

Strongest Mage with the Lust system

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Rumble!

Boom!

Immediately, every demon present in the hall released their terrifying auras, just a moment away from attacking Barren and shredding him to pieces.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

The human experts, though confused, not understanding just what Barren did to make them so angry, appeared around Barren, staring at the demons as their auras flared dangerously.

"I dare you all to move." Ancestor Rivervale said in a chilling voice.

The demons glowered at him, almost unable to hold themselves back from attacking, but they knew their side didn't have the absolute advantage at the moment, and once everyone realized the reason why they were angry, the elves would certainly join forces with the humans, which would put them in a dangerous situation.

"Hmph! Just you wait." A blood demon ancestor harrumphed before their group vanished from the place.

Everyone was confused.

"Just what happened?" A peak human monarch asked.

The spatial tunnel had opened and was right in front of them. Shouldn't they have hurried to enter it and leave this cage? But instead of doing that, they left?

The beautiful female elf looked at Barren, who was still staring at the spatial tunnel, and waited. Others, though impatient to learn the reason, did the same.

The demons had already left. Even if they had some hidden agenda that Barren uncovered and made them unable to act upon, they couldn't do anything about it right now.

A while later, Barren closed his eyes and took a deep breath before a wry yet relieved smile appeared on his face.

"Not only is he very strong, he is very cunning too. No wonder we were unable to leave even when we had multiple Quasi-Supremes among our ranks." He muttered,

"The head watcher?" Ancestor Rivervale asked in confusion before his eyes widened and his expression turned ugly, "Don't tell me, despite being so careful, we still fell into another one of his traps?"

Barren shook his head. "Yeah, something like that. But he prevented us from making a huge mistake."

Lenore, the beautiful elf woman and the reigning queen of the elves, raised her delicate brows in question, "What do you mean?"

Hadn't they sacrificed so many innocent souls already? So, what mistake was he talking about?

Ancestor Rivervale and others from the alliance also looked at him, but their eyes were narrowed.

Barren swept his gaze across them and explained, "This was all an elaborate plot of demons. If I'm not wrong, it was their ancestors who laid down this grand sacrificial formation. They wanted to use it to not only tear a hole through the sealing formation but also to..."

His expression and voice turned grim as he finished his sentence, "...break The Seals."

Ancestor Rivervale and others' expressions hardened when they heard this.

Because a long time had passed since that apocalyptic war that divided the human and demon continent happened, very few people knew the reason why it happened. They, being the peak experts of their respective families that had stood tall for a long time, were among these few.

They knew that war was fought to destroy an extremely dangerous group of fiends—the Devils.

Unfortunately, even after several Supreme Realm Experts banded together, they were unable to kill them. So, in the end, they had no choice but to seal them after exhausting their powers.

Because they knew no ordinary sealing formation was going to keep them sealed for long enough, with the help of several formation grandmasters, they laid down the Three

Grand Sealing Formation. Not only did it seal those fiends, it also sealed the human and demon continent.

The reason they did this was twofold.

First, the Three Grand Sealing Formation needed a significant amount of energy to function, which this part of the world could provide for tens of thousands of years without any problem. Second, in case the fiends somehow broke out of their seals, the sealed continents could contain them for some time, allowing the rest of the world to act.

Although the Three Grand Sealing Formation had already consumed a significant amount of the human and demon continent's mana throughout these long years, there was more than enough mana for it to work for a few thousand years more.

However, the demons seemed to have designed the sacrificial formation in such a way that when activated, not only would it tear a hole through the sealing formation, allowing them a passage to the outside world, but it would also break or at least weaken the seals sealing the fiends enough for them to break out prematurely.

"Fortunately, unlike us fools, the Head Watcher knew what the demons had planned. I'm sure he must have had some other plan to stop the demons from weakening the seals, but when those outsiders activated the teleportation formation, he improvised and allowed me to discover the coordinates of the spatial tunnel." Barren said, sighing in admiration.

"Now when I directed the energy gathered to break open the spatial tunnel, he siphoned away the energy that was supposed to weaken the seals."

Ancestor Rivervale, Ancestor Rothschild, Lenore, and other Quasi-Supremes of the Central Plains Alliance couldn't help but sigh in admiration and relief. At the same time, they were astonished.

"That old man... he seems to have progressed significantly." Ancestor Rothschild muttered with a dazed look on her face. Though she was thousands of years old and had a few wrinkles on her face, she was still a supreme beauty.

Ancestor Rivervale and others glanced at her, feeling a tinge of pity for her.

Over a thousand years ago, she had just reached the Quasi-Supreme stage. Bursting with confidence, she challenged the head watcher for a duel, wanting to defeat him and leave for the outside world, but she was defeated by him instead, and that too in just ten moves.

Humiliated, she vowed to surpass him and take revenge, but seeing how she hadn't progressed much through these years while he seemed to have progressed quite a bit

toward the Supreme Realm, she wouldn't be able to fulfill her vow, which might result in a heart demon, stopping her from progressing in the future.

Suddenly, her eyes flashed, and she looked at the swirling spatial tunnel in front of her.

"I'm leaving." She announced before immediately jumping into the tunnel.

"Wait—"

"Stop—"

Ancestor Rivervale and others' expressions changed. They wanted to stop her, but by the time they reacted, she had disappeared.

Bang!

"What a reckless woman! Doesn't she know we still need to deal with the demons?" Ancestor Rivervale growled, stamping his foot in frustration.

Then his eyes flashed, and he moved toward the tunnel too. "I'll go make sure she is safe—"

Swoosh!

However, before he could take even one step, a hand on his shoulder stopped him. Turning his head, he saw it was Barren.

"You should stop, Ancestor." He said,

Ancestor Rivervale narrowed his eyes, his aura slowly flaring, which made it difficult for Barren to keep his hold on him.

But then several emotions flashed in his aged eyes, and his aura calmed down.

Sigh!

Sighing, he glanced at the tunnel and nodded, "You are right. I should stop now. In fact, I should have stopped long ago."

Right as his words fell, he vanished from the place.

"You handle the things here. I'll go and make up for hurting your granny's feelings all these years."

When Max arrived at Ashroth's place, he found him sitting there, listlessly staring at the several dried-up corpses lying in front of him.

Seeing this, Max took a deep breath and tried to calm his anxiousness. Then he placed his hand on his shoulder and asked, "You alright?"

Ashroth finally peeled his gaze away from them, and with a wave of his hand, he stored them in his spatial ring.

Then he nodded and showed him the bracelet made of several wolf-like teeth. "I am fine, thanks to this bracelet."

Max didn't want to inquire but couldn't hold back his curiosity and ended up asking, "Your aunt gave this to you?"

