

## Death 411

Death... and me

Chapter 411: Where is Nulian?

Back at Rean and Roan's side, Rean finally arrived in the brothel that Roan talked about. Fortunately, he didn't need to know where it was. All he needed was to follow the connection he had with Roan.

"I lost quite some time with Qia's parents, so we better hurry up."

Roan nodded.

"It won't take long. Let's go."

[I still don't understand. There are a lot more people here than in the other places Nulian frequents. Wouldn't it be a lot harder to avoid everyone's Spiritual Senses here?]

Roan shook his head.

"Just watch."

Rean quickly activated his Light and Spiritual Sense bending skills while Roan did his job on the shadows. Soon after, they entered the brothel the same way they did back with Tissan.

This was quite a famous brothel that receives several levels of cultivators on a daily basis. As long as they had the Spirit Stones, it wouldn't bother who they were. Naturally, there were a few of them with cultivations much higher than Rean or Roan, so they should be able to notice the twins.

However, as Rean and Roan made their way between the people and dodged those who didn't see them, no one noticed anything out of place.

Finally, they looked in the direction of a specific table. There, they found Nulian being entertained by the women of this place. The twins could also see the guards who didn't leave Nulian's side, making sure to

protect their employer. Every single one of them was at the Initial Stage of Core and Soul Fusion Realm at the very least.

However, even as Rean and Roan got closer, none of these guys noticed their presence either.

Sister Orb, obviously, didn't understand. Rean's Spiritual Sense bending ability shouldn't be strong enough to bend these guys' senses. Considering how close Rean and Roan were to them, they should have found the twins' presence a long time ago.

[This... Why's there is no Spiritual Sense being used here?]

Rean laughed as he explained.

'Hahaha! Obviously! After all, it's probably an unwritten rule to not use Spiritual Senses in this place. This is a brothel, Sister Orb. There are many people in the rooms having sex at this very moment. Do you think they would want to be spied by other's Spiritual Sense? What if you end offending some high-level cultivator? That's why no one uses Spiritual Senses. There is no lack of formations to suppress Spiritual Senses in this place either.'

[Oh... So that's why Roan said this was the best place to take this guy down without anyone noticing. They are too afraid of spreading their Spiritual Senses.]

Roan nodded.

'Exactly. Anyway, let's just wait for now. That idiot will eventually choose one of the women and head to an empty room. That will be our chance.'

Rean then asked Roan.

'What about the woman?'

Roan shook his head.

'None of them have high cultivations. This brothel is very thorough with its treatment. All the women have very weak cultivations or no cultivation at all. That's for the sake of them not endangering their customers. We can simply knock the girl out when the time comes.'

Rean nodded, and soon, they began to wait. Time slowly passed as Nulian drank and chatted with the girls at his table. He also had a few other friends who participated in the circle. Rean even narrowed his eyes, thinking that he would have to give up soon if they didn't act. After all, he had to go back to the repository.

Eventually, Nulian got up while grabbing the woman he liked the most.

"Prepare a room for me."

One of the attendants of the brothel bowed and left straight away. A few moments later, he came back with a key in his hands.

"Here it is, sir. It's room number 356. As always, the room has all the perks sir likes."

Nulian nodded, satisfied. He then carried the girl as his guards all followed him. The twins, obviously, immediately followed.

'Have you noticed that these guards seem to be as annoyed as ever?'

Roan snorted as he replied

'Who the hell would be satisfied with such a job? If Nulian didn't pay them well, they would have left a long time ago. In the end, it all comes to cultivation resources. Some of them might not even agree with Nulian's ways. Still, their own cultivations and lifespans are more important than their opinions.'

'Anyway, you heard the guy--room 356. Let's go there first and see if it's open. Otherwise, we will need to squeeze our way in just when Nulian opens it.'

The twins quickly passed by Nulian and the rest as they rushed upstairs. Sure enough, they found quite a few guards on their way up. One in specific that the twins were sure to have a cultivation above the Core and Soul Fusion Realm. Still, even that guy didn't use his Spiritual Sense.

After some time, though, they arrived in front of room 356. However, just as they were about to open the room's door, it opened by itself. From inside, two maids came out while carrying their work stuff.

"Hurry up, hurry up! The manager said that the client will be here in a minute! If they see that we're still working in the room, he will definitely have a fit."

The other maid quickly grabbed her things as she looked around the room one last time. After making sure everything was in place, she quickly followed her co-worker.

Without the maids noticing anything, the twins used that chance to rush inside of the room. Soon after, they heard the sound of a door being closed before it was locked down.

[This room has a few hidden formations. It will take me a bit of time to analyze and discover what they are for.]

Roan nodded.

"Don't worry, it should be formations to prevent sounds from going out or Spiritual Senses from prying inside."

"Alright, let's just wait here for now. When Nulian closes the door, I will aim for his head while you knock out the maid."

Rean nodded. However...

"The two little mouses there, you have quite the guts to enter our Red Light House in such a manner."

All of a sudden, the ground below Rean and Roan shone as an enormous Spiritual Pressure made the twins kneel on the ground.

Rean was surprised to see that.

'My Radar Skill didn't detect anyone's Spiritual Sense at all. It must be some kind of detection formation.'

Roan narrowed his eyes.

'Indeed. Anyway, let's see who prepared it for us.'

Roan nodded. Rean then deactivated his Light Bending Skill, which immediately revealed the twins. Sure enough, the door of the room they were in opened again. An old woman entered the room and looked at the corner where the twins were being held down. Right behind her, a few other cultivators followed. Of course, due to the appearance change, they looked older and different.

"Oh! Two young men decided to pay a visit to my Red Light House. I was expecting some old monster or something like that. But in the end, you only have cultivations at the Core Formation Realm. Weird... How did you pass through all my guards without being noticed with such puny cultivation? Care to tell this sister your secrets?"

Roan snorted in response.

"Sure. As long as you tell how you found us."

Roan didn't really need to hear the answer, though. Naked eyes couldn't find them while Spiritual Senses weren't being used. In the end, only formations could possibly find them. One example would be some kind of weight detecting formation. Rean and Roan might not appear, but they didn't become weightless because of that.

What Roan wanted to know was something else.

"Oh! That's not too hard. No one can use Spiritual Senses in our brothel. Logically, we had to have some countermeasures against masking abilities. You just fell for one of those."

Roan nodded.

"I see... However, you seemed to be pretty sure that we would come. Was it really just a coincidence, or did you get the information beforehand?"

The woman narrowed her eyes as she looked at Roan.

"You're quite smart. Well, there's no problem in telling you that. You aren't the first one to try and kill that customer of mine in my Red Light House. It seems like Nulian has obtained quite a few enemies. In fact, the last one almost succeeded, so we increased the measures around that man. You see, he's quite a good customer, so we can't let him die here. It would tarnish our Red Light House's reputation."

Roan didn't seem to care.

"So, you were not targeting the two of us in specific, but anyone who would use your brothel to take Nulian down."

The old woman laughed before answering.

"Don't feel so sad. This Trapping Formation has enough power to even stop a Peak Core and Soul Fusion Realm cultivator. You see, I put quite some effort into it. At least, you won't die without knowing why."

Rean couldn't help but laugh.

"Hahaha! Sorry, lady. But I think you are being a bit too overconfident here. You see, you should really have turned off the formations that prevent people from using their Spiritual Senses."

The woman had a bad feeling as she stalled her finger. Soon after, two people behind her attacked, cutting the twins' heads... or so they thought they did.

As soon as the heads flew out, they became specks of Light and Dark Energies before disappearing in thin air.

'Death Style, Fifth Form, Mirage Assault!'

Rean and Roan's clones had many more uses other than just combat!

"Not good! Where is Nulian?!"

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Chapter 412: Qia's Change

Because Spiritual Sense couldn't be used, she couldn't tell that they weren't real. In an instant, the woman and her guards left the room at full speed.

