

Chapter 591 - 586: Recruit, Prove Your Worth

"What?"

"Where is this?"

"Uhm..."

Voices sounded out beside, behind, to the front of Su Mei. Her senses acclimated to the environment, and she observed her surroundings. Firstly, she discovered that the number of individuals present was great, but in comparison to the utterly massive trillions before, there were less than a hundred thousand individuals present.

But the field of the coliseum they were in was incredibly huge and spacious, and the numbers present didn't cover a tenth of it despite being a fair distance apart from each other. Secondly, there were men, women, mostly humans, in the audience seats observing them with varied outfits. They numbered the thousands, and they observed with interest in their eyes.

The thirteen figures at the center platform that stood at the highest height, observing them, had auras that were completely unfathomable. They gave off feelings that exceeded the concept of mortals, touching upon a new realm of existence. Her pupils constricted slightly.

'Mystic Ascendants!' Her thoughts moved rapidly, and she soon calmed herself down.

The man at the lead, the one who announced their success in passing the first test, was extremely familiar!

"He's the face!" A youth exclaimed, causing the others to inspect the middle-aged man who was handsome, with a trimmed stubble and short-tied ponytail. His beige robe was exquisite, and there was a strange symbol at the right side of his outfit. The symbol was a seven-colored diamond-shaped, and divided into four equivalent sections by straight white lines.

The lines were thin, but they had seven-colored runic symbols that were extremely lively. At the top and bottom of the diamond was a rotating spherical object that resembled a pill. The left had the character for 'Ever' and the right had the character for 'Lore'.

A concerned and strong-willed female shouted at those at the top: "Where's the rest of us?! What did you do to them?" She and her older brother had both written down 'Recruit' yet she couldn't sense his life aura. She feared the worst.

The others also realized their situation. Just a few moments ago, they were surrounded by trillions, now only less than a hundred thousand were present, and they had been shifted to a coliseum. It would be strange if they weren't concerned, but they were also fearful.

"Do you want to know?" A harsh, chilling female voice sounded out. It belonged to a dark-haired woman at the middle-aged man's right, at the third position. She was certainly a beauty, having a faint mature charm, but her eyes exuded a distinctly unfriendly coldness that sent chills down the spine. One could tell that she killed an unfathomable number of people, and with little hesitation.

The young woman felt her spine shrink, but her heart remained firm. She stepped forward, "Yes! Where's my brother?!"

The dark-haired woman narrowed her eyes, the temperature of the cold didn't dip, but it felt as if a blizzard had suddenly emerged, fierce and merciless. It was as if another word from the female would elicit the entirety of the woman's wrath.

"He's dead," she coldly spoke out. Her tone was indifferent, showing no concern for life.

The young woman went absentminded for a moment. Her world spun and she felt as if it was about to collapse. A malevolent emotion emerged in her heart, and her delicate face twisted in madness and rage. She didn't even think as she screamed in rage.

"AHHHH!" She punched out with the entirety of her cultivation base towards the highest platform. Her cultivation at the Sky Ruler Phase was completely unleashed, and even the astral force that was released via that fist, surging like a tidal wave towards the platform, contained hints of her vitality.

Her astral force pushed away the other youths. They instinctively protected themselves with astral wards, cursing the girl for her recklessness and temper. A few couldn't help but reveal a deriding sneer. Was this girl an idiot? What was a Sky Ruler Phase Cultivation going to do to these experts?

However, the young woman seemingly lost her mind as her dark brown eyes were coated in a sanguine desire to kill. A powerful Slaughter Intent gushed out, and she launched fist after fist. The crushing astral force reached the platform, smashing into a thin translucent membrane just short of reaching those thirteen figures.

The young woman didn't stop. She flew upwards and launched fist after fist, each containing traces of her vitality empowering her might.

Su Mei was startled by the sheer madness the young woman was exhibiting. What the hell was this? She realized this girl was an Ascendant, someone who was recruited by Xue Yifei.

"Your methods are impeccable," the middle-aged man with a short-tied ponytail remarked as he glanced at the dark-haired woman.

The dark-haired woman didn't show any reaction at the man's words, whether it was praise or an expression of displeasure. She waved her hand, and the raging screams of the young woman halted. She had lost consciousness. In the blink of an eye, the young woman vanished.

Then, the dark-haired woman swept her eyes across the bodies of the others. A glimmer of dissatisfaction flickered in her eyes, and she vanished as if she stepped into a Void Gate, leaving only twelve figures remaining.

The middle-aged man was unbothered by her actions, merely looking at the shocked gazes of those below. He calmly explained, "No one has been killed. That's just Exalted Truekill's test. To answer your concerns, there was a criteria of cultivation base relative to age and physique as the first test—only 93,452 of you passed. The rest have been sent to one of the three domains. If they wish to join a force, they'll still have the opportunity, but the testing will be more difficult.

"All of you, as long as you want, will be inducted to any of these fine forces as a member or disciple, as to what level of member or disciple, that'll depend on your ability and innate talent. However, the first hurdle has been passed." As the middle-aged man explained, they all finally understood.

A few felt regret for not asking the question of where their loved ones were first, being cautious and fearful to question these supremely powerful beings. If they had, perhaps they might have been taken away or noticed by those who stood at the highest platform.

Su Mei inspected the surroundings, wanting to see if she saw any familiar faces or sensed their auras. She discovered, to her shock, that she found quite a few auras familiar. There was Qing Qiumu, Na Xinyi, Long Tingyu, and Lin Ziyun. She didn't see Da Shan, Hong Ru, or Xiao Bing. Shockingly, she did find Mei Mei!

When she noted this, Su Mei was surprised to discover that everyone present was under the age of a hundred and eight years old! Be it Da Shan, Hong Ru, or Xiao Bing, they had been cultivating for over a hundred years, and not by a small amount.

Since the default Astral Core Realm lifespan was roughly a thousand years, usually reaching fifteen hundred years of age for the average peak Astral Core Realm cultivator, this was a shocking cutoff. They seemed to not care about battle prowess or foundation, because it was utterly impossible for Da Shan to not be selected if that was the case or many of the Ascendants.

The middle-aged man allowed them to digest before saying, "My name's San Luoyang, a Senior Member of the Everlore Association. Our Everlore Association is hosting this recruitment to provide you all with the opportunities to start anew, not be swept up in tragedy, and forge your new futures in the Aeternal Sky Starfield. To put it bluntly, this is your opportunity to prove your worth."

"...!" The youths gasped in shock. Everlore Association?! Was the King of Everlore alive in this starfield?!

Chapter 592 - 587: Recruit, Four Types Of Forces

'Everlore Association?' Su Mei's heart raced. The King of Everlore was a figure of the utmost prominence within the entire starfield. For the last eight thousand years, his achievements had defined entire eras, and propagated a near mythical legend. However, he wasn't a myth!

He was real!

Undoubtedly!

Yet they were just told that there existed an organization with his name. The questions in these youths' minds, Su Mei's included, were wildly surging! They had to know more, and if they could ever meet such an extraordinary figure.

A male youth with a sturdy build and firm eyes, vigorously rubbed his bald head to comfort himself before he worked up the courage to ask: "The King of Everlore is here? In this starfield?"

His question caused the clamoring youths to quiet down, their gazes focused on the middle-aged man like obedient students seeking out knowledge.

San Luoyang slightly smiled, seeing the ardent desire to meet their idol, but after a while, that smile lessened as a heavy light suffused from his normally calm eyes. The only reason they took action to save

that starfield, or even to conceal it from the Tiangou for millenia, was because of the King of Everlore's imprint on their history.

"If you wish to know about the King of Everlore, first overcome the trial before you. This will determine your future, likely the height you'll reach in your lifetime. Do not ignore the importance of this moment." His expression grew stern, giving these passionately curious youths some advice.

With this reminder, the youths tried to calm down. But the lingering questions invigorated their thirst for knowledge, and some couldn't help but have the distinct hope that the King of Everlore, this legendary figure, was alive and thriving in this new starfield.

How many here wished to earn his favor? To become the next hegemon that rivaled the likes of Grand Monarch Wu Yu, the Divine King Han Xei, Sacred Elven Queen, or the Demonic Abyss Master! A single moment could rewrite their entire destiny.

While they had Qingye Ying, the Princess of Everlore, and Wei Wuyin, the Ascendant Emperor of Neo-Dawn, they weren't nearly as great or legendary as the King of Everlore, still just babies trying to grow. After all, the King of Everlore developed beings that exceeded the Astral Core Realm! The best Wei Wuyin had accomplished was a Realmlord, and only one.

The difference was incomparable.

"At this moment, there are ninety-eight different forces present. A wide-variety of choices, but I'll explain how the ranking system for the forces in the Aeternal Sky Starfield works so that you better understand your choices. If you decide not to choose any of the forces present, or are unwilling to be an entry-level member of such a force, then you can openly refuse to do so, and we'll place you in one of the three Domains. You can then traverse the Aeternal Sky Starfield yourself and search for a force that suits your needs."

San Luoyang's words shocked some of the youths. This was quite a generous manner to conduct recruitment. While they could already be considered recruited, they still had the right of choice.

According to San Luoyang, the forces were ranked by two tiers, the Mortal Tier and the Mystic Tier. Those forces within the Mortal Tier had no officially recognized Mystic Ascendant Realm cultivators within their ranks, while those in the Mystic Tier did.

This might be simple enough, but there were further divisions for Mortal Tier, and they were divided by metallic titles, and the complexities of divisions and endorsements. Similar to the value of mortals, they were divided into Bronze, Silver, and Gold-rank.

Bronze-rank forces had at least one Timelord at the helm, overseeing the entire force, and they were the lowest force recognized by the starfield or the various domains of the Aeternal Sky Starfield. If a force had no Timelord, but the off-shoot backing of a Starlord-level expert, they would similarly be classified as Bronze-rank.

Silver-rank forces had Starlords as leaders, reaching the peak of the Astral Core Realm. These forces were the most numerous amongst the entire starfield, because they lasted the longest. Bronze-rank forces without the endorsement and oversight of Starlords were incredibly fragile, oftentimes crumbling

in the early stages of development. While silver-rank forces were established, long lasting, and had a stable foundation.

Gold-rank forces had the controversial Mystic Star Phase, the dubious Tenth Stage of the Astral Core Realm, cultivators as the highest level. They represented the peak of the Mortal-tier, touching at the edge of the Mystic-tier. They were quite short-lived, however. Those so-called leaders have lost lifespan in their attempt to ascend, so they were almost always at the precipice of declining to Silver-rank.

