

DEMONIC 1401

Chapter 1401 1401. Golems

Noah wasn't underestimating the trial. Some of the features described by Don worried him greatly, but he couldn't give up on that chance to prove his power and seize the best reward of the second layer.

Don watched as Noah dug a cave near the edge of the landmass and secluded himself. He had no words to express how reckless Noah's behavior was, but he had already explained everything he could.

Noah wasn't even part of the Legion, so Don eventually gave up trying to make him change his mind. If Noah wanted to risk his life and waste time over an impossible trial, he was free to do so.

Don soon left, and Noah remained alone in that distant part of the separate dimension. The light radiated by the Divine Deduction technique shone on his mental sea and improved his mental capabilities as he reviewed what Don had explained.

The trial wasn't easy. According to Don, the underground structure contained hundreds of golems at the peak of the middle tier. Moreover, Noah wouldn't be able to restore his "Breath" and mental energy unless he cleared an entire area.

The challenge also forced the contenders to destroy one golem per week. Failing in doing so would reset the trial to its original state and make all the previous efforts go to waste.

Noah knew that his power was off the scale, but he wasn't delusional. His abilities could allow him to defeat a single peak middle tier creature, but he didn't have the power to face hundreds of them at the same time. The limitations on his recovery were also a major issue, especially when he considered that the golems would always know his position.

'I won't immediately succeed,' Noah thought. 'I need to study those golems and develop an offensive pattern. My black hole will take care of my exhaustion, but I will eventually need a proper rest at some point.'

The trial sounded impossible to overcome for a single existence, but Noah had a crucial advantage. He wasn't alone. He could count on three divine companions that could multiply his battle prowess.

Noah's workshop and the dark world could even relieve some of the pressure created by his numerical disadvantage. He was probably the only liquid stage expert in the world who could have a chance in that test.

'How long do you need to reach the middle tier?' Noah asked through his consciousness.

"I'm close," Night replied. "Leave me a bunch of that darkness and focus on a strategy. I'll make sure to be ready before the trial."

'That's impossible if we count the period of hibernation,' Noah replied bluntly. 'Still, don't worry about it. I can complete my preparations only after I learn more about these golems.'

Night went silent after that reply and focused on eating the special darkness that Noah had continued to create to nourish his companion. Its breakthrough was approaching. It was almost time for the Pterodactyl to surpass its previous peak.

Noah also stopped minding the creature as he focused on absorbing the rewards gathered through the second layer. The many pills and potions were almost useless to him, but it was a waste to eat them only to obtain the energy that they contained. Yet, the same didn't apply to the Steeled Boar's corpse and the Uwan's fruit.

'Is this really as poisonous as Don claims?' Noah thought as he studied the spiked fruit in his hand.

His instincts didn't sense any danger coming from the fruit. They only felt the immense energy that it contained, and traces of hunger resurfaced in Noah's mind as he continued to study it.

'I guess I can only try it,' Noah concluded as he took a small bite from the fruit.

An awful taste spread through his mouth as he gulped that moist material. Energy began to flow out of the piece and disperse through his body, but the black hole promptly intervened and isolated that phenomenon with the dark matter.

Noah felt strange when that energy tried to reach his tissues. It didn't seem any different from the usual primary energy that he absorbed every day, but his insides wanted to reject it before it could even land on their fabric.

There was clearly something strange about the fruit, but Noah didn't need to understand its features since his black hole would take care of the matter. Its cycles of purification would turn that strange primary energy into something that Noah could safely absorb.

Noah ate the entire fruit in one bite after confirming that the black hole had successfully purified its energy. His body grew quickly as power came out of his fourth center of power and flowed inside his tissues.

After the fruit, Noah ate the Boar, except for its skin. He could use that material for his fake cores and other creations, so he preferred to store it at the moment.

His body improved steadily, but it didn't reach the halfway mark of the middle tier. Even the rewards from the inheritance of a rank 9 cultivator weren't enough to meet his requirements. Only nutrients far above his level could give him the power needed to experience substantial improvements.

His body was only the first of his preparations. Noah didn't know any traditional method to improve his dantian and mental energy more quickly. Still, he had accumulated a large stash of Soul Stones through his adventures in the Immortal Lands.

The raw laws contained in that currency allowed him to cultivate smoothly and slowly restored the first ability of his ambition. His individuality couldn't make him cross ranks again at its current condition, but forcing it to grow would improve his foundation. It would also deepen his reserves of energy, which was Noah's main intention.