"Yeah." Ashroth sighed, feeling complicated emotions in his heart. His aunt clearly knew beforehand that people were going to be sacrificed. That was why she gave him this bracelet, but...

"Perhaps she didn't have any more to give to your people." Max said after vaguely feeling his emotions and deducing what he was thinking about.

Ashroth sighed upon hearing this.

"Yeah, it was either this or that she didn't care about them." Saying this, he shook his head. "I don't care about others, but two of them were very close to me and little Amara, but now they are..."

He visibly trembled when he mentioned Amara, his heartbeat suddenly increasing, but he forced himself to calm down and asked, "Did you encounter some people on your way here?"

Max shook his head heavily. "No, all I saw were dried-up corpses. I felt a few presences of demon kings, though."

Ashroth nodded before looking him in the eyes and asking what had been gnawing at his heart, "Little Amara, do you think she is still... alive?"

Max shook his head, which made Ashroth's heart drop, but when he heard what he said, he calmed down a little.

"I don't know and don't want to think about it. I'll just go and see it for myself."

Though his close relation with the little Arya's family, the presence of Garima, and especially his maternal grandmother assured him somewhat of his family's safety, he wasn't sure if the elven emperors there would have bothered to save a human family.

And while he thought Garima might have some life-preserving items or techniques, he wasn't sure if she was able to save others. Lastly, his granny, because she was injured, might not have wanted to drain herself to save others.

He could be right or wrong. This was why he didn't want to think about whether someone had saved his family or not. He would just go there and see the situation for himself.

"I'll come with you." Ashroth said,

"Okay." Max agreed without hesitation before asking, "Now, where is that teleportation formation?"

"Come with me." Ashroth said, walking over to the stairs leading to the underground floor.

...

Shua!

Out of nowhere, two figures suddenly appeared in the sky just fifty miles south of Zexin City—the city where Max first encountered Neer, Little Ruo, and her grandfather.

Just as they were about to plummet toward the ground, large, bat wings appeared behind one of them, and he started hovering in the sky before taking a plunge and grabbing the other figure.

These two were none other than Max and Ashroth.

"Where are we?" Ashroth asked, looking around.

Max furrowed his brows in displeasure because Ashroth was holding him with one hand by his collar.

Grabbing his hand, he pulled himself up and put his hand around Ashroth's shoulder before looking around.

"Sorry about that. I did it unconsciously." Ashroth apologized.

"It's alright." Max casually accepted his apology, knowing he really didn't mean to disrespect him like that.

"I'm unfamiliar with this area. Let's move toward the north. Maybe I will recognize some place." Max said after a short while.

Ashroth gave him a 'Really, man?' look, to which Max calmly said, "I'm not well-traveled, nor am I familiar with the geography, even though I have lived somewhere nearby. So, it's nothing strange that I can't recognize this place."

Ashroth didn't say anything in response and just sighed before flying north as instructed. Soon, they came across Zexin City, which Max immediately recognized. When he saw how eerily silent it was and saw countless dried corpses lying on the roads and streets, killing intent flashed in his eyes.

When they flew over Claymore Town and Max didn't see many corpses, he felt complicated. He remembered how he informed the people that demons were attacking villages and towns and that everyone should leave for the Royal Capital if they wanted to survive. Though most people seemed to have left, he knew they were all dead now.

Ashroth noticed his expression but didn't say anything and continued flying in the direction of the Ninam City.

Two hours later, they arrived at Ninam City, and upon seeing people standing in groups, talking in low voices with fearful expressions on their faces, they sighed in relief, feeling their anxious hearts relax.

"It seems the emperors here controlled the situation." He said, feeling grateful to the ones who saved the population.

He was about to fly into the city directly but felt several strong auras sweep over him. Knowing if he continued, they would be attacked, he flew down and landed outside the city gate.

Without wasting time, he took out his communication crystal and sent Amara a message.

'Little Amara, are you alright?'

The three seconds he didn't receive her reply felt like eternity to him, and his heart had almost stopped beating.

'Reply, little Amara, please... ' He waited anxiously, almost crushing the communication crystal in his hands. When it vibrated three seconds after he sent her the message and her voice sounded in his ears, he felt his body become weightless as relief washed over him.

'I'm fine, big brother. Are you nearby? I miss you.'

His eyes became wet, but there was a bright smile on his lips as he sent her a message back. 'Yeah, I'm nearby. Big brother misses you a lot too.'

While Ashroth talked to his little sister, Max's heart was beating so fast that it almost leapt out of his chest.

The bad feeling he had became even more prominent because when he was in the air, he noticed the Garfield Mansion was in ruins and there was blood everywhere.

Swoosh!

Unable to wait for Commander Ryan, Lord Raku, or anyone else to invite him into the city, he rushed in.

The guards had already recognized Max, but the fact that he was with a demon made them frown.

When they saw him rush in alone, they wanted to stop him but hesitated. He was City Lord's guest, and even though he was with a demon, he didn't seem to be under his control.

"Let's just inform Lord Ryan and Lord Raku about it." Eventually, one of them said and decided not to stop him. Others nodded in agreement.

Swoosh!

By the time they came to an agreement, Max had rushed in and disappeared from their sight.

Left there standing alone, Ashroth awkwardly looked at the guards staring at him with caution in their eyes.

"Um, can I also go in?" He asked in human language, innocently pointing at himself.

"Heh! You must be dreaming, demon." The head guard sneered. "You should be grateful you came with Sir Max; otherwise, we would have already killed you. Now, shut up and stand aside."

Though Ashroth had expected this, the disrespect angered him. However, not to mention he couldn't kill them even though they were weaker than him because powerful divine senses were discreetly scanning the area from time to time, his precious little sister was in the city, and he didn't want to cause trouble for her sake.

He took a breath and closed his eyes, ignoring them.

On the city wall, the head guard shivered for a moment, which made him frown and glare cautiously at Ashroth.

...

Ignoring the divine senses sweeping over him, Max rushed to the now destroyed Garfield Mansion.

When he arrived at the place, his expression turned ugly because he felt the faint lingering energies. Though because it was very faint, he couldn't accurately determine the strength of the people who destroyed the mansion, he could tell they were emperors at the very least.

Then he looked at the bloodstains and had to forcefully stop himself from coming to any conclusions.

If he hadn't felt the presence of Maria, Ella, and Amara, he might not have been able to keep his calm, but thankfully he could. And because they were alive, he guessed his family should be safe too because they were staying together. There wouldn't be someone who would target his family but leave them be after all.

Ba-Dum!

Just as he thought this, his heart inexplicably skipped a beat and his face paled.

'Calm down!' He roared in his mind.

Swoosh!

Just then, two figures fly over toward him.

Without even looking, he knew one of them was Amara because the moment he arrived here, he had felt her rushing in his direction through their connection.

