

Chapter 2611

There was a smile on Fane's lips before he said, "You said he was forced, so who was it who forced him? Why would they force him when everyone knows he has a grudge against me? Harold using Michael to try to kill me is something we all know, so why are you trying to say that he was forced?"

After saying all of that, Fane looked up at Elder Rick with a serious expression. Elder Rick must be Harold's backer, that was something incredibly obvious. Otherwise, he would not be protecting Harold and Johnson.

He had so calmly twisted the truth, helping Harold shed any responsibility.

When Elder Baggin heard all of that, he nodded as he ran his hand through his beard, "You bring up some good questions, but before he answers you, let me ask you something first. We've not even explained the details of the matter yet, but you seem to know what happened?"

Fane turned to look at Elder Baggin. Elder Baggin had a sharp look in his eyes, but Fane could tell that Elder Baggin was different. He was not helping Harold. Elder Baggin looked old, but there was an air of sternness to him.

He was obviously someone with a fierce sense of justice. Fane was incredibly confident with someone like that in front of So f him.

If the three out of the two of them were on Harold's side, then it would be useless even if Fane told the truth to everyone present. Fane nodded as he answered earnestly, "After we left the transfer array, we met Harold. He asked me why I wasn't dead. The moment I heard him say that I was very curious. After mulling over it for a long time, I finally understood why he asked me that."

Harold could not stop himself from looking at Fane before he voiced out, "That's a load of crap! When did I ever ask why you weren't dead?"

However, he was shot down by a sharp look from Elder Rick the moment he said that. Harold's whole body shook, obviously afraid of Elder Rick. At that moment, even if he had the guts to try and defend himself, he was still forced to swallow his words.

Fane turned to look at Elder Rick and continued, "I've answered the question, so could Elder Rick answer me now?"

Elder Rick raised an eyebrow, maintaining his warm smile on his face. However, Fane felt like his warm and gentle face hid a sense of viciousness in it.

Elder Rick smiled and answered, "In truth, this matter is actually your problem in the end."

After he said that, Fane was incredibly confused. Was it Fane's own fault that someone was trying to kill him? Elder Rick's words were quite amazing!

Elder Rick continued to say, "You don't have to be so excited, and you don't have to question me. I'm speaking the truth. You offended someone outside. Harold says that it was a man in black clothes.

"That man suddenly captured Harold when Harold headed out. Harold was fed poison and forced to arrange for someone to kill you. That's because you haven't gone out ever since you entered Phoenix Valley, and the man did not know when you would leave.

"He was forced to try to kill you, which was why everything happened. Harold was helpless to do anything. If he had not been fed poison, he would definitely not have done any of that."

After Elder Rick said all that, Rudy was so furious his whole body was trembling. Even his face was pale. Fane had his eyebrows furrowed as he felt a deep rage in his heart.

Chapter 2612

Elder Rick really was incredibly silvertongued. With just a few words, he had basically dismissed all of Harold's wrongdoings. He was so shameless it rendered Fane speechless. Elder Zhou did not care how the two of them reacted and instead pointed right at Langston who was kneeling on the ground.

"Langston is a close brother of Michael's. Before Michael went to Holy Soul Mountain, he handed the contract with Harold to Langston for safekeeping. If any accidents happened, Langston would bring the contract out."

Fane raised a hand to interrupt Elder Rick as he earnestly asked, "I don't have anyone with a grudge against me outside. I've never heard of some black-clothed man before. This was obviously all fabricated by Harold to clear his name.

"Why do you trust his words so much? If I've done something and just casually made up some black-clothed man, would I be able to clear my own name as well?"

Elder Rick let out a slight laugh as he said casually, "This black-clothed man isn't someone who was just casually made up. If the black-clothed man did not exist, then how did Michael die?

"The deacons who helped send Michael to Holy Soul Mountain have all been interrogated by us. After they were interrogated, they only offered one answer.

"They did do all of it for the sake of Harold's money, but they only helped send Michael in. They did not send a second ; person through the array. After our investigations, the deacons were

definitely telling the truth. So other than all of you at Holy Soul Mountain, there should be someone else there!"

Fane raised an eyebrow and almost laughed out loud. Elder Rick actually managed to say those words. Even the black-clothed man who did not exist sounded so realistic.

Elder Rick continued after seeing that Fane was silent, "We sent our people to investigate Holy Soul Mountain. After a series of investigations, there was no one there at all.

"All of this proves that Harold was right. The black-clothed man had actually broken through the barrier and entered Holy Soul Mountain to find you." E

Fane smiled as he asked, "Then why am I fine right now, and the one who died was Michael?"

Elder Rick said in an incredibly calm tone, "That's because their negotiations broke down. Harold agreed to give Michael a portion of his resources, and the blackclothed man had agreed to give Michael something as well.

"However, the man clearly regretted it and ended up killing Michael himself. All of this makes sense."

Fane could no longer hold himself back from laughing after hearing all that crap. Elder Eliot frowned and said sternly, "What are you laughing at? Do you know where you are right now? You can't just laugh you feel like it..." when 3

ll in Fane's lips twitched helplessly, unable to himself from smiling, "You're really stop not holding back at all to clear his name. You're even willing to say such nonsensical things.

"That black-clothed man risked his life in order to kill me, but he somehow regretted it? This makes no sense!"

Elder Rick did not look angered at all by Fane's laughter, and instead said calmly, "Why doesn't it make sense? It's not like something like this has never happened before. On top of that, Michael's temper is quite bad. The two of them ended up in a conflict and the black-clothed man accidentally killed Michael. It's entirely possible."

Chapter 2613

Fane nodded, "Even if you insist that it's all true, you still can't explain the most important thing. If the black-clothed man is so capable, why isn't he moving alone?"

"Can't he just kill me himself? Why would he need to work together with Michael? This makes no sense!"

Elder Baggin nodded at Fane's words as he stood up from his chair, "Fane is right. If this black-clothed man is so capable, he wouldn't need to waste so much of his effort, even risking being found out. Why would he leave the corpse on a trail that alchemists would definitely pass? It's as if he wanted someone to find it!"

Elder Rick frowned after he heard that, turning around to look for everyone, "This is a problem I still haven't figured out to this day, but from the leads, Harold seems to be speaking the truth.

"He was being threatened. He might be in the wrong here as well, but his crimes aren't so bad that he needs to die. He should just be punished a little..."

Fane laughed coldly, "None of these clues can prove that he was forced. The blackclothed man doesn't exist at all. He's just claiming all of this to clear his name. It's all fabricated!

"You can't back him so blindly just because he has a good relationship with you! So many people saw the corpse then, and they are allowed an explanation. If you brush it off just like that, you'll just be making a joke of yourself!"

As he said that, Elder Rick's warm face had completely cooled. Harold loudly shouted, "How dare you speak to Elder Rick like this?!"

Fane raised an eyebrow as he said in a nonchalant manner, "If Elder Rick is fair and just and acts as an elder, I'd naturally respect him. However, Elder Rick has been trying to defend you from the very start to clear your name. Why would I need to be polite?"