Night hibernated while Noah trained. The Pterodactyl remained inside the separate space and fell asleep as a gravitational pull unfolded from its figure.

The creature continued to absorb energy even after its breakthrough began, and Noah didn't hesitate to fill its surroundings with the special darkness required.

'It's time to enter,' Noah concluded after he met the limits of his training.

The biggest issue in that process was that he had never fought the golems, but he planned to solve it soon. Once he gained that information, Noah could modify the workshop according to his needs and understand which attacks it was better using.

Noah interrupted his training at some point and moved to enter the cave under the cliff. An ominous aura began to leak out of the entrance once he stepped on it, and multiple appeared in the range of his consciousness.

The insides of the cave were pale-azure and seemed to carry metallic properties. The walls, floor, and ceiling of that underground structure differed from the barren lands on the surface. They were so sturdy that Noah couldn't even leave a mark on them when he used his Demonic Sword.

Supreme Thief had done that on purpose. The underground structure's layout was one of the trial's difficulties, and that mighty existence didn't want to leave any loophole.

A tunnel stretched from the entrance and led into a large underground hall. The ceiling was less than seven meters tall, barely enough to contain the tall figures that filled the area.

When Noah reached the end of the tunnel, he saw those humanoid golems turning toward him and sliding their heads on the ceiling as they began to converge on his position.

Chapter 1402 1402. Army

Screeching noises resounded in the pale-azure underground hall as the golems moved toward Noah. He remained at the exit of the tunnel as icy-blue light came out of his eyes.

The Divine Deduction technique was active. Noah wasn't aiming to defeat the challenge already. He had come there only to study the golems so that he could prepare his abilities.

The golems were a bit taller than the ceiling. They had to bend their back to move inside the hall, but their bodies were too clunky for that task. Their heads often hit the layer of metallic rocks and released screeching noises due to their movements.

Those creatures didn't have any peculiar features. They had long arms, large fists, and thick bodies. Their dark-blue skin was uneven, but it didn't carry any crack nor flaw. They moved slowly due to their clunky structure, but the joints on their shoulders and elbows appeared a bit more flexible than the rest of their fabric.

'I need to be wary of their punches,' Noah thought as he stepped off the entrance and shot toward the closest golem.

The Demonic Sword came out of the separate space and landed on his palm as dark gas flowed out of his skin. The fiendish armor soon covered him, and other trails of dark matter expanded to deploy the dark world.

Noah was going all-out since the beginning. He counted more than fifty golems at the peak of the middle tier in that hall, so he couldn't underestimate that challenge.

The dark world didn't manage to restrain the golem, but it studied them and sent those pieces of information back to Noah. He could gain a general idea about their physical prowess and sturdiness before even clashing with his first opponent.

'Don didn't mention this,' Noah thought as he studied those reports.

The golem's dark-blue skin carried properties that made them resistant to the "Breath" and similar forms of energy. Spells and common martial arts would find it hard to hurt those creatures.

That resistance didn't apply to the dark matter. Noah's higher energy worked perfectly fine against the golems, and that gave him hope to overcome that trial.

Noah stopped before entering in the golem's range and crouched as he pulled his black back. An intense sharpness spread through the dark world as the dark matter flowed inside the Demonic Sword and resonated with its intentions.

The golem drew near, but Noah released his lunge as soon as the creature's arms flickered. A trail of dense sharpness and dark matter came out of his sword and hit his opponent right in the middle of its chest.

The dark world's insides became chaotic as the golem ignored the attack and swung its arms toward Noah. He could see two giant boulders reaching his position at high speed, but he easily dodged them.

Noah flew toward the golem's shoulder, and his figure transformed into a black blade as the world in his eyes became blurry. He built his momentum before suddenly stopping and releasing a massive slash empowered by the dark world.

A giant black line crashed on the puppet's shoulder, but even that incredible attack didn't manage to slow down its movements. The golem had swung its arms as soon as Noah stopped, and its massive limbs covered his vision as they flew in his direction.

Noah had to dodge again, but he couldn't perform another attack at that time. A second golem had reached his position and had thrown its fists on the trajectory of his escape route. That puppet had actually calculated that path and was aiming to intercept Noah mid-air.

'They aren't as mindless as they look,' Noah noted down in his mind as he kicked the air next to him to perform a sharp turn that made him dodge those attacks.

