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Chapter 2566

Jackie calmly nodded.

Buck Tooth turned to look at Jackie as well. A glint of ridicule flashed across his eyes for a brief moment before he quickly composed himself, not wanting to have any form of conflict with Jackie.

At the end of the day, alchemists were revered among warriors, and every warrior had a certain degree of respect for alchemists. They needed alchemists to refine pills, after all.

The white-haired man let out a laugh as he remarked with a teasing lilt in his voice, "You truly do see everything at every given moment. There are soul attribute fighters even among alchemists. I've never seen you before, so it must be your first time here. Do you know the rules of Soul Grotto?"

Jackie looked at the white-haired man before he nodded calmly. To this, the whitehaired man's lips curled into a meaningful smile.

"You must continue to work hard. Don't be like this guy; he's been doing it for so long but still hasn't gotten a single soul crystal."

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The white-haired man had a very natural expression when he said that, but Jackie could tell that the white-haired man was trying to test himself. At times, Jackie felt really helpless. He did not want to interact with such people, but they could somehow worm their way into his life.

Jackie sighed as he said in exasperation, "Since I'm here, I naturally have the confidence to break the soul crystal. Thank you for your reminder."

Those words were clear enough. The whitehaired man could not help but raise an eyebrow. He had not expected that Jackie would be smart enough to immediately understand what he was trying to ask.

However, Jackie's words failed to repress the white-haired man's curiosity, and he then gave Jackie a once-over.

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"In so many years, it's the first time I've seen an alchemist here. Those who train in soul attribute techniques are usually all warriors who usually have a bright future being warriors. Seeing as you're so confident, you must have some talent in combat as well."

Despite his words, the white-haired man's words conveyed his curiosity, one that showed how he was searching for something. He clearly did not believe that Jackie had that talent.

Anyone talented at combat would pursue the path of becoming a warrior instead of wasting their time in alchemy. Even though alchemists received respect from warriors, one could only truly be confident if they had genuine power to support them.

Jackie frowned as he glanced at the white

haired man helplessly. To him, this whitehaired man was far too curious.

He could see from the earlier conversation with Francis that the man had a strong taste for gossiping.

Jackie took a deep breath as he refrained from sneering at the white-haired man. "There are some things I really don't want to repeat. Let me ask you something: why are you here?"

The white-haired man was taken aback by Jackie's question. After all, he never expected such a sudden one. "That's obvious," he answered. "I just want to absorb soul crystals to increase my power."

Jackie nodded seriously before he spoke again, albeit bluntly, "Why aren't you absorbing your soul crystal, then? What's the point of standing here? Will understanding my affairs increase your own power?"

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The white-haired man's face flushed at

that.

All of a sudden, giggles could be heard. around them, and the white-haired man let out an awkward cough. He tried to say something to defend himself but could not find the words.

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The white-haired man's lips stiffened as he shot Jackie a stiff glare, but in the end, he no longer pestered Jackie with questions. After all, Jackie was still a sixth-grade alchemist.

Even though he did not know how talented Jackie was at alchemy, it was quite likely that Jackie would become a seventh-grade alchemist if he was already in the sixth grade at this age. The white-haired man did not want to offend someone who might be a high-ranked alchemist in the future.

With that, the white-haired man suppressed the fire in his heart as he turned and returned to sit on his mat.

On the other hand, Buck Tooth turned and looked at Jackie earnestly as if trying to read Jackie's mind from his face.

Jackie furrowed his eyebrows. He hated being looked at so inquisitively, but ever since he arrived at Hestia Continent, he never ceased to stop attracting such curious gazes.

At this point, Jackie was content with himself. They could look at whatever they wanted to.

"Alright! Just a little more! Break!" Everyone could suddenly hear Francis' voice, and it broke the awkward atmosphere from earlier.

Everyone looked up and glanced at Francis, whose face was already beaded with sweat. His hands constantly moved as he formed seal after seal, sending a torrent of attacks at the soul crystal.

With multiple pangs, a large crack was finally seen on the outer shell of the soul crystal. Soon after, the crack quickly shattered the whole outer shell.

With a crack, the whole thing shattered, and the yellow glow radiated even more vibrantly.

After the last of the outer shell fell off, the soul crystal's radiant glow flew right toward Francis' palm. The moment Francis grabbed the soul crystal, a teardrop fell from his eye.

Jackie was speechless at how emotional Francis seemed. True, the soul crystal was something good, but it was just one crystal. Did he need to get so excited?

The others, coincidentally, shared the same thought Jackie had. They could not help but tease Francis for being so emotional.

One of the inner disciples said, "You truly are something else, Francis. And here I am, thinking you must've gone through a lot in your life before. Yes, that soul crystal is quite nicely sized, but do you have to be so emotional?"

