton and Sally

As we stepped away from the main building, I finally took in the vast expanse of the faction's residential area.

It was divided into clear sections: a private, more secure area for the elders, and a more communal space for the students.

Here, the student residences stood close to one another, creating an environment that offered little in the way of privacy.

I could sense the energy of countless warriors moving about in their own routines.

It felt alive, buzzing with power.

The quiet between us was broken by my curiosity.

"Elder Clinton," I ventured, glancing over at him as we walked, "What is the strength of the faction's elders?"

My question seemed to catch both Clinton and Sally off guard.

They exchanged a brief look, as if deciding how much to reveal.

Eventually, it was Sally who spoke up.

"The white flame elder, Clifford, the leader of the Thunderflame Faction," she began, "is a Half-Step Red Mark Warrior."

My eyes widened in shock.

A Half-Step Red Mark Warrior?

That meant Clifford was on the verge of reaching the highest rank before the legendary Red Mark status.

I had known he was powerful, but to be so close to matching the Dean of the university! It was mind-boggling.

“And as for the other elders,” Sally continued, “they are all at the peak of the Purple Mark Warrior stage, including both of your masters Elder Austin and Elder Ann.”

I was left momentarily speechless.

Peak Purple Mark Warriors?

This level of strength was rare, even within the powerful factions of the university.

The gravity of the situation began to settle on me, but one question lingered in my mind.

“If the elders are Purple Mark Warriors,” I asked carefully, “why aren’t Clinton and Sally!?”

Sally smiled knowingly, seeing through my question.

“You must be imagining grand things,” she said with a slight laugh.

“But let me explain something.

Just because two warriors are at the same rank, doesn't mean they are equal in strength."

I furrowed my brow, intrigued.

"It depends on their inheritance," Sally continued.

"The more powerful the inheritance, the stronger the warrior.

For instance, our main faction elders have inheritances that are far more powerful than ordinary Purple Mark Warriors.

That's why they can easily dominate others of the same rank."

I nodded slowly, understanding now.

It wasn't just about reaching a certain level it was about the quality of the power one inherited.

And from the sounds of it, the Thunderflame Faction elders were a cut above the rest.

As we approached my new residence, a modest building nestled between others, I couldn't help but feel the weight of this new chapter in my life.

I was surrounded by power, secrets, and opportunities, each one more daunting than the last.

But I was ready.

After a short walk through the bustling residential area, we finally reached my new residence.

The building stood modestly among the others, its architecture blending seamlessly with the surroundings, but there was a certain elegance to it sleek and modern, with hints of traditional elements.

It had an understated grandeur, marking it as a place for someone of notable status within the faction.

Clinton and Sally stopped in front of the entrance, turning to face me.

Their expressions were more relaxed now that we had left the intense atmosphere of the main hall.

“This is your new residence, Zack,” Clinton said, his voice calm but carrying a note of pride.

He then pulled out a sleek, crystal-like device from his storage ring.

With a quick flick of his hand, he sent a small stream of data to my communication device.

“Here is the access code.

No one can enter your home except you.”

I glanced at my device, the access code and a host of other information flashing across the screen.

Clinton continued, “Apart from the access code, I’ve also sent you some basic information about our university and the Tier-4 region.

It will help you get accustomed to the area and understand the resources available to you.”

I nodded, taking it all in.

This was more than just a residence, it was a secure haven, and the information he had given me would no doubt be invaluable in the coming days.

Sally stepped forward with a small smile.

“Alright, Zack, we’ll be heading back to our own places now.

We have some duties to attend to.

But let’s meet tomorrow morning.

There are things you still need to know, and we’ll get you acquainted with the faction and its workings.”

I bowed slightly in respect, feeling an overwhelming sense of gratitude.

“Thank you, elders.

Truly, if not for you both, I would’ve found it difficult to enroll and even harder to secure a place in such a prestigious faction.

I owe you.”

Clinton shook his head, a faint smile on his lips.

“It’s nothing, Zack.

You’re one of us now.

And remember, you’re not just any member, you’re the personal disciple of two of our main elders.

We've gained some favor in this arrangement too."

Sally nodded in agreement, her eyes twinkling with a bit of amusement.

"That's right.

It's a two-way street.

Your success is our success now."

With that, they both turned and began to walk away, their figures blending into the flickering lamplights of the nearby buildings.

I stood there for a moment, watching them leave, my mind still buzzing with the weight of the day's events.

Taking a deep breath, I turned back toward the entrance of my new home.

The door slid open with a soft hum as I approached, the access code immediately verifying my identity.

Stepping inside, I felt a wave of comfort wash over me.

Chapter 954: News spreads

From MC's Perspective:

Without wasting time, I decided to take a cold bath.

I made my way to the bathroom, the pristine tiles and the faint scent of eucalyptus promising some comfort.

I let the water run, watching as it filled the tub, cool and inviting.

As I submerged myself, the cold water immediately sent a shock through my body, but it wasn't unpleasant.

It was exactly what I needed.

For the next twenty minutes, I let the chill seep into my skin, washing away not just the grime, but also the tension that had settled into my bones.

Afterward, I wrapped myself in a fresh towel, feeling the soft fabric against my skin.

I changed into clean, comfortable clothes, appreciating how they felt after such a refreshing bath.

The room felt calmer now, more familiar, but I knew I couldn't relax just yet.

There was still so much to understand.

With a sigh, I pulled out my device, scrolling through the information Elder Clinton had given me earlier.

As the text loaded on the screen, a heavy feeling settled in my chest.

The more I read, the more the reality of my situation began to sink in.

My heart raced, a mixture of anxiety and unease creeping in.

The competition here was cutthroat.

It wasn't just about skill or strength, but survival of the fittest in the most brutal sense.

Even those who had the privilege of being taken in by the warrior factions were not safe from the pressure.

And the warriors outside of those factions?

I couldn't even begin to imagine the nightmare they must be facing every single day.

I shook my head, trying to push those thoughts away as I continued reading.

Twenty-five minutes later, I finally allowed myself to collapse onto the massive sofa in the corner of the room.

The ceiling above me seemed to stretch endlessly as I stared at it, trying to process everything I had just read.

The factions there were so many.

But only a select few mattered.

I learned that only Elders at the Purple Mark Peak Stage were capable of forming a faction, and they had to pass a grueling test from the Dean of the University.

Those tests had to be difficult beyond imagination.

Becoming a Faction Leader wasn't just about raw power, it was about having the right inheritance, the right backing.

And from what I could tell, few were as formidable as Elder Clifford.

The most shocking part?

Among all the factions, there were ten that stood above the rest.

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These were the ones to watch, the ones that could pose a real threat.

The Thunderflame Faction, the one I was now tied to, was among them.

The leaders of these powerful factions were half-step Red Mark Warriors an unimaginable level of strength.

There were a hundred other factions, but they barely registered in my mind.

They weren't the ones I had to worry about.

I knew I had to memorize everything about these factions.

Who their leaders were, what kind of warriors they attracted, and how they could threaten me or the Thunderflame Faction.

Besides the factions, there was the matter of the university itself.

The system here was strange.

Warriors were expected to do a lot of self-study, which wasn't a problem in itself.

