

ONE LAST SYSTEM

Chapter 6 - Training Pillar

"First of all, congratulations for reaching the twenty-first spot," the man said as he continued to lead me deeper and deeper into the beautiful garden. "While it's a pity you didn't outlast candidates more, as long as you work hard and be diligent, you won't have to worry about anything in here," he said.

'Yeah, if only I knew that reaching nineteen or lower spot would do me any good and if I knew what my position was, maybe I would try to last longer,' I thought.

"Here," the man pointed his hand at a small gate. The area behind it was fenced all over, but even this barrier couldn't hide the lush greenery on its other side. "Remember this place well, as this will be where you will spend most of your time from now on," he said.

"Sir?" I asked, hoping to get a bit more explanation.

"It's not, sir. It's senior brother," the man corrected. "But when we are by ourselves, you can simply call me Terio," he added. "Right, I don't think I know your name yet," Terio said with a kind smile.

"I'm Arthur," I replied while trying not to cringe about the naming sense of this world.

"Arthur... what?" Terio asked, glancing at me with the corner of his eyes.

"Senior, my family name is a matter I swore not to disclose," I replied.

There was no way I would reveal such a mighty-sounding name. I did my best not to attract too much attention to myself, and I was going to keep at it. Even if my second name had absolutely no meaning in this world, I was set on keeping it to myself.

"So be it," Terio replied as he pushed the gate of a lush garden open. He didn't allow me any rest to adore the place, pulling me deeper and deeper inside instead. "Here," he finally said as he stopped behind a smaller gate, one that I could open with a simple push of my hand. What's more, there was no lock on it whatsoever, making me doubt the aim of setting such a gate in the first place.

"Senior... What is this place?" I asked, set on learning some basics about this world.

"Your private garden. Whenever you feel like training, even if only for a bit, you must do it here," Terio warned me. "If you are ever found out training in the dormitory, no achievement nor a favor will stop you from becoming a slave, just like those who failed the test."

"Right," I said, pretending to suddenly recall the point. "What was this question back at the tent all about? Whether I want to train or pick a slave?"

"Let's keep it for later," he said, throwing me a weird look.

It seemed that I stepped on some kind of a landmine here.

With this failure, I decided to keep my tongue behind my teeth, even if only for a moment. Pressing for answers now would only reveal how desperate I was to get them.

Following my senior brother into my private garden, I couldn't help but feel my mood sour. It wasn't like it was dirty or unkempt. It simply paled in comparison to how beautiful the rest of the place was.

"Here," Terio pointed his hand at a simple, stone pillar erected in the very middle of the small clearing of my garden. Given the meandering path leading to this open space, I had no way of noticing it before. "From now, you need to keep hitting it. With all your strength, with half of your strength, even just patting it will do," he said with a smile.

"Excuse me?"

"Don't give me that look," Terio laughed out at the sight of my confusion.

"Well, I had the same kind of face when I heard it for the first time," he added as he moved towards the pillar and placed his hand on it. "You know, this isn't your average stone, but for now, that's all you need to know. So come on, try it out!"

As lost as I was, the order was simple. To hit the stone. I saw no point in doing that but humoring the man could potentially score me some brownie points with him.

"Yes, senior brother," I said, quickly adapting to this weird way of referring to the man.

As I approached the stone, I couldn't help but take a moment to look at it. Yet, no matter how hard I tried, I couldn't spot a single thing that would break my belief that it was just a simple stone!

"Come on, what are you waiting for?" Terio asked, a small tone of dissatisfaction appearing in his voice.

"Yes!"

I placed my hand on the stone before increasing my distance as much as I could without breaking the contact. I reached the optimal distance and took a stance before tightening my hand into a fist and throwing a punch.

'FUCK!' I cursed in my mind to add to my courage. Even though this was another world, I found it hard to senselessly slam my fist into a hard stone just like that.

'Huh?'

I felt no pain. I surely struck the stone with enough force to turn my fists into a bloody mess... But I felt no pain at all!

Tic.

The familiar annoying sensation coursed through my mind. This was the 'notification' of sorts of a positive change to the numbers of my status!

"See?" Terio asked while raising the corners of his mouth in a satisfied smile. "It's not that hard!"

I couldn't help but smile myself when I saw how cheerful this man was. For a moment, he certainly didn't look his age. It was the greatest proof that happiness made one younger.

"Wait," my senior brother's smile quickly disappeared, replaced by a look of dissatisfaction. "What did you stop for?" he asked, crossing his arms on his chest.

"Senior... This humble junior apologizes," I replied, not holding my humility back. "If you will allow me just one question...."

"Speak."

"How long am I supposed to keep hitting that stone?"

"It's simple," Terio said as his face finally relaxed back, only for a vicious smile to appear on his lips. "For as long as you can move your arms!"