This was also the reason why he hadn't contacted anyone through communication crystals. He wanted to know what happened in person, and since she was coming, there was no need to contact anyone else.

Shua!

Tap! Tap!

A few moments later, Garima, holding Amara by her waist, gently landed in front of him.

"My Lo— Max, you finally returned." Amara softly said, her eyes turning a little misty.

Seeing this, Max was surprised because the Amara he knew wasn't so emotional.

'Maybe the unfamiliar environment didn't suit her, and she missed me too much.' He thought. Although Anna and others might have kept her company, they were eventually unfamiliar people, and she must have felt alone.

Not in the mood to think too much about why she was so emotional, he nodded at her and Garima, who was looking at him with a hint of astonishment and... guilt.

He frowned. Astonishment he understood because, compared to the last time she saw him, she was quite a bit stronger, but what was she feeling guilty about?

Once again, his thoughts started churning, but he once again suppressed them and glanced toward the ruins of his family mansion as he asked,

"What happened here? And... is everyone alright?"

Despite him trying his best to sound calm and composed, his voice broke slightly.

Amara glanced at Garima, who took a breath and said, "Why don't we find some place to sit down? It's a long story."

His heart feeling heavy, he waved his hand, causing three chairs to appear.

"Let's sit and talk then." He said, taking his seat in the chair.

Amara's expression turned wry, and she looked at Garima, telling her to not mind him with her gaze. Garima, knowing what his mental condition might be, sighed and sat down. Amara followed suit.

After staying silent for a moment, Garima was about to start speaking when Max furrowed his brows and said out loud, "You all won't mind leaving us alone for a while, would you? We are talking about something personal here."

Garima broke out in a cold sweat when she heard this. Though he didn't say anything wrong, those experts whose divine senses were lingering around them might think he was being disrespectful because there was no respect in his voice.

The lingering divine senses paused for a moment as if startled by his words.

Then...

Hmph!

A cold snort sounded, and Garima and Amara's breaths hitched while Max's frown became deeper, anger flashing in his eyes.

But when the divine senses vanished a moment later, he shook his displeasure away and looked at Garima. "You can start now, Miss Garima."

"Ah, yes!" Garima said, hurriedly regaining her composure. Taking a deep breath, she began.

"The medicine you sent to heal your father was wonderful. Not only did it completely heal him, it also awakened his hidden ancestral bloodline..."

Max wasn't surprised to hear this because even though that [Drop Of Life] was diluted, it was a wondrous treasure of high grade.

A look of awe appeared on Garima's face as she continued, "The bloodline he awakened was really powerful. Even I, a King mage, felt suppressed in his presence. Though I didn't test his strength, I suspect it increased his strength by at least one fold, and maybe it was because of that medicine or maybe because of his bloodline or maybe it was due to both. Your father's cultivation started increasing rapidly, which made him even stronger. However..."

Speaking till here, her expression turned somber, "As mystical as his bloodline was, it... heavily influenced his personality. He became apathetic, and he no longer treated his family as family. In fact, he started acting like everyone was nothing but his servants and he was their lord."

Max wanted to argue and say this could not be true, as Ashton was a very loving and caring person, but recalling the slight change in Emily's behavior after her bloodline awakening, he knew Garima wasn't lying.

'Why didn't Emily become apathetic like Ashton then?'

Right as this question surfaced in his mind, he got his answer—Nascent Energy.

The nascent energy he fed her when she was cocooned must have suppressed or negated the side effect of her bloodline. If that wasn't enough, when they cultivated together, she had absorbed even more Nascent Energy, suppressing the side effects even more.

Garima then continued and told him how he killed Mark and crippled Noah.

After Max heard her, he couldn't help but frown and say, "I will hear about how much he changed and what else he did later. Tell me what I want to know."

Garima frowned in displeasure. She was trying to be considerate, telling him all this so he wouldn't be too hurt when he found out just what had happened an hour earlier.

"Just a few minutes after that dangerous feeling descended, a group of ten people—ten Monarch mages—arrived here." Garima began speaking,

"They stood in the sky and swept their gazes across the city as though trying to find something. The elven emperors here tried to ask them who they were, but one of them silenced them with a gaze."

"A moment later, their gazes fixed on the mansion here. It seemed like they were about to descend when another group—five cloaked Monarch mages—suddenly appeared. Four of them attacked the previous group while the last of them targeted your mansion."

Max's heart almost stopped beating when he heard this.

He didn't know how strong a monarch mage was supposed to be, but seeing even the elven emperors, who should be in the late stage or peak of the emperor realm, were completely helpless against just one monarch, just a casual attack from such a being should have been enough to eradicate everything in front of them, let alone a mansion and people inside who were nothing more than ants compared to them.

But then he glanced at the mansion ruins and calmed down a little.

He could tell that although a powerful force struck the mansion, it wasn't too overwhelming because there were still ruins left. If that monarch's attack had landed, there should have been nothing left to call ruins. But since there was... it could only mean he was obstructed.

And Garima's next words proved him right.

"Fortunately, however, despite being taken off guard, they were able to defend and stop the monarch who targeted the mansion."

Hearing this, Max sighed in relief and thought he should just listen to her narration without trying to think about what might have happened.

Garima continued, "The battle began in the sky. Just the shockwaves of their battle would have leveled this city, but the group of ten monarchs made sure no shockwave reached the city."

Garima paused after speaking till here, her expression turning grim. "Ten against five, they should have been able to quickly suppress them, but it wasn't the case because there wasn't a huge difference in both groups' overall battle power.

While they fiercely fought, unbeknownst to everyone, someone had already sneaked into the mansion.

If not for your old grandmother, everyone would have died. Unfortunately, even though that person only had the cultivation level of a high-stage King mage, because he was a close friend of one of those cloaked monarchs, he was very powerful and quickly severely injured her. If the group of ten monarchs hadn't sensed the undulations of their battle..."

She didn't finish her sentence as there was no need to because Max understood what would have happened otherwise.

She continued, "Fortunately, they did sense them, and despite the five monarchs trying to stop them from helping out, one of the ten managed to break off and destroy that clone. The mansion was destroyed in the process of killing that clone."

Max had many questions, like who were these two groups of people? Why was one trying to kill his family while the other one was trying to save them?

Since they were all monarchs, they surely couldn't be from the Thunder family. Then who were they, and what enmity did they have with his family?

But one question was more urgent than these, which was... Was his family safe?

As if reading his mind, Garima gave him the answer, but it was an answer he didn't like at all.

"Unfortunately, before your grandmother intercepted that clone, it had already killed the old butler, your brother William and his wife, your late eldest brother's wives, and Amelia." Garima told him in a soft voice.