However, his situation didn't improve. Noah found two more punches flying in his direction right after dodging the previous attack. A third golem had appeared, and it was trying to cut Noah's escape route.

Noah kicked the air under him and rotated on himself to dodge the incoming attack. The Demonic Sword released clinking noises as it hit the ceiling, but it didn't lose its power.

By the time Noah was above the golem's arms, the Demonic Sword had released a storm of black lines that rained on the creature and hid its entire body with the thickness of its blows.

Noah's kick also crashed on the giant's arms and created a shockwave that spread through the entirety of the underground hall. Its surfaces didn't tremble even after that impact, but that only proved how impenetrable and stable they were.

The golem's arms crashed on the ground after the impact, but Noah didn't feel safe yet. Three more puppets had reached his position and were throwing their limbs at him.

'I want to kill at least one,' Noah thought before kicking the ceiling to reappear on the ground.

Noah shot again and returned toward the first golem. That creature had suffered his strongest attack, but it had continued to move even if it had a large hole on its chest.

Cuts continued to appear inside the hole. Noah had used his boundless ambition to fuel his endless slashes, but they only managed to sever small pieces of the dark-blue creature. They continued to damage it, but that amount of damage wasn't enough to slow it down.

'I'll probably need three to four lunges to pierce it from side to side?' Noah thought as he pulled his Demonic Sword back again.

Among the attacks launched previously, the lunge had managed to damage the golem the most. Sword Saint's technique focused on piercing abilities, so that outcome wasn't a complete surprise for Noah.

Right before he could launch another lunge, the second golem reached his position and threw its limbs toward him. Noah had to interrupt the offensive to dodge, but an intense, dangerous sensation filled his mind as soon as he stopped.

Noah didn't need to turn to understand what was happening, but he still did it to inspect the scene properly. One of the last golems had waited for him in that position while crouching and pulling back its arm. It seemed that it was charging its blow.

The golem attacked before Noah could thoroughly study that form. Its fist condensed the air as it ran through the room and flung Noah back with the sole force radiated by its attack.

Noah couldn't even begin to imagine what would happen if the punch hit him directly. Still, he memorized everything he saw while he tried to escape from the dense shockwave that had engulfed him.

The tough rocks of the walls and his back clashed. Noah didn't manage to escape from that condensed air in the end. The blow had pushed him on the other side of the hall, behind many golems that promptly changed direction.

Noah quickly recovered to dodge again. The golems near him were already launching their attacks, which forced him to deploy an evasive maneuver.

Roars resounded through the underground hall at that point. Dragons formed inside the dark world and charged at the golems nearby. He had activated the workshop, but he wasn't using any fake core in that offensive.

Slashes also flew out of his figure and crashed on the incoming puppets. Noah's attacks always managed to hurt them, but they couldn't slow down their offense. The golems resembled an immortal army that would continue to march as long as it had an opponent.

Chapter 1403 1403. Math

Noah had already launched many attacks, but he had yet to destroy one golem. His slashes, lunges, and techniques broke their skin and dug through their tough bodies, but they never managed to destabilize their whole structure.

Only the first golem was showing signs of giving in. Cuts still dug through its injury. The opening in its chest had continued to enlarge as Noah fought all around the hall.

A loud hiss eventually echoed through the underground hall. Snore formed inside the dark world and joined the army of dragons in their offensive against the golems.

Dark rays shot out of its mouth and crashed on every golem that tried to find a flaw in Noah's escape route. The violent dark matter was Noah's most destructive attack, but it didn't manage to pierce the golems from side to side since they always destroyed the Blood Companion before it could hurt them too much.

The golems could immediately react to any danger, and they could coordinate to cut away Noah's escape routes. Their attacks also tried to force Noah to go deeper inside the underground hall.

That wasn't a battle against a bunch of mindless peak middle tier creatures. The golems were a fearsome opponent that could take Noah's life as soon as he let them gain the upper hand in that battle.

'At least one!' Noah shouted in his mind as he kicked one massive arm to the side and slashed at a golem that was trying to attack him from behind.

Noah had begun to feel some pressure as the battle continued. More and more golems were gathering around him. The number of attacks he had to deal with kept increasing, and he never managed to inflict a deadly blow to any of those creatures.

The tunnel leading back to the outside world got farther and farther away as he kept dodging and attacking. Snore's dark beams managed to buy him enough time to return to a decent position, but the Blood Companion lacked his agility and continued to crumble under those powerful attacks.