The only Gold-rank forces that survive long-term are generally those who have the endorsement and backing of Mystic Tier forces, receiving means to extend the lifespan of those Mystic Star Phase leaders.

The Mystic Tier was simple, and wasn't simply graded. There were only two classifications at most, and that depended on the force's structure and purpose. Some had no classification.

In the Aeternal Sky Starfield, there only existed four types of recognized factions: Clans, Pavilions, Sects, and Associations. Each of them were defined by their own hierarchy and functionality.

Clans were not necessarily bloodline-restricted, but a group or faction ruled by a single main bloodline. It resembled a Monarchy intermixed with traces of Democratic practices and divided power amongst representatives with patriarchs, matriarchs, elders, and councils formulated and divided by bloodline or strength. They resembled nations, but their lifeblood was the bloodline that established it, hence the name: Clan.

When a Clan fell, or were overtaken by an internal conflict, the scene was very similar to a rebellion of a nation or a coup d'etat. The ruling bloodline's main tree is either replaced by a lesser purity or removed altogether.

Clans in the Mystic Tier were divided into two ranks: Noble, & Imperial.

Those at the Noble-rank have 'true' Mystic Ascendant Realm cultivators, at the Second Stage of the Mystic Ascendant Realm, at the minimum. As for Imperial-rank, it wasn't very defined by their minimum requirement because it usually required being the strongest existence in the starfield. Therefore, Imperial-rank depended on the limits of the era. It would generally refer to the strongest Clan.

Pavilions, in their simplest forms, were businesses. They operated on business principles, oftentimes neutral, connected, and extremely wealthy. They functioned for the purpose to facilitate the needs and convenience of the other forces while expanding their reach. They even operated and maintained a variety of starfield-wide events and rankings.

Pavilions in the Mystic Tier were divided into two ranks: Chrome and Golden.

This wasn't defined by their overall strength, but their reach. If they reach at least five percent of the overall Aeternal Sky Starfield, they were considered Chrome, and if they reached ninety percent of the Aeternal Sky Starfield, they were Golden.

It was clear the monopoly of business was defined. There were only two Golden-rank Pavilions and four Chrome-rank Pavilions.

Sects established themselves off unique cultivation methods or doctrines, functioning in certain ways to grow a powerful and were often highly competitive. They, too, had bloodlines within their ranks, and

were often jointly ruled by several clans with a similar purpose. The majority of sects were products of mergers of lesser clans that sought to survive in chaos.

Sects in the Mystic-tier had no division of ranks. They were all classified as World-rank, explicitly outlining their reach, but developing a sect was a difficult venture that required a strong unity. Sects had the highest failure rate due to internal conflict out of the four forces.

Despite that, they were considered the most terrifying because, if strongly united, sects eclipsed the other forces in power and scope.

Lastly, Associations were specialized forces that offered a variety of unique resources or skills. There were assassination associations, alchemist associations, forging associations, talisman associations, and more. They were defined by their specialty, and thrived on exporting their speciality and importing resources.

They had no ranks, and were defined by the two tiers. If an association was in the Mortal Tier, then they'll be referred to as Mortal Associations, and the same rang true for Mystic Tier.

After explaining it all, San Luoyang said: "While there are hundreds of thousands of Mortal Tier forces in our glorious starfield, there are only sixteen Mystic Tier forces that exist throughout the entire starfield. They are referred to as the Eight Noble Clans, Three World Sects, Two Golden Pavilions, Two Mystic Associations and the Imperial Clan.

"However, these are only the ones within the Aeternal Sky Starfield that have settled in our space. Keep that in mind," San Luoyang cryptically warned, but those who were keen realized the implications. These youths' expectations were at an all-time high, seeking to join these forces that had cultivators that rivaled those like Grand Monarch Wu Yu and the Divine King Han Xei!

However, San Luoyang's next words shattered all their hopes in mere moments.

"Out of these sixteen forces at the Mystic Tier, only the Everlore Association is present here today for this recruitment. The rest are Silver and Gold-rank forces... So, let's see if you have the qualifications to join them!" San Luoyang smilingly said.

Chapter 593 - 588: Recruit, Ten Forces

Hearing San Luoyang's words made Su Mei come to a clear realization. They were all given the freedom to decline because the top forces of the Aeternal Sky Starfield were not present in this recruitment. After learning about the overall structure of the starfield, one would be inclined to reach for the stars rather than the sky.

There were quite a few youths that were heavily disappointed after realizing that the forces present, those that sought to recruit them, were Silver-rank and Gold-rank forces. While this was still an outrageous leap from their previous starfield's current era, if one saw the top of the mountain, how could one settle for the climbing only halfway?

"These chicklets are something else, aren't they? Do they believe they're hot sh*t or we're stinky sh*t?" A rough voice filled with amused disdain sounded from beside San Luoyang. A tall, roughly seven-feet, spiky-haired man with broad-shoulders and a brawny body scoffed. He had dark-brown skin and a pair

of round, fierce eyes. His physical presence was unable to be ignored, domineering and overpowering, even his casual breathing caused space to distort.

San Luoyang calmly replied, "Exalted Heavyheart, understand their circumstance." It seemed like he was pleading on behalf of the youths before him, but there was a distinct indifference in his tone that made him seem insincere.

"Hmph," Exalted Heavyheart displayed his displeasure with a heavy breath. Then, he glanced at the various youths once more and scoffed, "There's no one here that catches my eye. But according to our deal, I'll select him."

Exalted Heavyheart's words didn't surprise San Luoyang, and he merely gestured for him to act freely. After receiving the signal, clearly not acting in the same aggressive manner as Exalted Truekill from earlier, Exalted Heavyheart used his large hand with long, thick fingers and reached for a youth in the crowd.

"Wah! Wuh!" A series of unexpected wails sounded as a chubby youth was lifted slowly off the ground. The spectacle immediately drew everyone's attention, and Na Xinyi and Lin Ziyang simultaneously exclaimed.

"Lu Feng!"

"Little Lu!"

The chubby youth with baby fat still on his cheeks was a member of the Myriad Monarch Sect, and also a friend of theirs that followed them around in their early days of cultivation. They hadn't expected to see him again. Especially as he was being pulled into the sky by this Mystic Ascendant.

San Luoyang lightly commented, "Good seedling."

This caused Exalted Heavyheart to reveal a cheerful smile, and despite his massive build and height, the smile was quite attractive, highlighting a masculine handsomeness. With a wave of his hand, Lu Feng was sent whirling towards Exalted Heavyheart until he was brought directly before him, levitating with his short legs kicking out in panic.

"Wha-what do you want to do with me?!" Seeing this giant man smiling at him with an inspective gaze, he couldn't help but cover his chest and close his legs as if he was about to be defiled. His awkward and horrified expression truly made it seem like Lu Feng's future was to be violated.

A few members amongst the twelve laughed at this scene.

"Seems like you got an interesting one. Go easy on him, his body might not be able to take your...good intentions, haha." A human male with pale skin and yellow irises with sanguine edges spoke out with laughter. Within his pupils were two saber-shaped images, giving him a strange yet sharp existence. It was almost as if he was a saber.

"Hmph!" Exalted Heavyheart's smiling expression vanished, replaced with a stern and displeased look. He had an urge to chuck Lu Feng as far as he could, but he eventually held himself back. With a powerful snort that sent cascading waves of wind towards the pale-skinned man, he moved slightly and vanished alongside Lu Feng.

San Luoyang sighed, turning to the youths and explained: "The formerly twelve, now ten, cultivators beside me are all leaders of Gold-rank forces. Those at the sides of this stadium, watching and observing you, are from Silver-rank forces. You don't have to be fearful of not having a choice. If either that young woman or the chubby youth decides to reject entering the forces that took them away, the Everlore Association will relocate them safely to one of the three Domains. They can then attempt to join other forces."

For fear that the others would think this was a norm, San Luoyang felt compelled to clarify this fact. He continued, "That being said, those two have gained the approval of these leaders and their futures will be supported by Mystic Ascendant Realm cultivators, if they wish to accept them."

However, the pale-skinned man gave a disdainful smile after hearing the words 'Mystic Ascendant Realm cultivators'. He wasn't the only one, as the others also had varied reactions, with some even containing hints of mocking with cold smiles or the light in their eyes. They, those titled Exalted by the world, those at the Mystic Star Phase, held controversial beliefs regarding the validity and everlasting debate of calling Mystic Star Phase cultivators Mystic Ascendants.

It was clear that the Aeternal Sky Starfield itself had a clear belief that they weren't, forcefully declining them from being recognized as Mystic Tier forces, yet San Luoyang shamelessly announced this point. Still, they had their own pride and they wouldn't contradict San Luoyang in public to debase themselves. Moreover, that was no different than offending the Everlore Association.

As if unaware of their thoughts, San Luoyang proceeded. "In a moment, all of you will receive a scroll. This scroll contains information regarding the numerous forces present seeking to recruit you. Since you're unaware of many details, it'll give you an estimation on a variety of factors. This includes their strongest cultivator, any feats and achievements publicly known, the date at which they've been established, and any backing they have, including open alliances.

"It'll also include their field of speciality and minimum requirements it takes to become more than an entry-level member. Unlike the two past incidents, you'll be able to freely select any force that fits your desires. Be mindful, just because you start as an entry-level member, do not think that's your end. It is just your starting line."

San Luoyang's words still confused the youths. They've never heard of a recruitment where there was so much freedom of choice present. It was as if the Everlore Association was giving them compensation for the destruction of their starfield.

Su Mei realized this as well, noticing that the Gold-rank leaders didn't seem to want to be here, and just selected the one they liked before leaving. Perhaps this was the Everlore Association's way of giving those who lost their homes an opportunity, perhaps even guilty that they were unable to stop the destruction of their starfield. And the Gold-rank forces were just giving them face.

Suddenly, a scroll manifested before Su Mei and the rest. The youths hesitated briefly before grabbing the scroll and reading its contents. It was truly detailed and carried the names of thousands of forces at the Silver-rank, with ten forces at the Gold-rank.

The other two forces were absent, and there was no information regarding them. Clearly, these Gold-rank forces just had to select a single cultivator and complete the deal they made with the Everlore Association. However, didn't this contradict what San Luoyang said?

She was confused, and she wasn't the only one. However, San Luoyang did not clarify or explain the contents of their deal. The ten Gold-rank forces seemed to be openly accepting more than one member.

Su Mei was mostly right; this was compensation for the Everlore Association's inability to halt the destruction of the Imperial Dawn Starfield. It was their responsibility to protect it, yet they could only save the myriad intelligent lives that exist there.