Max's eyes reddened when he heard this, and the emotions he had been suppressing burst forth in the form of a violent wave of his aura.

Boom!

Garima and Amara were sent flying while their chairs and the surrounding debris of the mansion were reduced to dust. In the aftermath, only a small circular patch of ground remained untouched where he had been sitting, and around it, a crater over ten feet wide and three feet deep was blasted into the ground.

Thud!

Garima, with Amara in her arms, landed heavily on the ground. When his aura burst forth, realizing it could seriously injure Amara, she protected her.

After placing Amara down, she looked at Max—who was sitting there, unmoving, and was staring in front of him with an unfocused gaze while his aura fluctuated wildly—in astonishment.

When she saw he had reached the high-stage Four Star realm, she was already surprised, and the fact that she felt he posed a little danger to her had shocked her, but now seeing how just an aura wave sent her flying, she realized he had become far stronger than what she was able to see and feel.

Though Max sat unmoving, a storm of rage and heartache was raging in his heart and mind.

While he only felt a slight bit of sympathy for the unfortunate deaths of William and Mark's wives, it was the tragic news of others' deaths that truly shattered him.

As the images of Eva—the woman he barely knew but became closer to from that single passionate night, Butler George—the old man who cared for him like a grandfather, and Amelia—that gentle and kind woman who always treated him with warmth, flashed in his mind, he felt hollow inside. At the same time, he felt as if someone was squeezing his heart.

Feeling these strong emotions, Max frowned. To be honest, he didn't really have a deep connection with them, so while he should feel sad, it shouldn't be so much.

'Is this what they mean when they say that we only feel the importance of people after we've lost them?' He thought, closing his eyes as a single silent tear slid down his cheek.

After what seemed like a long time, Max opened his eyes, having buried his emotions in the depths of his heart because he couldn't afford to be vulnerable right now, and looked at Garima and Amara.

"Sorry, I lost control of my emotions for a moment." He apologized before saying, "Please continue."

Nodding, Garima took a deep breath and said, "Both groups fought again, this time more fiercely, but ultimately, the group of five lost and escaped. Once they left, the leader of the first group talked to your father, and your father..."

"...He... he left with them without saying a word to your family."

Max was silent for several minutes, his thoughts unknown. Then he stood up from the chair that turned into dust and jumped out of the crater.

"Take me where everyone is." He said to Garima and put his arm around Garima's shoulder before circling his other arm around Amara's slim waist.

Garima flinched at the touch and instinctively wanted to push him away but stopped herself and nodded before taking off.

Swoosh!

...

After Ashton left with Luman Arcadius' group, Ryan and Elena brought the distraught Garfield family to their mansion.

In the hall, Anna was bawling in Esther's embrace while Noah also had tears in his eyes as he stood holding his wife's hand. Although he couldn't be called a good person because of Mark's influence, he still loved his mother and was naturally heartbroken.

Mina was sitting silently on a chair, her head down. Her shoulders were trembling every now and then, which told everyone she was also sobbing.

Rima was sitting beside Maria, who was crying, and caressing her back to help her calm down a little. She had lost her parents when the Garfield Mansion collapsed.

"I shouldn't have left their side. If I were with them, I could have saved them." She sobbed, feeling sad and guilty.

"Shh, it's not your fault, Maria. You couldn't have known the mansion would collapse." Rima said.

Elena, Little Arya, Old Man Raku, and his wife were in the hall too. Lord Raku kept Noah company while little Arya sat on Maria's other side. Elena was standing beside Esther and Anna, while old man Raku's wife was sitting beside Mina.

When Max entered the hall with Garima and Amara, the sad and gloomy atmosphere hit him as he watched the scene in front of him.

"They cried a lot harder for the first half an hour. After that, they calm down for a bit when we talk to them, but then they start sobbing again." Garima said,

Max nodded and walked toward Anna and Esther while asking Garima, 'Where are their dead bodies?'

'There aren't any.' Garima was surprised when she heard his mental transmission, but it didn't delay her from answering his question.

Max's steps paused when he heard this, and dark red killing intent filled his blue eyes.

'I'll find you regardless of who you are or where you are, and I promise, when I kill you, you also won't have an intact corpse left.' Max vowed before closing his eyes. When he opened them a few moments later, the killing intent had vanished, having been suppressed for the time being, leaving a cold calmness.

Step! Step! Step!

As he walked closer to Anna and Esther, Elena noticed him, and a flicker of surprise flashed in her eyes. She nodded at him and stepped away from them, letting them have their personal space.

Max nodded at her in return and thanked her for being there for his family via mental transmission.

Esther, who had her eyes closed as she hugged Anna and stroked her back, finally noticed someone coming closer when Max was less than ten feet away from them and opened her eyes.

"You've returned." She muttered, her voice low and hoarse.

Max felt his heart clench when he saw the dim and desolate look in her otherwise calm but lively eyes and heard her voice that told him how choked up with emotions she was. He suspected if she wasn't trying to be strong for Anna, who had completely broken down, she would be a sobbing mess too.

"I'm sorry I'm too late." He said. Despite the cold and emotionless expression he wore on his face, his voice was thick with emotions.

Upon hearing his voice, Anna pulled her head out of Esther's warm embrace and looked at him.

"Little Max..." She murmured before pulling away from Esther and running into him. Max opened his arms and hugged her soft, trembling body tightly. Anna also hugged him tightly, her fingers digging into his back.

Max didn't know what he could say to comfort her, so he just said sorry for her loss and kept hugging her.

Esther watched them embrace each other, feeling her nose tingle. She was about to step away, wanting to give them their time, when Max opened one of his arms, looking at her.

She bit her lower lip, her eyes suddenly becoming misty. Then, before she knew it, she was hugging him too, sobbing silently.

For a moment, she hated herself for showing this vulnerable side of hers to these children, but when she felt his warmth, she let go of her inhibitions and poured her emotions out through tears.

As Max held both ladies to his chest, despite him not actively trying to, he felt the chaotic mix of their emotions. Their sadness, anxiety, sense of loss, fear, and all other emotions hit him like a freight train, making him feel dizzy, which almost weakened his hold on his emotions.

'No, I have to be strong for them.' He hurriedly composed himself, taking a deep breath. After he had perfectly reined his emotions in, he slowly released his aura, which had a slight amount of Nascent Energy.

He didn't want to influence their emotions, but he couldn't let them sink in sadness too much.

A short while later, they started to calm down, the intensity of their sobs lessening.

As Esther felt her chaotic emotions quickly settle down, she frowned slightly.

A while later, she slowly pulled away from him and gave him a grateful look. "Thank you."

Max just nodded at her while feeling shocked inside.