Elder Rick narrowed his eyes as his tone became incredibly cold, "Your words aren't merely casual remarks. You'll have to take responsibility for them.

"What do you mean by me defending him? You're saying that I favor him? Everything I'm doing is to stop an innocent person from being falsely accused."

Fane smiled as he matched Elder Rick's gaze fearlessly, "Elder Rick's words sound so noble. Don't you think they're hilarious?"

Elder Rick said in a righteous manner, "The truth is right in front of you. Without that black-clothed man, how did Michael die? Could he have killed himself?"

"He had already signed a contract with Harold to kill you, but you're not dead. Yet, Michael is dead, which can only prove the existence of that person. Furthermore, it's just like Harold had said, Harold is also a victim.

"We managed to find poison in his body. He really was poisoned by something incredibly strong. If it went on for a month without an antidote, Harold would be dead!"

Fane took a deep breath, feeling more and more amused by everything. Harold really did use all sorts of ways to try to clear his name. He even fed poison to himself.

However, the poison must be timed. As long as the antidote was talent, everything would be fine. Fane had to admit that Harold was quite smart. Since Michael had died in unknown circumstances, he had taken a hold of that point to fabricate someone who did not exist.

Chapter 2614

He used that fabricated person to clear his own name and prove to everyone that he was a victim as well. He had done all of that out of desperation. Fane could not help but turn to look at Harold.

At that moment, Harold seemed much calmer as he matched Fane's gaze in an uncaring manner. It was as if he wanted to say that, no matter what Fane said that day, they would be spared punishment.

It was because they had the support of Elder Rick. Rudy looked at Fane nervously. At that moment, Rudy felt like he was going to be angered to death.

The two of them were too despicable. They had twisted the truth so much that it was not believable anymore. It caused Rudy to feel like spitting blood.

That feeling tormented Rudy. It was as if someone was accusing him of something he did not do, but he was unable to defend himself.

Rudy looked up at Fane. He had even made the determination that even if the situation was being turned around like that by Elder Rick, he would absolutely stand up and expose everything. He was not willing to just suffer like that.

Fane did not bother with Rudy's anxious expression. He turned to look at Elder Eliot and Elder Baggin. Elder Baggin stared at everyone present with a stern expression while Elder Eliot was staring right at him.

It seemed both questioning and doubtful. From their expressions, Fane understood what the two of them were thinking about.

Elder Baggin was the one in the highest position, so he naturally wanted to get to the bottom of it and determine right from wrong. He wanted to deliver justice to everyone present. Meanwhile, Elder Eliot did not believe any of Elder Rick's words.

Elder Eliot looked at Fane that way because Elder Eliot wanted Fane to say something. Looking at their expressions, Fane's thoroughly relaxed.

He turned to face Elder Rick and said, "So the key question remains on the existence of the black-clothed man?"

Elder Rick nodded as he furrowed his eyebrows. He said with a curious voice, "I know there are still many questions about this matter. If we want to clear everything up, then we need to find that person. However, we already put in a lot of effort but to no avail.

"That person could not be found, so all we can do is to trust what Harold said was true. I know you still have your doubts, and you're not willing to believe all of this because of your grudges against Harold, but there's no other way.

"That's because all of the evidence points toward what Harold says being true. He did all of that because he was threatened. If he had not been forced to ingest the poison, nothing would have happened. In the end, the problem lies in the enemies you've made for yourself. Don't you think I'm right, Fane?"

Rudy's face was absolutely red in anger. He attempted to rush forward, but he was stopped by Fane. Elder Rick's words had gone too far. It was one thing to twist the truth, but he was even pinning everything on Fane.

It was absolutely petty. Even Elder Eliot's eyes were raised as he looked at Elder Rick in disdain. Even though Elder Eliot did not say anything, he still knew that Elder Rick was trying to defend Harold and Johnson.

Elder Baggin understood that as well, but Elder Baggin did not say anything because there was nothing he could do. Elder Eliot did not have enough evidence to make any judgments.

Fane suddenly let out a laugh as he looked at Elder Rick with an incredibly mocking expression.

Chapter 2615

"Elder Rick, you really are the most silvertongued person I've ever met. You're really capable of twisting the truth as well. Since you all want to know the truth, then let me tell you the truth. The so-called blackclothed man doesn't exist at all, I was the one who killed Michael!"

The moment he said that everyone présent was stunned. Even the three who were kneeling down on the floor looked up at Fane at the same time. Everyone had looks of shock and doubt in their eyes.

They were shocked that Fane said he had killed Michael while they doubted the truth of Fane's words. Fane did not care how they were looking at him.

He walked forward and stopped in front of Harold before he suddenly laughed coldly, "Did you think that these lies you made up would be able to clear your name even though they had some holes in them?"

Harold frowned as he shouted, "What kind of nonsense are you spouting? I've never planned on clearing my name! Everything I did was because I was forced.

"If the black-clothed man wasn't there, why would I have ever done something so absurd? Do you think I don't know how horrible the consequences would be for me if anyone found out about it?"

Looking at Harold's righteous indignation, Fane felt even more amused. He suddenly reached out and grabbed Harold's collar before allowing the power in his body to explode outward.

The power of a spring solidifying realm expert filled the place. In a flash, everyone widened their eyes, refusing to believe what they were feeling was real.

Fane had just tugged Harold's collar, but Harold ended up being picked up by Fane like a little chicken.

Fane raised an eyebrow as he said, "Your plan was honestly flawless. You bribed the deacons to send Michael to Holy Cloud Mountain. Once everyone was transferred over, he would quickly follow me and kill me.

"You hate me so much, but never tried to do anything to be yourself because you knew you were no match for me. The second reason was the fact that our identification badges are all being observed by the scroll. If I die, your identification badge will expose your location! You didn't want to take the risk, so you plotted out this plan."

As he said that, Fane grabbed onto Harold's collar tightly as he flashed a cold smile, "However, you would never have believed that Michael would amount to nothing in front of me! He's only at the initial stage of the spring solidifying realm, he was no match for me!"

Those words stunned everyone there, be it Harold who was being grabbed by Fane, or Johnson who was still kneeling on the ground. Everyone stared at Fane with widened eyes and a gaping mouth as they stared at the two of them with looks of disbelief.

However, the power that Fane was exuding was definitely not fake. Fane had absolutely broken into the spring solidifying realm and was even an expert within that realm. Other than Rudy, everyone else present was stunned.

After all, Fane's strength had shattered all of their common knowledge. Those who walked the path of alchemy would always end up using a lot of their time on alchemy.

They would have far too little time for martial arts, and would naturally not be able to go far in the martial path. Yet, Fane was a sixth-grade alchemist who was already in the spring solidifying realm. For someone at such an age to achieve that made him an absolute genius.

Harold trembled as he shouted, "Impossible! This is absolutely impossible! You're an alchemist, how could you have any time to train? You can't be in the spring solidifying realm. You can't be, Fane!"

Chapter 2616

Harold, already crumbling in chaos at that moment, frantically tried to find an excuse for himself, but Elder Baggin had interjected him with a deep frown and a sharp stare. "Shut up right now! Since Fane is this strong, then all questions have been answered. There's no black-clothed man, and you were threatened at all. If Fane hadn't surprised us with his strength, your plan would've gone perfectly.

