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After all, no one knew who would suffer the heaviest losses.

At this point, Rudeus was already trembling with anger. Jackie had humiliated him in front of so many people and spoke so crassly toward him. With that, Rudeus wanted nothing more than to end Jackie. He even started thinking about how he would capture and torture Jackie after they left Prosper City.

Meanwhile, Jackie no longer wanted to entertain Rudeus' antics, so he lowered his head and looked at the alchemists who sat on the mats. Even though the center was more of a tight fit compared to the outskirts, there was some space left.

Rudeus would no doubt continue pestering him, so rather than letting Rudeus follow him, Jackie decided to just sit at the vacant spot.

The seventh group was about to start anyway. He would have needed to come over again. It would save them from noticing Rudy as well.

Looking at how nonchalant Jackie was acting, Rudeus' anger soared to new heights. His entire body burned with the urge to rush up to Jackie and smack his face. Alas, he could not.

Rudeus took a deep breath as he slowly composed himself. He knew that he would only embarrass himself if he went after Jackie at this moment, knowing that he would not cooperate. Jackie would definitely take part in the competition.

Rudeus took a deep breath and was forced to turn and head to his original position.

At that moment, Mitchell, who had been silent the whole time, suddenly spoke, "Why do you insist on participating? Are you trying to make a name for yourself, or do you really think you'll be able to get the treasure?"

Mitchell came from Phoenix Valley, but his alchemy skills were, in truth, not as good as Rudeus'. He was from the inner valley and was an alchemist that Phoenix Valley took great pains to guide and improve. He had been silent the whole time in large part because his skills were no match for Rudeus. Even though he did not want to admit it, the results have been clear for all to see.

Rudeus had gotten a bronze treasure, while he only got a black treasure. Even though he was not on the best of terms with Rudeus, he did not want to see Jackie acting like he owned the place.

Who did Jackie think he was, carrying himself so pridefully?

Jackie raised an eyebrow, looking at Mitchell meaningfully. At that moment, there were a lot of alchemists that had similar-looking robes behind him. All of them had reddish-orange patterns on their robes. He had seen those patterns in Phoenix Valley before, so Jackie knew who they were, more or less.

If it had been before, Jackie would not have been too harsh on them since they were from Phoenix Valley. No matter what kind of conflict they had, Jackie would have tried his best to forgive any transgression against him. At this point, however, he had abandoned those sentiments. After all, Phoenix Valley had betrayed him first. Phoenix Valley had hidden a massive secret and never provided anything for him.

They never treated Jackie like one of their own. Seeing their unfair treatment, Jackie decided to respond in kind.

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Jackie snorted and replied, "I'm aiming for the treasure, of course. Just spare your breath, there's no point in you saying anything to me. No matter what you say, I'll still participate."

Mitchell's lips twitched as he hissed, "Don't you know that you'll embarrass Hestia by doing this? You have a sixth-grade alchemist badge! They'll not only mock you for participating with a sixth-grade alchemist badge, but also the whole Hestia Continent! I don't want you dragging us down with you!"

Exasperated, Jackie inhaled deeply as his lips twitched. He touched the sixth-grade alchemist badge that was on his chest and realized that the badge had never once benefited him. Nonetheless, he had no intention of ripping it away.

He looked at Mitchell and curtly replied, "I won't embarrass Hestia. As for the rest, you're the one who thinks you'll be embarrassed. Stop wasting your time, I won't listen anyway."

After saying that, Jackie closed his eyes and pursed his lips, looking as though he was shutting out the entire world from his senses.

Looking at this, Mitchell was rendered speechless.

The alchemists from Phoenix Valley behind him whispered to Mitchell, "Mitchell, just ignore him. This guy looks like he's lost his marbles. Rudeus said so much earlier, but this guy didn't listen at all, and he's barely unfazed by the threats as well. Since that's the case, there's no point wasting your breath."

Mitchell's lips twitched, but he had to admit that those words were true. There was no getting through to this guy.

Just as Mitchell was about to shut his eyes and rest as well, the Heaven Array's mechanisms suddenly moved. A green light glowed on the Heaven Array, attracting everyone's attention.

Jackie looked over as well and saw that there was a figure on the Heaven Array. He could immediately tell that it was not an actual person standing on the array, but an image that someone had sent over.

That person had white robes on and looked quite different. However, his face seemed visibly taut, and it was obvious that he came with no good intent.

Mitchell and Rudeus' gazes soured when they saw the image.

"Ethan Loewe, do you have nothing better to do?" hissed Rudeus through gritted teeth.