But to get what they needed, they had to earn merit points.

Merit points could only be earned through completing tasks.

So far, nothing too out of the ordinary.

But when I delved deeper, I came across something unsettling.

There were two types of hunting tasks.

The first, monster hunting, was straightforward and familiar to me.

But the second?

Foreign Creatures Destroying Task.

That was new.

The idea sent a ripple of discomfort through me.

I furrowed my brow, the same confusion washing over me that I had felt when I first transitioned from the outer regions to the inner post.

Everything felt foreign, confusing.

There was so much I still didn't understand.

I'd have to ask the elders tomorrow.

...

Meanwhile, the news of a new recruit joining the Thunderflame Faction spread through the university like wildfire.

Whispers and rumors circulated in every corner, from the training grounds to the study halls.

It wasn't just any recruit, joining one of the top 10 Warrior Factions at Star University was a rare feat, and the mere mention of it stirred excitement and curiosity.

These elite factions were known for their stringent selection processes, recruiting only those who demonstrated exceptional talent.

To even be considered, a warrior had to possess the ability to fight across small ranks, a baseline requirement that most warriors could only dream of meeting.

Those who couldn't manage this feat were dismissed as moderate warriors, a label that marked them as unremarkable in the university's fiercely competitive environment.

So, when a new warrior managed to break into the ranks of a top-tier faction, it was a significant event.

News like this didn't just stay confined within the university walls; it rippled outwards, reaching the ears of powerful organizations across the entire Tier-4 Region.

At that moment, the name on everyone's lips was Zack Lockwood.

Students across campus were buzzing about him, especially those in the medium-sized factions, who saw the top 10 factions as untouchable powerhouses.

For them, a new recruit in the Thunderflame Faction wasn't just an addition; it was a mystery to be unraveled.

Who was this Zack Lockwood?

What kind of warrior was he?

Even the elders of these factions took note.

Thunderflame wasn't just any faction; it had a reputation for recruiting only the most gifted warriors, specifically those aligned with three elemental forces-Thunder, Fire, Healing, and their variants.

This unique specialization made the faction highly selective, and it fueled the speculation about Zack's abilities.

Was he a thunder-wielder?

A fire-manipulator?

Or perhaps he had some rare variant of healing power?

It didn't take long for the other top 10 factions to take notice either.

Rivalry among these elite groups was intense, and every new warrior added to a faction's roster could potentially tip the balance of power.

Each faction kept a close eye on the others, and the arrival of a new recruit was seen as a strategic development, not just an addition.

Leaders of the top factions began issuing quiet orders to their subordinates: find out everything there was to know about Zack Lockwood.

In a place where strength meant everything, intelligence was the most valuable currency.

As Zack's name continued to spread, so did the efforts to learn more about him-his skills, his background, and what he might bring to the battlefield.

For the warriors who lived by the sword, knowledge of an opponent, or even a potential ally, could be the difference between victory and defeat.

And right now, everyone wanted to know who Zack Lockwood truly was.

On the other hand, Elder Clinton couldn't help but notice the growing buzz around him.

The ripple effect of Zack Lockwood's addition to the Thunderflame Faction was evident in the way people reacted, hushed conversations, sidelong glances, and the subtle curiosity lingering in every hallway.

Even within the faction itself, the murmurs had begun.

It wasn't just the students talking.

Elders from within the Thunderflame Faction were reaching out to Clinton, their inquiries thinly veiled behind casual conversation.

Clinton, however, remained unflustered.

He had been in this game long enough to know when to stay silent, and the order from the faction leader was as clear as crystal: no one outside their inner circle was to know about Zack Lockwood, not even their own faction members for now.

The reasoning was straightforward, but the execution was delicate.

In a place as politically charged as Star University, information was power, and discretion could make or break alliances.

Revealing Zack's presence prematurely could bring unwanted attention or even spark dangerous rivalries.

So when the elders came to him, their questions laced with curiosity and thinly disguised concern, Clinton played his part perfectly.

"I don't know much about it," he'd say with a nonchalant shrug, his tone giving nothing away.

Inside, though, he could sense the growing tension.

The elders weren't easily fooled.

They had spent years honing their instincts, and while they might not push too hard, Clinton knew they would be watching, waiting for any slip-up.

The same went for Sally.

As one of the faction's key figures, she too was privy to Zack's arrival, but like Clinton, she understood the importance of keeping her lips sealed.

Whenever someone asked about Zack, whether casually or with a hint of intrigue Sally remained tight-lipped.

She'd perfected the art of deflection, offering vague responses or redirecting conversations skillfully.

It wasn't easy.

People were naturally curious, especially in a place like Thunderflame where the recruitment of a new warrior was an event in itself.

Sally could sense the whispers following her, the questions that loomed just out of reach.

But she was careful, knowing that any slip of information could unravel the delicate strategy set in place by the faction leader.

Chapter 955: Part 1: Growth type- lightning seed

From MC's Perspective:

The following day, I woke up much later than I intended around 10 a.m.

The warmth of the sun had already started to filter through the curtains, casting long, golden streaks across the floor.

My body felt heavy with the weight of sleep, and a surge of guilt washed over me.

I had missed the morning cultivation session.

How could I have been so careless?

With a sigh, I pushed myself out of bed and trudged toward the bathroom.

The warm water was soothing as it cascaded down my skin, loosening the stiffness in my muscles.

The steam curled around me, and for 25 minutes, I allowed myself to get lost in the serenity of it.

After drying off and dressing in fresh, simple shirt and pant, I found my thoughts drifting.

The uniform...

I guess today's the day they'll give me one.

The idea filled me with a strange mix of excitement and nerves.

I wondered how it would feel to wear the symbol of my new identity.

Just as I was adjusting my sleeves, lost in these musings, a sudden sound startled me, the doorbell rang.

"Someone's here," I muttered, shaking off the lingering grogginess.

I walked to the door, the old wooden floor creaking beneath my steps.

Creak!

As I opened the door, my eyes widened in surprise.

Standing before me was Master Austin, his familiar, composed figure blocking the sunlight that streamed in behind him.

His armored clothing were immaculate, as usual, and his expression calm, but there was something about his presence that always caught me off guard.

"Master!" I stammered, feeling a rush of embarrassment.

"What brings you here?"

The middle-aged man gave me one of his knowing smiles, his eyes twinkling with a touch of amusement.

"Well," he began, his voice warm but teasing, "I thought you might come to meet me first thing in the morning."

A flush of shame rose to my cheeks, and I bowed my head slightly.

“Master, I...

I just woke up.”

He chuckled softly, waving a hand to indicate it was no big deal, though I could feel my stomach tighten with guilt.

I quickly stepped aside and gestured for him to enter.

As Master Austin walked into the room, he moved with a quiet grace, his movements deliberate and measured.

I hastily closed the door behind him and rushed to sit opposite him as he took a seat.

Once seated, I noticed that his sharp gaze was fixed on me, studying me as if evaluating something beyond my appearance.

The silence hung between us for a moment, and then, without a word, Master Austin raised his hand.

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A faint glow enveloped his storage bracelet as he retrieved several items and placed them gently on the table before me.