"Fane would've died on Holy Cloud Mountain, and you'd rid yourself of a source of hatred. Since you weren't by Fane's side at the time, the higher-ups wouldn't be suspicious of you at all!

"It's just your poor luck that the assassin you sent was no match for Fane, and your plan failed horrendously. Fane, did you deliberately place the corpse where people would pass by?"

Fane nodded. "If I had just spoken the truth, no one would have believed me. It was better if I put the corpse in front of everyone and had Elder Eliot investigate.

"I was sure that Harold thought his plan was flawless, that it wouldn't be traced back to him at all."

Johnson collapsed on the floor as he mumbled, "So there really wasn't anyone else..."

That question had plagued Johnson for a long time. Michael's death had been far too strange. Even after so much trouble, no one else was found at Holy Cloud Mountain at all, so who had harmed Michael?

Who placed that corpse there?

Even though they had crafted a lie, Johnson had been bogged down with fear, swallowed with his worry that the killer behind the scenes would pop up and overturn all of their lies.

Fane let go of his right hand, and the palefaced Harold fell to the floor. Even if he tried to give himself any excuses, Harold had no way of saving his skin anymore.

Fane turned to look at Elder Rick before he let out a laugh. "Elder Rick, do you have anything else to say? Do you want to find more evidence to defend them?"

The calm smile had disappeared from Elder Rick's face. He narrowed his eyes slightly as he shot Fane a cold glare as though warning him.

Fane, however, could care less. Elder Rick might be an elder, but it was precisely because of that that Elder Rick would not be able to act against Fane easily. As long as Fane managed to get to a high-enough position, Elder Rick would not be able to cause him too much trouble.

Elder Rick suddenly chuckled. "So that's how things were. I can't believe I was actually fooled by the two of them. They seemed so sincere, so I had thought that everything was true. Alas, I was too naive; I believed them too easily."

In just a few words, Elder Rick had wiped his hands clean of any dirt and responsibility. It was as if all those insulting words were only said by him because someone else had fooled him.

Fane's lips twitched when he heard all of that. Even he had to be somewhat impressed by Elder Rick's silver tongue.

Harold abruptly looked up at Elder Rick, but Elder Rick was already intent on clearing his own name and turned away completely, no longer looking at Harold at all.

Harold's entire body froze as he realized he was done for.

He had wanted to beg Elder Rick to say something for them at that moment...but he understood that someone like Elder Rick would avoid anything that would implicate himself at all costs.

"Alright. With things as they are, everyone already knows that there's no blackclothed man," concluded Elder Baggin coldly. "Michael died by Fane's hand, so there's nothing else to say.

"The culprit is Harold with Johnson as his accomplice. Both of you won't be able to escape your punishment anymore. Men, lock them both up!"

Chapter 2617

After both Harold and Johnson were dragged away, Elder Baggin looked at Fane with a genial expression. He saw and admitted to himself how memorable of a person Fane was; he was no doubt impressive in every aspect.

Elder Baggin had wanted to say a few more words but stopped himself after thinking about it. After all, they had just sentenced people to a crime.

He coughed lightly before addressing Fane, "You can head back for now. The matter has already been investigated. As for what punishment Harold and Johnson will get...

"You don't have to worry about it; they'll get what they deserve. I'll have the punishment we decide on passed on to you via your runner disciple. You can go back now."

Fane nodded, not adding anything else to the conversation as he left the Elder Hall with Rudy in tow. The two of them went very quickly but slowed down in the middle, mainly because Rudy felt erratic.

Fane, on the other hand, was rather calm and maintained a very casual expression the whole time.

"That shameless Elder Rick. He actually tried to pin the blame on us!" hissed Rudy. "When I heard his nonsense, I nearly rushed forward and fought him!"

Fane looked at Rudy, a small crack in his expression as he seemed mildly irked. "I need to advise you on something: you should always think things through thoroughly before doing anything in the future. You should calm yourself and think of what the consequences of your impulsiveness would be.

"If you had rushed forward and picked a fight at that moment, they would've used that as an excuse to lock you up forever. Things wouldn't end up well at all."

Fane could not help the frown from forming on his face at the thought of how Rudy could have cussed and shouted back there. With that, he grabbed Rudy's arm and stopped the guy in his tracks.

"You're not allowed to be so impulsive in the future. You doing that does nothing other than give me more trouble!"

Rudy's face froze in guilt upon hearing this. He knew that Fane was right. If he had been just a bit more reckless back then, he would have brought trouble to Fane too.

However, Rudy felt like he had already done his best in controlling himself, and Elder Rick had gone too far. Just thinking about Elder Rick filled Rudy with anger, but in the end, Rudy merely sighed in worry.

"I think that Elder Rick will have a grudge against us from now on. Will he try to do anything to us?"

Fane nodded and said without any hesitation, "That's to be anticipated."

Rudy got nervous the moment he heard that. "Well, what should we do? Are we supposed to just wait for him to try and pull something against us? Won't we end up at a huge disadvantage?"

Fane raised an eyebrow and said, "You don't have to worry about that. Even if he wanted to, he'd only be looking to cause me trouble. What of it, then? If he dares to do that to me, I guarantee you he won't have a good time."

Rudy nodded, trusting in Fane's abilities. As long as Fane can scale the ranks, Elder Rick would not be able to do anything to Fane.

Rudy sighed. "What kind of punishment do you think they'll be given? Will they just be expelled?"

Fane shook his head, thinking of Elder Baggin's expression. Fane felt like the punishment would definitely not be light, and merely being expelled was far too lenient.

Chapter 2618

Fane turned to look at Rudy with a calm expression. "You're seeing things too lightly. How could expelling Harold and Johnson be a punishment? Think about what they did.

"Even if Harold is talented, geniuses are the one thing Phoenix Valley doesn't need. A genius that hasn't done anything wrong will naturally benefit Phoenix Valley greatly after they're cultivated, but a genius that has done much wrong is a tumor that needs to be removed."

Rudy earnestly listened to Fane's words.

True, Harold had tried to use an assassin to kill another alchemist in Phoenix Valley due to his jealousy, and he had even bribed a deacon of Phoenix Valley. He had basically ignored all of Phoenix Valley's regulations.

In truth, Fane being dead or alive was not that important to Phoenix Valley. However, Harold's actions were what broke through the bottom line.

If Phoenix Valley allowed that behavior, worse things would happen in the future. When Rudy thought of that, he could not help but say, "Those two are going to die, then!"

Fane raised an eyebrow before he shook his head immediately, to which Rudy looked at Fane with a strange expression. "TThey'll survive? Then, that punishment..."

However, Fane turned before Rudy could finish and solemnly spoke, "Sometimes, death is actually a blessing. The two of them will definitely be made an example of.

"Based on what I know, Harold doesn't really come from an impressive background. He merely used his talents to curry favor with a few elders in Phoenix Valley.

"This time, Elder Rick probably stepped up to help Harold because he promised Elder Rick a thing or two. He'd probably agreed to do a lot of things for Elder Rick after he became a seventh-grade alchemist."