His other abilities failed to affect the golems. Those puppets marched through his slashes, his lunges, his dragons, and his dark world without ever slowing down. It didn't matter how much he hurt them. Everything was pointless if he couldn't destroy them.

Of course, Noah wasn't fighting to win. He had already devised countless strategies, and he had obtained enough data to improve his workshop. He only needed to see one last thing before he could retreat and prepare.

He had to understand how much damage the golems could take before crumbling.

'What are they doing?' Noah suddenly thought when he sensed that something was off.

The golems were too big to fight Noah at the same time. Only three to four of them could attack him without hindering each other's offensive. The rest of the army waited behind them, ready to intercept him whenever he performed an evasive maneuver.

However, Noah had suddenly noticed that part of the backlines had begun to move toward the exit. They were completely ignoring him to deploy a different tactic.

Noah didn't take much to understand what they were up to. He only had to imagine what he would do if he were in the golem's position.

'They are trying to seal the exit!' Noah concluded before kicking the air under him and transforming into a black sword as he shot toward the tunnel.

Noah didn't make it past the backlines with his movement techniques. There were too many golems on his path, so he often had to slow down to dodge them.

The golems exploited that flaw in his escape by charging their simple martial arts and releasing punches that filled the entire hall with waves made of dense air. They slammed Noah to a wall before he could cross them.

Snore quickly reformed and slammed its body on the golems that were trying to close on Noah. Its body made of dense dark matter managed to endure a few blows, and the violent energy shooting out of its mouth slowed down part of the backlines.

Noah quickly recovered and resumed his retreat, but Snore eventually crumbled, so the golems could launch their martial arts and interrupt his escape again.

The dense air slamming on his body kept him stuck on the pale-azure wall. Noah's instincts went crazy when he heard the screeching noises drawing closer to his position.

He could endure the shockwaves easily, but a direct hit would hurt. Noah knew that he had to leave before it was too late, but he felt unable to move properly with so many golems throwing their abilities at him.

Even if the situation appeared desperate, Noah remained calm. He had been through worse in his life, and he didn't approach the trial unprepared.

Noah unfolded his consciousness as he tightened his grip on the Demonic Sword. The dark world seemed to stop as his concentration increased and his mind focused on the golems.

Then, the dark world began to condense. The army of dragons vanished, and the dark matter in the area amassed in the form of minute shards above the puppets' heads. Those creatures promptly tried to attack them, but an intense sharpness suddenly filled the room and made it fall into complete chaos.

The shards transformed into massive blades that fell on the golems and cut through their dark-blue bodies. Those creatures remained stuck for a second, but they soon charged ahead and destroyed the black swords.

Noah's sharpness activated at that point. The giants now had a large crack that ran from their head to the bottom of their torso, and countless cuts opened inside them.

Pieces of those dark-blue rocks rained from their bodies as Noah's attack continued. He didn't waste time gathering those materials and shot toward the exit at full speed.

The dark matter that had flowed inside them after they continued their charge resonated with Noah's sharpness and aided the many cuts that were continuing to appear. The golems finally showed signs of slowing down, but that phenomenon barely affected their battle prowess.

Still, Noah used the instant gained through his technique to shoot toward the exit and cross the golems that were about to seal his path toward the outside world.

Along his path, Noah noticed that one of the giants had fallen on the ground, with its body in pieces. That was the first puppet that he met in the trial. It was the creature that had suffered his lunge.

Noah smiled at that sight, but he didn't dare to slow down. He entered the tunnel and quickly flew back into the outside world to return to his cave.

The scenes of the recent battles still filled his mind, but intense tiredness filled his mind and threatened to make him fall asleep.

Noah's body was fine, but his dantian and mental energy were almost empty. The last attack and the Divine Deduction technique's continuous use had made him reach his limits far faster than usual. Still, he didn't regret that.

'Destroying one of them was the hard part,' Noah thought as he sat and reviewed the images of his recent battle. 'Finding a way to destroy the other ones without depleting my energy is simple math.'

Chapter 1404 1404. Preparations

Noah recovered and prepared for his second attempt in the trial after he returned to his cave. His black hole of power washed away the tiredness that afflicted his centers of power, and his mind planned strategies that would help him defeat that challenge.

He had to overcome two major problems to win the trial. One involved his energy, and the other the power of his attacks.