“Here,” he said, his tone matter-of-fact but filled with an underlying weight.

“A few sets of uniforms, a communication device, and a new, purple grade Storage ring.”

I stared at the items, my heart pounding in my chest.

The uniforms were folded with meticulous care, their fabric smooth and pristine, symbolizing the next stage of my journey.

The communication device gleamed with subtle enchantments, and the purple grade storage ring, far more intricate than the one I currently owned, seemed to hum with latent power.

I was overwhelmed, but before I could speak, Master Austin's voice cut through my thoughts again.

"I still have one more thing to give you," he said, his eyes softening slightly.

"It's a special gift for my sixth personal disciple."

Sixth personal disciple?

The words echoed in my mind, and my heart skipped a beat.

Master has five other disciples?

I had always assumed I was one of the few, perhaps the only, but the realization dawned on me that there were others, senior disciples I had yet to meet.

My thoughts swirled as I struggled to absorb this new revelation.

Who are they?

What are they like?

Will they see me as their equal, or will I have to prove myself?

But more than anything, I couldn't help but wonder what was this "special gift" Master was referring to?

Then, without a word, I saw Master Austin retrieve a small, intricately carved box from his storage ring.

The box itself exuded a sense of mystery and power, its surface etched with arcane symbols that shimmered faintly in the light.

My pulse quickened in anticipation.

Whatever was inside, I could sense it was something extraordinary, something far beyond any treasure I had encountered before.

Master Austin remained silent, his expression focused as he carefully undid the seals surrounding the box.

Each seal dissolved with a soft glow, fading into the air like wisps of smoke.

My breath caught in my throat as the lid slowly lifted, revealing a golden glass bottle nestled within.

The bottle was beautiful in its simplicity, its surface smooth and flawless, but it was what floated inside that made my heart race.

Suspended in the center of the bottle was a small, glowing seed a deep purple in color, etched with intricate ancient patterns that seemed to shift and change with every glance.

Tiny arcs of purple lightning crackled from the seed intermittently, their power palpable even from where I sat.

The air around it felt charged, as though the very atmosphere was bending to its will.

Suddenly, I felt something stir within me a resonance, a pull.

Deep in my consciousness, the lightning rune that had been dormant for so long flared to life, shimmering for just a moment.

The sensation was unmistakable, a direct connection to the strange, powerful seed in front of me.

I felt drawn to it, as if it were calling to a part of me I had yet to fully understand.

Confused, I tore my gaze from the bottle and looked at Master Austin.

His knowing smile told me he had already anticipated my reaction.

“Are you confused?” he asked, his voice breaking the silence.

There was a warmth in his tone, as though he enjoyed watching the unfolding realization on my face.

I nodded, unable to find the words.

“This,” he began, his voice filled with a quiet reverence, “is the Purple Lightning Seed.

A variant of the lightning element.”

“Lightning seed?” I echoed, the term foreign to me.

“Yes,” Master Austin continued, leaning forward slightly, his eyes gleaming with seriousness.

“But this is no ordinary treasure.

It's a growth-type treasure, which means it will evolve as you grow in power.

It's beyond any elemental seed you could find on the market.

Gradeless-its potential is limitless.

Not even my other disciples possess something like this."

His words hit me like a hammer.

A growth-type treasure?

My mind struggled to process the significance of it.

I

"Mostly," he said, his tone solemn, "because treasures like this are incredibly hard to find.

And when you do find them, they have to resonate with the right elemental affinity.

This Purple Lightning Seed has been with me for years, waiting for the right disciple.

My other disciples are talented, but none of them share your affinity for this specific lightning variant.

They command other forms of lightning."

Master Austin's words sent another shock through me.

So there are other lightning warriors among his disciples?

My thoughts raced, imagining who they were, what their strengths might be.

But more than that, I felt an overwhelming sense of honor and pressure.

This treasure was meant for me.

It had been waiting for me.

“And now,” Master Austin added with a small smile, “it belongs to you.”

I sat there, my heart pounding as waves of disbelief and excitement crashed over me.

The weight of the moment settled in my chest.

Not only had I been gifted this rare and powerful treasure, but I also now knew that Master Austin had entrusted me with something even his other disciples had not received.

The purple lightning seed continued to pulse gently inside the bottle, the arcs of electricity dancing around it like a living force.

My connection to it, though still faint, felt undeniable.

What lay ahead with this seed?

What power would it unlock within me?

I sat there, feeling utterly overwhelmed by the flood of information.

My mind buzzed with unanswered questions, each one more urgent than the last.

What exactly is a gradeless treasure?

What makes a growth-type treasure so special?

And most pressing of all: What does this lightning seed actually do?

The seed floated inside the bottle, its pulsing light casting an ethereal glow across the table.

It was mesmerizing, yet intimidating.

I could sense its raw power, but I had no idea how to harness it, let alone understand its full potential.

The tiny arcs of lightning crackling from the seed only deepened the mystery.

Was this seed truly meant for me?

What would it demand of me in return?

A knot of anxiety twisted in my chest, and I felt the need to voice these questions, to ask Master Austin for clarity.

But I held back, hoping that he would continue to explain.

He had already revealed so much, and yet it felt like I had barely scratched the surface of what this treasure could be.

Chapter 956: Part 2: Growth type- lightning seed

From MC's Perspective:

Austin's voice carried a deep sense of authority as he spoke.

"The lightning seed has no limit," he said, his eyes gleaming with the weight of the knowledge he was sharing.

"It will grow along with you, amplifying your purple lightning's destructive potential and making it even more powerful as you advance."

I felt a surge of excitement ripple through me at his words.

The thought of wielding such power, of having something that could evolve as I did, was thrilling.

"You can easily fight across ranks," he added, his tone confident, as if this was a foregone conclusion.

A question had been gnawing at the back of my mind, though.

The lightning seed was clearly an extraordinary gift, but I wondered if there was a strategy to using it something that might affect my future potential.

"Master," I asked thoughtfully, "should I use it now or after receiving my inheritance?"

Austin's eyes flashed with approval, a faint smile tugging at the corners of his mouth.

"Well," he began, his voice taking on a more contemplative tone, "the lightning seed has no limit, as I've said.

But some inheritances do.

If you truly aim to reach the heights beyond the Red Mark Rank, then you'll need to secure a top-tier inheritance."

He paused for a moment, letting the gravity of his words sink in.

"But that's still a long way off for you," he continued, his expression softening slightly.

"For now, you can use the lightning seed.

It will integrate with your current strength and grow with you as you rise in rank."

I nodded, absorbing the advice.

There was wisdom in what he said.

Waiting for an inheritance might be important in the long term, but right now, harnessing the lightning seed would be crucial for my immediate growth.

Austin rose from his seat with purpose, his movements fluid.

"Take it and come with me to my training area," he said, gesturing for me to follow.

"It's fully equipped with everything you'll need, including an essence chamber.

You won't have to strain yourself too much during the process."

As I stood up to follow, he glanced back at me with a knowing smile.

“Once the lightning seed enters your body, it will take root in your dantian,” he explained.

“From there, it will spread and merge with your essence, fueling your lightning with more raw power.”