Chills ran down Rudy's neck when he heard this, his lips twitching as he incredulously replied, "So you're telling me the punishment will have them wishing they were dead?"

Fane nodded. Even though the two of them had already been taken away, Elder Baggin had yet to specify Harold's punishment. With what Harold had done, they would have to give Harold an incredibly harsh sentence as a warning to everyone in Phoenix Valley.

Everyone had to see that that was the consequences that would befall those who did such things.

Fane looked at Rudy's pale face and furrowed his eyebrows strangely. "You look like you're sympathizing with Harold. Do you think that punishment is too harsh?"

Rudy shook his head vigorously at that. "How could I feel that way? I'd rather he suffer alive! Though, I started to wonder what'll happen if Phoenix Valley's ruthless methods start to come our way..."

Rudy could not bring himself to continue his train of thought.

Fane frowned, feeling like Rudy seemed to have an obsession with linking everything bad to himself.

Fane turned around and said, "Cast aside all those nonsensical thoughts. You keep tying yourself to everything and causing your own mood to plummet. Aren't you tired of it?"

Rudy took a deep breath, unable to say anything about it.

Fane could not be bothered to dwell on the topic, so he looked up into the distance. "I'm going to the Hall of Wishes. Are you coming?"

Chapter 2619

Rudy had a long face when he heard Fane's words. "Fane, can't you just take a break? You're already so talented, but you insist on being so hardworking still. Me? I'm like a pile of poo on the roadside!"

Fane raised an eyebrow helplessly. "That's why you should come with me. It's pointless to stay here and whine about everything the whole day. Your talents are already lacking in the first palace, and if you don't start working hard and end up with a zero again in the next test, Elder Eliot may very well expel you!"

Rudy, however, nodded gleefully at that. "I wish he would! I can't stand staying here anymore. So many things have been happening lately, and it feels like I'm constantly living in fear. I'll start praying if I don't leave this place soon!"

Fane rolled his eyes and ignored Rudy.

The Hall of Wishes still looked the same as usual. However, for some reason, there seemed to be a lot fewer alchemists than usual that day. Fane noticed it and thought about it for a moment before shaking off the thought.

Fane did not want to waste any brainpower on useless matters at that moment. The only thing he wanted to do was to improve himself constantly.

He needed to get better to attract the attention of the higher-ups in Phoenix Valley. Only then would he be able to get even more resources, and even people like Elder Rick would not be able to try anything foolish.

Others might have stepped back if they butted heads with Elder Rick; they would not have been so obstinate. Fane did not think in that way.

Elder Rick was the one who provoked him first, so Fane would naturally not bother being polite with things.

Fane entered a room in the Hall of Riches,

and the pill aura was incredibly dense. He eventually found a room at the corner. After entering, he threw himself into forming pill runes. The most important part of alchemy was the formation and fusion of pill runes.

Fane already knew how each pill rune was drawn, but his body could not completely keep up with his memories at that moment. All he could do was get used to it, one step at a time. That was why Fane had still never refined seventh-grade pills.

However, after a period of hard work and practice, Fane felt like his memories had already merged with his body to a certain extent. He was preparing to prove himself.

He focused himself as his hands constantly danced. Streak after streak of golden light flowed between Fane's fingers, the Pill runes easily drawn out and floated in front of him.

After four hours, 4500 pill runes were neatly arranged in front of Fane, radiantly glowing bright gold.

"It's wrong!" Fane exclaimed. His fingers had slipped for a moment, and the rune under his finger suddenly let out a splutter as it shattered into a pure pill aura in a flash.

Fane helplessly frowned as he looked up at the 4500 pill runes before him. Even though the pill runes did not crumble like the one before, Fane could still feel like he was already at his limit.

If he continued to practice, he would only be able to make another 50 pill runes at most before everything crumbled.

Fane took a deep breath as he retracted his right hand, and with that, all of the pill runes dispersed and turned into a pure pill aura. "It went better than I thought."

Chapter 2620

The last time, Fane had only managed to condense 2000 pill runes. After half a month of training, Fane was able to form 4500 pill runes, more than double of what he had last time.

Others would no doubt think that he was lying if they found out how fast he was improving. After all, no one could achieve that at such speed.

Normally, one would first need to completely memorize a pill rune in their mind before they could condense it. After that, they would have to start practicing condensing the rune, stroke by stroke. Normally, even one pill rune would take a long time.

It took constant trial and error, learning from one's mistakes before committing the runes to memory...but Fane did not need that at all. He did not need to memorize any of the runes.

All of those memories were already integrated into his head. All Fane needed was to synchronize his memories with his body. His rate of improvement was

drastically higher than anyone else!

After understanding his limits, Fane had accomplished what he wanted to in the Hall of Wishes. He planned on refining a seventh-grade pill after he went out.

The simplest seventh-grade pills required 3000 pill runes at 50-percent refinement. Fane, however, had already successfully condensed 4500 pill runes.

All of them were already at 50-percent refinement, and a good amount of them was already at 60-percent refinement. As long as Fane wanted to, he would easily be able to make a seventh-grade pill!

The moment he pushed the door open, Fane saw Rudy anxiously standing in front of the door. When Rudy saw Fane walking out, he got so emotional that he almost cried.

A surprised expression flashed on Fane's face, but he was not surprised because of Rudy's emotional expression. Instead, it was because Mr. Zayne was standing next to Rudy.

Fane could not help but frown when he looked at Mr. Zayne. Even though Fane was much more mature than Rudy, he could still not help but think about Grayson's matter.

That incident had something to do with Mr. Zayne, for sure. After all, Mr. Zayne was the one who had arranged their sleeping

quarters back then. Mr. Zayne knew what happened after that as well, but he might never tell them both about it.

Mr. Zayne offered a smile when he saw Fane walk out and nodded at Fane. In contrast to the genial-looking Mr. Zayne, however, Rudy looked like he was about to collapse.

Both of Rudy's hands were trembling, and he looked like he had seen a ghost. Fane sighed in exasperation.

Rudy was most worried about the higherups at that moment. After all, he had no idea what was happening behind the scenes, while Mr. Zayne had a lot to do with all of that.

If the higher-ups decided to do anything against them, Mr. Zayne would be involved.

Mr. Zayne standing with them merely complicated Rudy's feelings at that moment. Fane nodded at Mr. Zayne. Even though his emotions were in a complicated spot as well, he was still far calmer than Rudy was.

When he walked up next to Mr. Zayne, he calmly greeted Zayne, which elicited a raise of an eyebrow.

"You're much more reliable. This guy next to you, meanwhile, is exaggerating matters. When he saw me coming over while he was waiting for you, he turned pale as a ghost.

"I had only a word or two with him, and he already started to stammer. If you haven't done anything wrong, why are you so scared?"

Those words merely drained more of Rudy's color as he became paper-white pale.

Chapter 2621

At that moment, Rudy looked like he had ingested poison and awaited his passing. His entire body was trembling, which caused Fane to frown. Rudy would have fainted if that persisted.

He reached out and pulled Rudy behind him. "Mr. Zayne, are you looking for me for something?"