As for the Gold-rank forces, they had a choice: Select a member to promote to their highest discipleship amongst the youths or open the doors to all of those present. Exalted Truekill and Exalted Heavyheart clearly chose the former, with the others choosing the latter.

Su Mei didn't bother reading the Silver-rank forces. She was looking for a competitive environment with the greatest resources available, so she sought after the Gold-rank forces. Her thinking was in line with the vast majority. If only because of the resources.

In the Imperial Dawn Starfield, during all eras, the stronger the respective force, the higher their disciples potential. Which one of these youths were unaware of this fact? This was expressed in not just territory, but resources, and various Creationist.

Typically, higher-ranked forces had greater forgers for better armaments, skilled Architects that resources to establish grand cultivation arrays for a better environment, and top-tier alchemists that provided alchemical products as rewards or just basic benefits.

In the Myriad Monarch Sect, the lowest 'official' disciple was at the Astral Core Realm, and each of them were given monthly cultivation stipends that could put all other forces beneath the hegemon to absolute shame, even some stipends for their most elite disciples couldn't match it. They had access to much better resources, methods, arts, spells, and cultivation environments.

After all, the Sky Palaces above the sixth-level of the five extreme mountains were filled with astral essence! And all this was far before Wei Wuyin had ever entered the sect, creating such a vast disparity that the four hegemonic forces highlighted and dominated as the top forces for several eras without pause!

Even when the Myriad Monarch Sect was ganged up on, nearly destroyed, there were no other forces outside of the other hegemon that could rival their means and repository. This didn't count the Alchemist Association, however.

Therefore, she delved into the details of the Gold-rank forces. There were two sects, one pavilion, two clans, and five associations. This shocked her for a moment, especially after considering the purpose of these associations.

The five associations specialized in talismans, beast nurturing, mercenary assignments, herbal development, and research of arts, spells, and methods.

When she read this, her mind was flowing with all sorts of disbelief and intrigue. She had never heard of associations that totally focused on things like this, and usually sects, pavilions, or other forces would have devoted departments.

When he looked further into the Association specialized in Mercenary Assignments. She realized they performed bodyguards for persons or events, escorting merchants and goods, and even participated in wars for a price. There were likely even assassinations, but that wasn't detailed.

Herbal development caught her eye, because according to the information listed, it required wood, water, or light cultivators who have specialized Spirits of Cultivation to become greater than an entry-level member. They were tasked with accelerating, nurturing, and providing the growth of herbs used for alchemy or medicine.

There were even details regarding the type of desired Intent. If one comprehended any of the Nine Meadow Intents individually, they could instantly become core members of the association. She couldn't help but think about Qing Qiumu, as she was the most talented Wood Cultivator in their generation.

The others were easily understood.

Besides the Mercenary Association, called the Fairlight Mercenary Association, the other four didn't fit her goal. The one pavilion was called the Clear Water Pavilion, and they operated in the Elementus Domain, in the eastern region.

The scroll detailed the explanation of Domains, something she was deeply curious about as San Luoyang had mentioned entering three Domains as the second option or in case of failure.

Domains were locations dominated by one of the sixteen Mystic Tier forces. The other Mortal Tier forces all existed within one of these sixteen domains. They were similar to Astral Territories in the Imperial Dawn Starfield. They outlined borders that represented ruling rights.

Just from reading the list, she realized only three domains were listed as locations for all the Silver-rank and Gold-rank forces. They were the Everlore Domain, Elementus Domain, and Skyrend Domain.

The Everlore Domain belonged to the Everlore Association, but it was amongst the smallest of the sixteen, not being territorial or needing to be. The Elementus Domain belonged to the True Element Sect, and it was the eighth largest Domain, but had the smallest domains amongst the Three World Sects. The Skyrend Domain belongs to the Liu Clan, a member of the Eight Noble Clans.

When Su Mei read Skyrend Domain, noting the name of the Aeternal Sky Starfield, she felt that this Liu Clan was not simple. It was also ranked eleven amongst Domain sizes.

Despite the Domains marking borders and territories, Su Mei discovered that the herbal association was backed by the Jiang Clan, another of one of the Eight Noble Clans, yet was situated in the Skyrend Domain, ruled by the Liu Clan.

This caused her to understand that the territorial situation was quite complex, likely a result of all sorts of deals and conflicts.

Since the Clear Water Pavilion was a merchant group that provided rare liquids alongside other cultivation necessities, she removed that as an option. She didn't wish to become a shopkeeper or

worker, even if it meant being drenched in wealth if her decisions and investments paid off. It was too passive.

The only real options left were the two sects. As for the clans? She didn't even think about it. Being a talented female cultivator amongst a bloodline-ruled nation will only provide struggles, distractions, and the feeling of always walking the tightrope, unless one was ambitious and open to climbing the leader through status and schemes, not might.

The sects offered a familiar setting, and the competition was fierce. Furthermore, there was one that suited her own cultivation quite well:

The Solitary Saber Sect.

Chapter 594 - 589: Recruit, Their Choices

The Solitary Saber Sect was a Gold-tier force that focused on the saber. The details in the scroll stated that the Solitary Saber Sect was the second-oldest Gold-rank force in history, and it had no backing of a Mystic Tier force. It, however, was mentioned to be on friendly terms with the Godforge Association, one of the two Mystic Associations alongside the Everlore Association.

Since the Everlore Association and Godforge Association never endorsed any force, they were considered neutral forces amongst the Aeternal Sky Starfield.

The Solitary Saber Sect was located in the Skyrend Domain. However, their territory was marked as independent. This intrigued Su Mei, as she wondered what that meant. She noticed that the other sect listed was also declared as an 'Independent Force' in the scroll.

There wasn't a specific explanation. She figured it meant that, like the Scarlet Solaris Sect inside the Wu Country, they operated upon their own rules. As long as they don't directly infringe on the Liu Clan's interests, they would have full rights to handle their territory as they pleased without interference or oversight.

Considering San Luoyang explained Clans as Nations with multiple monarchs and democratic practices, this made the most sense.

Su Mei decided to enter the Solitary Saber Sect. She had birthed Saber Intent long ago thanks to Wei Wuyin's help, and while her Spirit of Cultivation wasn't Saber-focused, she cultivated the saber wholeheartedly. One of the requirements to become a higher-than-entry level sect member was to have a Saber Soul or Saber Intent.

Qing Qiumu was in a dilemma as well. None of the Gold-rank forces was appealing to her. The herbal association was perfect for someone like her, a Wood Cultivator who possessed the Nine Meadow Wood Intent, an Apex-level Wood Intent, but it didn't match her personality.

She could only delve into the Silver-rank forces. After searching for hours, she finally found one. Furthermore, she was startled by its name and details.

The Sacred Forest Sect.

One of the recruitment details stated that to be a higher-than-entry level member, one didn't need to be a Wood Cultivator, but they had to be of the Elven Race. This was the first force that explicitly stated its racial requirements. While all races could join, why would they if their futures were limited?

She wondered if the other forces had hidden requirements that weren't listed, and the Sacred Forest Sect was just more open about it. This thought caused her to glance at the sides, viewing all the spectators that belonged to Silver-rank forces.

She quickly noted that over ninety-five percent of them had human auras, untainted by any mixture of other races. They didn't even bother concealing their auras. Her eyes twitched, and she glanced at the youths around her.

She then came to realize that besides her, there were only eighty-three other elves. The discovery caused her heart to race. Even if one considered the total population of their starfield, elves surely made up more than thirty percent. This was thanks to the Sacred Light Palace founded by the Sacred Elven Queen and the Myriad Monarch Sect. Their Astral Territories were filled with those of the elven race.

Even the Alchemist Association's Qingye Ying, the Princess of Everlore, was an elf.

Yet the number present barely reached 0.1% of the total participants. While the rest were humans. The demons were even less.

Her heart started to fiercely throb as she recalled San Luoyang's warning before that families shouldn't separate if they were integrated with more than one race, indicating they choose the planet created for them to live on.

Was the Aeternal Sky Starfield discriminatory towards non-humans? If this recruitment was any indication, then absolutely.

Qing Qiumu quickly found the female elf in the stands. She was beautiful with long, sleek dark-green hair and light-green eyes, a willowy waist, and a pair of sharp-tipped ears. She resembled the Verdant Forest Elves from the Four Extreme Continent. This was certainly the Sacred Forest Sect's representative.

Furthermore, the representative was staring at her with a faint smile, a bright joy flashing in her gaze after being noticed. However, she didn't speak or try to mouth words. One could see her desire to pull Qing Qiumu in, yet she couldn't act in the same way as the Gold-rank forces.

Qing Qiumu realized she wasn't left with much choice. She decided which force she'll join.

Na Xinyi's option was clear. The last Gold-rank force was a female exclusive force called the Dark Yin Palace, a sect that fostered female cultivators using Yin Methods, Spells, and Arts. As a Four-Point Yin Physique Female Cultivator, was there any other choice? With her unique physique, she was bound to elevate to a higher-ranked member.

When Wei Wuyin arrived, she was determined to let him see her outstanding achievements.

There were numerous females that chose this force as their destination, unaware of the true darkness behind its existence, behind its purpose.

Lin Ziyang chose the Clear Water Pavilion. She wanted to keep a low profile, and gather information and status to grow her force as a Valkyrie. Her intentions to challenge herself had changed after learning from Wei Wuyin that the Sacred Elven Queen might be within this starfield, and when she heard that the Everlore Association existed, this only firmed her desire to remain low-key.

Long Tingyu chose the Dark Yin Palace. She expected her Big Sister Na Xinyi to choose the same, and a female-oriented force will allow her to not be hassled for her beauty. She could focus on cultivation. If it was allowed, she could bring Xiang Ling with her.

The selection process took several hours, and no one rushed these youths either. This choice will define their future. But what San Luoyang and the others didn't know was that their choice will not only define their future, but the future of the entire starfield.

While these youths were deciding their futures, another youth of the Imperial Dawn Starfield was floating in the boundless Dark Void of the Aeternal Sky Starfield on a Voidship.

Alongside this handsome youth were two women that carried outstanding auras and exquisite figures. They formed a united picture that could manifest awe and praise in the hearts of many.

They were Lin Ming, Bai Yuxi, and Senior Sister Lin, and their expressions weren't as outstanding as their auras and appearances. They all carried a solemn light in their eyes as a giant Voidship over twenty-times theirs blocked their way... At both sides of this Voidship's hull was a single character shining brightly in fiery light: "Spiritwalker."