But then his expression grew thoughtful, and he added with a hint of regret, “It’s a shame I don’t have anything related to your blood element.

If we could strengthen that alongside your lightning, you’d become even more of a monster in combat.”

The idea of merging my lightning and blood element together was tantalizing.

I could almost picture it, the raw, unpredictable force of lightning combined with the ancient power of my bloodline.

A force to be reckoned with.

“But perhaps Elder Ann will gift you something related to healing,” Austin mused aloud.

“If she knows about the lightning seed, I’m sure she’ll prepare something equally special for you.

She’s not one to be outdone.”

A small spark of anticipation lit within me at the mention of Elder Ann.

If Austin was providing something as powerful as the lightning seed, I could only imagine what kind of surprise she might have in store for me.

Her expertise was unparalleled, and I had no doubt that whatever she offered would push me even further along my path.

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"Alright, we can leave now," Austin said, rising to his full height and turning towards the exit.

I nodded, my mind racing with possibilities as I followed him.

He led me to the Training Area, a place steeped in authority and discipline.

Only Elders were permitted to fly within the faction's grounds, unless a student had been granted special permission.

But we walked, and as we did, Master Austin shared more about how things operated within the faction.

"The Elders of each faction have their own private training areas," he explained, his voice calm but firm.

"These areas are designed for them to oversee their disciples' growth and provide guidance directly.

Every Elder has a responsibility to their students."

I listened carefully, noting how the hierarchy functioned.

In addition to these private training spaces, there was also a massive communal training area.

It served as a hub for all students, particularly for those without a dedicated Master.

Many of these students were warriors within the faction, but not all were fortunate enough to be chosen by an Elder.

For them, a rotating group of Elders took on the role of teacher, offering guidance and training to ensure they weren't left behind.

"It's one of the core benefits of joining the faction," Austin continued.

"Only those with above-average talent make it in, so the faction doesn't want to waste that potential.

Even if a student doesn't have a personal Master, they're still given opportunities to improve."

I could see how the system worked now, ensuring that every warrior, whether under the tutelage of a Master or not, had the chance to grow.

The faction wasn't just about survival of the fittest, it was about nurturing raw talent and making sure none of it went to waste.

And with only three elemental categories ,Lightning, Fire, and Healing, it made it easier for Elders to conduct sessions that catered to all warriors under those disciplines and their elemental variants.

As we walked through the faction's bustling grounds, I noticed the curious gazes following us.

Eyes lingered particularly on Master Austin, recognizing his presence with reverence.

The warriors who caught sight of him couldn't help but stare, he was, after all, one of the five pillars of the Thunderflame Faction.

His reputation preceded him wherever he went.

"Ignore their stares," Austin said, his tone dismissive.

"Right now, your rank is pitifully low.

Remember, you need to reach the General Rank within one year.”

His words hit like a bolt of lightning.

General Rank?

In one year?

Then I accepted the reality without making any response.

Shortly afterward, we arrived at a large, gated area.

The imposing structure was marked by a grand nameplate that read “Golden Lightning Palace.” The words gleamed with an almost electric energy, hinting at the power behind the name.

Austin glanced at me with a knowing smile.

“This is my place,” he said, his tone casual but proud.

“The name relates to my element, as you might have guessed.”

I looked at the palace in awe, unsure how to respond.

The scale and significance of it all were overwhelming.

Instead of fumbling for words, I simply smiled, acknowledging the honor of being brought to such a place.

As we stepped through the gates, I could feel the hum of latent energy in the air.

The training grounds inside the Golden Lightning Palace were vast, with intricate designs that seemed to channel and amplify elemental energy.

Even the atmosphere felt charged, as if lightning itself had been woven into the very stone and walls.

Austin walked ahead of me, his stride confident.

Without turning back, he spoke again.

“My other disciples aren’t here at the moment.

I’ll introduce them to you next time.

From today onwards, this will be where you training area, my Golden Lightning Palace.”

“If you have any doubts or questions,” he continued, “you can ask me anytime.”

I felt a surge of gratitude.

Master Austin had already done so much for me, and now he was offering his personal guidance whenever I needed it.

“Thank you, Master,” I replied, my voice filled with sincerity.

“I’m truly grateful.”

He gave a slight nod of acknowledgment and turned to lead me deeper into the palace.

We made our way to the center of the Training Area, and my eyes were immediately drawn to the massive fighting platform that dominated the middle of the vast open field.

The platform was made of smooth, polished stone, its surface scarred in places, evidence of countless intense duels that had taken place there.

It radiated an aura of strength, as though the energy of all the previous warriors who had fought on it still lingered in the air.

Surrounding this central platform were four smaller fighting platforms, strategically placed at each corner-top right, top left, bottom left, and bottom right.

Each of these smaller platforms seemed designed for more focused, one-on-one combat, while the larger one in the center clearly catered to grander, more intense duels or training sessions involving groups.

I swept my gaze across the area, taking in the sheer scale of the facilities.

The entire field was meticulously designed for training.

To my left, I noticed racks of various training weapons, spears, swords, and axes-gleaming under the sunlight.

On the right side, there was a series of essence imbued targets, likely used for ranged or elemental attacks.

The setup was thorough, offering everything a warrior could need to sharpen their skills.

As I continued to scan the surroundings, something else caught my eye.

Beyond the fighting platforms, there was another path leading to what appeared to be a secondary courtyard.

It was partially obscured by tall trees, but I could make out glimpses of additional buildings and training structures in the distance.

The path was flanked by neatly trimmed hedges, and I could sense a deeper, more secluded training area beyond.

“That leads to the specialized chambers,” Austin said, noticing where my gaze had landed.

“There are essence chambers for cultivation, skills enhancement rooms, and spaces for elemental training.

You’ll have access to all of it.”

On the other hand, I’m listening to his explanation carefully.

Chapter 957: SSS-ELITE EARLY STAGE (Essence breakthrough)

From MC’s Perspective:

After crossing the next courtyard, we finally arrived at the Essence Chamber.

It was a vast, high-ceilinged room humming with faint energy, the air thick with the scent of metal and magic.

Master Austin had granted me full access to all the training facilities, a rare privilege that made the significance of this moment hit harder.

“You’ll need to go inside and consume the lightning seed,” Master Austin said, his voice carrying an edge of urgency.

“Once it takes root in your dantian, it’ll stimulate rapid improvements in both your physique and essence.

You might even experience a breakthrough, so be ready for anything.

Use this opportunity wisely.” He paused, his gaze serious.

“I’ve got other matters to attend to, but I’ll return later.”

With that, he turned and left, his figure disappearing down the corridor.

I stood before the entrance to the chamber, my heart pounding in sync with the faint hum of the room.

Taking a deep breath, I keyed in the access code Master Austin had given me.

My fingers hovered for a moment before pressing the final digit on the panel screen.

Creak!

The door slid open, revealing the inside of the chamber.

As I stepped through, the door sealed shut behind me with a quiet hiss, the air inside immediately feeling different, denser, charged with potential.

My gaze swept over the room, eventually settling on a sleek control panel embedded into the far wall.

It was designed to regulate the flow of energy in the chamber, a tool for tailoring training experiences to one’s level.

I approached the control panel, my fingers hovering over the options.

