

Hammer God 383

Chapter 383 Strong Undercurrents

The others looked with surprise at Kyle.

"You're a dwarf?" the Crown Prince asked.

"Half-dwarf," Kyle said.

"Half-dwarf," the Crown Prince repeated.

"Yep," Kyle said.

Silence.

"I've never met a half-dwarf before. So, excuse me if my questions might be a bit intrusive," the Crown Prince said.

"No problem! I get that all the time. Ask away!" Kyle said.

The other representatives remained silent while the Crown Prince asked about the basics.

How was dwarf culture different from human culture?

How did beasts taste?

Could Kyle advance simply by eating?

"I can," Kyle said. "I don't need any Ether Crystals. Just a couple of Monsters are enough."

"Lucky," Tomb said with a snort. "Advancing would be so much easier if I could just consume some beasts."

"Truly, an enviable ability," Shore added.

"Come on, it's good, but not that good," Wild said. "There's always a drawback. He can probably not gain a lot of Ether by using Ether Crystals."

"Actually," Kyle said, fully knowing that this was a trap, "I can also just absorb Ether Crystals."

Kyle could see what the others were trying to do.

Their goal was to exclude him, and they were using a very interesting method to achieve that.

Envy.

Beginners would have gone with some kind of tribalist excommunication to isolate Kyle. For example, saying that he was just a dwarf or that he probably had to be stupid.

However, such blatant disregard would anger the Crown Prince, which would push him to Kyle's side.

All of these representatives knew that this wouldn't work. They were not beginners. They were professionals.

More experienced people would have used fake envy. They would make sarcastic comments about how Kyle was born with a silver spoon in his mouth and how his accomplishments weren't worth as much as theirs since they had it harder.

However, this kind of talk was considered bitter and bitchy. If the Crown Prince heard them talking like this, he would lose respect for them. He might not be pushed towards Kyle's side, but he also wouldn't come closer to them.

Yet, these professionals used an even better method.

Real envy.

All of them were strong and smart enough to realize that there was no point in being envious of Kyle's advantage. Being envious of that would be like being envious of the size of a tall man or of the advantages a beautiful woman could bring.

The point was that everyone had some kind of advantage. These people were Grandmasters, and they were confident enough in their abilities.

They didn't need to envy Kyle.

However, by actively stirring their slight feeling of envy, they could stoke it.

They would continue being nice, and their compliments would be honest and heartfelt.

Yes, not needing to rely on Ether Crystals was amazing, and everyone wished they had it.

In the short term, this would seem like they liked Kyle, but in the long term, this would become the one thing everyone thought of when looking at Kyle.

He was a half-dwarf.

He was not better or worse than humans.

But he was not a human.

He was different.

A slight and subtle feeling of alienation would appear.

It wouldn't be strong or aggressive.

It would be more like trying to talk to someone who was a couple of decades older, in a different life situation, working a different job, and having different political opinions.

There was nothing to connect with.

These two people could still work together or have some small talk.

They wouldn't hate each other.

But they also weren't really connected.

This kind of feeling was what the other representatives wanted to achieve.

It was subtle.

It wouldn't show any effect within the first couple of days.

But with time, the Crown Prince and Kyle would just feel like distant colleagues, who would only talk with each other when there was official business.

And that was also what Kyle wanted.

'Dude, I don't want to spend all my time trying to suck this dude's dick. Like, who the fuck cares about how close I am to this guy? Sure, we might lose some opportunities here and there, but that doesn't matter.'

'The Chief has an Aristocrat's Body. Getting sent to the frontlines more might actually be a good thing since that gives the Chief an opportunity to grow even stronger.'

'In fact, I'm not even sure if the Crown Prince's opinion will be relevant in any way.'

'I mean, if the Stark Brotherhood plans to stay like this, yeah, his opinion would be relevant.'

'But it's not about the Stark Brotherhood. It's about the Chief.'

'The Crown Prince's goodwill doesn't matter when the Chief will be directly talking to the three Transcendents.'

'Also, the less time I have to spend with the Crown Prince, the more I can train. Can't forget about my own power.'

For the next two hours, everyone enthusiastically asked Kyle questions.

None of the questions were very intrusive or rude, but that was because the representatives knew that they couldn't push the envelope too much.

They had planted a couple of seeds. Forcing them to germinate might ruin everything.

For the foreseeable future, they needed to be nice and accommodating.

Kyle had already made a good profile of everyone after some hours of talking.

Larian, the Crown Prince, was someone who tried to do the right thing for the kingdom.

Wild was quite confident and had a strong and optimistic personality.

Shore was on the quieter side but wore her emotions on her sleeve.

Naga was filled with pride but didn't put others down.

Tomb was crude, direct, but honest.

Sky seemed distracted most of the time. It was like there was always something on her mind, and Kyle believed that she was also the only other person who actually didn't want to be here.

'She looks a lot like the Chief and the Champion of Skysand. Additionally, she is the representative of the Skysand Guild, which is owned by the Champion of Skysand.'

'Wonder if she's related to them.'

"Hey," the Crown Prince said with a smile. "How about we celebrate the arrival of our new colleague?"

Then, he looked at Kyle. "Are you fine with that?"

'No, but I have to accept anyway. It's part of the fucking job.'

"Of course," Kyle answered.

"What do you have in mind?"