Given how careful he was being, he could confidently say no one below the Five Star realm should be able to sense what he was doing, but... she, just a peak Two Star mage, did?

...

Anna took a few minutes more, but she also calmed down but didn't seem to want to pull away from his warm embrace.

Seeing this, Max gently patted her back. "I'm not going anywhere. So, let me go meet others, okay?"

"Mm." Anna acquiesced and reluctantly pulled away.

Max then went over to Mina. It took him more than double the time it took to calm Anna to calm her, which showed just how greatly affected she was by her son's death and Ashton's cold abandonment.

Max helped calm Noah and his wife down after that. He also checked Noah's condition.

He had thought he would heal him with his Nascent Energy, but after seeing the extent of the damage, he sucked in a cold breath, feeling helpless.

Ashton had been too cruel. Not only had he broken his mana core, he had somehow managed to injure his dantian and had shredded his mana veins into pieces, rendering recovery impossible.

With Mark and William dead, Noah crippled for life, and Ashton gone, he was the only man left in the house and felt responsible for the family more than ever.

'I need to adjust my plans.' He thought, closing his eyes.

After he met Durden and found out he was living in a small place, the so-called forsaken land, and that there was a vast world out there, he had planned to find a way out of here if he could not find the Divine Energy required for the system to reactivate.

With Ashton looking after the family and Emily and Anna supporting him, he wouldn't have to worry about them once things calmed down, and he could leave for months or even years, but now, he couldn't afford to do so.

Sure, Emily could take care of the family, but he didn't feel right dropping the responsibilities onto her.

'It would be better if I can find Divine Energy in the central plains...'

...

After accompanying them for a few hours, he visited the local cemetery where Elena allowed his family to bury the remains of butler George, Amelia, William, Eva, and Mark's wives. Maria's parents were buried there. He paid them his respects and said goodbye. Mark's grave he ignored because a vile person like him didn't deserve it.

After that, he went to meet the old Granny and Gene.

Knock! Knock!

He softly knocked on the door and waited. After a few seconds, the door opened and Gene appeared in front of him. She was dressed in a green floral dress that snugly hugged her petite frame. Her eyes were red, and long streaks of dried-up tears were visible on her cheeks.

When she saw Max, hope sparkled in her eyes. "Did you bring the medicine?"

After asking her, she clenched her tiny fists nervously, hoping he would say yes.

Noticing this, he nodded, "Yes. How is Granny?"

Gene let out a sigh of relief upon hearing him. She stepped aside to allow him entry into the room and said, "She is unconscious. That guy was too strong. In just one exchange, he worsened all the old injuries Grandma was suppressing and then injured her further. If that Monarch mage hadn't intervened at that time..."

She didn't finish the sentence.

As they walked over to the bed and saw Granny wrapped in bandages, she said, "One elven emperor tried to help her but could only stop the injuries from worsening for a short period of time. He said she would only live for three more days if they couldn't find suitable healing medicine for her.

Although he said he would try to find it, with how things are and how she is a human, I doubted he would succeed in his search."

"I was losing my mind thinking I would lose the only family I have left..." A single tear slipped down her cheek as she said this. Then her eyes lit up as she looked at him and excitedly grabbed his hand. "Fortunately, you came back in time. I just hope... the medicine you brought can heal her."

Seeing her confidence shaking as the realization of the situation dawned on her, Max pulled her trembling body in his arms and gently stroked her back as he said, "Calm down. There is no need to worry. Granny will be alright, I promise."

"You sure?" Gene asked, slowly feeling her anxiety fade away.

"Yes, I'm sure." Max nodded.

He knew since Granny was an Emperor, he would face the same situation as he did when he tried to heal the Golden Python, but as long as he could improve her condition just enough to make her conscious, he believed he would be able to help her heal.

Gene calmed down and pulled away from his embrace, her face slightly flushed.

Max checked his Nascent Energy reserve—there was barely enough left to help her regain consciousness.

After thinking for a moment, he sat down cross-legged on the ground, took out the Mana Crystal, and started absorbing the mana and converting it into bloodline energy.

After he used it all up on Golden Python, he didn't have time to sit down and recover.

Although he felt the amount of Nascent Energy he had left should be enough to help Granny regain consciousness, he wasn't sure because he hadn't tried healing any king mage, let alone an emperor mage like her, to calculate the exact amount he would be needing.

So, it was better if he recovered his bloodline energy before trying his luck. In case the Nascent Energy wasn't enough, he could use the bloodline energy to make up for it, hopefully.

Gene frowned, not understanding why he had started cultivating instead of giving Granny the medicine, but she didn't interrupt him and patiently waited.

For some reason, even though he had exhausted his bloodline energy, he hadn't felt the side effect—that hunger to have sex. Maybe that was why his bloodline didn't aid him in absorbing the mana.

After three hours, he put away the Mana Crystal and opened his eyes, letting out a tired sigh. If his bloodline was hungry, he would have completely recovered the bloodline energy, maybe in just two hours, but now, even after taking three, he only recovered sixty percent.

"This much should be enough." He muttered and stood up.

He could've recovered it completely because he had time, but when he hit the forty percent mark, though faint, he started feeling the urge to mate.

Also, just as he had guessed, the hunger increased his mana absorption and conversion speed by a slight margin.

When he recovered fifty percent, the hunger multiplied, but it was still manageable. However, when he recovered sixty percent, it became slightly difficult to suppress.

Since recovering more would have increased his hunger beyond the limit he could handle without experiencing any difficulty, and sixty percent bloodline energy was going to be enough, he stopped.

"Leave us alone. I'm going to start treating her." He said to Gene, who was about to speak.

"You what?" Gene asked in confusion.

"I'm going to start treating her and can't afford any distractions. So, you have to vacate the room. I'll call you when I'm done." Max repeated.

Gene couldn't believe what she heard for a moment. Then her eyes turned misty. "You lied. You said you had medicine."

Max sighed. Stepping closer to her, he grabbed her shoulders and looked her in the eyes as he spoke calmly but firmly.

"Although she isn't my blood grandmother, she is still family. I would not harm her. Believe me."

Gene stared at him for a few seconds and then looked at the unconscious granny. Then, biting her lower lip, she said, "I choose to believe you. Please help her get better."

"I will do it. Don't worry." He nodded and let her go.

Weng!

After she walked out and closed the door, he activated the room's isolation formation before creating an isolation barrier covering the room with his mana and bloodline energy.

Taking a deep breath, he placed one hand on her forehead and another on her chest, right above her heart, and started injecting Nascent Energy into her.

'Oh?!'

He exclaimed in surprise because he didn't face as much difficulty as he thought he would injecting his energy into her.

'Maybe it's because she doesn't have as strong defenses as Golden Python's?' He mused.