Noah's battle prowess didn't reflect his actual level, but the quantity of energy contained inside his centers of power did. He could defeat the peak middle tier golems, but long battles against those opponents would exhaust him.

His attacks were also unsuitable for that type of battle. The golems were resistant to the "Breath" and mental energy, which ruled out most of his spells and martial arts from the list of abilities to use in the trial. The damage that he could inflict with them didn't match the energy needed to cast them.

At his current level, Noah couldn't improve his centers of power drastically. Even the raw laws would lose their effect at some point, and abusing them would only hurt his individuality in the long run.

Noah had to find the solution to those problems in his techniques. He had to rely only on stronger abilities to save energy and be more efficient during the battle.

The last fight didn't feature Noah at his peak. Night was hibernating, and he didn't use any fake core with his workshop, so the ability didn't express its true power.

The dark matter didn't perform any specific task either. Noah had used it to create the fiendish armor, but that protection was almost useless against the golems. It could only defend from the shockwaves. It couldn't stop their massive punches.

Noah could express far more of his power now that he knew what he had to defeat, and he didn't waste time in completing his preparations. A new blueprint formed in his mind and the Steeled Boar's skin transformed into multiple fake cores while he waited for Night to wake up.

He even studied his martial arts. The golems were theoretically resistant to those techniques, but Noah backed his forms with his incredible physical strength. His slashes and lunges were far from useless in the trial.

'I have always planned to do this,' Noah thought as his Divine Deduction technique helped him reviewing his martial arts. 'I can't limit the higher energy to the passive empowerment of other abilities. I have to make it a core part, just like my physical strength, my "Breath", and my mental energy.'

The workshop and the dark world were the only techniques he couldn't activate without dark matter. His martial arts and spells could still work without it, and that had to change.

As much as Noah liked being versatile, he recognized that he couldn't treat his dark matter as energy separate from his existence. The dark matter was part of his individuality, so all his techniques and spells had to feature it.

Noah had done something similar in the past already when he had fused his martial arts and spells to create a personal school that only hybrids could perform. He only had to do it again but on a broader scale since that project would theoretically update his whole battle style.

That project required a lot of time and many tests, but Supreme Thief's inheritance was the perfect training area, especially since he had to wait for Night to wake up.

The Crystal City and other eventual bounty hunters couldn't reach him in that place. No one on the entire human side could find the inheritance since the Legion kept its location a secret and moved it whenever the cultivators became too close.

The environment inside the second layer was also perfect for his level. That separate dimension had the same quality as the outer world. It was even better at times since it didn't feature any unexpected danger.

Noah was even alone now since most hybrids weren't aware of that location. He could train in complete safety and without external hassles to handle.

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Night was a rank 7 creature in the lower tier that Noah had improved. Its mind had also experienced the ascension twice, so it surpassed most magical beasts at his level when it came to his experience in the divine ranks.

It was only normal for Night to need years to wake up. The length of its hibernation reflected its power and the might that it would wield after the breakthrough.

Noah could rejoice twice when he saw that Night had continued to sleep for entire decades. That time allowed him to focus on his abilities and showed how the Pterodactyl's potential surpassed any other magical beast in the Immortal Lands and made it closer to the hybrid realm.

"I have to say, Master," Night voice suddenly echoed in Noah's mind while he was training, "I didn't expect to reach these peaks after you destroyed part of my mind. I'm glad I've sacrificed it now."

A deafening roar filled the separate space when Night finished speaking, and the massive figure of a peculiar Pterodactyl shot out of Noah's chest right after.

Night flew out of the cave and rose high in the sky before bathing in the second layer's pale-azure light. Trails of darkness followed it since it had yet to learn how to control its new power. The companion cut and transformed the matter on its path due to its newfound sharpness.

'Are you ready to jump in a battle?' Noah asked through his mind as a cold smirk appeared on his face.

"I only need to understand how strong I have become before," Night replied. "I can cut anything you want afterward."

"Have fun," Noah replied before focusing again on his abilities.

Night flew through the second layer in the following months. It avoided the areas featuring members of the Legion to focus on the few powerful specimens that inhabited that environment.

Noah kept the Pterodactyl's movements in check through his mind, but he didn't apply any major restriction to its behavior. He only asked the creature not to start a war because of its need to test its power.

After Night felt satisfied with its tests, it flew back to the cave and returned inside the separate dimension. It was ready to hear Noah's battle plan and eager to face the golems.