"Where is Nulian's Room?"

"Number 175."

In a place not far away, Rean looked at a particular direction in the ceiling before commenting through their Soul Connection.

'Sure enough, our Mirage assault clones were destroyed.'

Roan shrugged his shoulders as he replied.

'It doesn't matter. We already got Nulian's head anyway.'

Rean nodded.

'I knocked out the girl already. Still...'

Rean then looked at the guy's head and couldn't help but say.

'I really can't get used to this system. Having to carry heads... Don't they have a better way to confirm someone's death? Of course, Nulian was trash, so I don't feel any pity for him.'

Roan didn't even bother to answer as he entered the Soul Gem Dimensional Realm. Rean then did the same and entered the place. Because they had been in the Capital all this time, the save point in their room was always close. Considering the number of spirit stones Rean made at the moment, paying for the teleport wasn't hard, especially when the distance was this close.

Of course, Roan spent almost all their stones in the Dark Web Organization. Fortunately, they still had enough for something like this.

When the Red Light House owner arrived, she saw Nulian's subordinates guarding the door's front.

"Halt! No one can bother the young master."

Unfortunately for them, the old woman herself was a Nascent Soul Realm cultivator. The people behind her were no weaklings either. In a single sweep, they threw all those guys away.

"Are you trying to kill a customer of your Red Light House?!"

The woman glared at them for a second before opening the door.

"Hmph! Come and take a look yourself. Is that the kind of protection you can give to your employer?"

The guys were taken aback before they quickly arrived at the door. Sure enough, Nulian was as dead as he could be while the woman he brought inside was unconscious. Nulian was a Core and Soul Fusion Realm cultivator. However, his guard was completely down when he entered the room. Besides, he



couldn't use Spiritual Sense either. If Roan couldn't take the man's head in such an advantageous situation, then he wouldn't be Death.

Nulian's guards went pale when they saw that. They would have a tough time explaining it to the Favri Bank that Nulian was a part of.

In the end, just a simple letter remained on the bed. The woman quickly grabbed it and read its contents.

-What kind of shit service is this? Your employee gave the room key and even said the room's number in front of others. Only an idiot wouldn't notice that something was wrong. Good luck next time.-

The woman was fuming. Someone dying in her Red Light House was definitely going to affect her business. Sadly, there was nothing she could do. She could tell that whoever did it was long gone. If they had the leisure to even write a letter for her, they obviously had their way out planned. Of course, she still issued an order to lock down the Red Light House and did a thorough search, just in case. It's just that she didn't find anything in the end.

Back in the Dalamu Sect Residence, Rean and Roan left their rooms as if nothing had happened at all.

"Alright, I already lost too much time. Unless it's really urgent, I probably won't be able to leave the Formations Guild for the next week."

Roan nodded, not minding it too much.

"Very well, I'm going back to deliver the guy's head so that I can get rid of the killing requirement for the year."

And just like that, the twins separated and went back to doing their own things.

Sure enough, the news that Nulian died in the Red Light House spread like wildfire. However, the Shadow Reapers wouldn't accept just some news. The mission would only be paid if the taker brought the head back. Those were the rules.

Roan arrived back at the old house and immediately teleported back to the Black Market. Without wasting time, he went straight to the Shadow Reapers building. There was a different entrance for members. Roan then brought his badge out and used it to get access.

As always, a few members were looking at the board to see if they should take a mission. Roan ignored that and went into a closed room on the back. Inside, one of the Shadow Reaper members looked at Roan before asking.

"Badge and head."

Roan brought them out. Roan had used his Yin Energy to freeze Nulian's head. Otherwise, it would be dripping blood everywhere. The guy then used Roan's badge to check which mission he had taken. Soon after, he paired the face of the head with the picture they had in the records.

"Mission concluded. Go to the counter outside and take your payment."

Roan nodded before he got his badge back and left. As for how he would report it to the employee, that wasn't his problem.

As soon as he left the room, he saw the same organization member from back then coming out of another room. He went to the board and then removed Nulian's assignment from the board and a few others.

Roan thought if he should take another mission or not. However, he decided to not force things in the Capital. He would just look at the Shadow Reaper's branch in the same regions as Jialin Country later.

After giving his badge to the man behind the counter, the latter quickly confirmed the mission's conclusion. Following that, he passed a bag and Roan's badge back to him.

"Mission's reward given. You can go."

Roan scanned inside and saw that it didn't have 1500 Rank Three Spirit Stones. Instead, it had only 1200. Sure enough, the Shadow Reapers Organization didn't work for free. They obtained 20% of the reward in exchange.

'That's to be expected. An organization this big can't possibly work without financial backup. There should be no lack of people they need to bribe to keep everything under wraps either.'

Roan didn't mind it since Spirit Stones at Rank Three or below weren't an issue for the twins anymore. Well, these 1200 would come in handy since he used almost all of their stones back in the Dark Web Organization.

'Perhaps there's some Yin Energy Dak Element Skill that I can get for this price. Let's go take a look.'

Since Roan was pretty much free, he decided to browse the Black Market to see if something good could be found.

Back in the Formations Guild Main branch, Rean had just arrived when suddenly, Qia appeared as well.

"Ah!"

Rean looked around the crowd and then smiled back to Qia.

"Princess, did you just come back as well?"

Qia smiled as she held Rean's hand.

"Indeed. I had to go back to the Palace for a moment to resolve a few things."

Rean somehow felt that the current situation was strange. Qia seemed to be quite in a good mood. In the end, he couldn't help but ask her through a Spiritual Sense.

'You do know that our last kiss was also a play for the others to see, right?'

Qia looked at Rean as if she didn't care.

'Obviously. Still, it doesn't change the fact that it was very pleasing. What about you, did you like this princess's kiss?'

Rean was taken aback. Was that a trap?

'Ahem... That's not the issue here, right? The important part is that everyone saw it.'

Qia refused that answer.

'For men, it might not be an issue, but it definitely is for women. I just want one answer, yes or no.'

Rean sighed since there was obviously only one answer. If he said that it wasn't, it would only hurt Qia's pride even more. Besides... as much as he was trying to avoid increasing her feelings for him, he would be lying if he said that it wasn't good. Which single man in the world would find kissing a beauty like Qia unpleasing? Well, Roan and Tissan might...

'Ahem... Of course.'

Qia then showed him a playful smile as she laughed.

'Hahaha! Then that's good.'

Suddenly, Qia pulled Rean's hand in her direction before stealing a kiss from him. Because Rean wasn't expecting it, he had no time to react before her lips were already touching his own.

Qia then let him go before saying.

'Since it was good, there is no problem in continuing with practice. This princess also liked it, so we have nothing to lose since we are just showing our 'love' a little bit more. You better be prepared. This princess requires many samples to make sure no one will have any doubts about our 'relationship.'

Qia then let go of Rean's hand before walking back into the Guild's Repository. As for Rean, he didn't know what to say anymore. Just a few hours ago, Qia would never take the initiative to do such a thing in front of everyone else. Even that time when she forced herself over him, she looked like she was going to die out of embarrassment. However, although there was some fluster on her face, she didn't seem to care about it anymore.

'Just what happened in these last few hours that made her change like that?'

To answer that question, we would need to go back to the moment Qia's mother brought her to Tulia's room.

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Chapter 413: Poor Rean

Back when Rean left to help Roan with the mission, Qia's mother had brought her to talk in Tulia's Room.

"Qia, let me ask you. Do you really like that boy?"

Qia's face went red as she shook her head.

"N-No, it's just a political marriage that will benefit both of us. That's all!"

Ariana sighed as she looked at Qia's expression.

"I'm still your mother, you know? Do you really think you can hide it from me? In fact, I don't think you're doing a good job hiding it from anyone at this point. It's just too obvious."

"This..."

Qia didn't know what to say while Ariana insisted.