Chapter 595 - 590: Spiritwalker's Envoy

"I, Lin Xianxue, greet Venerable Spiritwalker," Senior Sister Lin, whose full name was Lin Xianxue, spiritually transmitted with a respectful tone, removing her displeasure of being directly intercepted.

The Voidship before her, that was utterly massive in size, and far more complicated in form and structure than the Voidships found in one of the Nine Lesser Elementus Caches, had arrived without warning and forced them to halt. From the lettering and aura, it clearly belonged to Venerable Spiritwalker.

She was a figure that was extremely prominent, and outside of the sixteen Mystic Tier forces of the Aeternal Sky Starfield. Lin Xianxue couldn't fathom why such an illustrious figure would arrive before them.

Bai Yuxi, however, went ghostly pale at the arrival of Spiritwalker's Voidship. She clenched her fists so hard that her knuckles went white, yet she tried to remain outwardly calm. Fortunately, she wore a facial veil otherwise her bloodless countenance could clearly give away her current level of outrageous fear.

Lin Ming frowned. He wasn't aware of who this Venerable Spiritwalker was nor why they would go out of their way to halt their travels. After the World-Shifting Net descended, they were taken away as well after Lin Xianxue, the formerly Senior Sister Lin, had informed those operating the net her identity. They had arrived alongside the others, entering the Aeternal Sky Starfield after five days.

Lin Ming was utterly amazed that they had traveled entire starfields in a few days, but even more so after learning the sheer vast size of the Aeternal Sky Starfield. Just the smallest domain was roughly the same size as their starfield! As for the Solar Star with the strange ring around it, it occupied enough space to rival half their entire starfield.

It was MASSIVE!

The level of shock and marvel he experienced on that day was beyond anything he'd ever felt his entire life. While he knew that his Senior Sister had originated from an advanced civilization with a much larger population, he wasn't expecting such a massive difference.

It was only after learning that the Aeternal Sky Starfield was originally more normal sized, but it kept expanding its borders continuously as the forces developed, birthed new planets, and established new areas of control. Soon, the nearby starfields were assimilated entirely, and the Solar Star with a Mystic Radiance Belt was conjured by the Ascended Cultivators of the Aeternal Sky Starfield after centuries of concentrated effort.

In fact, the Aeternal Sky Starfield had even taken control over some stellar regions outside of its own. For example, the Desolate Dragnet Region that the Imperial Dawn Starfield was a part of had portions of it made into an off-shot Domain not attached to the Aeternal Sky Starfield. As for the Desolate Dragnet Region itself, it had been abandoned due to its poor quality and the Tiangou's presence that kept eating Solar Stars.

He was awed by the domineering manner that the Aeternal Sky Starfield functioned, even claiming regions outside their own Stellar Region. How powerful was that?!

Yet now, on their way to the True Element Sect, they were intercepted by individuals with unknown intentions. He couldn't help but feel tense, and he wondered if his Senior Sister would be able to handle this unexpected development.

Lin Xianxei was quiet as she observed the Spiritwalker Voidship with a heavy gaze, awaiting a response. It took a long while before a voice resounded from the Voidship. The voice was carried by spiritual waves, as the Dark Void was absent of air particles, making sound unable to travel.

"Lin Xianxei? The Little Saintess of the True Element Sect? I didn't expect you to be here." The voice was light, masculine, yet aged. A spiritual image manifested in the dark voice, firstly possessing a faint cyan color and then gaining substance and form.

It slowly shaped into an middle-aged man dressed in grey and blue robes. He had long hair tied into a bun, and a thick horseshoe mustache. With an upright posture, his shoulders seemed as if they could hold heaven and earth. From the faint radiance in his eyes and his countenance, one could tell he was once a devastatingly handsome youth that contained a unique and reliable charm.

Lin Xianxei was briefly startled after seeing this figure, her eyes flickered as she clasped her hands and bowed slightly, "Exalted Yu."

The Exalted Yu gave a faint smile at her respectful attitude. The incarnation he formed approached the Voidship at a swift speed, arriving in a matter of a few breaths. When he did, his eyes swept the Voidship. "Quite the design. Seems to be over six thousand years old in terms of version. Intriguing."

With this comment, he moved forward and the barrier protecting the Voidship from the Chill of the Dark Void was easily bypassed.

Lin Ming's eyes fiercely widened as the figure arrived on deck, standing before them with a nostalgic gleam in his eyes. "I wouldn't have expect the Little Saintess of the True Element Sect to be riding such a vessel. But I guess it would hide your presence, so it makes sense."

Lin Xianxei was unaffected by the man's arrival. He was just an incarnation conjured to act as a vocal medium. Its unlikely that he was even on the Spiritwalker Voidship, and he might have been called forth via a treasure.

"Exalted Yu, how may I help you?" Lin Xianxei asked, wanting to know his purpose.

Exalted Yu faintly smiled, removing his inspective eyes away from the voidship and onto Lin Xianxei. "As an Envoy of the Spiritwalker Hall, I've been directly tasked by the Venerable Spiritwalker herself to find a Chosen by the name of Lin Ming, and..."

Bai Yuxi and Lin Ming's hearts clenched. The latter couldn't help but think that this would be his first obstacle on the path of cultivation. However, he was ready to face it!

Exalted Yu's pause was accompanied by a quick glance at Lin Ming, a glint of interest flashed, before his sightline was blocked by Lin Xianxei's exquisite figure and calm yet fierce expression. Clearly, she was highly defensive of Lin Ming.

Exalted Yu didn't mind, continuing: "Take the agreed upon share of resources obtained from the Elementus Cache."

"The agreed upon share?" This startled Lin Xianxei. She wasn't aware that Bai Yuxi had promised eighty percent of the Elementus Cache to Venerable Spiritwalker to perform the Engorging Foundation Method, allowing Lin Ming to establish his Domain Seed.

Lin Xianxei looked at Bai Yuxi whose heart was racing, fists tightly clenched, and breathing slightly irregular. She figured out what happened just from that sight, and how Lin Ming obtained the Chosen title via an outdated shortcut. She sighed, turning to Exalted Yu, and explained:

"I'm afraid that's not possible."

"Oh?" Exalted Yu wasn't bothered, just intrigued.

"When Lin Ming arrived at the Elementus Cache, it was empty. So he obtained nothing. A 80% share of 0% is still 0%." Since this was an agreement between them, she didn't feel good being unable to uphold their end of the deal, but the facts were unchangeable.

Exalted Yu's eyes looked at Lin Ming with a knowing light and then back at Lin Xianxei. He faintly smiled and said, "Absolutely impossible."

"What do you mean?" Lin Xianxei frowned.

"Venerable Spiritwalker had verified the contents of the Elementus Cache with several other Venerables shortly before the deal was struck. The resources were untouched, and with the Third Manager of the Golden Life Pavilion acting as an overseer, it's incredibly unlikely for it to have been taken. After all, they

had all sworn oaths not to use their powers to plunder or damage the resources of the training ground, only those participating in the training grounds and the natives can safely touch it.

"So it's absolutely impossible that there was nothing when he arrived. Unless someone could act in secret before the watching eyes of the Third Manager of the Golden Life Pavilion. You and I should know that's...unlikely. Even if it was possible, a cultivator at that level has utterly no need for those trifling resources." After explaining this, Exalted Yu walked to the side and observed the side of the railing. He seemed fascinated by this old Voidship.

"..." The three were utterly silent. Lin Xianxei and Bai Yuxi both looked towards Lin Ming whose expression was slightly unsightly. Lin Xianxei's eyes darkened. Was she lied to?

Seeing the emotion suffusing his Senior Sister's eyes, Lin Ming's heart raced as he hurriedly explained: "I told you the truth! I don't have any of the resources of the Elementus Cache. I can swear an oath to that!"

This caused all three of them, Exalted Yu included, to look at Lin Ming with baffled expressions. "Then what happened?" Lin Xianxei asked. She needed to know the truth. When she first heard Lin Ming explain, they were distracted by the net, and she didn't feel the need to interrogate. After all, Lin Ming wouldn't lie to her.

But with Exalted Yu, an Envoy of Venerable Spiritwalker here, she could only press for answers.

Lin Ming took several deep breaths and said, "When I arrived, the Elementus Cache was untouched. I tried to claim the cache, but..." he hesitated as he recalled that silver-eyed figure that brought out his vengeful emotions. If he were to tell the truth, wouldn't the existence of a second Chosen and all the events before be revealed?

"Hurry and spit it out!" Lin Xianxei urged loudly. She was clearly getting mad and impatient.

Lin Ming heavily sighed after a moment of acceptance, "Wei Wuyin somehow took all the resources away. Likely with a unique spatial tool or something. I wasn't able to get any of it."

"Wei Wuyin?" Lin Xianxei recalled the Ascendant Emperor of Neo-Dawn, the sub-fifty Alchemic Emperor, the one she feared would be a competitor to Lin Ming after he entered the Elementus Chosen Trial.

"The Second Chosen?" Exalter Yu curiously added.

"The Second Chosen?!" Lin Xianxei exclaimed in shock.

What?!

Chapter 596 - 591: Price To Be Paid

Bai Yuxi's delicate body violently trembled. She was aware that two Chosens were selected by the Primary Overseer, but she didn't mention it for fear that Wei Wuyin would contest Lin Ming's legitimacy as a Chosen in the True Element Sect. After all, each faction within the True Element Sect was allowed a single Chosen.

Wei Wuyin should be half-crippled after using self-damaging methods to increase his strength, but if he obtained the Elementus Cache and all its grand resources, he could certainly recover. After all, even alchemical products like the Enlightening Soul Pulse Elixirs. This placed her heart on a pile of solid stress just thinking about it. Now that Lin Xianxei was aware of it, further accentuated by her damaged soul, Bai Yuxi felt herself on the verge of mental collapse.

Lin Xianxei's glaring stare demanding answers only added to the anxious atmosphere. Furthermore, for Bai Yuxi, she knew this was only the beginning of the tumbling boulder that was her cascading series of problems. Helpless, she could only bite her lips tensely as the event she least wanted to see occur.

From her gaze alone, Lin Xianxei was conveyed her demand for an immediate and clear explanation. There was no need for shouts, just that gaze and her posture was enough. While she had received the detailed report about the outcome of the Elementus Chosen Trial from the Primary Overseer, she was ignorant of the events that led to it or the existence of another Chosen, yet there were outsiders who weren't even a part of it aware. How could she not be enraged by this?