Hearing this, Francis turned to look at the person and snapped, waving the soul crystal in his hand, "Stop trying to rain on my parade. If you were the one with this soul crystal, you'd be just as emotional. Just look at the size of this thing!"

To Francis' credit, it was relatively large; about the size of a fist. Francis could not completely cover it with his hand.

The white-haired man snorted. "The soul crystal is quite big, but if I got it, I wouldn't be so emotional that I'd end up crying.

"After all, I have great ambitions. In one year, I'll get an even bigger soul crystal than the one in your hand!"

The white-haired man sounded incredibly sure of himself as though certain his goal was within reach.

Francis let out a grunt as he rolled his eyes. "I knew that you guys wouldn't be capable of saying a single good thing."

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Buck Tooth had long lost his patience before this exchange. When he noticed that Francis was not giving way, he shouted, "Get lost right now, Francis! You already have the soul crystal, but you're still taking up the spot. Can't you see that there are still two people waiting behind you?"

To this, Francis bashfully turned and saluted Buck Tooth before he ran over to a vacant spot nearby and found a clean mat. He sat and started to toy with the soul crystal in his hand happily.

Seeing the soul crystal in Francis' hand up close made everyone envious, and it showed in the expressions they had. Despite their ridicule and haughty words, it was impossible for them to not be enticed by such a large soul crystal in front of them.

They even struggled to keep their behavior

in check. After all, none of the five individuals had the ability to get that soul crystal.

Feeling their gazes, Francis' lips curled into a smirk as a prideful expression was etched onto his face. "What's wrong? Do you want it? Too bad, because I'm not giving this to any of you!"

Everyone wanted nothing more than to run up to Francis and give him a smack.

Buck Tooth paid no attention to their quarreling. Francis' victory might have even excited him as he furrowed his eyebrows and started to look at the innumerable dancing soul crystals in the cave.

The soul crystals might be moving and dancing around quickly, but they were like headless flies. As long as one could find a target, they could use their power to lock onto them.

Any person could break the outer shell and

obtain the soul crystal, provided they have the capability of doing so.

Buck Tooth let out a sharp cry as his hands moved. Soon after, runes appeared in front of him as they turned into a black ax, one that gave everyone the goosebumps.

Very quickly, Buck Tooth headed right at the soul crystal he had locked into.

"Shatter!" Buck Tooth cried out in anger. The ax fell down immediately upon the soul crystal.

Jackie raised his eyebrow and shook his head in exasperation. The ax should be Buck Tooth's strongest attack, but he overestimated himself. Even though the attack was strong, the soul crystal he chose was not small.

It was just a little bit smaller than the soul crystal Francis had gotten earlier. The difficulty of shattering it would probably be not much different from the soul crystal Francis got earlier.

Jackie sighed helplessly at the thought.

Buck Tooth was not as strong as Francis. To get that soul crystal, Francis even used up a lot of his strength and only barely secured it.

Jackie raised an eyebrow as he observed Buck Tooth's expression. After the attack, Buck Tooth seemed a bit disappointed, yet the fire in his eyes remained as he showed no signs of slowing down. It was obvious that Buck Tooth had the same plan as Francis.

Both of them planned on stubbornly using all their might to attack the outer shell of the soul crystal. It looked like he would need to waste quite a lot of time again.

"Shatter! Shatter quickly!" Buck Tooth shouted out as he attacked, his muscles bulging as he did.

Buck Tooth seemed tempted to just rush over and bite the soul crystal out with his teeth, much to Jackie's chagrin. He could not help but take a step back as he wondered how long it would take for Buck Tooth to give up.

He did not feel like Buck Tooth would be able to get the soul crystal like Francis did. After all, they were not on the same level. Buck Tooth was not as strong as Francis, and the soul crystal should not be weaker than the one earlier, too.

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Francis had only managed to shatter the outer shell of the soul crystal right when he was about to run out of strength. If he had expended all his true energy without being able to shatter the outer shell, Francis would have no other option but to give up.

That would mean that Francis would get nothing out of visiting the Soul Grotto.

After all, they were only allowed to enter the grotto once a month, and they were not allowed to stay for more than a day each time. Under all those restrictions, failure would mean giving up until the next chance.

Obviously, Buck Tooth knew he would gain nothing if he failed, and that was why he would use everything he could. He made the preparations for a long battle.

"You're all terribly stubborn, really,"

sighed the white-haired man. "Can't you just choose a smaller soul crystal? Even though the effects of absorbing a large soul crystal are much better than a small one, don't forget to work within what you're capable of. If you try to take on too much, you might end up with nothing!"

Even though Jackie did not like that whitehaired man that much, he had to admit that the man still had a point. Even if they wanted to fight for it, they needed to have the skills.