Mr. Zayne nodded before he motioned to the door, indicating that they could not talk while they were outside. Fane nodded before he left to the plaza in front of the hall with him.

Not wasting any time, Mr. Zayne immediately got to business after finding a secluded place. "There's a tournament that you have to go to," he spoke.

"A tournament?" Fane furrowed his eyebrows as he looked at Mr. Zayne.

Mr. Zayne took a deep breath before he nodded seriously. "The situation is quite urgent. You'll know when you're there. You're the person most suited for the job right now. There's no one else we can look for, so you'll have to go..."

After saying that, Mr. Zayne had a strange expression on his face, and it was as if he was holding himself back from saying something. After a few moments of silence, he finally spoke, "Did you cross someone?"

Elder Rick's face immediately came to Fane's mind the moment Mr. Zayne spoke those words. He knew that someone must have sabotaged him, and Fane had to admit, he was rather curious.

Whatever it was, he was not at the stage where he was mortal enemies with Elder Rick, despite their conflict. Fane had been thinking about it, and he decided that he would forget the matter as long as Elder Rick stopped giving him trouble.

However, he never expected to be implicated in just such a short time. Nonetheless, Fane nodded without stopping. "Did Elder Rick recommend that I participate in this? Is there a problem with this tournament?"

Mr. Zayne raised an eyebrow, curious about Fane's incredibly quick reaction. However, he was a carefree person and did not go around in circles with Fane.

He sighed as he spoke, mild irk present in his tone, "You're right, Elder Rick was the one who recommended you. He said you were of the right age and even praised you a lot. Still, this looks like a death sentence to me.

"The tournament itself is fine. If you perform well, you'll get a lot of rewards, and the eastern elders will look at you better. If you fail to do well, you'll end up suffering."

Even though Mr. Zayne had not been too clear about the contents of the tournament, Fane could pick out a few key points from those words.

First was that he was at the right age. Elder Rick had probably claimed that Fane was the best among those in his age group. Even though the tournament itself might not have a problem, it must involve something incredibly important.

If Fane ended up failing of any kind, Fane would end up becoming the subject of a lot of public criticism. That was probably why Elder Rick recommended him so strongly.

He wanted the other elders to look down on Fane and roughen Fane's path forward. Elder Rick would then be able to deal with Fane easily without much opposition.

Chapter 2622

"The matter is already set in stone, and it cannot be overturned," spoke Mr. Zayne, the helplessness evident in his voice. He stared at Fane seemingly sympathetically as he added, "In a while, the other two will come over. I'll introduce everyone."

Fane said nothing as he stood quietly, but Rudy struggled to remain calm. He pulled at Fane's arm and whispered, "If that's the case, then you can't go. We both know this is a trap. We should avoid Elder Rick. He's so despicable, and we can't let him get what he wants!"

Fane raised an eyebrow before nodding as he whispered to Rudy, "You're right, but he probably anticipated me rejecting to participate in this tournament, however. You'd be doing exactly what he wants."

Rudy was baffled at this, his eyes widening at Fane's words. "What do you mean? If we reject it, we'll still be doing as he wants?"

Fane sighed in exasperation as he nodded slightly before saying, "If I reject them now, I'd be rejecting the higher-ups. Those people won't have a good impression of me regardless. After all, I'm of the appropriate age and talent. No matter how you look at it, I have to give it a try."

Rudy's face soured as he heard that. He looked around anxiously as he scratched his head, trying to figure out a way to reject but to no avail.

It seemed like Elder Rick truly had trapped them with no room for escape, and whether they advanced or retreated, Elder Rick would still benefit from it.

Fane reached out and grabbed Rudy. "Don't overthink it. No matter what, this warrants try. Have a bit more faith in me. There are some things where the true victor can't be seen until the very last moment."

With that, Fane said nothing more.

Mr. Zayne had been observing their conversation silently, not doing anything other than looking at Fane meaningfully.

After Fane and Rudy's conversation ended, Mr. Zayne cleared his throat before he piped in, "It hasn't even been that long and you've already offended Elder Rick. I always knew you weren't someone who is all that cautious. It seems like I wasn't wrong after all."

Fane looked up at Mr. Zayne calmly. "I've always talked and acted upon the principles I've laid out for myself. I won't trouble anyone who doesn't trouble me. If Elder Rick hadn't tried to do something to me, I wouldn't have any problems with him."

Hearing that, Mr. Zayne let out a cold smile. "You're too overconfident. Don't think I don't know what's happened. Everything about you has started to spread, and everyone knows you're talented in every way.

"However, an elder is still an elder. He can't do anything to you publicly, but it won't trouble him whatsoever to bait and trap you behind the scenes, just like what happened today. If he hadn't recommended you so much, you wouldn't have been placed under the limelight."

Fane nodded. Even if Mr. Zayne had not said that, Fane understood the logic behind everything that had happened. He let out a small chuckle, but his composure never wavered.

"He can do whatever he wants to, but he needs to bear the consequences for anything he does," remarked Fane, sounding awfully blunt.

Though Fane was not trying to exaggerate, Mr. Zayne felt incredibly amused at those words. In the end, Mr. Zayne could not stop himself from laughing out loud.

Chapter 2623

Mr. Zayne laughed for a good while before he broke into a light cough, saying, "You're the most confident sixth-grade alchemist I've ever seen! In so many years, I've never seen a sixth-grade alchemist that would dare challenge an elder and even declare that he'd get back at them! Curious am I to know where all that boldness comes from."

Fane did not answer, however, his lips curled into a smirk as he kept his silence. At that moment, Mr. Zayne would probably be amused if Fane said he would even go against the world if needed.

After all, the elders were an unbeatable authority in Mr. Zayne's eyes. Mr. Zayne had been in Phoenix Valley for so long but had never managed to get that title.

He felt like Fane was not going to be a match for an elder. Even though Fane was talented, there were so many others with talent, too. In the end, how many of them would end up becoming an elder?

Mr. Zayne laughed for a long time before he stopped. He shook his head helplessly and said, "Since I was the one who brought you here, let me leave you with a reminder: you'd best not get too far ahead of yourself. After all...you're just a sixth-grade alchemist."

All of a sudden, they heard a series of footsteps, and all three men turned and spotted two men in green robes with seventh-grade alchemist badges on their chest walking toward them.

Mr. Zayne looked at the two of them and immediately composed himself. He let out a slight smile before he nodded at both figures.

The two of them bowed to Mr. Zayne and politely greeted him. Fane narrowed his eyes. Even though the two of them had greeted Mr. Zayne, he could not feel much respect in their words. It was like the two of them did not think Mr. Zayne was that important at all.

Any regular alchemist would regard Mr. Zayne highly as a deacon, even though he had not become an elder yet, but the two of them were noticeably exceptions.

Of course, Mr. Zayne could tell that the two green-robed men were not that respectful, but he did not seem too displeased about it at all. He smiled as he introduced them to Fane, "This is

Claude Hodgins, and the one next to him is Benedict Malone. You'll be heading to Sky Peak Pavilion with the two of them and have a small tournament there."

Fane nodded and greeted both green-robed men. The two of them nodded at Fane as well, but their gazes were noticeably sharp.