"You know that your father and I had a political marriage. In fact, the majority of the Imperial Family was like that. Still, I think I'm one of the lucky ones since your father treats me very well. I have to admit that I've grown fond of him with time. Well, it might also be because of my own family that he is doing it. I would probably never know for sure."

"You are my youngest child. Your elder sister also had a political marriage, and so did your oldest brother. At the moment, you are the only one left. If this marriage somehow fails, your father will eventually find someone for you. That's how it works, and you know that. So, if you have some feelings for him, I want you to confirm it right now."

Sadly, Qia remained silent, giving Ariana no choice but to ask.

"Qia, you said that this marriage would be beneficial for both of you. What was the deal that you two came up with?"

Qia looked at her mother before she explained everything.

"I see... So at first, your Master noticed that Rean probably wouldn't force you to do anything. Later, he agreed that he would give you complete freedom and never touch you except for moments where you need to play the married couple's role. Still, those moments would be nothing more than simple kisses and things like that, right?"

Qia nodded, not trying to hide it.

"Well, that is quite a good deal. It's not like the situation about the fight for the throne will be kept hidden from the masses for long. Rean wants to help his Master protect their sect, so it's fine. It's not like Rean prying into this information would change anything since even the Chrole Empire is already more or less aware of what's happening. Anyway, Rean's intention doesn't matter at the moment, so let's go back to the part that I care about."

"I understand what's happening here. You have always been very prideful. When Rean said that he would give you complete freedom, you accepted that. But when he continued and said that he had absolutely no interest in doing anything with you, you simply couldn't take it."

"There is one thing I don't understand, though. It's not like you and Rean know each other that well. How come you became interested in him that easily?"

Ariana's words made Qia fall into deep thought. Indeed, how did Rean's shadow enter her heart so effortlessly? Qia then began to think about the few interactions they had before. Finally, she felt like she found an answer.

"Maybe... his complete disregard for my status? It's hard to put it into words. He treats me as if I'm just any ordinary girl. The Formations' Guild is neutral territory, and everyone addresses me casually here. However, I can still easily tell that they're measuring their words to not offend me. But Rean... Rean is different. He simply... doesn't care. I wonder why it attracts me so much..."

Well, things like kings, princesses, and empires were almost extinct back on Earth. Besides, although far from perfect, the people on Earth still preached equality between all humans. Rean lived double the amount of time on Earth than he lived in the cultivation world, so he still had these thoughts where no one was better than the other. He knew that it was different in the cultivation world, but he didn't care. That's why his words and actions looked a lot more genuine than anyone else. For someone like Qia, who had been treated like that ever since she was born, Rean's presence really gave her a new feeling she never experienced before. In the end, she just desired more of that.

After hearing Qia's answer, Ariana couldn't help but ask.

"What you want and what you're doing are two starkly different things, don't you think? Shouldn't you be focusing on the part that really matters?"

Qia nodded with a sad expression.

"Sorry, Mom. I will stop it and focus on the deal itself. Master already told me that almost no princes or princesses have the same chance as I do. I should focus on keeping my part of the agreement and stop expecting anything from him. The freedom that I will get is what I should pay attention to."

Ariana looked at Qia as if she was looking at an idiot.

"Are you that dumb? Didn't I just say that you should focus on what really matters?"

Qia was speechless. That's not the answer she expected from her mother.

"This... What do you mean?"

Ariana then looked at Qia's face with a solemn expression.

"Hmph! You said it yourself. Almost no princes or princesses get the chance you got. But I'm not talking about this freedom bullshit. What I mean is that none of them have the opportunity of marrying someone they genuinely care about. Here you are, with your emotions almost bursting out of your chest, and you are still pretending that they don't matter.

Ariana got angrier as she continued.

"This is really irritating. Why wasn't I this lucky in the past? Why wasn't any of your siblings this lucky? Your father's a very strict man who practically can't think about anything other than the Empire. Still, he definitely isn't so bad compared to others like your grandfather, so I wish he had the same encounter as you in the past."

Qia was shocked to see her mother acting like that. She quickly dropped her head as she heard all of that.

"But... but..."

\*Pah!\*

"Ouch!"



Out of nowhere, Ariana slapped Qia's back using Spiritual Energy to make sure it would hurt.

"Idiot! If you truly keep using this bullshit freedom to get away from your happiness, I will never forgive you. So what if he's three years younger? Who cares about that? If anything, he will be more active in the bed for a long time since he will be younger."

Qia's face burned when she heard that last part.

"Mother!"

Ariana glared at her in response.

"Shut up!"

"Yes..."

Qia couldn't go against her mother at all. Not only did she have more authority, but Ariana's cultivation was much higher as well.

Ariana then put her hands on Qia's shoulder as she said.

"Qia... There is indeed a chance here that you shouldn't lose. So you must give it your all. Do it for me, your father, and your siblings. Don't throw away something that we all wanted but couldn't get. Can you promise me that?"

Qia couldn't help but tear up. Eventually, she made her decision as she nodded her head vigorously.

"Alright! I will definitely play all my cards to not let this chance escape."

Ariana sighed in relief as she smiled.

"Mommy is proud of you."

Suddenly, Ariana's expression changed as she entered a new topic.

"Now, there's another huge problem we need to discuss."

Seeing Ariana's demeanor, Qia immediately understood that it must be something serious.

"Wh-What is it? Did something happen in the fight for the throne?"

Ariana shook her head.

"Worse than that."

Worse? Could it be that the Emperor died?

"We need to find a way to catch Rean's heart!"

Qia almost fell with her face to the ground.

"That's all?!"

Ariana narrowed her eyes.

"What do you mean that's all? My daughter's happiness is on the line. This is a problem even bigger than the Empire going to war. To hell with all that throne fight bullshit!"

Qia was speechless. Wasn't the Imperial Family always above everything? How come it became so insignificant all of a sudden? However, Qia immediately understood why her mother thought like that. Her father was the real member of the Imperial Bloodline, not her mother. Ariana came from another family. Not only that, but Ariana didn't come from any of the subordinate clans either. Instead, she came from a clan of merchants from outside the capital. Naturally, her attachment to the Imperial Family wasn't as big as her father's. Or better yet, she simply didn't care...

Ariana then looked at Qia.

"Do you think I didn't notice? That Rean boy was only pretending everything! The kiss, the flattering words, the entire thing was just a ruse. You love him, but at this moment, it definitely isn't the same on his side. Time to discuss what you should do to catch his heart as well."

Qia's cheeks began to get hot as she heard her mother's words.

"Th-Then... What should I do?"

Ariana began to ponder about the issue.

"He healed your scars, which turned you back into beauty both in and out of clothes. You are definitely a piece of sexy meat that wolves would love to eat. Still, that boy seems to not mind this... how come..."

"Mom... aren't you a little too direct?"

Ariana ignored Qia as she continued to think.

"Hum... It seems like we can only use the same plan as Rean did before."

"Same plan?"

Qia gave a confused look at her mother.

Ariana nodded before looking back at Qia.

"Didn't he say that he might have impregnated you? Let's make it real."

Poor Rean didn't know what was waiting for him.

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Chapter 414: Need Money

"EHHH?! No, that's out of the question!"

Ariana sighed as she replied.

"Is that so? Oh well. I guess I asked too much from the start. In any case, one thing is certain!"

\*Gulp\*

"Wh-What's that?"

Ariana then pointed at Qia before saying.

"You need to attack! Your half-assed attitude is no good! Didn't you two agree that it was all practice? That's good enough! From now on, 'practice' a lot more! Every time a change appears, go get him. If he asks, say that it's for the sake of practice."

Ariana was really fired up as she continued.

"Of course, don't stop at just that! Make sure to leave some clues behind. Anything is good as long as it makes him think that there's more to those actions. You inherited both your parents' blood, so you turned out a beauty, just like your sister. Your older brother is quite handsome in his own right as well. I refuse to believe that Rean's heart won't sway if you press forward."

Qia couldn't help but ask.