Ethan let out a laugh and shrugged. "Aren't I doing official business right now? I just want to see if you'll be able to gather enough to participate in the seventh round. If you can't, well, that's a shame. After all, I still want to get to know more alchemists from Hestia. We should exchange pointers and elevate our skills."

Although Ethan's words seemed innocent enough, the way he spoke sounded incredibly sinister, coupled with the obvious smirk on his face.

Jackie frowned, immediately understanding why Rudeus and Mitchell's expressions soured so much. This probably was not the first time Ethan downplayed alchemists from Hestia with his words.

Rudeus took a deep breath, doing his best to suppress the rage in his heart. "The people who will be representing us, and whether we'll get enough people, have nothing to do with you. If you have the time to care about us, care about the White Marsh Continent first. Even though our results aren't much, you alchemists from White Marsh Continent are just a little stronger than us. You can't compare to Chaos Continent at all!"

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Ethan's expression stiffened upon hearing Rudeus' words, and a sharp glint flashed in his eyes. Not only was the Heaven Array a large transfer array, but it could also transmit a person's image. Without the person being sent over, they could talk to those around the Heaven Array.

This was the power of an ancient array.

Ethan seemed to have been angered by Rudeus' words.

Snorting, he retorted, "You speak as if we're that bad. Even though we're not as good as Chaos Continent, we still managed to get golden treasures, and not just one at that. Meanwhile, you're far different. You claimed that you're only a bit worse than us. Is that true, though? None of you obtained a single golden treasure yet! Do you really have the right to say such words?"

Those words were definitely a slam on the pride of every alchemist in the inner city. It completely humiliated them, causing Rudeus to shudder in anger. He had been insulted by Ethan before as well, but Ethan had not been so venomous with his words before.

Rudeus came from a ninth-grade clan and received showers of praise from a young age.

Naturally, he was never humiliated before. Worse still, he had no other words to throw at Ethan, who seemed visibly prideful the moment he brought up golden treasures.

He looked at all of the alchemists from Hestia in disdain. "I'll be part of the seventh group. I don't know who'll be competing against me, but let me warn you, none of you will be getting the top-three spots. I think you should just wake up and give up on this competition. After all, this has always been a competition between White Marsh Continent and Chaos Continent. Hestia is just here to make up the numbers with you trash bags."

Ethan cackled maniacally before his image flashed and he disappeared. At that moment, no one could hold back.

Everyone cursed Ethan for being despicable and shameless. They jeered at how arrogant he was, saying that all he knew was to brag. Even the most composed of the alchemists present could not hold back their anger after all that humiliation.

"This guy has crossed the line! It's like he thinks no one can beat him. He's clearly never taken part in the competition at all, but he constantly taunts people. He thinks he's unrivaled!"

"How could someone actually skilled be like him? All he knows is bragging. I think he won't even be able to get the first three places. He doesn't have the skills, so he's just trying to bolster his pride by gloating in front of us!"

"He's just an arrogant and despicable lowlife. If I can meet him face-to-face, I'd rush over and give him a good few sobering slaps!"

Even though all of them knew that Hestia could not compare to White Marsh Continent, they were not willing to swallow Ethan's words. They felt like Ethan's constant taunts were fueled by his vanity. They believed that Ethan was not talented enough to make it into the top three spots and merely wanted to mock them to bolster his self-confidence.

Rudeus was seething at this point, his eyes completely red as he felt like he had never been so humiliated before.

On the other hand, Jackie lightly sighed. He knew very well that Ethan was not completely wrong. If the situation continued, Hestia might not even be able to muster enough people. After all, Rudeus was standing in front of them, insisting that only skilled and willing alchemists be allowed to participate.

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For others, taking part in the competition meant that Rudeus might very well humiliate them, and no one wanted to bear that humiliation. Of those present, only two of them had gotten treasures while the rest returned empty-handed.

Every one of them knew how difficult the competition was, so everyone became cowards. No one was willing to stand up at such a time.

Jackie looked at Rudeus before turning to look at Aaron.

At that moment, Aaron was conversing with Rudy. The two of them were hidden in the darkness, trying not to interact with anyone else. There must have been a few alchemists present that were like Aaron, but thanks to Rudeus' poorly chosen words, no one was willing to step up.

Rudeus trembled with anger and looked like he was about to collapse at any moment.

Jackie did not want to care about anything, but thinking about it, he would need to meet the alchemists from White Marsh Continent and Chaos Continent when the competition started. If they truly could not get enough people, they would be the laughingstock for everyone else.

To avoid that, and also because Jackie did not want Rudeus to just do as he pleased, Jackie said to the people around him, "Rudeus might be exceptional, but he's not the boss of everyone here. We can't just let him pick and choose who can take part just because he wants to. Even if the competition is hard, it's a good opportunity to challenge yourself. As alchemists, we shouldn't let go of any chance to improve ourselves!"