The screen displayed several modes, each more intense than the last.

For now, I chose the Basic Mode, knowing that the lightning seed would bring its own challenges.

With a flick of my finger, I hit the activation button.

Boom!

A low, resonant hum filled the chamber as blue and white swirls of world energy began to materialize, cascading from the ceiling like mist.

The energy thickened, surrounding me in a cocoon of power.

The sensation was palpable, sharp and alive, like standing in the eye of a storm.

I walked over to the platform at the center of the chamber and sat down cross-legged, letting the energy settle over me.

The sheer force of the world energy prickled against my skin, buzzing with latent power.

This wasn't something to waste.

I had to make the most of it.

Reaching into my storage ring, I withdrew a small golden bottle.

Inside, floating gently, was the purple lightning seed.

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Even through the bottle, I could feel its presence, a potent, almost dangerous energy coiled within that tiny seed.

I uncorked the bottle, the faintest crackle of energy escaping into the air.

My heart skipped a beat as I tipped the bottle and let the seed slide into my palm.

It was warm, pulsing with a life of its own.

Just holding it, I could sense the sheer destructive power it contained, and for a brief moment, I hesitated.

But there was no turning back.

I opened my mouth and swallowed the seed.

Immediately, I felt it travel down my throat, a pulse of electricity sparking in its wake.

It moved slowly through my body, like a creeping storm, before it finally settled deep in my dantian.

There, it floated for a moment, suspended in the center of my core, pulsing with energy.

Boom!

The seed suddenly activated, glowing brightly as it began to draw in the purple essence already stored within my dantian.

The pull was instantaneous, like a vortex.

The purple essence, which I had painstakingly cultivated, was being sucked away at an alarming rate, swirling into the seed in the blink of an eye.

Panic flickered at the edges of my mind, but I pushed it aside.

This was expected, this was part of the process.

Closing my eyes, I immediately began to run the Lightning Scripture.

In my mind, the ancient lightning rune etched deep within my consciousness flickered to life, glowing with power.

It resonated with the seed, sparking to the rhythm of the lightning coursing through my veins.

The seed was like a living thing, throbbing with power as it absorbed more and more essence.

My body began to tremble under the strain, but the lightning rune in my mind stabilized the process, guiding the chaotic energy into controlled channels.

I could feel it now, my body changing, evolving with each pulse of energy.

The lightning seed was not just taking; it was giving.

The energy it siphoned from my dantian was being returned tenfold, transformed into something purer, more refined.

I could feel it strengthening my muscles, fortifying my bones, and expanding the very essence of my being.

As the purple lightning seed continued to glow brighter in my dantian, I realized this was more than just an opportunity, it was a transformation.

The breakthrough I had been waiting for was near, and I was on the precipice of a new power.

I just had to endure, to hold on, and ride the storm.

As the newly refined lightning essence began to circulate through my body, it surged with an intensity I had never felt before.

The raw power brushed against the barrier within me, my next bottleneck, the limit of my current rank.

The moment it touched the barrier, a thrill of excitement shot through me.

This was my chance for a breakthrough, and I didn't intend to let it slip away.

I focused, guiding the powerful purple lightning essence through my meridians according to the patterns of the Lightning Scripture.

Every cycle sent waves of energy crashing against the barrier, pushing it closer to its breaking point.

The world outside ceased to exist; all I could feel was the pulsing rhythm of power inside me and the growing pressure against the walls of my limits.

Time slipped away unnoticed.

At one point, I felt the first crack form.

It was faint, but unmistakable.

The barrier, which had been so solid and unyielding, was finally beginning to weaken.

Excitement surged within me, but I kept my focus razor-sharp.

I couldn't afford any distraction now.

The cracks slowly spread under the relentless bombardment of energy, like fissures in a dam holding back a torrent.

The pressure built higher and higher until, at last-

Crack!

The barrier shattered completely.

I felt a rush of pure energy flood my dantian, the breakthrough I had been waiting for.

My body shuddered as the transformation took hold.

The space inside the dantian begins to expand.

After a few seconds, the space expansion came to an end.

SSS-ELITE EARLY STAGE (Essence Breakthrough)

A new, profound energy coursed through my veins-the essence of an SSS-ELITE Rank.

It was unlike anything I had ever experienced before.

The lightning essence had changed, evolved.

This wasn't just a simple power increase; it was a complete transformation.

The purple lightning within me now carried the energy of the SSS-ELITE rank, further augmented by the strength of the lightning seed.

I could feel it-raw, volatile power surging through me.

Purple lightning arcs crackled around my body, dancing along my skin like living entities, forming and dissipating in rapid bursts.

The energy was alive, responding to my thoughts and movements.

With a mere flicker of intent, I could control the lightning, shaping it into whatever form I desired.

It felt almost instinctive, like a second skin of pure power.

In that moment, I realized something remarkable-I could use this purple lightning as armor.

Without the need for any specific technique, the lightning essence itself could form a protective shield around me, like a natural extension of my will.

But I knew better than to rely on it too soon.

Such control would require extensive practice and mastery.

The raw potential was there, but I had to refine it, hone it, until it was as natural as breathing.

I pushed those thoughts aside for now.

There would be time later to experiment and test my newfound abilities.

Right now, the most important task is to stabilize this new energy.

The breakthrough had caused a profound shift in my body and essence, and if I didn't solidify my foundation, all this power could spiral out of control.

I closed my eyes, focusing inward once more.

Slowly, I began to guide the chaotic energy into steady, controlled streams, circulating the new SSS-ELITE lightning essence through my meridians.

The purple arcs of lightning around my body dimmed slightly as I reigned in the wild power, bringing it to heel.

Each breath I took deepened my connection with this new essence.

The pulsing storm within me began to settle, the once-erratic lightning becoming more harmonious, more attuned to my will.

This was only the beginning of what the lightning seed had unlocked.

The lightning seed is growth type one.

I could feel it in my bones, in my core.

The potential for even greater power was within my grasp.

But for now, I needed to take it one step at a time.

Chapter 958: Idiotic twins

From MC's Perspective:

By the time I had fully stabilized my new strength, the sun had already dipped below the horizon, late-evening glow.

I took a deep breath, feeling the new surge of power within me.

This was the moment I had been waiting for.

Now that the breakthrough was complete, I needed to take stock of the changes.

The first thing I did was check my body.

The purple lightning seed had initiated a complete evolution inside me.

My internal organs, which had already been fortified through years of body cultivation, now felt even stronger, more resilient.

My meridians, once strained by the flow of powerful energy, were now wide and open, ready to handle more force.

The bones, already toughened from years of cultivation, now seemed nearly unbreakable.

I could feel their new sturdiness-an unshakable foundation enhanced by the seed's power.

I shifted my attention to my dantian, and what I saw there took me by surprise.

The space within had expanded, growing larger than before.

At the center of it all was a small pool of liquified purple lightning essence, shimmering with power.

The purple lightning seed had taken root in this pool, pulsating gently as if it were alive, its presence a constant hum of energy within me.

Every beat of its power echoed through my body, filling me with a sense of overwhelming strength.

Yet, there were still traces of impurities on my skin-a thin layer of grime that clung to me.