"Bu-but... Would it really be okay for a princess to act like that?"

Ariana completely disagreed.

"Hmph! You're wrong! You're a princess of the Sasamil Imperial Family. The third princess might not be a strong contender for the throne, but she's still trying her best. Do you think she's keeping her position by acting delicate or defenseless? No one in the Imperial Family thinks like that, so give up those thoughts of yours."

Qia had to admit that her mother was right. In fact, she was also like that. When there was something she wanted, she had to put her all into it, ignoring everything else. It's just that this was her first love, so her feminine side was speaking louder than usual.

"A-Alright! I'll do it!"

Ariana nodded, satisfied.

"Obviously! You're my daughter, after all."

And so started Rean's will test.

Of course, neither Rean nor Qia could spend much time with that at the moment. Both of them were aiming to pass the Formations Guild Main Branch test. Qia's appearance at the guild entrance was purely coincidental since her mother held her back a long time. That's why she made the first attack there and left right after to continue her studies with her master.

Rean looked as Qia walked away as if nothing had happened.

'Sigh... Whatever. As long as I stand my ground, she will eventually give up. Yes, that's the best strategy for the moment.'

Suddenly, Rean heard a Spiritual Sense Message from Droman.

'What are you doing standing like a statue in the entrance? Stop wasting time and come inside. I prepared everything for this last stretch before the exams. Don't forget, I won't let you go out anymore after we start.'

Rean immediately put those thoughts behind and nodded.

'Yes, Elder Droman.'

Back in the Black Market, Roan was perusing the skills list in one of the available shops. As always, the entire Black Market had a few people walking around, and the shops were no different. However, every single item was stolen goods, prohibited for selling, or had some other kind of shady background. The Yin Energy Dark Element skills that Roan was looking for just fell into the same categories.

Roan did find a few of these manuals for sale. However, he was blocked by one of the other traits of the Black Market. Everything here was just too damn expensive! He would be able to buy at most one of the skill books available here, and the money he made with the assassination would be gone already.

'Hmm... There are almost no examples of Dark Element Skills. I guess controlling Yin Energy to use the Dark Element isn't easy for others, after all. Besides, the ones I saw had descriptions that seem to be quite behind my own techniques.'

Roan continued to look into the skill introductions until, finally, something piqued his interest.

'Shadow Steps? Did someone create a movement technique like my own? Well, that would make sense since the cultivation world had existed for who knows how many years before I appeared.'

Roan quickly read through the introduction. However, he narrowed his eyes in the end.

'Pretty similar indeed. However, other than merging with the shadows to move around more silently, it can also leave behind an energy reading to confuse the enemy. It can make them think you moved in another direction. I have to admit that this was a clever idea. In head-on combat, making the enemy lose their guard could make a difference.'

However, Roan wasn't an idiot. He knew that the description of the skill was definitely modified. It didn't say anything about the difficulty of using that extra skill, nor the price to make it work.

'Besides, even if it works, that doesn't mean I disappeared. Creating an energy reading that could fool my enemy is easier said than done. For that, I would rather use Mirage Assault. At least the clones would be identical to Nightingale or me.'

Roan pondered if he should take that skill until he eventually shook his head.

'Leave it aside. Just the description alone was enough for me to form the idea in my head. It'll be better if I create something similar on my own. It shouldn't be too difficult since the Mirage Assault and the Three Claws of the Dragon already use the same principle.'

That's why Roan read so many skill books. More than acquiring new skills, he put more importance on obtaining new ideas. The new abilities would follow right behind.

Roan continued to browse the list. After some time, he found a skill that he wanted to buy for real.

-Dark World-

Uses Yin Energy to control the surrounding Dark Element. The area around the cultivator will then plunge into a world of darkness, affecting the enemy's vision.

'That's surprising. How did they deal with the huge expenditure of Spiritual Energy necessary for something like this? It probably won't affect the enemy's Spiritual Sense that much, but robbing them of their vision is still quite an advantage.'

Roan had thought about such a use case before. However, controlling all the Dark Element in such a large area was not only difficult, but the expenditure on Spiritual Energy was also ridiculously high. Considering that it didn't affect the opponent's Spiritual Sense that much, Roan discarded the idea in the past.

'What else does it say...?'

-The affected area depends on the user's cultivation and ability to control the Yin Energy to use the Dark Element. One must remember that any area of effect skill has a higher consumption of Spiritual Energy. However, this skill has been created to reduce consumption as much as possible.-

'Sure enough, the sellers predicted that the readers would think about this point, so they added this detail.'

Roan pondered a bit and made up his mind. Even if the skill wasn't perfect, he at least wanted to understand how they worked with the massive consumption of Spiritual Energy. It might not be worth using Dark World, but that information alone could still be used in other skills later.

Roan then turned to the guy on the counter before asking.

"How much for Dark World?"

The guy behind was taken aback for a moment.

"Oh... There aren't many cultivators who use the Dark Element. Even in the Black Market, I've only seen three of them so far. Dark Element is quite hard to use, and their skills are quite costly. Are you sure you want to buy it? In the Black Market, there is no such thing as giving the item back. Once you get the book, your Spirit Stones are gone for good."

Roan nodded.

"Just tell me the price."



The guy then shrugged his shoulders as he nonchalantly replied.

"Alright. It costs 200 Rank Four Spirit Stones."

Roan narrowed his eyes. He didn't expect that Dark Element Skills would require Rank Four Spirit Stones. Also, there was another problem. Even if the guy accepted Rank Three Spirit Stones' equivalent price, he wouldn't have enough to pay for it.

'Should I offer one of my skills in exchange?'

Obviously, Roan also had his own Dark Element Skills. It's just that they were made to work better when there was the Light Element as well. Still, they all worked with the Dark Element alone.

However, Roan shook his head in the end. His skills were created by himself. He had been hiding his identity until now, and only Old Worm would recognize him. But if he gave his skill out, others might use it to track him down. Roan would rather not do such a thing.

Roan then turned around and left the Skill Shop. The guy at the counter didn't try to stop him either. He already had to give part of his profit to the Black Market, so he wasn't willing to lower the price to start with. Since Roan didn't have the money or didn't want to pay, he simply let him go.

However, Roan didn't really give up the skill.

'It seems like I can only use the exam reward to put my hands on that skill.'

The Alchemist Guild Main Branch Exam! They only accepted 10 or so new members every year. However, thousands participated in the exam every time. Naturally, the guild prepared a fitting reward for those who succeed. Besides becoming a member of the Main Branch, passing the test will allow one to obtain Rank Four Spirit Stones as a prize. Obviously, the higher one's position was, the more one would get. That was one of the reasons Rean was putting so much effort. After all, he hadn't found a way to earn Rank Four Spirit Stones on his own yet.

Death... and me

## Chapter 415: Droman Had to Accept the Invitation

The last week of availability for Rean and Droman to use the repository passed in a flash. After they came out, the Formations Guild once again extended Droman an invitation to join their ranks. Droman, of course, was just about to refuse when he heard a Spiritual Sense Message from Rean.

'You were the one who convinced me to accept this marriage bullshit. Not only that, but Qia seems to have entered some kind of full attack mode. Since you forced me into this, then I will also make you swallow your pride. If you don't accept their invitation this time, you can forget about developing the circuitry formations with me.'

Droman was taken aback by Rean's words.

'You do know that it wouldn't really be considered revenge since joining the Formations Guild Main Branch is the best thing that could happen for me, right?'

Rean snorted in response.

'Do you think I don't know your pride? You haven't accepted it at all because of this. So yeah, that would be the best outcome for you. However, as good as it might be, I know how much you would hate the idea of joining them since the creator of the communication system, which is me, is still out.'

Droman narrowed his eyes. That was the truth. He had never accepted their invitation because his pride didn't allow him to do so. He reluctantly agreed to join the Formations Guild using the Communication System only if Rean passed the Guild's Exam.

