+5 BONUS

An Arrogant Heir

The moment Kade stepped fully into the chamber. He could feel the pressure. The air itself seemed heavier, as if the atmosphere had thickened around the long obsidian table.

Twelve elders.

Twelve sources of restrained power.

Their auras were not unleashed, yet even in suppression, they radiated dominance.

Kade's senses sharpened instinctively.

Each of them...

At least Dragon Lord level.

A rank beneath the Celestial Realm.

In the world of martial arts, power was divided into distinct realms that separated men from monsters.

Sentinel, Regent, Sovereign, Dragon Lord, Celestial Realm, Primordial and Apex Primordial

Kade himself had only recently ascended into the Celestial Realm.

And yet... 1

These twelve men and women sitting before him were monsters in their own right.

+5 BONUS

Their eyes assessed him. Disgust surfaced.

"A young man?" one of them muttered under his breath.

"Is this some kind of joke?"

Murmurs spread around the table.

Disappointment and skepticism. A heavyset man with streaks of silver in his hair leaned forward slightly.

Chad Bozeman.

His aura was sharp and aggressive "How," Chad said slowly, voice laced with disbelief, "could Master Zucker choose a little boy to take the mantle of King?"

The word King echoed faintly in the chamber.

Zia stood respectfully near the entrance.

"I do not know the reasoning behind Master Zucker's choice," she said carefully. "But this was his final directive."

The elders exchanged glances.

They had expected someone seasoned.

Someone hardened by decades of war and corporate conquest. Not… a man who looked barely twenty-five.

Kade stood quietly at the head of the table.

He understood immediately.

+5 BONUS

They were not here because they respected him.

They were tolerating him because of Zucker. He remained calm.

But Chad was not willing to remain silent.

"This is unacceptable," Chad said sharply, standing from his seat.

His chair scraped against the polished floor, echoing through the hall.

He stepped forward, eyes narrowing.

"Little boy," he said with open disdain, "do you even understand the basis of Aether?"

Aether is the primordial life-force that exists between matter and spirit. The force that allowed martial artists to surpass human limitations.

Only one percent of the world's population could even sense Aether. Fewer could control it. And even fewer could weaponize it. Those that do are called warriors. It was the true source of Kade's powers.

Chad's aura flared slightly...just enough to press against Kade like a test.

"Are you even a warrior?"

The pressure intensified.

Several of the elders watched carefully now.

"What is your current cultivation level?" Chad demanded.

+5 BONUS

Kade's eyes slowly lifted to meet his.

His expression didn't change.

But something colder appeared beneath the surface.

He might be quiet. But he would never accept disrespect.

A faint grin touched his lips.

"You look old," Kade said calmly, voice steady, "and yet you don't know how to speak to your new master?"

The words struck like a blade.

The chamber fell completely still.

Zia swallowed hard.

Of all the elders—

Chad Bozeman had the worst temper.

A Dragon Lord at the peak of his realm.

A man who had crushed competitors, broken enemies, and commanded private armies.

And now—

On his first day inside headquarters—

Kade had openly challenged him.

Although Kade had been chosen as the successor of Azure, Zia had

+5 BONUS

no clear understanding of his strength. She knew he possessed Aether. She knew Master Zucker trusted him. But speaking to Chad like this—

Without demonstrating power first was a dangerous move.

The air began to vibrate faintly.

Chad's eyes darkened.

"How dare you!"

Chad's voice exploded through the chamber like thunder.

"Although you may be the chosen heir," he continued, his body trembling with fury, "you have not been coronated! And you already have the audacity to talk back to me?"

The veins along his neck bulged. His aura began leaking uncontrollably.

Most Dragon Lords could restrain their presence.

Chad wasn't trying to.

Kade didn't flinch.

"You elderly men demand respect," he replied coolly, "yet you don't know how to give it."

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