Lin Ming glanced at the trembling Bai Yuxi and sighed in his heart. In hindsight, he felt that he should've just come clean and revealed everything. It would've been better than this awkward situation with another party present.

Yet Exalted Yu was quite intrigued by Lin Xianxei's ignorance. She was traveling with one of the Chosen of the trial and was the Little Saintess of the True Element Sect, yet she was uninformed of the events within the trial? This was amusing. He couldn't help but look at Lin Ming, forming a knowing smile.

He said to Lin Xianxei, "You don't know? According to Venerable Spiritwalker, two Chosen had been declared simultaneously. Furthermore, one of them had even formed Element Heart Intent. Your sect is suffering quite a bit because of this." The amusement in his tone was unconcealed, as he stoked the fire.

"What?" Lin Xianxei's heart started to race, "Element Heart Intent?" She looked at Lin Ming, a wisp of hopeful glee within her alluring eyes, but when she saw his downcast gaze, she realized the truth. After all, she was the original Secondary Overseer, how could she not be aware of the loopholes or requirements?

It wasn't just her, even Exalted Yu discovered the truth from his reaction. The higher-ups of the world believed that Lin Ming, this grey-eyed, handsome youth was the possessor of Element Heart Intent. At the time, the other Chosen was damaged physically, mentally, and spiritually, it was highly unlikely for him to formulate a complex sequence of thoughts, let alone comprehend Heart of the World, World of the Element Intent.

This led to Lin Ming being the only logical choice.

"..." Lin Xianxei was silent for a long period of time. Just from this and Exalted Yu's words, she understood that the situation was escalating. The importance of Element Heart Intent couldn't be stressed, and it was far, far, far more vital than a False Worldly Domain and premature Domain Seed manifestation.

She had to take a deep breath to organize her thoughts, looking at Lin Ming for a moment, and her hardened gaze slowly softened with each passing moment. In the end, her emotions were released as a soft, defeated sigh.

"Our sect will handle any trouble that comes its way, Exalted Yu." She turned to face this envoy and clasped her hands respectfully, "The contents of the Elementus Cache was not claimed by Lin Ming, but Wei Wuyin instead. Now, if you'll excuse us, we have to return to the True Element Sect." Clearly, from her tone, she wanted Exalted Yu off this ship.

"Mm," Exalted Yu hummed out a nuanced sound. He was quite impressed by Lin Xianxei's ability to regulate her emotions. She was befitting her glowing reputation, yet this situation couldn't be settled so easily.

"Venerable Spiritwalker has an approximate estimation of resources and their total market value. The deal wasn't eighty percent of the resources, but eighty percent value of resources in the Elementus Cache. This was originally so it could be substituted for any other external treasures to balance it out, in case the set of materials Venerable Spiritwalker wanted led to a percentage greater or lesser, without breaking the terms of the agreement." Exalted Yu plainly explained, flipping his right hand as a beige-colored note was conjured in his palm.

Bai Yuxi, Lin Ming, and Lin Xianxei's heart dropped after that. They all knew this situation wasn't so easily dismissed.

Lin Ming finally stepped forward, "I never agreed to any share distribution!" He had never spoken to or seen this Venerable Spiritwalker, yet they were demanding eighty percent of the total value that the Elementus Cache possessed? And it had to be substituted by other treasures?!

Lin Xianxei was shocked. This wasn't an agreement?

Exalted Yu seemed prepared, calmly explaining: "You're right. This was also one of the main reasons the total value was the target rather than the specific contents of the Elementus Cache. It was Bai Yuxi who swore the oath, so the burden lies with her. Of course, you could always go against the oath."

"..." Lin Ming felt his words caught in his throat. Both he and Lin Xianxei turned to Bai Yuxi whose palms were sweaty and trembling. She had made this agreement to ensure that Lin Ming would become the Chosen. It was their only choice, and she thought it would be fine after, but who could've known that Lin Ming wouldn't obtain the Elementus Cache?

They couldn't even react when the beige note arrived before Bai Yuxi. She, with quivering hands, reached out and grabbed it. When she did, a number and two words were clearly seen.

Her heart sank into its furthest depths.

Lin Xianxei took the note from Bai Yuxi, and then her expression drastically changed. "Impossible! There's no way this was the value of Elementus Cache!" She directly expressed her disbelief, completely not accepting this outrageous target. This was enough to buy a tenth of a domain!

However, Exalted Yu was once again unsurprised and prepared, "The value of the Elementus Cache includes all its treasures, such as the entry and exit badge. And according to Venerable Spiritwalker and the others, this included eighty percent of the estimated value of the training grounds. Because whoever has it can freely open up a pathway via the badge and send any number of geniuses to experience it for half a century.

"As per the agreement with the Golden Life Pavilion, no?" Exalted Yu slowly formed a bright smile. Almost everyone was aware that the World Realm's Core detonated, destroying everything that related to the training grounds. But the agreement with the Golden Life Pavilion was extremely public, and if a Chosen was born from the trial, then everyone knew that the Chosen would be granted free access to train themselves and their forces.

Therefore, the Chosen actually partially owned the training grounds alongside the Golden Life Pavilion. At the time, the Golden Life Pavilion had agreed to maintain the Chosen Trial and uphold certain rules in exchange for purchasing and maintaining it. After all, a World Realm was extremely costly to maintain, especially something as complex, unique, and beneficial as the four Seasons, and the True Element Sect was a little financially deficient at the moment.

While there was a limited number that could be brought in, this was included in the eighty percent share, because the badge itself could only be truly obtained in the Elementus Cache, so it was included. It was a play on words. A little despicable, but perfectly legal as some would say.

In a way, Bai Yuxi was scammed.

Well, not really.

From Exalted Yu's point of view, all these conditions would be negligible if Lin Ming had obtained the Elementus Cache. The Four Extreme Continent would be freely his to explore and train in as the perfect grounds to refine his Elemental Intents, battle prowess via the Season of Devils, and spells and arts through the Season of Regression.

Lin Ming would also gain the assistance of three Starlord-level figures, a dozen or so Timelords, and thousands of Realmlords outright! While he might suffer a little loss in the short run, he could even use this opportunity to formulate stable relations with Venerable Spiritwalker, an Ascended!

Yet the truth was brutal.

The Four Extreme Continent was gone.

The World Realm's Core was destroyed.

The Elementus Cache was stolen from him.

There were no benefits to be had, he was left with nothing but a debt that he hadn't even agreed on, and all of it was on the shoulders of Bai Yuxi. Someone who helped him forge his Domain Seed and become Chosen!

"..." The subsequent silence made the atmosphere so thick that a searing knife couldn't cut it. This price wasn't something a budding Chosen could afford, but refusing it was the same as sacrificing Bai Yuxi. As for getting the True Element Sect to foot the bill, they weren't in the best of states right now, how could anyone agree to handle this?

But Bai Yuxi's status was extremely special! If something happened to her, the consequences wouldn't be simple.

Lin Xianxei felt a throbbing headache while holding the outrageous note. She hadn't even returned to the sect to deal with the legitimacy of Lin Ming's Chosen status, and this was now happening?

Exalted Yu didn't stop though, continuing by breaking the stiff silence, "Bai Yuxi, in exchange for freeing Lin Ming from his spiritual shackles, you agreed to a price. I'm here to remind you of that as well."

Price?

Lin Xianxei couldn't help but be even more astonished, turning to Bai Yuxi questioningly. Just when you think things couldn't get worse, more things keep happening. Of course, the True Element Sect did not fear Venerable Spiritwalker, so if they were shameless enough, they could just dismiss this. There were ways to protect one from the consequences of an oath or even outright break it, if one was willing to pay the price.

In fact, if Lin Ming had obtained the Elementus Cache, lost eighty percent, then the True Element Sect would merely negotiate the details with Venerable Spiritwalker, and take the portions they could from her. This would lead to Lin Ming having to share the training ground with other talents of the sect.

"..." Bai Yuxi was silent. And then, her eyes glossed over! She felt the world darken as her thoughts swirled about without order or linear function. With a sudden thud, she fell down on her side like a collapsing tower.

"Bai Yuxi!" Lin Xianxei called out in panic. She rushed forward to catch Bai Yuxi's head and sent a stream of gentle spiritual force into her body, inspecting her thoroughly. She felt her entire mind to be in chaos and her cultivation in disarray. She was close to cultivation deviation, short of outright losing control of her innate energies. If that happened...

Lin Xianxei violently paled. She hurriedly withdrew a vial that contained a radiant liquid of a cyan-color. It glinted with a sparkling light that was extremely animated, like the light itself was living. It was absolutely gorgeous.

Exalted Yu looked on with not a single ounce of surprise in his eyes, only curiously glancing at the vial. "Peak-tier, eighth-grade Spirit-Body-Mind Harmony Elixir?" After noting the contents, he was taken aback.

This was an extremely precious elixir used to stabilize wounds to the Spirit of Cultivation, and one's mind, body, and World Sea for a period. It could prevent cultivation deviation, even restore a cripple. However, it was extremely precious and could be considered as a pseudo ninth-grade alchemical product that only Mortal Sovereign Alchemists could concoct it without much issue.

Lin Xianxei didn't hesitate to slowly pour the ounce of liquid into Bai Yuxi's mouth, lifting her concealment veil and revealing her appearance to the world.

"...!" Lin Ming's eyes widened.

Chapter 597 - 592: Endless Issues

Lin Ming felt a gush of memories flow through his mind after Lin Xianxei lifted her veil, slowly pouring the contents of the vial inside her mouth. As Lin Xianxei eased it through the gap of her lips, she used a gentle strand of spiritual force to circulate throughout Bai Yuxi's system.

But what Lin Ming saw was truly too shocking!

"It's you!" He couldn't help but say, despite Bai Yuxi's unconscious state. This entire time, Bai Yuxi's face was concealed, and he was unable to view it. He didn't mind, however, as he knew this was a habit that outstandingly beautiful and talented women took to avoid trouble. Due to it, there were some shameless women who did it to place an alluring mystery on their unfathomable beauty, when that clearly isn't the case.

However, Bai Yuxi truly had such unfathomable beauty. Her arched brows, slim and trim, were placed perfectly on her egg-shaped face. Her pink lips that seemed as soft as water, as fluffy as cotton, and as sweet as candy were accompanied by long lashes that seemed capable of causing tornadoes in the heart with every movement.

Her face was totally symmetrical. An outrageous synchronicity that gave forth to an incredible harmonious scene. Despite her pale as ash countenance, her skin was flawless. There were times when women were described as having skin like jade, but from the gloss, sleek balance of colors, and skin without the slightest flaw, she truly seemed to have skin like jade!