'Isn't there a better way of me paying for it?'

Sure enough, he really didn't want to do it.

Rean shook his head as he said.

'No can do. Either you accept their invite now, or you won't see a single rune from me.'

Droman fell into a dilemma. As for the elder who came to invite him, he noticed that Droman had suddenly become silent.

"Why so much thought? Just take it. I don't wanna be rude, but even though you created something amazing, your chances of entering the guild through the test is quite low."

Droman felt like a knife passed through his heart. He knew it was true, but this guy didn't need to point it out, right?

On the other hand, Rean looked at him as if he was saying the exact same thing.

Finally, Droman gritted his teeth and accepted that offer.

'Fine! But you better not hide anything regarding the Circuitry Formations later.'

Rean laughed after hearing that.

'Hahaha! It's hard, isn't it? That's what I felt when I decided to accept this marriage. Anyway, don't worry. We will develop the Circuitry Formations together.'

Droman's expression was dark, but he nodded nonetheless. Following that, he turned in that elder's direction before saying.

"Sigh... Fine, I accept the Main Branch invitation. What should I do?"

Immediately, the elder and the other Formation Masters around them got excited.

"Oh! Finally! I've never thought it would be so hard to recruit someone to the Main Branch. Usually, everyone would accept it with open arms. Hahaha!"

The ender then began to guide Droman somewhere else.

"Your disciple can come as well. It's quite a quick process."

Droman and Rean then followed the guy as the other Formation Masters looked at them with satisfied expressions. They really didn't want to let Droman roam free like that. What if another empire's guild recruited him instead? That won't do!

Around an hour later, Rean and Droman left the Guild's Main Branch. This time, however, Droman's Formations Guild Badge on his robe changed. Obviously, that was the main branch's badge.

"Happy now?"

Rean nodded as he looked at Droman's grim expression.

"Absolutely!"

Droman couldn't help but sigh.

"Whatever... Let's go back to the Dalamu Residence in the Inner City. I could try and use my status as a member of the guild to let you enter the repository for another week. However, the price would be quite hefty. Besides, we have something better to do. I'll use this last week before the exam to help you revise everything you learned about. Understood?"

Rean nodded while showing a determined expression.

"Sure thing. Let's go."

Rean and Droman weren't the only ones practicing, though. Old Worm stopped going out for a week already. Whatever it was that he was doing seemed to have been resolved already. Thanks to that, he and Roan practiced Alchemy quite a lot.

"This formula turned out a little unstable. You know why, right?"

Roan nodded.

"The synchronization of the remaining properties didn't go as I expected."

Old Worm confirmed.

"Exactly. Don't forget. Even if the recipe is the same, the herbs aren't. The Finmi Swamp Root from the capital has a higher concentration of Elemental Energy than the ones you can get in the Dalamu Sect. Make sure that you analyze it thoroughly next time you try it."

Roan then took the medicinal liquid back and continued concocting the pill. Even though it wouldn't be as good as it was, he wouldn't simply throw it away. He's not the type who liked to waste things.

Old Worm looked at that and nodded, satisfied.

When Old Worm came out of the Alchemy Room, he noticed Rean and Droman's arrival. It was then that he saw Droman's new badge.

"You accepted their invite?"

Droman scratched the back of his head helplessly.

"It's quite embarrassing since the one who really invented the Communication System was Rean. If not because this guy forced my hand, I definitely wouldn't have taken the offer."

Rean didn't even care as he headed inside. Old Worm, on the other hand, just shook his head as he muttered.

"Meaningless thoughts. Just accept it since it's beneficial."

Old Worm then left the room without waiting for an answer.

'Sigh... as always, so little words.'

And just like that, the last week before both exams passed in a flash. Rean also had some freedom since Qia was entirely concentrated on the exam too.

Droman and Old Worm would be representing Rean and Roan, so they had to go together. The two sides quickly arrived in the Core City before each one went to their own guilds. It was finally time for the exams to start.

Death... and me

Chapter 416: Can He Resist?

It was the first time that Roan had entered the Alchemist Guild. After all, Old Worm didn't have that free month to allow Roan to go there. The guild wasn't any smaller than the Formations' building. But what really caught people's attention was the large number of young alchemists that came to participate in the exam.

There was an enormous crowd outside the guild, waiting for their chance to enter. However, Old Worm was still a member of the Main Branch, so he was at least allowed to pass ahead with Roan. Eventually, they arrived at the counter... well, one of them. For the exam, the Alchemist Guild Main Branch prepared many temporary counters where the candidates could register.

Of course, there were a few of them reserved primarily for the disciples of the members of the guild. Old Worm obviously brought Roan to one of those.

"Oh! It's Fellow Alchemist Fauk. You rarely ever come to pay us a visit."

Old Worm nodded.

"I've been busy."

He then pointed at Roan.

"Register him for the exam."

The guy nodded and quickly passed a badge to Roan. Many members had brought their own disciples, so the guy didn't find it strange that Old Worm had one as well.

"Go to hall number seven, your group will be there. Your table is number 459. It's against the rules to use your own tools and ingredients. Everything will be provided by the Alchemist Guild."

Roan nodded as he looked beside him. He saw that everyone was paying several spirit stones before registering.

"How much?"

The man shook his head as he replied.

"Disciples of members have no need to pay."

Roan nodded and quickly put his badge away, and headed to hall number seven.

"I can't be there with you, so I'll be watching from the sides."

Old Worm then turned around and left as well. The guy on the counter couldn't help but feel that interaction was weird.

'Is that all you have to say to your disciple? And what about this boy? He should have shown some respect to his Master as well...'

Still, that wasn't his problem, so he simply called the next person in the queue.

Roan didn't take long to arrive at the hall. He went straight to his table and began to look around. The hall was really enormous, and his number 459 was still considered at the forefront. He was sure that there were at least another 3 or 4 thousand tables behind him. Not to mention that this was only one of the halls. According to Old Worm, the Alchemist Guild opened at least ten halls for the exams every year.

'They really make a fortune. The guys outside had to pay 300 Rank Three Spirit Stones for registration. No wonder they only open ten or so slots every year. If they had even more slots, the Alchemist Main Branch wouldn't even have enough space for everyone to go through the exam.'

At the front, he also saw a stage that was empty at the moment. Roan then ignored his surroundings as he looked at his equipment on the table. There were only the most simple tools that one would usually give to those who were just starting in the path of alchemy. Roan's Spiritual Sense quickly spread around, and sure enough, it was the same for everyone else.

Roan then began to sort out his tools as he waited for the exam to start.

Back in the Formations Guild, the exam didn't attract as many people as the Alchemist's exam. Alchemy was universally known for being a money-making side occupation, so it was normal for them to receive a lot more attention.

Droman quickly used his privilege to register Rean.

"Rean boy, it seems your time has arrived. Nervous?"

The man on the counter was someone Rean saw a few times during his time in the repository.

"Hmm... I would say excited instead."

The man laughed as he passed him a badge.



"Your testing field is number eighteen. I wish you good luck."

Formations usually occupied areas much bigger than alchemist tables. Naturally, they needed a lot more space to go through the tests. However, there was no way that they would have enough space for everyone to draw formations. There weren't as many people as the Alchemist Guild, but they could still fit a few thousand in their own turf.

That's why the first tests would be elimination trials where there was no need to draw formations at all. Only when the number fell to an acceptable range would the next tests start.

Rean nodded as he looked at Droman on his side.

"Well, I'm going there, then."

Droman shrugged his shoulders as he said.

"We did all we could. Now it's all up to you."

Rean smiled as he turned around and left. However, he heard Sister Orb's voice as he walked to the test field.

[Hmph! With me here, there's no way you can lose.]

'You shut up. I'm here to compete, not to cheat.'

[Why would you do that? Roan said that you should always use everything at your disposal, remember?]

'That might be the case for him, but not me. Even if I fail this test, I won't mind.'