It was to be expected.

This always happened with major breakthroughs, as the body expels unwanted toxins during its transformation.

I knew a cleansing was in order, but the feeling of my newly enhanced strength kept my mind buzzing with excitement.

What would Elder Ann have in store for me next?

She had been overseeing my progress for some time, and I had no doubt that she had something planned.

A faint smile tugged at the corners of my lips as I stood up, feeling lighter on my feet despite the newfound weight of power inside me.

I made my way over to the console to deactivate the chamber.

As I switched it off, I could see the world energy dissipating, almost evaporating before my eyes.

The concentrated power that had filled the chamber moments ago was gone, leaving the room in a calm stillness.

Once it was fully deactivated, I stepped out into the open air.

“Master,” I called out, spotting him immediately.

Austin stood before me, his eyes sharp, taking in the changes with a critical gaze.

“Good,” he said, nodding approvingly.

“Your purple lightning essence has reached the SSS-Elite Rank.

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The purple lightning seed worked wonderfully.

Not only did it help you break through, but it also improved your purple lightning element talent.

Your element will now be even more powerful, more destructive.”

His words were like a series of revelations, each one hitting me harder than the last.

I had felt the power inside me, but hearing him confirm it with such certainty made it all the more real.

“So it’s improved my talent as well,” I thought, the realization sinking in.

“The purple lightning seed truly is a remarkable treasure.”

Austin's eyes gleamed as he continued, "Take some time to rest.

I'll summon you tomorrow."

I nodded, grateful not just for his guidance but for the treasure he had provided me.

"Thank you, Master," I said earnestly, before turning and leaving the Golden Lightning Palace.

The path back was familiar-I had memorized it during my previous visits, so navigating it now was second nature.

The cool evening air brushed against my skin, a stark contrast to the heat of the chamber.

I walked with a renewed sense of purpose, each step grounding me more in my new reality.

But as I moved along, something caught my eye.

Two figures were approaching from the opposite direction, their pace casual but purposeful.

At first, I paid them little attention, but as we drew closer, it became clear-they were headed straight for me.

As I continued down the path, I noticed the distinctive Thunderbolt crests emblazoned on the chests of the two men approaching.

That symbol meant only one thing-they were faction members.

My mind immediately began to race.

What do they want?

I wondered, my instincts already telling me that this wasn't a friendly encounter.

I attempted to walk past them, hoping to avoid unnecessary conflict.

But they moved in unison, stepping directly into my path, their intentions clear.

They weren't here for pleasantries.

I stopped in my tracks, eyeing them closely.

As I took in their features, I realized they were twins identical in almost every way, save for their haircuts.

The one on the left had his black hair cropped short, while the other wore his a bit longer.

Their expressions were smug, as though they had already decided how this interaction was going to play out.

"Are you the new faction member, Zack Lockwood?" the black-haired warrior on the right asked, his voice sharp with an undercurrent of challenge.

"Yes, it's me," I replied, keeping my tone neutral, though I could already feel the tension rising.

"Wow, we finally met you.

But we're wondering! are you really as strong as they say?" the twin on the left, with the short-cropped hair, chimed in, his tone mocking.

I smirked, unsurprised by their words.

Of course, I thought.

I knew people would come to test me eventually.

But I hadn't expected to face two warriors at once.

Their arrogance suggested they underestimated me, which was fine by me, I preferred it that way.

I quickly assessed their energy levels.

They were both at Peak Stage SSS-Elite Rank, formidable opponents in their own right.

I glanced around the pathway, taking in our surroundings.

The place seemed deserted at first, but I could feel hidden eyes watching from the shadows, observing.

It was obvious these twins weren't the only ones interested in seeing what I was capable of.

The faint rustle of leaves, the soft whispers of energy, there were others, cloaked in secrecy, watching the confrontation unfold.

One of the twins, emboldened by the silence, sneered.

"What, are you scared?"

They both burst into mocking laughter, their voices echoing down the path, confident and cocky.

My eyes narrowed, and I felt the shift within me as my demeanor hardened.

My patience for this nonsense was wearing thin.

Scared?

They had no idea.

My perception ability, heightened from my recent breakthrough, surged to life.

The area around me sharpened in clarity as my senses extended, giving me a precise read of everything and everyone within range.

The moment I locked onto their positions, I made my move.

Swoosh!

Without warning, I vanished from where I stood, reappearing directly in front of them with lightning speed.

The smirks hadn't even left their faces when I clenched my fists and struck.

A sharp right to the first twin's face, followed immediately by a left to the second.

The impact was brutal.

Boom!

Boom!

The sound of my blows echoed in the evening air, as both warriors sent flying backwards, their bodies crashing into the ground with a heavy thud.

Their faces were bloodied, deep red streaks running down their cheeks as bruises swelled beneath the broken skin.

Eyes glazed, they swayed on their feet for a moment before collapsing, hitting the ground with a dull thud.

Both fainted on the spot, utterly spent.

Gasp!

A sharp gasp cut through the tension, followed by a series of hushed, nervous whispers.

The crowd was frozen, murmuring in awe and fear.

I scanned the sea of shocked faces briefly, noting the shadowy figures lurking just out of sight, before turning away.

Without another word, I resumed my walk, my boots clicking rhythmically against the pavement as I headed towards my residence.

I knew they had seen everything those who preferred to stay hidden in the darkness.

Hopefully, the clear display of strength would be enough to keep them at bay.

I had no interest in further confrontations.

But if they dared, they would face the same fate.

From a nearby balcony, Austin observed the entire scene with a cold, calculating gaze.

His lips curled into a small, approving smile.

He nodded to himself.

Zack's composure, his ruthless precision-it had impressed him.

"He's ready," Austin muttered under his breath, a faint gleam of respect in his eyes.

And then, from the shadows, they emerged-silent figures who had been watching from the darkness, cloaked in anonymity.

Their eyes widened in shock as they surveyed the aftermath of the brutal encounter.

The two warriors-both formidable SSS-ELITE Rank Peak Stage fighters-lay motionless on the ground, their bloodied faces a testament to the sheer power of the one who had bested them.

The crowd of hidden observers, once so confident in the strength of the fallen warriors, now found themselves re-evaluating everything they thought they knew.

Whispers spread like wildfire among them, as they exchanged uneasy glances.

The newcomer, previously underestimated, had just shattered their expectations.

This wasn't just another challenger; this was someone whose power defied rank, someone who could dismantle even the strongest without breaking a sweat.

Fear and respect began to swirl in their minds, blending together into a potent new understanding of who they were dealing with.

Chapter 959: Dark Variant Faction

From MC's Perspective:

After returning to my room, I immediately headed to the bathroom, feeling the need to wash away the impurities first.

The bath was soothing, the warm water loosening the tension in my muscles.

I let myself relax for a good 20 minutes, allowing the steam and quiet to ease my mind.

When I was done, I changed into some comfortable clothes, the soft fabric a welcome contrast to the weighty thoughts swirling in my head.

I sat down on the sofa, sinking into its plush cushions, and picked up the digital device Elder Iris had mentioned.

It was sleek, almost weightless in my hand, with a glassy surface that shimmered faintly with embedded magic.