But what shocked him wasn't her gorgeous looks that defied common sense, but the familiarity with her face!

When he fought Wei Wuyin, somehow, he had descended into an illusion where he claimed victory over Wei Wuyin, then another, and then his last opponent was her. They had met by chance on the Four Extreme Continent after she stumbled upon her bathing in a spring.

After a little tit-for-tat, they came across a treasure trove and were greeted by a contesting, arrogant Realmlord. They fought off the Realmlord with their united effort, and escaped with something in both their pockets. It was a tense, dangerous moment, yet they put aside their differences and worked together.

He had thought she was the Holy Daughter of Absolute Hot Fire, Tang Xingyun, who also helped him during his time to forge his Domain Seed.

Wait...

Then who was the Holy Daughter and why was she helping him?! Lin Ming's mind grew confused for a moment as he saw Bai Yuxi's pallid countenance regain its healthy gloss, reigniting her beauty again.

Lin Xianxue gave a heavy sigh of relief after seeing Bai Yuxi respond to the elixir, "She's stable."

Bai Yuxi had suffered damage to her soul, and the compounding stress had caused her cultivation to run amok, nearly claiming her life. This was serious. If this isn't dealt with, healed properly, she could become an invalid or thoroughly crippled, if not dead.

But Exalted Yu rubbed his chin and insensitively said, "I wonder what the Tang Clan is going to think when they learn the Enlightening Soul Pulse Elixir left behind by the King of Everlore isn't available to heal their Young Mistress? Hm, I wonder how the Imperial Clan will react?"

Lin Xianxue felt her heart stop for a moment. She slowly turned to Exalted Yu, her expression extremely dark, and she asked in a low, rumbling voice: "What?!" Her head turned to Lin Ming, who, upon recalling the details of the sixteen forces given to him by Tang Xingyun, he turned pale with a shudder.

Exalted Yu's amusement was endlessly revealed in his expression, "Bai Yuxi promised Tang Xingyun, the Young Mistress of the Tang Clan, three high-tier, ninth-grade Enlightening Soul Pulse Elixir from the Elementus Cache to heal herself. What? She didn't tell you? Well, the Tang Clan will certainly seek you out."

After that was said, he thought of something and added: "My task was to retrieve the Elementus Cache contents, but in case I wasn't able to, I'm to escort you to the True Element Sect to obtain the alternative form of payment and a safe trip. So, I'll let you guys discuss things. I'll just be tagging along for now." After Exalted Yu said this, he started to shimmer out of existence until his incarnation decomposed into energy.

With an unconscious Bai Yuxi and a vanished Exalted Yu, only Lin Xianxei and Lin Ming remained on the Voidship. She slowly encapsulated Bai Yuxi in gentle spiritual force to continuously monitor her condition, and turned to Lin Ming.

"Tell. Me. Everything."

After a full explanation of events, including his initial defeat at the hands of Wei Wuyin, means and sacrifices made to manifest his artificial Domain Seed, and the subsequent defeat and helplessness as Wei Wuyin took the Elementus Cache for himself, Lin Xianxei was finally no longer ignorant.

However, her expression was extremely dark, like cloudy night. Lin Ming was a promising youth with untapped potential, but this sh*tstorm was massive! To start, Lin Ming had lost to Wei Wuyin in the trial and was sealed, forcefully causing a Venerable to intervene.

A fact that would shatter all chances of legitimacy that Lin Ming had! It was even likely that Venerable Spiritwalker might blackmail her if she were to advocate for Lin Ming's status as a Chosen. After all, with a few words, her entire argument would collapse.

While this could be explained with and justified that Wei Wuyin used self-damaging enhancement methods to increase his strength, that could be easily dismissed! Why? Because Wei Wuyin comprehended Element Heart Intent! Because Wei Wuyin had the courage to make the sacrifice!

Couldn't Lin Ming also unleash self-damaging enhancement methods to match him? If not, then that's attributed to his uselessness and unwillingness to give it his all! After all, did Wei Wuyin not claim the Elementus Cache and all its resources? A risky gambler was far better than a cautious coward that whined and complained about fairness in the face of defeat.

One had grit.

One had no spine.

Lin Xianxei couldn't believe they kept this from her. So while she seemed gloomy on the outside, she was utterly raging on the inside. She could strangle someone!

The legitimacy detail wasn't even the worst. It was Wei Wuyin's absence! He was 'technically' a Chosen for the True Element Sect, and she was supposed to monitor the situation, yet she couldn't explain why he wasn't with her! When those addled-brained old farts questioned her, how should she respond?!

When she returned, everyone would likely already be made aware of two Chosens, since there's no way Exalted Yu said that the True Element Sect was being troubled without that being the case. But she'll have one. And not even the one who supposedly comprehended Element Heart Intent!

It didn't even end there!

Bai Yuxi and Tang Xingyun, both females of outstanding talent and beauty, need the high-tier, ninth-grade Enlightening Soul Pulse Elixir concocted by the King of Everlore! Both of which were women of heaven-reaching statuses, with Tang Xingyun being the youngest Young Mistress of the Noble Clan. With both of their souls damaged, this was a pressing matter!

The one who will demand answers, and likely vast compensation far beyond those elixir's worth, will be the backings of those two. And the chances of Lin Ming becoming a Chosen, heck, whether her faction would even accept him knowing the sheer troubles that'll follow, was infinitesimally low.

Yet the one who likely had the elixir, the 'second' Chosen, who should've been her responsibility, was not with her. That burning rage inside her heart made her feel queasy and unsettled. So much so that she had to close her eyes and think happy thoughts for a long while.

Lin Ming had his head down while he waited, not wanting to upset this Senior Sister of his, but his eyes blazed with the flames of rage. This was Wei Wuyin's fault! While he wasn't so narrow-minded and delusional to subtract his own responsibility, Wei Wuyin was the ignition point of all these problems!

His arrival to the new world that he had wanted for nearly two decades had been met with a relentless outpour of issues!

Lin Xianxei stood motionlessly for half an hour. When she finally moved, she activated the Voidship's flight formations, causing it to slowly move in a curved manner. She was clearly turning around!

Lin Ming couldn't help but ask, "Where are we going?"

Lin Xianxei was in a mood, unwilling to deal with Lin Ming. But after a while, she relented and answered.

"To find Wei Wuyin."

Chapter 598 - 593: Mystic Radiance Belt

Lin Xianxei, Lin Ming, and the unconscious Bai Yuxi, were situated on their Voidship looking out towards the myriad planets that littered their eyes. They came in all shapes and sizes, beautiful and gloomy, sparkling or dim, yet their eyes reflected not the appreciation of this gorgeous sight, but a sense of loss.

Lin Xianxei sighed, "We're fucked." She had never been one to use coarse language, but this was the perfect situation to do so.

Why?

BECAUSE WEI WUYIN WASN'T THERE!

After they left, they turned around to arrive at the Everlore Association's planet named Third Sky, a planet ruled by the San Clan of the Everlore Association within the Everlore Domain. They hosted the

recruitment of all the new talented inhabitants there, and sent off the others to the three Domains of their choice via a few large-sized Void Gates.

But when she arrived, asked about the whereabouts of Wei Wuyin, the only response those of the San Clan gave her was that there was no one amongst the populace of trillions with that name, cultivation level, and age range. It didn't stop there, of course!

As the Little Saintess of the True Element Sect, she had some persuasion power, so the San Clan delved further into the mystery. After a little bit of digging, it was discovered that several individuals had written the name 'Wei Wuyin' as one of their two connections.

But further investigation suggested that Wei Wuyin wasn't registered himself, but the group still met. When they interrogated a Qi Condensation Realm woman that had yet to leave, whose name was Mei Yang, they learned that Wei Wuyin wasn't present throughout the event. Others also corroborated this statement.

A cultivator like Mei Yang wasn't able to lie to them, so they accepted this after another verification from a woman by the name of Qin Rui, an Astral Core Realm cultivator, and the answer remained the same. As for where he went or how he vanished, they had no idea!

With the destruction of the starfield, there was no longer any evidence to pursue!

Still, they discovered another fascinating fact in their investigations. Prior to the World-Shifting Net's appearance, all the beasts and beastmen vanished without warning. Lin Ming was confused by this specific targeting, but Lin Xianxei was aware of the Everlore Association's preferences.

Someone very powerful must've taken action knowing that the Everlore Association was going to leave all those with beast bloodlines to die. Initially, they thought Wei Wuyin was taken, but they learned he was human, not a beastman from Qin Rui. After all, beastmen can only cultivate using their hearts, not their dantians, but Wei Wuyin had a Spirit of Cultivation in his dantian from an early age.

But the possibility that whoever took action also brought Wei Wuyin away was possible. The only question was: Who?

Unable to find the answer, they were left facing a brick wall without any tools. This left them standing on their Voidship staring blankly at the gorgeous scenery.

"Even if we continued searching, it's unlikely he's alive, right? Whoever took him must be unimaginably powerful." Lin Ming rationalized, feeling a surge of cooling relief in his heart. Without Wei Wuyin present, he felt confident in tiding any difficulties or obstacles in his future.

Lin Xianxei frowned, glancing at Bai Yuxi. "The Elementus Cache was likely their target." With a sigh, she leaned against the railing and showed off her exquisite curves. Lin Ming caught a glimpse and felt stunned. He had forgotten that his Senior Sister was a beauty for a moment.

He turned away, concealing his thoughts and asked: "It's not that much of an issue, right? Even if we don't have the Elementus Cache and the Enlightening Soul Pulse Elixir, we can commission it, right? You once told me this starfield has Mortal Sovereign Alchemists, even those that exceeded the Mystic-rank. We can then settle any debt right then."

Lin Xianxei gave Lin Ming a sidelong glance, her eyes staying on him for a moment before looking away. "Do you really think ninth-grade products grow on trees? That the Tang Clan is harmless? That the True Element Sect's situation is easily solvable?!"

"No. I'm not naïve, but you said—"

"I know what I said!" Lin Xianxei rose her voice, her frustration leaking from her every breath. Lin Ming started. He remained silent as he waited for Lin Xianxei to calm.

It took a while before her chest, that kept rising and falling in an alluring fashion, settled with a heavy sigh. "I'm sorry...You just don't know."

"Then tell me. I'm here now. I'm facing this world with you, so don't leave out vital details." Lin Ming urged. He only learned about the sixteen forces from the information orb left by Tang Xingyun. Lin Xianxei had kept so many details vague this entire time. It was such that he wasn't certain of her cultivation level or the highest cultivation in the starfield. He only knew snippets of the whole picture.