Roan's voice then appeared in his mind.

'No can do. You better pass this test by hook or by crook. Your Circuitry Formations are linked to our Destiny Points. They're a lot more important than your naivety. Don't forget what we're dealing with.'

Rean's expression went gloomy as he replied.

'Fine! However, Sister Orb can only intervene if I run out of options. Otherwise, I want to try and see how far I can go in the tests alone.'

Roan didn't care.

'As long as you pass, then so be it.'

[The Formation Masters in this guild had been preparing the exam for a long time. I used this month in the repository to analyze all the formations being used in the testing fields. Thanks to that, I'm ready to guide you to victory at any time.]

Rean sighed as he nodded.

"Found you!"

All of a sudden, someone held Rean's arm.

Rean was taken aback as he looked at the girl by his side.

"Q-Qia, are you in the eighteenth test field as well?"

Qia smiled playfully before nodding.

"Yeap. I asked my Master if she could use her status to at least put me in the same testing group. Since it makes no difference which one we enter, it wasn't hard for her to do that."

Rean sighed as he looked at Qia's bright smile.

"You do know that we are enemies in this exam, right? I have no intention of holding back just because you are here. Our marriage is something completely different."

Qia didn't mind.

"Obviously! If you really did that, I would kick your ass. I'm also participating, intending to get one of the ten slots. I only came to the same test field so that you could see how good of a deal you got after becoming mine."

Rean felt a chill on his back.

"Becoming... yours?"

Qia narrowed her eyes at him as she replied.

"What? You will be my husband, so you are obviously mine. Any problem?"

Rean immediately shook his head after seeing Qia's dark expression.

"Ahem... Of course not."

"That's good then."

Rean felt helpless. With her obvious attacks, even he didn't know how long he would resist.

Death... and me

Chapter 417: He's Good

Back at the Alchemist Guild Main Branch...

Most of the tables in Roan's hall had already been filled. With a few exceptions like himself, most alchemists seemed to be around their late teens. However, Roan could see some who looked to be around his age. As for those who appeared to be older, that's probably only their appearance.

Finally, the door of the hall closed, which indicated that the exam wouldn't accept any more participants. Following that, a Spiritual Sense Message reached everyone present.

"The Alchemist Exam will now begin. From now on, you are prohibited from leaving your workstations. As mentioned in the rules, no personal tools are accepted. You will have to do with what you have on your table."

Suddenly, another door opened at the front of the Hall as an old man using the Alchemist Guild Main Branch badge came out. Behind him, several other alchemists using the same badge followed.

While the old man went up to the stage, the alchemists that came behind spread around the Hall in an orderly manner. One of them stopped just a few tens of meters from Roan. Everyone knew that those guys were there to prevent cheating.

After that, they all paid attention to the man on the stage. He seemed to be talking with a few of the alchemists there at the moment.

"It's Elder Waki Tou!"

"He's a Heaven High-Level Alchemist."

"We're quite unlucky. His exams are usually the most strict."

"Hmph! So what? This is just the starting phase."

"Correct. If you can't even pass this level, do you think you would have a chance for the ten slots?"

"If anything, it's good that the majority will fall here already."

"Still, you better be ready. Elder Waki doesn't like to approve many people at once. The ones who pass through his exams are usually a lot fewer than the other supervisors' tests."

Eventually, Waki seemed to finish his talk with the other alchemists. He then approached the stage front as he looked at all the young alchemists present.

"Welcome to the Alchemist Guild Exam. As you know, two exams are going on at the moment. The first one has a lot fewer participants, which is the one targeted at older alchemists. And there is the exam you all are taking now, the new talents exam."

"The requirements for this exam are simple. Be under the age of 20 and be recognized by the Alchemist Guild as a full-fledged alchemist."

When Roan reached the Earth Low-Level Alchemist rank, he was registered in the Alchemist Hall of the Dalamu Sect, which was then informed to the Alchemist Guild itself. Rean went through the same process for his Blacksmith and Formation Master side occupations. Even though they weren't part of the main branches in the capital, they were still recognized by the guilds as true members.

"You all heard the rules already, so I won't repeat them anymore. Just remember that anyone who breaks them will be expelled from the guild forever, so be careful."

"Alright, let's start with the first part of the exam, the medicinal extraction exam. As you all know, this is one of the very first steps when concocting pills. It's not just about bringing out the medicinal properties of the materials. You need to be sure that the quality of the medicine will not be lost in the process."

"There are many ways of doing it. Some like to use boiling methods. Others prefer to use pestle and mortars, a few choose to inject Spiritual Energy inside to force the medicinal liquid out, etc... I will not tell you to use a specific method since everyone has their own preferences. All that matters here is the quality of the medicinal liquid that you get."

Waki continued.

"That will be the first part of the exam. At the moment, there are 4981 alchemists in this hall alone. Usually, the guild asks to pass the first 300 into the second phase. However, I don't see any use in those below the top 100. That being said, only the best 100 medicinal extractions will go to the next phase."

Everyone couldn't help but become a bit nervous. Sure enough, Waki made it a lot more difficult for them.

"Once you finish extracting the medicinal liquids, put them inside the vials on your table. The assistants will come and bring it to the stage where the quality will be tested through a formation."

[Roan, different from Rean and the Formations Guild, I did not have the chance to analyze the formations of this place. I doubt I will be over in time to help you with that formation he talked about.]

'It's okay.'

"If you look into the right drawer of your table, you will see that we prepared a few herbs for you there. They are all of the same age and quality. You can select any of them to use in the extraction process. If you want to try several different ones, go ahead and do it. As long as you get a medicinal quality that you deem as best, I don't care which one you use."

"Alright, you all have two hours to go through the extraction process. After the two hours are over, no more medicinal liquids will be accepted. The exam starts now!"

On the sides, there were quite a number of alchemists that came only to watch. Most of them were the masters of these young alchemists. Old Worm, of course, was there as well to watch Roan.

Beside him, there were a few other alchemists from the Main Branch, just like him. Obviously, they were a lot fewer compared to the alchemists who came from outside. One of them just so happened to be the guy who registered Roan, Selio Mutban.

"Hey everyone, look who's back. Faulk finally appeared again."

Immediately, a few eyes were attracted to Old Worm.

"Oh! Faulk, you came to watch the exam? You rarely come to pay a visit."

"That's true. You are one of our oldest members, but you seldom come out. How come you're here this time?"

"Hahaha! You might not believe this, but Faulk seems to have gotten a disciple."

"What? The Dead Faulk got a disciple? You're kidding, right?"

Sure enough, Old Worm's reputation of having no emotions was not something from Dalamu alone.

Old Worm massaged his temples as he sighed. That's why he didn't like to come. These guys were just too noisy.

"Tell me, tell me! Who's his disciple?"

Selio then pointed in Roan's direction in the distance.

"Can you see the black-haired boy there on the twentieth row?"

Everyone focused their Spiritual Senses and quickly found who Selio was talking about.

"Oh, he seems to be quite young, no? He's what? 15, 16?"

"It doesn't matter. I'm more curious what kind of boy would catch Dead Faulk's interest. You've never brought a disciple before."

"Hey, Faulk. Your disciple seems pretty calm. Is he really good?"

"Well, Dead Faulk took him in, right? He must be quite above average to catch Faulk's interest."

Faulk knew that they weren't really trying to offend him. Dead Faulk had basically become his nickname here, that's all.

Old Worm sighed before glancing at everyone.

"He's good."

Well, that was all he said, much to everyone's disappointment.

Death... and me

#### Chapter 418: Formations Guild First Exam

Meanwhile, Rean was undergoing a similar situation. The testing field was even larger than the Alchemist Hall, where Roan was having his exam. At the moment, it was already closed, so no more participants can enter. On the other side of the field, Rean found someone he recognized. It was the same elder who invited Droman the first time they arrived in the Formations Guild, Zako Vale.