Retreating and choosing something they were capable of would be the right choice. However, Buck Tooth was too riled up by Francis' achievement and was brimming with confidence, which led him to choose a soul crystal much like the one Francis had chosen.

After the white-haired man spoke, there was a clamor of discussion among

"I think he's an elder disciple. Does anyone remember his name?"

"I don't, but he looks familiar. He must've been brought under the wing of an elder, but even if he's an elder's own disciple, he doesn't look like he has that much talent. He doesn't seem that smart either, so I doubt he'll amount to much in the future."

After hearing that, Jackie had a strange look on his face. Normally, an elder disciple was ranked higher than an inner disciple. After all, being accepted by an elder to be a personal disciple was proof of a certain amount of skill.

However, listening to the people around him, it seemed like being an elder disciple was nothing noteworthy. They seemed to look down on that elder disciple.

As his thoughts wandered, Jackie heard a set of urgent footsteps from nearby.

Turning around, he saw someone rushing in from outside. He looked over and heard someone softly calling out, "Alex."

Alex Sharp nodded as he wiped away the sweat on his forehead. It seemed like he had run over.

Alex's eyes fell on Buck Tooth. When he saw Buck Tooth battling away, he frowned somewhat unhappily.

After that, he looked at Jackie. When he saw the badge on Jackie's chest as well as his alchemist attire, he immediately knew Jackie's status.

He could not help but say, "Why is an alchemist here?"

The mild displeasure was evident in Alex's words. It was as if Jackie, despite just standing nearby, was wrong.

Jackie's lips twitched in exasperation, not saying anything.

Alex did not hold back as he continued, "Mr. Alchemist, this isn't somewhere for the likes of you. Other than wasting time, it's pointless for you to stand there. I have an urgent matter I need to attend to. Give me your spot."

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Jackie was irked to hear Alex's words. He had thought that his clothes and the badge on his chest would have brought him a lot of conveniences. At the very least, he would not invite that much trouble.

After all, alchemists were held with high regard by warriors. He could give the fighters various benefits, after all, so regular warriors would not offend alchemists.

Jackie had queued up according to the rules and never intended on troubling anyone else at all. He should have been able to peacefully obtain his soul stone, but he never expected another troublesome matter to pop up so quickly.

He did not know Alex, but judging Alex's temperament as well as the slightly respectful tone others seemed to refer to Alex with, Alex must not be a small figure.

However, Jackie did not care who Alex was at all. He was already impatient from all the waiting. How could he just give up his spot?

His expression was somewhat frosty. "No," he replied, and even calmly at that. There was no explanation to his words, and he merely conveyed his intentions.

When Alex heard Jackie's clear rejection, his face suddenly froze. He did not seem to believe that someone would dare say that to him and deny him so easily.

Alex stood a few meters away from Jackie. "Do you think you're that great just because you're an alchemist? Do you know who I am? You dare deny me like that?"

No one expected that Alex would be infuriated by Jackie so quickly after entering.

Jackie seemed to have quite the temper. No matter who it was, Jackie did not seem to hold back on his words when he was unhappy.

The white-haired man had thought that Jackie dared talk that way earlier because the white-haired man was not talented enough, but it seemed like Jackie did not care who he was talking to or how strong they were.

As long as he was offended, he would stand his ground and retaliate!

After Jackie heard Alex's words, he smirked and said bluntly, "I don't care who you are."

Even if it was the emperor, anyone who caused Jackie trouble would be met with the same treatment. Alex became so enraged that he glared at Jackie venomously.

Jackie was used to that expression, however. Everyone who wanted to get rid of him or cause him trouble would always look at him like that.

Jackie had long since gotten immune to those stares. Even if they fought right at that moment, Jackie would not be scared at all.

"Don't think that you can show off in front of us just because you're an alchemist. Alchemists are valuable, but Phoenix Valley has alchemists everywhere. One or two dead alchemists won't make a difference!"

Alex's tone was incredibly threatening, but it did not even make Jackie raise an eyebrow. It seemed like Alex must have been a bully for a long time. Otherwise, he would not have been able to say something like that.

Jackie merely sported a small smile as he fearlessly responded, "Don't talk as if something heinous has been done. You're the shameless one who wanted to take my spot. You're unhappy that you were rejected, but you make yourself seem so noble."

"You...!" Alex was so furious both his hands started to shake. It seemed like he wanted to rush forward and choke Jackie at that moment.

Jackie pursed his lips nonchalantly; he had no plans of entertaining Alex.

However, Alex did not relent as he demanded, "I'll give you one last chance. Give me your spot, or I'll put you through hell!"

It was the same words and the same threatening tone as usual. Jackie seemed to hear something like that once every month. Jackie raised an eyebrow as he nodded very solemnly.