Lin Xianxei turned to Lin Ming, looked him into the eye, and stared. The two faced off without a single blink, with Lin Ming revealing a fierce resolve. Even though they were in a situation, when has he not been in one? No matter the obstacle, he refuses to give up or surrender to fate. If someone tells him that the shield was unbreakable, then he'll melt it down!

"Haaaa...Okay. I'll tell you then." Lin Xianxei couldn't help but be moved by Lin Ming's willpower. It reminded her why she gave him the token in the first place. Because he was unwilling to surrender in the face of any adversity, yet he had a heart of gold that knew how to repay kindness and enmity with a clear conscience.

"Where should we start?" She turned to face the Aeternal Sky Starfield's only sun.

And Lin Ming said, "What about there. Why is the Solar Star here surrounded by a white ring? What is it?" He had always been curious, but there never felt like the right time to ask.

Lin Xianxei nodded, "I guess starting from there is perfect. That's called a Mystic Radiance Belt. You should know that Solar Stars exude a unique energy that permeates the entire starfield, enables life, growth, and an outpour of special material. We cultivators call this energy—Essence. It is one of our four vital energies, alongside mental, physical, and obviously, spiritual, and it allows us to cultivate. This essence is filtered through different mediums, having different qualities as a result.

"Let's see...Essence typically has two forms, pure and converted. The purest form of Essence is just simply Essence, but when it is filtered through the Chill of the Dark Void, entering the atmospheric filters we call Sky Layers for planets, it becomes Astral Essence. This is still Pure Essence. Flat Continental Earths don't have the means to filter Astral Essence, so its diluted further until it becomes Qi Essence. Not the exact same Qi Essence we conjure ourselves during the Qi Essence Phase, but extremely similar.

"These pure-type Essences integrate with the plant life, terrain, natural environment, and based on the balance of energies and such, naturally produce materials we use for cultivation. This essence can even be condensed by other celestial bodies, purified by the World's Core, be it planet, flat continental earth, even lunar satellites and make essences stones.

"When essence is intermixed with a natural occurring will of the environment, unique essence materials can form. This is what we cultivators call a converted-type Essence. There's ranks and grades, with Mortal-rank materials having Qi-grade and Astral-grade. We even produce our own Qi Essence, forming the basis of our Spirit of Cultivation's body.

"When we mention unique Natal Souls or Astral Souls, they refer to the container of our Spirits of Cultivation formed by our Qi Essence, elevated to Astral Essence. Even a Astral Fire Soul is composed of converted-type Fire Essence or Astral Sword Soul is composed of converted-type Sword Essence.

"The Mystic Radiance Belt elevates this pure-type Essence into Mystic Essence, infusing it with traces of Mystic Intent. As for normal essence, it only has Mortal Intent.

"The Mystic Radiance Belt filters all essence exuding from our Aeternal Sky Solar Star and basks the entire starfield in its nourishing energies. This can improve cultivator's physique, innate talent, and even give birth to strange, otherworldly bloodlines!

"Even with the Mystic Radiance Belt, however, Qi Essence Stones and Astral Essence Stones still exist in most environments, but there's a slight chance that the amalgamation of Mystic Essence will form a Mystic Essence Stone that carries Mystic Intent. These are extremely valuable for those who wish to Ascend, absolutely priceless. There could even be a Mystic-Grade Essence Mines or Comets. Furthermore, it allows the birth of Mystic-Rank materials such as herbs, strange liquids, and such." Lin Xianxei marveled at the grandness of the belt, her eyes sparking with boundless reverence.

Lin Ming digested this information. So the Mystic Radiance Belt elevates the Starfield's ambient essence to beyond Mortal-rank, thereby increasing the quality of materials and cultivators? This was what he gathered from that long, detailed explanation.

It was also what he understood the purpose of having more than one Solar Star was. According to Lin Xianxei from before, multiple Solar Stars can elevate the growth and level of resources and suitable cultivation environments. There was even a time she mentioned a Starfield having seven Solar Stars!

"But how is it created?" Lin Ming followed up.

"Long ago, about twenty thousand years ago, Ascended spent centuries refining it. Half of them even gave up their lives to build it. It's the greatest formation we know of." The history of the Mystic Radiance Belt was never altered, showing the immense respect every passing era had for those heroes that gave them a better future.

"...Is it that difficult to create?" Lin Ming felt utter disbelief, his eyes shining with a similar glimmer. The thought of having three of them like his starfield made him brighten.

"Not only is it difficult and dangerous! It requires a natural Solar Star that is filled with Elemental Origin Energy, only birthed during the creation of a Stellar Region. It's..." Lin Xianxei halted her words, remembering the missing individual that comprehended Element Heart Intent.

Noticing her mood falling, Lin Ming asked: "What about alchemists?"

Chapter 599 - 594: Aeternal Sky Alchemists

"Alchemists..." Lin Xianxei was rather wistful as that term was mentioned, resonating with her Heart of Cultivation. In her eyes, they were of paramount importance to cultivators, especially those seeking to reach the highest peak.

The vast majority of high-level materials were extremely volatile, only being useful after years, sometimes decades of refinement, yet Alchemists turned the normally above ninety percent of cultivation resources in a starfield into incredible creations. Even those materials that were unable to be used for cultivation, such as the Soul Ash of Divine Jade, a result of failed Soul Impartations of the Heavens, can be turned into heaven-defying materials that can shatter the conventions of cultivation!

The one thing a starfield never lacked was materials. In fact, there was an overabundance of materials in the Imperial Dawn Starfield. It was so excessive that if all these materials were transformed into viable cultivation resources, the Myriad Yore Continent could convert almost all cultivators into the Ninth-Stage of the Qi Condensation Realm, with ample leftovers to spare for some Astral Core Realm Cultivators.

That was despite the Myriad Yore Continent being a flat continental earth unable to produce astral-grade materials.

The King of Everlore was the best example of this paramount importance. While residing in a starfield lacking a Mystic Radiance Belt, he was capable of personally producing numerous notable 'true' Mystic Ascendants, and with his casual support, several others at the Mystic Star Phase, the First Stage of the Myriad Ascendant Realm, such as the Bloodforge Emperor or the four Elementus Knights.

There was also Divine King Han Xei's Cousin, the Guardian of Elements, and even the Nine Worlds Fate Seer! While the latter was said to have no connection with the King of Everlore, it was extremely unlikely that the person hadn't acquired some product that was concocted by the King of Everlore, either by purchasing it or other means.

This was all in a Stellar Region considered 'desolate' by those like Wang Yutian!

While this revealed the absolute brilliance and outstanding talents that the King of Everlore possessed, supporting his astonishing legacy with every retelling of his achievements, it simultaneously highlighted the absolute potential of Alchemists!

Lin Xianxei's feelings as she spoke out that title was justified, every ounce of it. She slowly ran her hand through her hair, slowly closing her eyes as she took a deep breath. When she finally exhaled, she felt her thoughts clear.

"I've been purposefully avoiding this conversation, but you're right: You're now facing this world too. So I'll explain it," Lin Xianxei said her thoughts, revealing that her actions of avoiding this topic was intentional. Yet now, she was willing to divulge it all.

Lin Ming, however, was baffled. Was the topic of Alchemy taboo? While he, as a cultivator, understood its significance, he was someone who believed that hard work would overcome any and all shortcuts. That was why he wasn't dejected by losing to Wei Wuyin, believing he used self-damaging methods to temporarily elevate his strength.

As if reading his thoughts, Lin Xianxei continued: "You think alchemy is a shortcut, that it's an auxiliary path that only supports, highlighting the talent already present, nothing more, right?"

Lin Ming was startled initially. But after some thought, he reaffirmed his belief and nodded. "Since I was young, I have faced numerous so-called experts and elite geniuses that relied on alchemists, eating pills and drinking elixirs for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, yet they all fell short in the face of my own hard work. Their wealth and pills that they were so proud of was merely a crutch, and when faced with true talent and work ethic, they stumbled in defeat."

"..." Lin Xianxei actively listened, hearing the moulded mind and hardened belief behind those words. "I know. This is why I wanted to avoid the topic. Well, in some ways, you're not wrong. But you're also totally wrong."

Lin Ming knitted his brows. Regardless of Lin Xianxei's belief, his life's trajectory filled with obstacles and rich, pampered idiots courting death left him firm in his belief. It was this unshakeable belief that allowed him to train harder than anyone and always strive for greatness. After all, he had the courage to step onto the path of Elemental Origin.

Even Wei Wuyin in his younger years heavily debated doing so, the difficulty was not to be underestimated. There were still cultivators at the Realmlord level that hadn't even comprehended one of the five advanced Elemental Intents in their entire thousand years of life.

There were even cultivators who spent their hundred or so years of life forever at the Essence Flow Phase, the Second Stage of the Qi Condensation Realm, solely because they couldn't comprehend one of the four basic Elemental Intents.

If it wasn't for the trial's unique environmental period, the Season of Elements, specifically designed to help cultivators comprehend Elemental Intent, there would be almost no one who could become a Holy Candidate amongst the natives, excluding the very rare few.

"I..." Lin Xianxei was about to speak, to reveal her truest thoughts, but seeing the firm drive within Lin Ming's eyes, she inevitably hesitated. She kept her next words to herself, proceeding to explain with a faint smile: "In the Aeternal Sky Starfield, almost every force has their own alchemists. However, the alchemists beyond a certain level are widely known, to the point their exact number is public knowledge, even the faction they belong to. It is a point of pride to these forces.

"In the Tri-Vision Starfield you belonged to, referred to as the Everlore Starfield by those of this starfield, there were ranks to Alchemists. Here, it's mostly unchanged, but the conditions to be classified as a certain rank of alchemist, of a certain level, is different. It's more detailed and far more difficult to be recognized in comparison."

Lin Ming's brows lifted in interest. This was the topic he was interested in, because much like others, he held the King of Everlore's legend close to his heart. While he truly believed that alchemy wasn't everything to a cultivator, he understood that when used appropriately by a talented cultivator, they can achieve wonders.

Divine King Han Xei was the perfect example of this.

"In the Aeternal Sky Starfield, there's two main tiers: Neophyte Alchemist & Ranked Alchemist. Those Neophyte Alchemists are Alchemists that can concoct products up to the sixth-grade. They can only be considered Ranked Alchemists when they can concoct seventh-grade products to a certain standard."