"Alright, everyone's already here. As you know, it would be impossible to test all of you in drawing formations at once. Depending on the techniques employed, a formation might take up a huge space, which would only be for a single participant. In that case, we have to reduce your numbers during the first phase."

"In this testing field, we have prepared three types of formations. All of them have one thing in common, they will try to hinder your movements. We have one movement restriction type formation, one illusion type, and one barrier type. Your objective is to reach this side of the field where I'm waiting."

The elder wasn't that far away, at most 500 meters or so. Still, none of the participants thought that it would be easy to reach his location.



"The formations aren't perfect. All of them have a few flaws that can be exploited. That is also a way to test how much you all understand formations. After all, there's no lack of formations in the outside world. You never know when you will need to crack a formation down. The ability to analyze them quickly and accurately is highly appreciated in the guild. It can even save your life in the future as well."

"One more thing. You don't need to be afraid of someone using the same methods as you all. Beneath the three formations, there's another major formation capable of hiding everyone's presence while separating them. You can work to your heart's content without being afraid of giving clues to others."

Rean and everyone else nodded. That was a straightforward but effective method to test everyone.

"The clear condition is simple as well. The first 200 to come out to this side will be qualified to enter the next phase. Once the number is achieved, the formations will turn off by themselves, and the rest can leave."

Sister Orb's voice then appeared in Rean's mind.

[As I said, our time spent in the Formations Guild was enough for me to analyze this exam's formations. I can tell you in real-time how many people already passed the exam. If I see that the number is getting too close to 200, I'll let you know where the flows are located.]

Rean sighed but nodded his head nonetheless.

'Alright.'

On the other side, Zako continued with his speech.

"Last but not least, the test has a time limit to be completed. If time's up but the number of those who have come out still hasn't reached 200, then we will move forward with the ones who concluded the exam. The rest will be disqualified straight away."

"Alright, that's all you need to know at the moment. The exam starts now!"

Qia, who had been holding Rean's hand all this time, stole another kiss from him before giving him a wink.

"Then, I'm going ahead. See you on the other side."

Rean scratched the back of his head as he looked at the other men around him. The air around him was quite 'red' with killing intent. Obviously, the newcomers who didn't know anything were quite jealous of his open relationship.

'I wonder if I'll survive in the end.'

Rean then shook his head and rushed inside the formations as well. Immediately, the world around him warped as the illusion formation began to work on him. What was just an open field a while ago, now became a jail with bars everywhere.

'The first one is an illusion formation, huh? Now that I think about it, they didn't tell us what sequence it would be.'

Rean then went to the corner of the jail and touched the bars. However, he immediately narrowed his eyes after that.

'They didn't hold back at all. Even though I know that there's no such thing as a cage in front of me, I can still feel it when I touch the bars.'

Rean was right. For the spectators, Rean was doing nothing more than holding his hand in the air. Well, that was the same for most of the participants as well. The spectators had to use another monitoring formation to be able to see what the participants were seeing.

'To find the flaws of the Illusion Formation, I will need to see the runes first. Obviously, the formation won't allow me to do that, so I will have to force them to appear.'

There were different methods to do it. The most common was to use a burst of Spiritual Energy in the illusion itself. The illusion was made through the runes, allowing one to visualize it for a few moments. Of course, the higher the illusion's level, the harder it would be to make that work. Everyone in this exam was an Earth Middle or High-Level Formations Master, so the formation was obviously made to match these levels... or so the majority thought.

'No, they are looking for the best ones, so I wouldn't be surprised if this is an Earth Peak Level Illusion Formation.'

Rean was right. It was the same thing for everyone in the other testing fields as well.

Rean kept walking around the illusion formation for a while before he stopped in the middle. He looked down at the ground that seemed to be the same as everywhere else. Suddenly, a smile appeared on his face as Light Element began to converge around his body. Soon after, he sent all of it into the ground.

No one understood what Rean was doing. As far as they could see, nothing happened with the illusion at all. Even the runes didn't appear for even a second, so why did he do that?

However, Rean suddenly looked at a certain point in the jail. It was the ceiling close to the top right corner.

'Found you!'

Soon after, he used his Spiritual Energy to attack that point of the formation.

\*Crack... Shatter!\*

Immediately, he heard the sound of something breaking apart as the jail around him disappeared into thin air!

"What?! He destroyed the formation core!"

"How did he do that?!"

"He didn't even try to use the formation's flaws to turn it off."

"The formation core should be even harder to find than the flaws in the formation. Could something have been wrong with it?"

"Are you dumb? Do you think the guild would commit such a mistake with that level of formation?"

Droman wasn't the least bit surprised, though. He knew very well why Rean was able to find it so fast.

"Hahaha! So, how is it? Do you like this old man's disciple?"

The others looked at him with mixed emotions.

"How did he find the Formation Core?"

Droman smiled in response.

"That's a secret. You will need to ask him directly. Whether he wants to answer or not, that's up to him."

Death... and me

#### Chapter 419: Medicinal Extraction

Rean didn't hear anything about the commotion inside. He simply pressed forward while waiting for the next formation to appear.

Most formations that used cores kept their flow of Spiritual Energy hidden. If they couldn't do that, the formation would be made in a way where the Spiritual Energy flowed evenly everywhere, preventing one from pinpointing the core's location. Or maybe the core would be protected by something.

After all, if the core of a formation that needs it was destroyed, the formation would become useless. It's common practice to make preparations for it to not happen. Naturally, the Formations Guild wasn't idiotic enough to leave it exposed. If anything, the Illusion Formation Core was better hidden than normal formations at the same level.

Still, there was indeed a reason for Rean to find the Formation Core that easily. Spiritual Energy was one of the driving forces of the living world. There was no lack of Life Force present in it. It's just that the amount was too small for just anyone to notice. Well, anyone but Rean, whose affinity was the Light Element.

Rean indeed couldn't tell where the Spiritual Energy was coming, but Life Force was different. The Formation Core obviously had even more Spiritual Energy inside, which made things even easier for Rean. By using his Light Element on the entire jail, Rean was able to feel where the highest concentration of Life Force was located.

Well, he also felt the presence of the other participants. However, the way Life Force acted inside a living body was different from a Formation Core, so Rean didn't have issues finding the right source.

Formations that used cores were usually considered a lot stronger due to the support they give to the runes. But strangely enough, Rean would have a lot more difficulty finding a way out if the Illusion Formation didn't use it.

As Rean walked forward, the color of his hair suddenly changed into black and white. Immediately, he understood that Roan started his exam as well.

Sure enough, Roan began to extract the medicinal liquid present in the herbs. He selected a Tavian Stalk to do it since he used it a few times before. His hair also changed into a mix of black and white as he worked with the herb on the mortar.

The alchemists close to Fauk also noticed that, though.

"What happened with his hair?"

"What a strange kid."

"That's not all. I might be wrong, but I think I felt a bit of the Dark Element present in his concoction."

"Dark Element? I could swear I felt Light Element."

"Does it mean he can use both Yin and Yang energies? After all, it's impossible to use the Dark Element without controlling Yin Energy. The same could be said for the Light Element without Yang Energy."

"Fauk, is that a side effect of your disciple's cultivation?"

Old Worm glanced at the chatterboxes and shook his head.

"His situation is complicated."

Everyone looked at Old Worm, waiting for him to continue. Unfortunately, Old Worm didn't say a single extra word after that.

'Would it kill you to try and be a bit more specific?'

Roan didn't know what everyone was discussing. Still, he did get someone else's attention. Waki Tou, the elder presiding over the exam of hall number seven, was looking directly at him with his Spiritual Sense. In the end, he couldn't help but shake his head in disappointment.

'Light and Dark Elements? Would someone cultivate both Yin and Yang Energy just to control those polar opposite forces? I wonder how he hadn't gotten a cultivation defect until now.'

Still, as he looked at Roan's performance, the expression on his face disappeared.