'This is the best I can do for now,' Noah thought as he focused on bringing his centers of power back to their peak. 'I will handle the other spells another time.'

Noah couldn't succeed in his project in those years, not completely at least. He had to ignore some spells and finish the improvements on those that he planned to use in the trial. The others would have to wait for him to go to the next tower.

Once his centers of power were ready, Noah left his cave and jumped off the cliff to reenter the trial. When he reached the end of the tunnel, he saw the army of golems turning toward him again. Those creatures had even returned to their original position after the previous battle.

Noah behaved like the last time. The Demonic Sword flew in his hand, and he crouched as he pulled his blade back. Still, the golem fell backward when his attack hit its chest.

Chapter 1405 1405. Power

The Demonic Sword began to shake while Noah held it. That phenomenon didn't come from the accumulation of dark matter in its structure. It was a form that Noah had added to give an active task to the higher energy generated by the blade.

Martial arts required forms to consume "Breath" and use it to produce stronger effects, and the same applied to the higher energy. Noah had already seen from Snore's dark beam how the dark matter reached its highest destructive potential in its violent shape, so he created a move that imitated the effects of its innate ability.

Noah had it easy in that task. He had invented the Snore's dark beam in the end. Translating the movements of its organs into a form wasn't hard. The problems had begun when the dark matter started to diminish the effects of his darkness.

Still, Noah had used the years while waiting for Night to wake up to test and polish that new move. That martial art was already perfect in the trial.

When Noah pushed his blade forward, his sharpness intensified, and a dark beam came out of his attack. The technique carried the same violent energy that Snore could create, but it released it in a more orderly form.

That seemed to be contradictory. The violent dark matter was what made the dark beam so threatening. Still, Noah didn't affect that feature during the execution of his technique.

The dark beam appeared more orderly due to the sharpness that flew with it. Noah had found a way to condense it through his darkness and physical strength, so the attack carried the full power of Snore's innate ability added to his iconic lunge.

The attack hit the golem at the center of its chest and dug its dark-blue metallic skin to reach deeper parts of its body. During the impact, the puppet sensed an immense force pushing it back and destabilizing its balance.

The beam was so dense that the golem bent backward before falling on its back. The creature waved its arms in a desperate attempt to straighten its position, but its clunky body didn't allow it to stand up quickly.

Cuts had also started to open inside the large hole that had appeared on its chest. Its fall had prevented Noah from inflicting more damage, but he had already used his individuality to increase the dangerousness of his attack.

While the golem tried to deal with that annoying technique, Noah leaped toward it and held the Demonic Sword with both hands. His blade pointed at the ground, at the creature that was still stuck there due to its clunky shape.

Noah's blade began to tremble again while he performed that move. That form lacked any style or refined gesture, but it expressed the aggression carried by his individuality. It made Noah resemble a drooling beast that was jumping toward its injured prey.

A massive arm appeared on its path during his descent. A second golem had arrived on the scene and had thrown an uppercut to catch him by surprise, but its attack barely managed to slow Noah down.

When the trembling blade hit the giant fist, shards made of dark matter flew downward and cut away pieces of the second golem's limbs. Some even turned into dust due to the might carried by the blow.

Noah quickly pulled back his blade and rotated on himself to slash downward. His movements seemed to slow down since the world tried to restrain that intense release of energy, but his attack wasn't something those weak laws could contain.

A fast curved black line flew out of his figure and crashed on the damaged fist. The rest of the attack continued to descend toward the first golem and worsened its condition as it intensified the countless cuts that were opening inside its injury.

A third and fourth golem reached Noah, and the second creature joined their offensive with its free hand. Three punches were flying toward him at the same time and threatened to smash his body into pieces.

That offensive wasn't something that Noah could stop even with his improved martial art. His centers of power were too weak for that feat. Yet, he had prepared something for that issue.

His dark world suddenly expanded, and the workshop activated. In a fraction of an instant, countless thick tentacles wrapped themselves around the golems around him and restrained their movements.

The tentacles also extended on their arms and stopped their attacks before they could reach Noah, giving him time to execute another form undisturbed.

Noah kicked the air above him and shot past the damaged arm. The world in his vision became blurry for a second, but it soon stabilized when his weapon pierced the golem's head, and dark matter exploded wildly in its insides.