Lin Ming interrupted, "Certain standard?" Lin Xianxei had mentioned twice now that the way an alchemist was determined and recognized was different from their starfield.

He tried to recall their starfield's requirements. It was...right, five percent success rate with a product of a certain grade and an acceptable refinement time. This gated many alchemists however, with quite a few being outrageously slow yet consistent or fast and with an even more pathetic success rate. This led to some Lord Alchemists successfully concocting seventh-grade products, yet unable to become King Alchemists.

Lin Xianxei elaborated, "To be considered a Ranked Alchemist, of any rank, be it Mortal or Mystic, one needs to have a success rate of twenty percent or above! Only low-quality products counted. Moreover, they must be able to concoct a high-quality product of the tier in their desired rank's grade."

"..." Lin Ming's heart skipped a beat. "Did that mean...?"

Lin Xianxei solemnly nodded, "Yes. To be considered an Alchemic King of the Mortal-rank, one must be able to concoct a low-tier, seventh-grade product with a twenty percent success rate out of a certain number of tries.

"Despite this, our Aeternal Sky Starfield has billions, hundreds of billions, of alchemists beneath the King Alchemist level, and has billions of King Alchemists, and millions of Emperor Alchemists. To be exact, it has 3,549,331 active Emperor Alchemists since I last checked."

Lin Ming's heart didn't just skip a beat, he went full stop.

WHAT?!

When his heartbeat resumed, it started to wildly race. Wasn't that too exaggerated? Their entire starfield only had thousands of Alchemic Kings and a dozen or so Emperor Alchemists! Yet millions here?! MILLIONS?!

The sheer disbelief exuding from his eyes was almost tangible, enough to nearly grab it!

But Lin Xianxei wasn't as excited, continuing with an indifferent tone: "There are three divisions to each rank. They are: Official, Prime, Grand. There are also divisions for the three tiers of products: Low, High, & Peak. If a King Alchemist can meet the requirements of twenty percent success rate in concocting peak-tier products for their grade, any product, they will be called Grand Alchemic Kings.

"Can you guess how many of those over three million Emperor Alchemists are beyond the Official division?" Lin Xianxei asked with a faint smile, her eyes glinted with slight amusement.

"...uh, two hundred thousand? No! Uhm, fifty thousand!" Lin Ming thought his first guess was a little too high, so he reduced it to a fourth. But when he saw the amused light increase in her eyes, he knew he was off.

Not holding back any longer, she said: "Five. Hundred. And. Four." She stated each word clearly, causing Lin Ming to reel. What? Five hundred and four?

504?

Just 504 Alchemists beyond Official? Out of three million?!

What the fu-

Chapter 600 - 595: Sixteen Greatest Forces

In spite of Lin Ming's speechless expression, Lin Xiaixen continued with a hint of satisfaction. "Those at the Official Alchemic King level can be considered capable of concocting low-tier, eighth-grade products effectively, yet the disparity between Official and Prime was a huge chasm of difference."

Huge chasm?

The difference went from over three million to five hundred and four! Senior Sister, I think your understanding of a huge chasm should be changed!

While Lin Ming felt utterly stunned and somewhat appalled, he wasn't slow. Quickly, he followed-up with his own question: "Why is the difference between two tiers so massive? Isn't it just low-tier and high-tier within the same grade?"

Lin Xianxei nodded in approval, but said: "It's not so simple. There's two core factors for this glaring gap. One, Alchemic Talent. Two, Cultivation. Alchemic Talent, like other forms of innate talent, is divided into the five levels: Null, Standard, Excellence, Overlord, & Chosen. This is further divided by three grades in each, all except Null, which are Earthly, Worldly, and Heavenly.

"To cultivate a Spirit of Cultivation, let's say a Natal Fire Soul, one must have a Heavenly Standard-level of talent. This is relatively simple for basic things, and it can even be improved upon by the birthing of Intent. This is why almost, if not all, cultivators at the Elemental Birth Phase can create Spirits of Cultivation relating to the four elements."

Lin Ming hadn't known that talent was divided in such a clear-cut fashion. While he knew what it meant, which was the body's overall compatibility with certain types of energies, he didn't know the levels were defined. Yet this could even affect the strength of the innate energies one's Spirit of Cultivation produces.

"The reason why there is such a large gap is because a certain control and quality of generated Alchemical Energies is required to consistently concoct high-tier eighth-grade products. This can be overcome by an Alchemic Soul, like that so-called Qingye Ying of your starfield, high level of natural talent towards alchemy, such as Wei Wuyin, or a high cultivation, such as a Mystic Star Phase Cultivator. But most alchemists are unable or unwilling to cultivate an Alchemic Soul, for obvious reasons, or just unable to due to lacking innate talent.

"It can also be completed by abusing others, creating Alchemic Proxies. But the last force that tried to do so was wiped off the face of this world in three days by the Everlore Association. Almost a billion died in that time. And no other force interfered, even offering their approval. Because Alchemists can not be defiled—Remember that."

"..." When Lin Ming heard Wei Wuyin's name, his mood fell and his anger resurged, almost missing out on the next words that were said. While Lin Xianxei hadn't gone too in-depth as to why there was a

dividing line between low-tier and high-tier eighth-grade products, he couldn't help but recall Wei Wuyin's outstanding performance and victory over an Alchemic Astral Soul cultivator.

"How high does one's talent need to be to exceed an Alchemic Astral Soul?" Lin Ming asked, feeling a tense, uncomfortable lump in his heart.

"Alchemic Astral Soul? I don't know, but Alchemic Natal Soul? At least a Heavenly Excellence level. However, that Qingye Ying isn't a true Alchemic Astral Soul Alchemist despite her Alchemic Astral Soul." Lin Xianxei shrugged at Lin Ming's focus on Wei Wuyin.

"Huh?"

"That Qingye Ying used an Impure-quality Everlore Ascension Pill, a ninth-grade product, while in the Qi Condensation Realm. The impurities that she consumed on that day ruined her talent, every level of it. Not just her Alchemic Talent, but her talent towards all forms of essences in this world. She lost against Wei Wuyin because she was a tenth of a true alchemist, barely better than a normal Natal Soul, at best. Otherwise, how could she be defeated by Wei Wuyin?" Lin Xianxei had investigated Qingye Ying out of curiosity, noting the formations acting as artificial meridians to upkeep her cultivation base.

"...No wonder." There was an audible sigh from his chest after hearing that. He had thought Wei Wuyin was truly the next King of Everlore!

As if reading his thoughts, Lin Xianxei revealed another truth. "Becoming a Mortal Sovereign Alchemist is even harder. As I said, it requires two things, but for talent, to become a Mortal Sovereign Alchemist, you NEED to have an Alchemic Astral Soul. That or a 'true' Mystic Ascendant Realm cultivation."

Lin Ming's eyes lit. "Are there Mortal Sovereign Alchemists in the Aeternal Sky Starfield?" The King of Everlore had been the only one in the history of the Everlore Starfield to have reached that level. He defined eras for thousands of years!

Lin Xianxei's expression became solemn, and she nodded heavily, wistfully gazing at the Mystic Radiance Belt. "There are. Thirty-four, in fact."

Thirty-four?!

"That's..." Lin Ming couldn't help but feel like there was something strange with Lin Xianxei's answer. Instead of provoking awe, it provoked curiosity. Why so many? How so many? The sheer unbelievable aspect of it caused him to not have any extreme reaction.

"However, don't get your expectations high or fall into delusions of acquiring their help on your path of cultivation without tremendous fortune. Mortal Sovereign Alchemists are highly regarded figures, and insufferably arrogant. The title 'Mortal Sovereign' fits them perfectly. All thirty-four Mortal Sovereign Alchemists belong to one of the sixteen greatest established forces. They all have a minimum of one, with the Everlore Association having a total of twelve."

"The Eight Noble Clans, Three World Sects, Two Golden Pavilions, and Two Mystic Associations?" Lin Ming asked.

Lin Xianxei looked surprised by Lin Ming's knowledge of the subject. She could only attribute it to Bai Yuxi. "The eight Noble Clans consist of the Tang Clan, Ming Clan, He Clan, Liu Clan, Chen Clan, Bing Clan,

Yu Clan, and Jian Clan. They each are like rulers of their own dynasties, controlling planets, numerous World Realms, and hundreds of billions of lifeforms.

"The Three World Sects are our very own True Element Sect, the tyrannical Boundless Martial Sect, and the incredibly elusive Void Voyage Sect. In truth, the Void Voyage Sect doesn't own any planets or space in our Aeternal Sky Starfield, but they have World Realms embedded in the folds of space. World Realms that are said to be constantly moving about everywhere. But the fact they're considered a World Sect should be a strong indicator of their reputation and strength.

"The Two Golden Pavilions are the Golden Life Pavilion, the most business oriented force, and the most widespread. They have bases and dealings in almost every domain with most forces, excluding the Imperial Sky Domain and Nine Worlds Domain, which belong to the Imperial Clan and Golden Gate Pavilion respectively.

"As for the Golden Gate Pavilion, they are extremely mysterious, but they focus on information gathering, establishing rankings, and organizing events, but dabble in goods. They're one of the most feared forces, simply because their intelligence network is utterly terrifying. The Imperial Clan, at one point, even wanted to remove them after they released a Ranking List that detailed information about their secretly cultivated geniuses. They failed, of course."

Lin Ming mused. Nine Worlds Domain? Reminded him of something, yet he couldn't quite recall.

"Lastly, the two Mystic Associations. They are the renowned Everlore Association and the Godforge Association! The former needs no explanation, and the latter specializes in the Dao of Forging. They create nearly 90% of all Mystic-level tools in the starfield. Such as Bai Yuxi's veil..."

While Lin Ming was aware of this information thanks to Tang Xingyun, he frowned slightly.

However, Lin Xianxei abruptly jolted upright without warning!

Lin Ming started, taking a step back. "What's wrong?"

Lin Xianxei brightly smiled and her sudden movements caused her proud and ample twin peaks to bounce, and if it wasn't for her current disguise, perhaps the entire Solar Star would pale in comparison to this alluring sight. "I know how we can find where beasts and beastmen were taken!"

After saying that with boisterous excitement, she took the helm of the ship and activated its movement formations. With a steady shift, it started to fly through the Dark Void.

Lin Ming's heart continuously shook. Wherever the beasts went, it likely indicated where Wei Wuyin was! If they could find Wei Wuyin, wouldn't they solve all these pesky issues?! After all, he had the Elementus Cache!

As they moved, following closely behind them was the large-sized Voidship with 'Spiritwalker' on its hull.