'But the Python is in the Five Star realm, while she is an Emperor mage. Shouldn't her natural defense be stronger?'

Right as he thought this, he smiled wryly, 'Why am I thinking as if the Golden Python is an ordinary Five Star beast?'

He clearly remembered the devious Supreme Mage's surprise when he saw its egg in the auction and the scene of it coming out of the spatial crack it had torn open to escape.

Although he had sinister intentions, he was a supreme mage, and the things that could surprise a being like him must be extraordinary. Python proved this point by tearing open space, after all; which other beasts could do the same? Heck, even the mages in the monarch realm weren't able to do it, from what little he knew about the realm.

Seeing how easy it was, Max relaxed a bit and scanned her body. She was badly injured—almost all her inner organs were injured and had stopped functioning. And although he wasn't able to probe her dantian, he could tell it was in a chaotic state.

The only fortunate thing was that she didn't have any foreign energy in her wounds, wreaking havoc, most likely thanks to the elven emperor who patched her up.

'Let's see how effective it is on her.' He thought as the Nascent Energy trickled into her almost squashed heart.

For a while, there was no change, but after thirty seconds had passed, her heart started recovering, albeit very slowly, which thrilled Max.

...

Ha~!

Three hours later, when it had become dark outside, Max exhaled an exhausted breath and removed his hands from her forehead and chest.

Seeing he didn't face much difficulty injecting the Nascent Energy into her body and how her body didn't have any foreign energy to make things difficult for him, he thought he might not need to use up all the energy to help her regain consciousness, but... he was wrong.

After her heart recovered a little, barely beating once per minute, no matter how much Nascent Energy he fed it, it didn't recover any more. He then tried to heal her other organs, but the result was the same. After they recovered slightly, further recovery seemed impossible.

He knew why this was the case—his Four Star Nascent Energy wasn't potent enough to help an existence way beyond his realm. At most, it could make small, insignificant improvements.

Fortunately... These minor improvements were enough.

He looked at her, noticing her eyelids twitch, with a triumphant smile on his face.

'Now let's hope she agrees to use my method of healing.' He thought.

After having sex with his women, who were Two Star, Three Star and Four Star mages, he had noticed something—despite appearing the same, the potency of the Nascent Energy he received from them varied based on how strong they were.

For example, the Nascent Energy he got after having sex with Claire was way less effective than what he got from Emily, and what he got from Lily and Sara was more effective than hers.

Based on this, he theorized that if he had sex with women stronger than him, for example a King Mage, the resulting Nascent Energy should be a lot more effective and might work on King Mages.

So, his plan to heal Granny was simple—he would convince her to have sex with him and would use the produced Nascent Energy to heal her.

Given the current situation of his family and even his own emotional state, he wasn't willing to think about having sex, but he could feel the situation in the coming days was going to be a lot more dangerous. If he wanted to ensure his family didn't suffer any more than it already had, he needed strength.

If he healed Granny, they would have their own emperor mage to deal with situations. Moreover, he hoped Granny wouldn't need all the produced Nascent Energy to heal.

If he could use just a small amount of it-Emperor Grade Nascent Energy-for himself, his improvements would be tremendous.

Just thinking about it made him clench his fists in excitement.

Normally, a Four Star mage like him could at most use Five Star grade resources. Trying to use higher-grade resources would either result in crippling or death.

However, it was not the same case for Nascent Energy. Because it formed from his essence and bloodline, no matter how high grade it was, it wouldn't harm him... or so he hoped.

He looked at her from head to toe.

Though he and Gene called her Granny, she looked barely fifty years old. Because bandages tightly wrapped her, he could see her hourglass figure and firm body, which was quite tempting. Only the wrinkles on her face made her look old and less attractive.

Seeing she was about to regain consciousness, he touched her bandages and controlled his fire elemental mana.

Swish!

In an instant, fire blazed to life and burned the bandages into ashes. While he wasn't able to heal her inner organs properly, he didn't have any problem healing her flesh wounds, so there was no longer a need for bandages.

After blowing away the ashes with a wave of his hand, he took the blanket to cover her when he caught a glimpse of her naked body and raised his brows.

Her body was ripe and plump like a woman in her early thirties, exuding boundless mature charm. Her skin was smooth and lustrous, not wrinkly or sagging. like one would expect after looking at her face.

Then why was her face all wrinkly? This didn't make sense to him.

Shaking his head, he covered her.

After a short while, she slowly regained consciousness and opened her eyes. She blinked a couple of times and adjusted to the light.

She then looked at Max sitting beside her.

"You've returned, son?" She spoke with a warm smile on her face, looking gentle and endearing.

"Yeah, Granny." Max nodded and asked, "How do you feel?"

"Hm?" Hearing his question, she raised her brows before suddenly remembering what had happened before she lost consciousness. Then she checked her condition with her divine sense. Immediately, the light in her eyes dimmed.

"I feel... horrible." She sighed, despondent, and closed her eyes.

Before, although she was injured, her foundation was safe, so she could easily recover as long as he found proper medicine.

Now, however... Not only her mana core and the four ascension pillars she had formed after investing so many resources and time were damaged, but even her dantian was injured—she could no longer recover, which meant even if she had the Thunder Sword now, she wouldn't be able to free her family members.

'All hope is lost.' She felt miserable. Despite this, however, she didn't regret facing off that man even for a second.

People who reached such heights, becoming emperors, had extraordinary states of mind. If they do something, even if it was bad, they would rarely ever regret that decision.

Max focused his bloodline sense on her but couldn't feel her emotions. Still, just from her expression, he could tell what she might be feeling, especially if...

"Your foundation is damaged?" He asked,

"...Yes." She nodded.

"No wonder you are feeling hopeless now."

Granny frowned in displeasure upon hearing his almost careless tone.

Shouldn't he mind his words a bit more, especially when she fell to this state to save his family?

"Can you leave me alone for a—" She began saying when Max interrupted her, almost making her angry, but when she registered what he said, her heart skipped a beat.

"I can heal you..."

[A/N: Hmm, so how it's going?]

"What did you say?"

Max met her gaze, showing he wasn't joking, and said, "I have a method that might completely heal you—your injuries, your foundation, everything."

Granny blinked, stunned. Had he just really said he could heal her injured foundation?

Normally, if she had heard a Four Star say this, she would have scoffed and ignored him.

After all, healing an injured foundation—especially the dantian—was a challenging task even for monarchs and Quasi-Supreme mages who had many mystical methods and resources at their disposal. So, how could a mere Four Star mage heal it? It was ridiculous.

However...

The Four Star mage in question was Max, someone who she had always felt was strangely enigmatic. So, she was slightly inclined to believe his claim, especially because he had sent that mysterious drop of liquid that completely healed a crippled and almost dead person like Ashton.