Time to connect to the network.

The Student ID card I'd received earlier was supposed to give me access to the society's online network, so I entered the required details carefully, mindful not to make any mistakes.

A moment later, I was logged in.

A new account had been created under my name, and the interface sprang to life before me.

I could now access the society's internal network-news, resources, and forums exclusive to members of the True Elements Society.

As I scrolled through the homepage, I noticed that most of the headlines and articles were focused on internal affairs: updates on training programs, new breakthroughs in magic research, and news about the society's elite factions.

One headline caught my eye immediately: Thunderflame Faction Defeated by Dark Variant Faction.

My curiosity piqued, I clicked on the article without hesitation.

As I read through the report, my initial interest turned into something much heavier.

The piece detailed a recent competition between two of the top ten factions within the Star University- Thunderflame and Dark Variant.

The article described how a team from the Thunderflame Faction had been decisively beaten by warriors from Dark Variant, their defeat sending shockwaves through the society.

The Dark Variant Faction, as the name suggested, was composed of warriors who wielded elements with a sinister edge-cold wind, poison, dark flames, and other deadly variations of elemental magic.

My expression grew serious as I absorbed the details.

The Thunderflame Faction was known for its fiery power, its warriors wielding flames so intense they could incinerate most opponents with ease.

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Yet they had fallen to the warriors of Dark Variant, whose abilities could sap the life from their enemies or corrupt their energy with poison.

The article highlighted how brutal the competition had been, a reminder of the constant power struggles between the top factions.

A chill ran down my spine as I finished the article.

The strength of these factions wasn't to be underestimated.

I couldn't afford to draw attention to myself-at least not yet.

I wasn't ready to face opponents of that caliber.

The factions were dangerous, and the rivalry between them intense.

For now, it was best to lay low, observe, and focus on my own growth.

Testing the waters too soon could lead to disastrous consequences.

Closing the article, I set the device aside, my mind still racing.

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I had entered a world where power was everything, and the competition was fierce.

If I was going to survive let alone thrive, I needed to be prepared for the challenges ahead.

But for now, I'd keep my head down and stay out of sight, learning all I could from the shadows.

...

The following day, rumors of a new arrival spread like wildfire through the Thunderflame Faction.

Zack Lockwood, a newcomer, had made a name for himself in less than 24 hours by thrashing two of the older students in public.

It was all anyone could talk about.

From the lowliest faction members to the Main Elder himself, the entire faction had heard of Zack's impressive feats.

But it wasn't just his combat prowess that had everyone talking.

What truly shocked the elders was where Zack had been seen coming from-the Golden Lightning Palace, an enigmatic and prestigious place that very few were ever granted access to.

For many, this immediately elevated Zack's status in their eyes.

The name alone was enough to make even some of the faction's other-ranking members hesitant to act against him.

Those elders who were not part of the inner circle of power, the non-main elders were particularly cautious.

They knew better than to provoke someone who had ties to such a powerful entity.

As a result, the usually arrogant and brash warriors of the Thunderflame Faction, known for their aggressive attitudes and quick tempers, now hesitated to make a move.

For once, their arrogance faltered, unsure of how to approach this mysterious newcomer.

Zack had upended the status quo in a matter of hours, and no one wanted to be the first to provoke him.

Meanwhile, deep within the faction's main hall, Elder Ann sat in quiet contemplation, her mind focused on Zack for different reasons.

She had just learned some critical information.

Elder Austin, one of the more powerful figures within the faction, had given Zack a rare and coveted Purple Lightning Seed-a seed imbued with potent purple lightning energy.

Not only that, but Zack had successfully refined the seed, absorbing its power and making it his own.

The fact that Elder Austin himself had shared this information with her made the situation all the more significant.

Elder Ann realized that, if Austin had bestowed such a rare gift upon Zack, she would need to offer something of equal value.

But finding a gift that matched the Purple Lightning Seed in both rarity and power was no small feat.

The seeds related to healing elements, for example, were incredibly rare, even more so than those tied to the elemental powers of lightning or fire.

In fact, Elder Ann had only ever heard of them in rumors, and she doubted any were even available in the current region.

She leaned back in her chair, lost in thought.

What could she possibly give Zack that would strengthen his loyalty and position within the Thunderflame Faction?

Suddenly, an idea sparked in her mind.

Zack's cultivation methods-while effective-weren't nearly as advanced as they could be.

From what she knew, the lightning cultivation method he currently used had been given to him by his master in the inner post region.

Then there was the blood cultivation method Zack had acquired by chance, which no doubt had elevated his strength, but it too wasn't as refined as it could be.

And as for the healing element, the method he used had been taught to him by an elder from the outer post region.

This gave Elder Ann a potential solution.

If she could provide Zack with a more advanced cultivation method, something truly powerful that would enhance his abilities.

A smile crept across Elder Ann's face as she began formulating her plan.

Zack Lockwood was an unknown variable in the faction, but if played right, he could become one of their greatest assets.

Now, it was just a matter of securing the right resources for him.

Throughout her long life, Elder Ann had amassed an impressive collection of healing cultivation methods and techniques.

It had been her passion, her life's work, to gather knowledge about the art of healing.

Yet, the process had not been easy.

Many of the techniques she had uncovered were incomplete-fragmented pieces of knowledge that had been lost to time.

Only a precious few were complete, fully intact methods passed down from ancient times, and even fewer were still relevant in the current era.

Sitting in her private chambers, she pondered her next move, her mind racing with possibilities.

Zack Lockwood wasn't just any personal disciple-he was a warrior of three elements, a rarity that demanded special consideration.

The Purple Lightning Seed gifted to him by Elder Austin had already boosted his lightning abilities, and his blood cultivation method had added another powerful layer to his combat prowess.

But his healing element was the one area that remained underdeveloped, at least compared to the others.

With a quiet sigh, Elder Ann extended her hand and activated her storage ring.

In an instant, a pile of ancient scrolls, parchments, and animal skins materialized before her, each one filled with knowledge of healing techniques gathered from across the ages.

These were no ordinary documents; they contained methods that had been used by some of the greatest healers the world had ever seen, methods shrouded in mystery and often forgotten by the modern era.

She gazed at the pile with a furrowed brow.

Normally, choosing a method for a disciple would be straightforward, based on their elemental affinity and natural talent.

But Zack was different.

A typical healing method might not be enough.

It had to not only enhance his healing powers but also complement his other two elements-lightning and blood.

Elder Ann

gently sifted through the scrolls.

Some of them were so old that the parchment crumbled slightly under her fingers.

These were ancient, powerful techniques, but many came with strict requirements.

Some demanded that the warrior possess only the healing element, to ensure purity of cultivation.

Others required a rare physique or special bloodlines to unlock their full potential.

Chapter 960: Faction's Canteen

From MC's Perspective:

The following day, I woke up earlier than usual, my body still carrying a slight buzz from the energy cultivated the night before.

After completing my morning routine-washing up, stretching, and gathering my thoughts for the day-I decided to focus on cultivation.

As I was settling in, something caught my attention: the faint glow of a notification on my communicator.

An unread message in the inbox.

Curious, I opened it.

My eyes widened with surprise.