They scrutinized Fane and looked painfully inquisitive, much to Fane's discomfort.

Nonetheless, Fane understood their intent. Mr. Zayne had said that the tournament was limited by age, which meant that the two of them were about the same age as him. Being a seventh-grade alchemist at their age naturally gave them sizable pride.

After Mr. Zayne introduced the three of them, he did not delay matters as he brought them to a small vessel. They headed toward the aforementioned Sky Peak Pavilion.

Fane did not ask where it was but was instead thinking of the kind of tournament they would be going through.

It made sense why Mr. Zayne thought that Fane would drag them down. After all, the other two participants were seventh-grade alchemists. Their arrogance was palpable, so they were probably quite capable even among seventh-grade alchemists.

After ascertaining that fact, Fane relaxed instead.

There were four people in the small vessel. Other than Mr. Zayne, who was steering the vessel, the three of them took up a spot by themselves to rest.

Chapter 2624

Fane had no intention to befriend the other two men, while these two looked down on Fane.

After everything that had happened before, Mr. Zayne was noticeably much more careful. As they advanced, he would regularly stop and study their surroundings for any signs of ambush.

Fane and the two green-robed men merely closed their eyes and rested in the vessel.

Initially, they were still quite composed, but Claude started to lose his patience after a while. Claude looked up at Fane and said, "I don't know what Elder Rick was thinking for praising you so much. We seventhgrade alchemists are the leads here. Make sure you don't drag us down and disappoint Elder Rick!"

Claude talked like he was lecturing Fane,

which made Fane frown. He loathed anyone who spoke to him in such a manner, and Claude acted like he was far above Fane.

If Claude had said anything else, Fane might not have reacted so badly, but Claude's tone sparked Fane's fuse.

He looked up at Claude and said, "The one, thing I hate the most is those who speak without knowing the whole situation; you're obviously that type of person.

"You've never seen how good I am before, but you've already judged me just by listening to what others have said. What a gentleman, you are. Elder Rick has a grudge against me; he was just praising me in an attempt to drag me down!"

Those words stunned Claude, while Benedict looked up from his seated position at Fane with a strange expression. Elder Rick had a grudge against this guy? Fane was recommended because of a grudge?

The two of them could not help but nod after thinking about it. That made sense. After all, Fane was only a sixth-grade alchemist, and a sixth-grade alchemist would not have the chance to do anything in this tournament.

They would have to rely on seventh-grade alchemists.

Fane was only there to add to the numbers. Elder Rick might have said many nice words, but he had never claimed that Fane would help them obtain victory.

"You're really something else... I heard that you haven't been in Phoenix Valley for that long, and you managed to get Elder Rick to hold a grudge against you and even try so hard to cause you trouble. You truly are commendable."

These words were minced with obvious mockery.

Fane sighed. He had just regained his bearings when things started to act up again, and he never even wanted to exchange words with these two men!

Even if they were seventh-grade alchemists, Fane did not regard them that highly at all. However, since the two of them said so, Fane could not hold back.

Claude looked at Fane in disdain as if it was all Fane's fault that Fane offended Elder Rick.

Fane grunted lightly as he looked at Claude. "And what gives you the right to go on your merry way and give others snide remarks?"

"You don't even know what sort of relationship I have with Elder Rick, yet you can so boldly assume and imply that I'm the one at fault. Well, if you're ever killed by an elder in the future, it's definitely your fault!"

Claude widened his eyes, not expecting Fane's temper to be so bad. He had just said a few words but was shot back so viciously.

"I've never seen a sixth-grade alchemist as brazen as you!" spoke Benedict, frowning when he did.

Chapter 2625

Fane smiled as he turned to look at Benedict. "Well, I've never seen seventhgrade alchemists like you who don't know how to mind your own business. The two of you look like you're just too bored and have nothing to do. Do you think that you can go around and cause other people trouble just because you're seventh-grade alchemists?"

Fane had not even been able to finish his tirade when Mr. Zayne turned and shouted, "The three of you, keep quiet! We'll be at Sky Peak Pavilion soon. Don't embarrass Phoenix Valley!"

"Whatever will happen, you have to remember that you're from the same place. When you're outside, you represent Phoenix Valley, I don't care what you do inside Phoenix Valley, but when you're outside, you'll be punished for embarrassing the valley no matter who you are!"

All three men fell mum at Mr. Zayne's words. Nonetheless, Claude and Benedict's anger never subsided, and it showed on their face.

The two of them frowned as they glared at Fane who merely shut his eyes and ignored them. Fane shut his eyes, not wanting anything more to do with them.

Claude and Benedict, having known each other, would no doubt join hands no matter what happened.

After arriving at Sky Peak Pavilion, Mr. Zayne finally introduced the clan.

Sky Peak Pavilion was an eighth-grade clan, but they were not comparable to other eighth-grade clans. They had only been promoted less than two years ago, and Sky Peak Pavilion had just been a seventhgrade clan before that. O

Meanwhile, Unbreaking Pavilion that was in conflict with the alliance was at the peak of eighth-grade clans, only one silver away from being a ninth-grade clan.

If Sky Peak Pavilion went to war with Unbreaking Pavilion, they would probably be decimated in less than a month.

After Sky Peak Pavilion was introduced, Fane could not help but wonder...

What was the point of this tournament? They left for Sky Peak Pavilion and traversed such a large distance, so there had to be something important. What was so important? Fane needed more time to figure it out.

Sky Peak Pavilion's elders were already waiting outside the mountain. When the vessel stopped, the elders got up to greet them. They exchanged many pleasantries with Mr. Zayne before the elders brought them into the Sky Peak Pavilion inner compound.

Sky Peak Pavilion might be an eighth-grade pavilion, but their buildings were not all that impressive. They could not compare to Phoenix Valley.

Sky Peak Pavilion's elders brought them through a long path before they arrived at a spacious hall. There were quite a few people in the hall, but there were only two chairs in the center.

Fane looked up at the two people who were sitting there. One of them had the special elder robes of Phoenix Valley on, and he was probably the elder from the east that Mr. Zayne had spoken about before.

The other one looked to be about in his late forties. He had a smile on his face, one that did not reach his eyes. He gave the impression of a scheming old fox.

Mr. Zayne bowed to the two of them. "Greetings, Elder Maurice, Master Forrest."

So that was Master Forrest from Sky Peak Pavilion. Looking at how respectful Mr. Zayne was, Master Forrest most likely held a great position in Sky Peak Pavilion.

What followed was a string of empty pleasantries. They talked about how safe the journey was and asked about some things in Phoenix Pavilion. Mr. Zayne seemed quite familiar with these proceedings.

Fane quietly stood by the side, not saying anything. It took a bit of time before they got to the main topic.

Master Forrest stood up as he waved at the three behind him and said, albeit with false humility, "These are the disciples the Sky Peak Pavilion has raised for many years. They can't compare to your disciples from the Phoenix Valley, but they are skilled in their own right. We brought them here today to hopefully show some of their skill."

Master Forrest continued to introduce the three. The man at the front was Conrad Suller, while the other two behind Conrad were Jameson Lagey and Bradley Cooper respectively.