Secondly... She was feeling hopeless and really desperate. Even if it wasn't Max who had claimed to possess a method to heal her, she would have still tried her luck.

Silence lingered between them as they stared into each other's eyes, which Granny broke after a few moments.

"You said you might be able to heal me, no? How sure are you?" She asked,

"I'm fairly confident, but there is still a chance it could go either way, because I haven't tested this method on anyone stronger than me yet," Max said honestly.

"This means you have tested it on weaker people?" She further inquired, her eyes glinting with a hopeful light.

"Indeed, and it worked," Max nodded.

Granny went silent for a moment before asking, "What do I need to do?"

Seeing how he was trying to convince her, she knew there was a catch; otherwise, he would've already used his method. After all, it didn't seem to have any negative effect from how he said it.

"Well..." Max explained the method without hiding anything.

When he told her how he could create an energy unique to him by having sex with women, she understood what she needed to do, and this realization made her uncomfortable. At the same time, she was shocked and couldn't help but wonder aloud once he finished speaking.

"How could such a mystical bloodline exist? I have never heard of any with a similar ability."

Max stayed silent, letting her think over and decide whether she was going to do it or not. He didn't feel the need to tell her about the consequences in case she didn't heal within a few days, because it was impossible she didn't know her own condition.

Granny closed her eyes. She didn't need to think too much because she already knew her answer—she didn't want to die, not because she was afraid but because she hadn't saved her family members yet.

Still, the fact that she had to do it with someone who was not her husband made her uncomfortable, and the fact that this someone was technically her grandson only made it worse for her.

In the end, she managed to control her emotions and said, while pulling the blanket off her body. "Okay. Let's do it."

Max calmly nodded and started to undress while saying, "After we do this, our relationship will no longer be the same, which means I can't keep calling you Granny."

"You can call me Esme or Esmelda, whichever you prefer." She said, her eyes closed and face flushed in embarrassment.

"I'll call you Esme then." Max said as he took off the final piece of his clothing. He then lay beside her and gently caressed her face.

"I am curious, why does your face look like that when you have such a... youthful and beautiful body?"

A shiver ran down her spine when she felt him touch her face so intimately. Then she heard his question, which she had already expected him to ask, and answered, "After my husband passed away two hundred years ago, I didn't want anyone to pursue me. So, I used a mystical magic spell I had found in an ancient ruin and aged my face."

"So, did it work?" Max asked while feeling a little curious to know how she looked before.

With a wry smile, Esme shook her head. "While some stopped bothering me, others were undeterred because they didn't want me for my looks but for my strength—I was a peak King mage at that time with very high chances to break into the emperor realm."

Max hummed in response as his fingers trailed from her cheek down her neck, then lower, sensually tracing the valley between her tantalizing, full breasts with small pink tips adorning them like jewels and making them look delectable to him.

Esme's breath hitched, and she became stiff as she felt his sensual and provocative touch. She fought hard to stay still as he went down, reaching her flat but soft abdomen and her navel; she bit her lower lip while her fingers dug into the bedsheet.

Max looked at her, a mischievous glint flashing in his eyes when he saw how she was trying so hard not to react to his touch.

After caressing the circumference of her navel, which he had already realized was her weak point, his fingers trailed down.

Already struggling to breathe properly because of her injuries, Esme's breath hitched—and then completely halted when she felt his feathery fingers reach dangerously close to her sacred place, untouched for two hundred years.

As he went lower and lower, she shuddered in shame, embarrassment, and worst of all—an aching anticipation that she couldn't suppress.

Then...

She almost let out a disappointed sigh when she felt Max stop just before he was about to reach the final destination and felt him move back up, leaving her body trembling and her heart aching for more.

But then she realized something.

A breath of relief escaped her lips—that he hadn't gone any lower.

At the same time, her face flushed red in shame.

She was already wet.

Max traced back the path his fingers had taken and stopped at her cheek. Gently turning her face toward him, he looked into her blue eyes and asked,

"Can you recover your face now?"

He had tried to inject some Nascent Energy into her face to make the wrinkles go away, but it didn't work, and he had thought that if she agreed to have sex with him, he would use some of the produced energy to revitalize her face.

But hearing it was the result of a spell, he wondered whether she could undo it.

Esme's already red face flushed even more when she met his gaze and saw his naked upper body. Biting her lower lip in a bid to control her roiling emotions, she nodded, "I can, but not entirely."

Max felt his cock throb when he saw her seductively bite her plump lip and came to a realization.

'No wonder those people pursued her despite the fact she is a widow... She is quite charming.'

"That's alright. Recover as much as you can." He said,

Esme looked at him with her limpid blue eyes and muttered, "I-I won't be able to use that spell again if I recover my face."

"Huh? Why would you need to use it again after you become my woman? You know, I prefer my women to be pretty." Max revealed a small smile.

When he decided to have sex with her, he had already decided to make her his woman. His reason was simple—with her by his side, his progress would be rapid, at least until he became an emperor himself.

But after this brief interaction, he came to like her as a woman and felt that same indescribable and almost irresistible pull toward her that he felt toward Emily and Anna.

'I'm... really a pervert, aren't I?' He smiled bitterly in his heart, thinking Pauline wasn't wrong in her evaluation of him.

Suddenly, his thoughts started to drift toward her and Kriss and the situation of their family, but he hurriedly pushed them to the back of his mind, not wanting to dwell on anything that might sour his mood at this moment.

"Y-Your woman?" Esme stammered, her eyes wide.

At this moment, after seeing her flustered expression, no one would think she was a mighty emperor mage.

"Of course," Max nodded before narrowing his eyes and asking, "Don't tell me you were thinking of using me this one time and then throwing me away?"

"I... I..." Esme didn't know what to say, so she just went silent and started to calm her turbulent emotions and her heart that was starting to beat faster than her injuries allowed it to, causing her a lot of pain.

Max also realized this when he noticed the pained glint in her eyes and felt guilty for teasing her.

He waited until she calmed down. Just as he was about to speak, he heard her say, "...I don't want to take advantage of you, so... I agree to become your woman, but it'd be better if you kept it a secret."

Max was stunned, not expecting her to agree so easily. But what he didn't know was that she had thought about many things in that short while.

Even after she healed and regained her peak strength, she most likely wouldn't be able to free her people even with the Thunder Sword.

After all, the Thunder Sword would only make her strong enough to fight an early-stage Monarch, but the Thunder family had multiple monarchs, and any one of them could kill her.

This was why she had planned to sneak into the Thunder family when their attention was diverted to the war and free her people. Even then, she knew the chances of her succeeding weren't high.

But what else could she do? The Thunder Family wasn't known for being patient, so she knew they wouldn't wait for her to fall in their trap for too long and would kill her people.