What greeted him was silence and gazes of various emotions. Some were exasperated, while some were disgusted, but they were all directed at Jackie.

Jackie was not fazed, having anticipated these reactions before he even spoke.

Rudeus, enraged and unable to tolerate Jackie's sudden burst of words, stood up. He was like an angered lion, clenching his fists tightly as his true energy circulated his body, ready to attack at any moment.

Nash Skye, who was also from the Scarlet Pavilion, reached out and grabbed Rudeus by his arm. He was afraid that Rudeus would not be able to control his temper and attack Jackie.

After all, Prosper City had its laws, and the moment Rudeus broke those laws, he would be punished. It was a punishment no alchemists could withstand, and he would be turned to ashes.

"Don't fall for it, Rudeus!" warned Nash anxiously. "This guy is trying to anger you and make you attack. You'll be punished by Prosper City if you do!"

Those words were like a bucket of cold water on Rudeus' face. He suddenly calmed down from his anger, realizing that he had been acting too recklessly. If Nash had not been there to hold him back, he might have attacked Jackie. After all, Jackie's words had been even worse than adding oil to the fire for Rudeus.

Rudeus took a few deep breaths before he quelled the anger in his heart. At that moment, however, Rudeus' hatred toward Jackie became concentrated.

Nash looked over and scoffed. "Don't think that you can challenge us as you please, you brat!"

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"Rudeus' behavior in arranging things this way is because he doesn't want Hestia to be humiliated. If everyone participates so brazenly like you are, won't it show the other two continents that our alchemists are all so bad?!"

Hearing that, Jackie raised an eyebrow as he said loudly, "Stop looking for excuses, I won't be convinced just like that. You keep on saying you don't want Hestia to be humiliated, but what you're doing will only embarrass us even more. There are so many alchemists here. Is it that hard to pick out a few seventh-grade alchemists? The fact that the seventh-grade alchemists are all unwilling to step up is purely because they'd be humiliated by Rudeus if they didn't satisfy him."

"Who'd want to step up just to be berated? You're stopping others from taking part and humiliating our continent even more! In your eyes, sixth-grade alchemists are nothing, but what about seventh-grade alchemists?! Surely it won't be hard to pick out a few seventh-grade alchemists when there are over ten thousand of them here! Why can't we even pick out ten? Simply put, no one wants to be scolded!"

"The standards you uphold are hilarious. As long as they have a seventh-grade alchemist badge, they won't be mocked when they enter. After all, the badge doesn't explicitly say how skilled a person is. Even if the alchemists from the other continents are skilled, there's no way there will be a lot of eighth-grade alchemists. After all, there's an age restriction!"

Jackie's words were quite logical, and the other alchemists slowly became convinced. Everyone slowly felt like Rudeus' earlier arrangements were too tyrannical and too reliant on him alone.

Many alchemists were present, including seventh-grade alchemists. It should not be difficult to pick out 10 of them to compete. The reason why no one stepped up was simply because of Rudeus' horrible temper. If they were not to his standards, they would be shouted at.

There should have been a lot more people willing to participate. After all, no one wanted Hestia to be humiliated.

Rudeus was shaking in anger as he looked at Jackie with even more hatred in his eyes. If it were not for Jackie, he would not be questioned like that!

Jackie did not care how angry Rudeus was at all. Instead, he turned and raised his voice to speak to all the other alchemists, "You can compete if you want to. It's a rare chance to train yourselves. After all, you're not competing with the alchemists of Hestia but those from other worlds instead. Even if you'll be mocked, it's fine! Just imagine that they're dogs that only know how to bark!"

"Hey, that guy has a point, this is a rare chance! We can't just listen to Rudeus' arrangements. Even though I'm not an eighth-grade alchemist, I'm still a seventh-grade alchemist."

"My skills are decent. There's no way I'll get a treasure, but at least I can train myself. I'll only be able to improve if I do that!"

"Even though this guy is insufferable, he's being logical here. We can't just follow what Rudeus wants, we should think for ourselves!"

Slowly, the alchemists' stance shifted as they gravitated to accept Jackie's view and that Rudeus should not have a final say in everything. After all, Rudeus was only concerned with himself.

After a short while, a tall man stood up from his mat. He walked over to the Heaven Array and grabbed a small array before putting it in his storage space.

The man told everyone, "I won't let this chance go. I've decided to take part in the seventh group!"

After saying that, he turned and walked back to his spot. Slowly, everyone started to move, and the remaining arrays were quickly taken.