'The medicinal liquid in his mortar seems quite... good? How's he doing that?'

There were thousands of alchemists in this exam. The only reason Waki noticed Roan was because he was the only one using different elements. Everyone else was using Fire, Wind, Water, Earth, or some combination of those elements like Wood and Augmented Fire with Wind. There was Lightning Element as well, but this one was rarely used in alchemy.

The other alchemists beside Old Worm noticed that as well. Some of them even began to pay more attention to Roan than their own disciples.

Old Worm's expression didn't even change, though.

Roan was doing the same thing as always. He used the Light Element to protect the stalk medicine while the Dark Element destroyed any undesired properties. It was very similar to when Roan needed to eliminate the impurities during concoction. During that time, he would keep using Rean's Light Element to protect the Medicinal Liquid just like now while the Dark Element destroyed all the impurities.

In fact, Roan could extract the Medicinal Liquid of the herbs directly inside the cauldron. Quite a few of the participants were doing it as well. However, Medicinal Extraction and Medicinal Purification were two separate processes. What would be checked by the Formations Guild in the first phase was the medicinal liquid quality, not how many impurities it had. That being said, he decided to use the mortar and pestle since he didn't need to start concocting straight away.

Roan spent around ten minutes doing that. Finally, he thought it was enough and poured the Medicinal Liquid inside the vial on the table. This vial was specially made, just like the pill bottles. It prevented the medicinal liquid quality from dropping. After that, he took another herb and began to do the same thing.

'Although I know the information of these herbs, I have never used most of them. I might as well take this opportunity and try them out.'

As Roan extracted the medicinal liquid from the next herb, an assistant of the guild came forward to take his medicinal liquid vial. After that, the assistant brought it to the stage as many others did. However, just as the assistant was about to put it down, Waki came forward and grabbed it.

"You can leave."

The assistant didn't dare complain and left straight away to look for more of them.

Waki then opened the vial for a second before sniffing the contents inside. Soon after, he closed it and put the vial down with the others. Waki had already done it many times with other participants' vials that caught his attention, so no one found anything strange about it.

'Such a strong and pure smell. There aren't many here who can achieve this level. I wonder how well he will do when we use a formation to analyze them all.'

Waki then looked at a few more participants. Just like Roan's, Waki confirmed that their medicinal liquids were quite good as well. Three participants had caught his attention more than the rest, though. One of them was a disciple of an elder of the Alchemist Guild called Cluhe Sol. As mentioned in the past, using two elements was hard, and only a few could do it. Cluhe just so happened to use Water and Earth to create the Wood Element, and Waki could tell that his control was very refined.

The other one was a young girl from outside the capital called Lita Xue. In her case, she used Water and Fire together, which created a type of blue flame. Her medicinal extraction was also a tad above the rest.

Obviously, the last one was Roan, who used the Dark and Light Elements.

'This year's exam seems quite interesting.'

Death... and me

Chapter 420: Is That Valid?

Back at the Formations Guild, Rean was finally hindered by the next formation. When Rean touched it, the barrier in front bent outwards. Still, there was a limit as to how far Rean's hand could go before he couldn't force it anymore.

'This protection formation looks a bit elastic. I was lucky that the last formation used a hidden core approach, so breaking through it was simple. This one, however, has its core located inside the formation itself. They didn't even try to hide it. After all, it would have no meaning once you pass through it.'



Nonetheless, Rean's Light Element was still outstanding when it came to analyzing formations. After all, they're real paths that the runes can't hide since they need spiritual Energy. It's just that Rean would need to break it like everyone else after finding the flaws to exploit.

'Sister Orb, how many have reached this second formation already?'

[Only you so far. I doubt any of the old geezers outside thought that you would find the core of the previous formation that easily. As for your wife, I can tell that she will be out of that illusion formation any time now.]

Rean nodded as he kept looking at the runes lit up by his Light Element.

'Here's the first flaw. There is a path broken that's making the Spiritual Energy run around, decreasing the formation's efficiency.'

Rean then tried to force his Spiritual Energy there to cause chaos in the flow of the formation. Unfortunately, it was far from enough.

'It will take too long if I use this one alone. Let's look for more.'

Rean then found a second, a third, a fourth... There were quite a few different flaws. However, this was nothing out of the ordinary. It's hard to find perfect formations in the world due to how many runes they needed to operate. Of course, for this test alone, there were a few more flaws than usual since they couldn't let this exam go on forever.

Outside, everyone was impressed by Rean's speed in finding those flaws. They could only see his Light Element gathering around him, but it didn't look like it was doing anything to the runes. One would usually force the runes to appear so they could analyze them, but Rean didn't do anything like that.

"Droman, I know that your disciple has an extremely rare Light Element Affinity. Still, how the hell is he using it?"

"Right! It shouldn't be this fast at all. Is he not cheating?"

"I wouldn't say cheating since it would be suicide to do it in this Guild's exam. However, it is definitely a method we haven't seen before."

Droman laughed out loud.

"Hahaha! I told you before that you will have to ask Rean himself if you want to know the answer. However, you were right about one thing, Light Element is part of the reason. Don't say it's cheating. What's wrong with using one's own power to open a path for himself? Or could it be that you guys would like to have been born with Light Element Affinity?"

Immediately, everyone went quiet. They all knew the problem that out of the norm affinities had. Simply put, the lack of cultivation techniques. They would be stuck with pure Spiritual Energy absorption without any proper guide whatsoever. Obviously, they would all be several times slower than anyone else.

"B-But! If that's the case, how's your disciple in the Core Formation Realm already? Wasn't it supposed to be a burden to not have Cultivation Techniques for oneself?"

Droman nodded, not denying it at all.

"Correct. That's why I said Rean's talent is several times higher than mine. He and his brother created their own cultivation techniques. That's the result you are seeing in front of you right now."

Well, the twins could only give such an excuse since there was no other way to explain how they could cultivate that fast. Others could only believe it, too, since this world should not have Light and Dark cultivation techniques.

Rean didn't know what everyone was talking about, nor did he care. He only kept finding the flaws in the formation with the help of his Light Element. Rean continued like that for another twenty or so minutes.

'Alright, this should be enough.'

[Oh! Just so that you know, Qia has broken through the illusion formation. She was the 4th one to do it.]

Rean smiled and nodded.

'She is part of the Sasamil Imperial Family, after all. The education in formations she got is definitely top-notch, probably much better than Droman gave to me.'

Spiritual Energy then gathered around Rean before he forced it into all the flaws he found at the same time. He moved the Spiritual Energy in a different path through those flaws, which began to cause chaos in the formation itself. After doing that for another five or so minutes, a breach in the formation finally appeared.

Naturally, Rean entered it in a flash, leaving the formation behind. With the intervention gone, the formation began to go back to its normal flow, and the gap closed just a few seconds later.

"That kid already passed the protection formation."

"Not only did Droman create the Communication System, but he also found such a heaven-defying disciple."

"Don't be so sure. The next formation is the worst one."

"You're right. There is only the movement restriction formation."

Droman's expression didn't even change. With Rean's method of following Life Force in Spiritual Energy, he would be able to find the flaws sooner or later. However, even he didn't expect what Rean was going to do.

Around a hundred or so meters after the last formation, Rean was assaulted by a great wave of pressure coming from above.

'The Movement Restriction Formation!'

With every step forward, the pressure increased.

'I will need to analyze it from here... nope! To hell with that.'

'Life Style, First Form, Enhancement!'

'Death Style, First Form, Stellar Piercer!'

Rean's body shot forward like a cannonball! However, he didn't use the Stellar Piercer to attack. Instead, he used it to pierce through the rest of the field! The pressure increased several times in less than a second as his bones cracked because of its power. However, just as Rean was about to reach his limit...

\*Swish!\*

The pressure disappeared! Rean had passed through the last formation by force!

"Haha! I passed!"

Immediately, the entire hall of spectators went silent.

'Is that valid?'