Now, however, she saw another path.

Although she couldn't increase her realm, Max probably could thanks to his bloodline, which she felt was strong enough to allow him to reach the Monarch realm without too much difficulty.

Once he became strong enough, he could probably help her progress too, and with both of them teaming up, rescuing her people would be a lot easier.

She didn't have anything to back this feeling, but since her instincts told her so, she chose to believe it.

"You... sure?" Max asked.

"Mm," Esme nodded before saying in a voice so soft and sweet that he almost melted, "Please give me a few minutes, my lord. I'll recover my face for you."

Saying this, she closed her eyes and covered her face.

"..."

Again, he was stunned.

Not only had she already made up her mind, but she had also begun acting like she was already his woman—speaking so gently and in her real voice.

There was not much difference between the voice she had been using before and the one she used just now, but the latter was very sensual and almost hypnotic.

'How can someone have such a beautiful voice?' He thought, dazed.

If someone had told him that an emperor mage was not only going to become his woman when he was just a Four Star mage, she would also be... submissive to him, he would have scoffed.

After all, even if he somehow managed to trick—cough—convince an emperor mage to become his woman, getting her to respect and defer to him would've been nearly impossible, given the pride ingrained in someone of her stature.

'If her voice is so beautiful, she shouldn't be any less beautiful than Lily, Emily, and Elena, right?' He thought. He knew he shouldn't have his hopes high, nor should he compare her to others, but... he couldn't help it after hearing her voice.

After what felt like hours to him, she removed her hands and revealed her now wrinkle-free and almost glowing face that exuded an indescribable charm.

Max's jaw hit the floor, and he stared at her in a daze. She looked so beautiful and so fatally attractive that he couldn't find proper words to describe her, but he knew one thing—she easily beat Lily and others in that department and, needless to say, exceeded his expectations by a large margin.

"Perfection!"

He muttered, and before he knew it, he was already leaning toward her and kissing her pink, soft, and plump lips.

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Esme froze for a moment, her eyes flashing with panic while she felt uncomfortable in her heart.

She raised her hands, placed them on his shoulder, and was about to push him off of her, but right at that moment, she regained her senses and forcibly stopped herself.

Since she had already decided and agreed to become his woman, he had all rights to her, and she shouldn't resist like she was about to do.

Tears appeared in her eyes and silently slid down.

Max's bloodline sense may be useless in front of her, not able to read her emotions; his eyes and other physical senses worked perfectly fine.

The moment he kissed her, he felt her body seize, and when she placed her hands on his shoulders, he could feel her intent.

Though a flicker of displeasure flashed in his eyes for a moment, he quickly controlled his hormone-driven body and slowly disengaged from her lips.

Then he saw her tears and guilt on her face.

He sighed. 'She is really a good woman. Her previous husband must have accumulated a lifetime of good karma to have married a woman like her.'

"I'm sorry, I didn't mean to... sour your mood, but I couldn't help it. However, please don't mind me and... continue." She wiped her tears and apologized.

Max gently cradled her face in his hands and said, his voice tender, "You must have loved your husband a lot."

Esme bit her lip, her eyes becoming teary once again as she nodded, "Mmn. He was really a good man and always did his best to keep me happy. When we got married, he was already a Five star mage, while I was just a Three Star. He did his best to provide the best resources to me to make me stronger. I really loved him, but then he... died because of me.

He dedicated his life to me. I had decided to not let any other man even touch me inappropriately after he died because it would be disrespectful to his memory, but here I am, already promised myself to you."

She had a bitter expression when she finished, but then, thinking her words might seem rude to him, she opened her pink lips to apologize but was interrupted by Max, who curiously asked,

"What do you mean he died because of you?"

Since she was his woman now, it was his responsibility to take care of their physical and emotional well-being, meaning he couldn't let her feel guilty about her decision.

Esme looked at him in surprise, not having expected him to ask this. She thought he might be asking so she could vent her emotions, but from her expression, she could tell he was really curious.

So, she took a breath and explained, "I didn't have an extraordinary talent in cultivation. I progressed quickly only because of my late husband and reached the peak of the King realm within a hundred years.

Unlike me, however, he was a genius, and despite wasting a lot of his time on me, he had already broken through to the Emperor realm.

Since the lifespans of Kings and Emperors are different and he didn't want to see me die before him, he wanted me to break through too so we could live together as long as possible. However, I had already almost reached the peak of my potential. Even with various resources, it was very difficult to break through."

Speaking until here, she paused before continuing, "He was undeterred, however. He researched and found that there was a specific resource in a danger zone that could increase the innate potential of even King and Emperor mages.

Despite many advising him to not take the risk because many emperors and even a Monarch had died while exploring this danger zone, he went there and... never returned."

"He was truly an admirable man." Max praised him, sincerely, before asking, "How do you know he died there? Maybe he was just trapped?"

"I wish this was the case, but..." Esme sighed, "His soul lamp extinguished, which only happens when the person is no more."

"I see," Max nodded.

They were silent for a short while before Max said, "You know, given how much he loved you, I'm sure he wouldn't want you to die when you can live a good life. So, you shouldn't feel guilty."

Esme looked him in the eyes and asked, "I don't wish it, but if something happened to you in the future, would you feel alright knowing your women might get in some similar situations where they have to... choose another man?"

Max went silent, and his expression turned unreadable. Esme waited patiently, wanting to hear his answer.

After a while, Max met her gaze and slowly said, "Firstly, if I'm dead, I wouldn't feel anything. Secondly, if I die before ensuring they can stay safe and happy, although I would feel uncomfortable if they chose someone else, I will understand because it happened because of my inability."

He knew she might become angry upon hearing his response, but he said what he felt.

As expected, she got angry. "You mean it's his fault?"

"Of course. He should've known he might not return from that danger zone. If he didn't want you to go to someone else if he died, he should've taken you along. If it were me, I

would've done it. Since he didn't, he valued your life more than his. So, you shouldn't feel guilty doing the same." Max spoke without holding back.

Esme stared at him for a long while before she closed her eyes and let one tear slip before murmuring, "You are right. He valued my life more than his. So, I should do the same; otherwise, wouldn't it be more disrespectful to him?"

Opening her eyes, she looked at him and asked, "...Right?"

"Right." Max nodded.

"I understand." Esme said before asking, "Can you please give me some time to come to terms with the things?"

'You should've taken your time before agreeing.' He thought but didn't say it out loud and nodded.

Then donning a robe, he got down from the bed and sat cross-legged on the floor and started absorbing mana from the Mana Crystal to recover his bloodline energy, knowing it would increase his lust, which was precisely what he needed right now—after the conversation spoiled his mood—if he wanted to have sex with her.