Each of them was about Fane's age and sported seventh-grade alchemist badges. After Master Forrest finished his introduction, Elder Maurice took the initiative to introduce his alchemists.

Elder Maurice walked forward and looked at Claude and Benedict, both standing in front of Fane, and he had a pleased expression on his face when he did.

However, his face froze the moment he looked at Fane, especially at the sixthgrade alchemist badge on Fane's chest. He widened his eyes as his lips quivered slightly.

Thankfully, he was facing the Phoenix Valley representatives at that moment, and Sky Peak Pavilion's representatives did not see the change in his expression at all. Elder Maurice took a deep breath before he looked at Mr. Zayne with a questioning look.

It was evident he was asking why a sixthgrade alchemist was there.

Zayne's lips froze. He knew before he came here that Elder Maurice would be enraged when he saw Fane, but Zayne could not afford to offend either side, thus finding himself stuck in the middle.

No matter how versed Mr. Zayne was playing politics, there were some things he could not avoid. In situations like this where it was impossible to get on well with either side, he still had to perform his duties, regardless of how reluctant he was. The higher-ups were the ones who had arranged for him to do it.

Screwing up or offending either side were both incredibly bad scenarios for Zayne. Naturally, he did not want anything to go wrong.

Helpless, he pursed his lips as he returned Elder Maurice's gaze. There were some things that he had to make clear, or he would end up causing himself a lot of trouble.

It would be like telling Elder Maurice that the whole situation was like this because of him.

Mr. Zayne frowned and thought about it for a moment, trying his best to summarize his thoughts before he gave a simplified version of the explanation he had in mind to Elder Maurice.

Elder Maurice's expression darkened in the blink of an eye. At the start, Elder Maurice was merely shocked that a sixth-grade alchemist was brought over, but after understanding the situation, Elder Maurice immediately understood how terrible the situation was.

With a frown on his face, he whispered, "This is a disaster! Does Rick not know how important this tournament is? Doesn't he know what the consequences will be if we take the wrong step?"

Mr. Zayne was so afraid that he started to

tremble after he heard that. "I don't know about that, but Elder Rick vouched and insisted on nominating Fane for this," he answered helplessly. "He spoke of Fane's talents so greatly, and Fane is at the right age, so everyone eventually agreed to his recommendation."

Elder Maurice's face grew hot red in anger. His right hand trembled, and he would have started spouting curse words had the situation allowed him to.

He took a deep breath, composed himself, and tried his best to calm his voice.

"He's really out here trying to ruin things! If Fane was at the peak of sixth-grade alchemists and only a hair away from being a sixth-grade alchemist, he might be able to get us some results in this tournament, but you told me that it hasn't been long since he advanced to be a sixth-grade alchemist. How could he carry such a heavy burden? We'll completely lose this tournament thanks to Elder Rick's meddling!"

Chapter 2627

"We've never interfered with his grudges, but he's been getting out of hand lately. He dares to use such an important tournament to deal with someone he doesn't like! It's practically an abuse of power! He's gone too far!"

Mr. Zayne inwardly agreed with Elder Maurice; Elder Rick truly did cross the line this time. After all, this tournament practically gambled the benefits Phoenix Valley could have gotten.

If they did not win the tournament this time, Phoenix Valley would have to pay a greater price to get Sky Peak Pavilion's help!

With that in mind, Zayne's expression darkened in his state of exasperation. He was a deacon with a certain level of power in Phoenix Valley, but against those elders, he did not really hold any weight.

He never voiced his opinions so casually when facing the elders either, even if he knew he was correct. That was why there was nothing he could do other than feel helpless at that moment.

Elder Maurice struggled to regain his composure and maintain a normal expression, but the more he thought about it, the angrier he became. He wanted nothing more than to rush back to Phoenix Valley and challenge Elder Rick to a duel to the death.

Mr. Zayne glanced behind him and saw Master Forrest looking at them curiously. After all, they had been whispering to each other for a long time.

Zayne let out a slight cough and said, "Elder... Master Forrest has been staring at us."

Elder Maurice pursed his lips helplessly. After taking a deep breath, he finally suppressed the anger in his heart as he turned to look at Master Forrest.

"Some matters in the valley have arisen, so please forgive me, Master Forrest. There's been more and more troublesome matters popping up."

Master Forrest raised an eyebrow. Despite his mounting curiosity, Elder Maurice was still someone important, and he could not afford to make things too awkward.

Master Forrest let out a laugh before he nodded. "You'll be here for a few days anyway, so a bit of a delay is not an issue. You can have your conversation more privately for now."

Elder Maurice nodded and walked forward. He waved Fane and the others over, and they nodded hurriedly. They followed closely behind Elder Maurice and arrived at the corner of the hall.

At that moment, Elder Maurice could no longer compose himself. He reached out and pulled Mr. Zayne toward him before hissing with gritted teeth, "I don't care what Rick is thinking, but if this thing ends up dragging us down, I won't let him off!"

Elder Maurice was already irate at that moment. He would normally never say something to a deacon, especially since Mr. Zayne was not that close to him, but Elder Maurice felt like he would die of frustration if he did not vent out his anger.

Zayne pursed his lips helplessly, knowing how angry Elder Maurice was.

There was no longer any way for them to change the situation. Fane was already there, and they could not possibly make any last-minute changes. With that in mind, Zayne's gaze swiveled to look at Fane.

Chapter 2628

During the entire exchange, Fane never lost his composure as he merely stood behind them quietly. Even if he heard some of the things they have said, he barely reacted to them. It was as if they were not talking about him at all.

Claude and Benedict, on the other hand, could not contain how pleased they felt. After being pulled over, they managed to hear some of the conversations despite Elder Maurice trying his best to lower his volume. Of course, they knew why Elder Maurice was so visibly irked.

Claude smirked as he looked at Fane, the nuisance he was. If it was anyone else, Elder Maurice would not have been so angry, and the matter would not be in such a mess.

The moment he thought back to how arrogant Fane was in the vessel, Claude felt a build-up of fury within him. Oh, how he wanted Fane to however much dirt he could! Fane ought to know to choose his battles; whom he could offend and could not.

He raised an eyebrow as he deliberately leaned toward Fane, whispering so none could hear him, "Do you hear that? Elder Maurice is furious thanks to you. Someone like you will only drag us down in this tournament."

Fane pursed his lips in exasperation. Normally, he would ignore whatever people were saying, but Claude was like an annoying fly in his ears that would buzz to his ear, annoying him to no end.

He looked at Claude and lowly retorted, "Have you conveniently forgotten everything I have said before? You've never seen me in action before, so why are you setting that judgment on me already? You think I'll drag you down? I think you're just trash."

Fane might have lowered his voice when he said that, but he was not as afraid of others hearing him as Claude was. Both Elder Maurice and Mr. Zayne had heard parts of it, even when they stood in front of them.

The two of them turned to look at Fane at the same time, but Fane's expression did not change at all when he felt their eyes on him-still calm as usual. Meanwhile, Claude's face had turned purple from Fane's words, and he was so angry that both his fists trembled.