The sender was none other than Master Ann herself.

Her message was direct, almost casual: she wanted me to visit her at the manor.

“Someone will come to pick you up,” she said, and asked me to be ready.

I raised an eyebrow, intrigued.

“Interesting,” I muttered under my breath.

There was no immediate rush, so I decided to take my time.

A long bath felt like the right way to start the day.

I let the hot water soothe my muscles, washing away the tension that had been building from constant training and meditation.

Fifteen minutes passed in a blur, but by the end of it, I felt refreshed and more than prepared.

Once dried off, I slipped into the black uniform, adorned with the silver thunderbolt crest of the Thunderflame Faction.

The material clung to my body, sleek and fitted like a second skin, but it wasn't heavy like battle armor—more of a flexible suit meant for quick movement.

Its subtle weight reminded me of my allegiance and the power we wielded in the faction.

Just as I was about to leave, my stomach growled unexpectedly, the deep rumble cutting through the stillness of my quarters.

I hadn't realized how hungry I was.

Warriors of our caliber could go days without food if needed, but nourishment was still important, especially when that nourishment came from monster meat—rich in energy and strength.

The faction's canteen came to mind, and I remembered the online news.

Thunderflame was generous to its own; meals were provided freely to its members, a rare privilege among the top factions.

But for outsiders?

They'd have to pay in points, something I'd seen mentioned, though I had yet to confirm it for myself.

Despite knowing the canteen could be a place where trouble often brewed, I decided food would be my first priority.

Trouble could wait; hunger couldn't.

With a deep breath, I left my room and started walking.

The canteen wasn't far, just past the residential area, and I had a feeling this would be the calm before the storm.

A few minutes later, I arrived at the canteen, following the route on my map precisely.

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The open space was bustling with activity, filled with warriors in their black uniforms, the Thunderflame crest visible on each one.

Men and women, some fresh-faced and others bearing the hardened expressions of seasoned fighters, moved about with purpose.

A few headed inside, likely as hungry as I was, while others walked out, their meals finished, laughing and talking in low, relaxed tones.

I took a moment to survey the scene.

The canteen itself was a grand hall, designed to accommodate the sheer number of warriors.

Long tables stretched out across the space, and the air was thick with the scent of cooked meats and savory spices.

The low hum of conversations, clinking utensils, and footsteps filled the atmosphere.

After sweeping my gaze across the area, I spotted the food counter on the far side.

My stomach rumbled again, urging me to move.

I made my way through the crowd, stepping in line behind one other warrior.

He didn't seem to pay any attention to me as he collected his food and moved aside.

When it was my turn, I stepped forward confidently.

“Monster meat,” I said, my voice firm but polite.

The staff member behind the counter nodded without a word, moving quickly to prepare a plate.

Within moments, he handed me a tray piled with thick steaks of wild boar monster, their surfaces glistening with juices.

The rich aroma hit me immediately, making my mouth water.

I took the tray and scanned the room for a seat.

Most of the tables were occupied, but in the far corner, I spotted an empty spot.

Perfect.

I made my way over and settled into the seat, the clatter of my tray blending into the background noise of the bustling hall.

To my relief, no one seemed to pay me much attention.

Warriors around me were engrossed in their own conversations, eating, chatting, and occasionally bursting into laughter.

The atmosphere was light, almost casual, a rare moment of peace amid the constant training and competition.

It was strange yet comforting.

I couldn't help but smile to myself, feeling a small sense of contentment as I cut into the meat.

Each slice of the boar was tender, and as I bit into it, I could feel the surge of energy coursing through me.

The flavor was rich, the meat almost melting in my mouth.

I ate slowly, savoring each bite, my body absorbing the energy it provided.

Just as I was enjoying my meal, something nearby caught my attention.

A group of warriors at the next table seemed to be engaged in a heated conversation.

Their voices, though low, carried enough tension to pull me in.

They were discussing something serious, something that piqued my interest: the Dark Variant Faction.

I slowed my chewing, listening in while keeping my eyes on my plate.

"Hey, should we let those dark b@stards off so easily?" one of them said, his voice laced with frustration.

"They're always picking fights with us," another added.

His tone was sharp, and I could sense the anger simmering beneath the surface.

"It's because our elements counter theirs," a third warrior chimed in.

“Thunder and fire against their dark element.

They want to weaken us, keep us on edge.”

There was a collective murmur of agreement, but it was the next statement that struck me the most.

“The Main Elders aren’t taking this seriously enough,” the first one said bitterly.

“If this keeps up, it’s going to damage our reputation.

We need to act.”

I glanced around discreetly, realizing this conversation wasn’t limited to just one table.

Warriors all over the canteen were talking in hushed tones, their expressions serious, their eyes darkened with concern.

The Dark Variant Faction wasn’t just a minor nuisance, it was a looming threat, one that seemed to weigh heavily on everyone’s mind.

It was clear now that tensions were high.

The constant skirmishes with the Dark Variant Faction weren’t just about personal grudges.

It was becoming a larger issue, one that could affect the entire faction’s standing within the university.

And from the sound of it, many warriors were already planning how to deal with the situation, taking matters into their own hands if the elders wouldn’t.

I leaned back in my chair slightly, the weight of the situation sinking in.

“Looks like it’s not going to be easy to walk around the university without running into trouble,” I thought, my gaze shifting to the entrance of the canteen.

Originally, I had been thinking about stepping out of the faction to explore the university grounds.

After all, the university had common training facilities available for members of all Halls, and as a member of the Outer Hall, I had access to the Outer Hall facilities.

But judging from the conversations around me, it seemed even the Outer Hall might not be as peaceful as I had hoped.

Still, I had made up my mind.

Despite the unease, I wanted to take a look around the Outer Hall later, see for myself what the atmosphere was like.

But before that, I had to visit the Healing Palace as instructed.

Master Ann was expecting me, and from the sound of things, I might need her healing teachings now.

I continued to eat, cutting into another slice of the monster meat as I quietly absorbed the conversations around me.

The tension in the canteen was palpable, but it wasn’t just about the Dark Variant Faction.

Snatches of other discussions reached my ears-complaints, strategies, and rumors floating through the air like static.

Then, in the midst of all the noise, I caught something unexpected.

My name.

It was subtle, but unmistakable.

I glanced toward a table nearby, where a group of warriors had their heads close together, speaking in low tones.

Their expressions were less animated than the others, more calculating.

“...he’s the newcomer, right?” one of them said, not bothering to lower his voice much.

I kept my gaze forward, pretending to focus on my food, but my ears were keenly tuned to their words.

“Yeah, that’s him,” another voice confirmed.

“Shows up and gets attention right away.

Not surprising, but still!”

“It’s always the same,” someone else muttered, his tone dripping with irritation.

“The faction’s got plenty of warriors who’ve been here longer.

Just because he’s got a bit of talent doesn’t mean he should be the focus.”

I smirked inwardly, keeping my expression neutral.

It wasn’t surprising.

In a place like this, filled with ambitious warriors striving for status and power, competition was inevitable.

But their dissatisfaction was more revealing than they likely realized.

If anything, it only confirmed that I was on the right path-if they were talking about me, it meant I was already making waves.