He noticed that nothing he was saying to gain the upper hand was working against Fane; that man did not seem to care what he was saying at all. Fane seemed to be willing to say anything back at him, regardless of the situation they were in.

Claude almost spat out blood in anger. If Benedict had not pulled him back, Claude would have started a fight with Fane on the spot.

Elder Maurice narrowed his eyes as he appraised Fane. Mr. Zayne frowned, obviously having something to say. However, with his cautious nature, he swallowed his words.

The atmosphere was suddenly incredibly quiet. Elder Maurice let out a small laugh as he walked toward Fane. "You don't seem scared at all, are you now?"

Fane stared straight into Elder Maurice's eyes. Even though he could not really hear everything Elder Maurice had said earlier, he knew where Elder Maurice stood.

As long as he was not on the same side as

Elder Maurice, Fane might have a bit more room to maneuver in the coming events. With that, Fane sported a proud expression for the first time as he nodded slightly. "Of course not. If I were afraid, I wouldn't have come."

Elder Maurice raised an eyebrow at this, a curious expression etched onto his face.

After all, Fane had a sixth-grade alchemist badge on his chest, but he spoke even more proudly than a seventh-grade alchemist.

Elder Maurice frowned as a thought sprung in his head. This kid before him must have been very confident in his skills, provided he was not just being overly proud.

Even though he usually met the latter, he was hopeful that Fane was the former at this point. Elder Maurice took a deep breath as he said seriously, "You've had a rift with Elder Rick, haven't you?"

Chapter 2629

It might have been worded as a question, but Elder Maurice's expression clearly said that he knew what went down.

Fane, not bothering to hide the truth, nodded. "Yes, we had some conflicts before. There was an alchemist who felt like I insulted him after I didn't give my task to him at the task hall, so he arranged for an assassin to kill me.

"After the matter was exposed, he tried to have Elder Rick speak for him, and to fulfill his promise to that person, Elder Rick twisted the truth completely. I exposed him in the end, however.

"The two alchemists who tried to have me killed are already locked up, leaving Elder Rick rather humiliated by the matter. Having lost whatever good things and benefits he had due to that stunt, he decided to trouble me."

Of course, Mr. Zayne had briefly gone through this matter with Elder Maurice, so Elder Maurice more or less knew what had happened.

After Fane relayed his story, he suddenly raised his voice and said in a righteous tone, "Before I entered Phoenix Valley, I thought that the higher-ups would never resort to favoring anyone like this, even if there was some competition inside. It looks like I was far too naive.

"I feel like someone like Elder Rick doesn't deserve the position of an elder at all. His moral character isn't worthy, and I'll never acknowledge him."

The temperature dropped as he said that. Even Claude and Benedict widened their eyes and looked at Fane in shock.

Truthfully, they shared the same sentiment, that Elder Rick did not deserve to be an elder. Regardless, Fane actually dared to voice it out, which surprised them.

After all, Fane was still an alchemist in Phoenix Valley, but he had just voiced his displeasure and even questioned the higher-ups.

He even questioned their moral compass, something no ordinary person would ever do. Even if Claude was downright vain, he would never question another elder in front of another!

Worse still, Fane spoke so confidently, so boldly, and his entire posture reeked of pride!

Benedict frowned. "Fane, how dare you? Even if an elder does something wrong, it's not your place to question them!"

Fane raised an eyebrow as he turned to look at Benedict. "I've seen many dogs like you. Even if you continue barking, I'll never agree with you.

"Don't act all holier-than-thou when this doesn't even concern you. If it weren't for the evidence I had in hand, the attempt to assassinate me wouldn't have been cleared, and I would've been the unfortunate one!

"This doesn't concern you at all, so you obviously don't care about it. You can talk to that elder without a care in the world to suck up to him, but if you're trying to stop me with your actions, then that's the wrong move!"

After he said that, Fane walked forward, forcing Benedict to take a step back. Benedict never expected Fane to be so resolved. All of a sudden

"Well said!" spoke Elder Maurice affirmatively, which startled everyone present. Fane, on the other hand, raised an eyebrow.

Well, it seemed like he had taken the right gamble.

Chapter 2630

Elder Maurice was already infuriated by Elder Rick for meddling in his affairs. He was already planning on fighting back against Elder Rick, hence why he could boldly applaud Fane's words.

Fane had earned an ample amount of Elder Maurice's favor.

Elder Maurice looked up slightly. "Even though I think you're right, you still need the right to say those words. If your pride is just an empty tin can, your words are all meaningless without the power to back up your claims."

Elder Maurice put his hand on Fane's shoulder as he added, albeit with a relatively firm voice, "If you do well this time, I'll make sure to support you. If you don't do well, you won't just have made an enemy of Elder Rick, but me as well."

Elder Maurice's words placed an invisible

pressure against Fane. Additionally, his words also sparked interesting expressions from the rest of their companions.

Claude felt like Fane had gone overboard with bragging this time, and he might have just rocked a boat he should not have. Fane could not possibly do well, so Fane would ultimately disappoint Elder Maurice in the end. Moreover, Fane had carried himself so haughtily before, acting like Elder Rick did not faze him.

With that in mind, he could not help but let out a cold laugh. Claude narrowed his eyes and looked at Fane as if he was looking at an idiot.

Not only did Fane's self-righteous words fail to get him out of his predicament, but they merely ensnared him into a deeper pit. If he did not produce any results, Elder Maurice would never forgive Fane.

Claude and Benedict exchanged glances; it was obvious how happy the both of them were.

Fane nodded. "I'll say the same thing as I've said. If I can't do it, I wouldn't have come."

Elder Maurice patted Fane lightly on the arm. "Good! Very good! Remember what you said. Don't end up shooting yourself in the foot!"

After saying that, Elder Maurice no longer wasted any more time, turning and walking back toward the center of the hall.

All this while, Master Forrest looked like he had returned to his seat and was enjoying his tea, but his gaze had always been on Elder Maurice and the others.

After he saw Elder Maurice bringing the other four back, Master Forrest immediately put down the cup in his hand as he put a smile on his face, standing up to greet them.

At that moment, Elder Maurice had already composed himself. He looked at the people from Sky Peak Pavilion and extended his hand forward to introduce those from Phoenix Valley.

There was nothing too special about Claude and Benedict, since both of them had seventh-grade alchemist badges on their chest. When it came to Fane, however, a few of them suddenly had a meaningful look in their eyes.

In truth, they had already noticed Fane before. After the introductions, their curiosity deepened. After all, other than Fane, everyone else participating in the tournament was a sixth-grade alchemist. 2

Sky Peak Pavilion was a far cry from Phoenix Valley, and Phoenix Valley was a major camp of the Middle Province Alchemist Alliance.

Phoenix Valley had produced countless talented alchemists, but they had actually sent a sixth-grade alchemist, which greatly shocked everyone.

Feeling everyone's gazes, Elder Maurice's anger was triggered once more, but this time, it was aimed at Elder Rick.

Fane was at the right age, sure, but he was just a sixth-grade alchemist. Phoenix Valley had so many alchemists, and it should not have been hard for them to choose three alchemists who were suitable!