Chunks of dark-blue rocks shot in every direction as Noah turned to perform a slash while pulling his sword out of the creature's head. A massive cut spread through its chest and fused with the large hole as the blade came out in the open and slashed at the damaged arm.

Other golems arrived at that point, but more tentacles materialized inside the dark world and restrained their movements, giving Noah all the time that he wanted to focus his opponents.

'Snore,' Noah thought before leaping off the lain golem to shoot toward the second one.

Snore materialized among the dark world and opened its mouth to launch its dark beam to the first golem. The puppet was still struggling to stand up, but the creature's innate ability kept it down and dug through its body.

'Night,' Noah thought before moving his blade to the side and accumulating dark matter in its structure.

A shadow came out of his chest and surpassed him to fuse with the golem's shoulder. Before Noah could even reach that spot, the limb fell, and the Pterodactyl reappeared nearby.

Noah had understood the weak points of the golems at first sight. The joints on their arms had to be softer to allow them to perform their attacks, and Night could exploit that information.

The Pterodactyl was the only creature in Noah's arsenal that could execute precise attacks without minding the opponent's movements. It could reach its joints in an instant and sever them even faster.

Noah reached the golem's neck as the arm fell and stabbed the sharp side of his blade into its dark-blue metal. His feet then landed on its severed shoulders, and dark matter filled his black vessels as he focused his whole physical strength on cutting that head off.

A flash of dark matter spread through the dark world as the energy contained inside the Demonic Sword exploded. A large chunk of the golem's neck shattered as he continued to apply strength to his attack.

More explosions resounded, and other golems arrived in his position, but there didn't seem to be an end to those tentacles. The workshop's new creation could keep those creatures restrained for a long time as long as they didn't work together to sever them.

However, Noah knew that destroying the tentacles was useless. The dark world would always refill the depleted higher energy and recreate those limbs.

Chapter 1406 1406. Initial success

The new blueprint for the workshop represented a giant octopus that Noah had explicitly created for the trial. Its body didn't exist in the world since he had invented a structure that could restrain the golems.

Noah had learnt from his first attempt in the trial. An army of dragons in the middle tier couldn't stop the golems, and he suspected that adding fake cores to their bodies would only slightly improve their efficiency.

He needed something different for the challenge, something strong enough to face multiple golems at the same time, and that his workshop could create instantly.

Through the Divine Deduction technique, Noah devised a blueprint that could feature multiple fake cores. The octopus contained most of his replicas of Great Builder's oval items, with many of them occupying specific spots in its tentacles.

That made the limbs far sturdier and gave them enough power to restrain the golems. Still, their destruction could cause the loss of the fake cores. The octopus wasn't big enough to cover the entire underground hall either, so it could only protect Noah from the attacks happening around him.

Noah completed his slash and severed the golem's head. Violent dark matter flew out of his blade once it reappeared in the open, and black shards crashed on the puppets that had gathered around him.

The headless golem didn't stop moving, but Night flew inside its other shoulder and severed its arm with a clean attack. Nothing seemed able to block the Pterodactyl now that it had reached the middle tier.

A prideful hiss echoed in the underground hall as Snore raised its massive head to spat a wave of that matter on the golems amassing around the battle. The puppet under the Blood Companion had died after suffering countless injuries, and the Snake wanted to announce its feat to the world.

'I can do this!' Noah shouted in his mind as he continued to fight.

If his math was correct, he had enough energy to clear the entire hall. Adding his dark matter to his martial arts had put more pressure on his body, but it had eased the weight felt by his dantian. Those techniques also required a small amount of darkness anyway, so his improvements made its consumption barely noticeable.

The dark world kept enhancing his abilities and companions as the battle continued. Night and Snore could express far more power in that environment, and the same went for the giant octopus.

Noah exploited every chance that he found to inflict damage. Those golems weren't living beings, and they didn't have any core. The underground hall itself seemed to fuel them and lead them toward him.

They would stop moving once they suffered severe structural damage. The room would spend too much energy to make them function in that condition, so it left them on the ground.

The golems could ignore even his deadliest techniques to launch a reckless assault. They didn't care about their life. They only wanted to defeat their opponent.

The octopus took care of most golems. It restrained their movements and allowed Noah, Snore, and Night to inflict severe injuries. The Pterodactyl and Noah could even resort to more precise attacks that left the golems either maimed or completely armless.

As the battle continued, Noah began to feel some pressure. That trial was far more dangerous than his fight with the Steeled Boar. The golems could gain the upper hand and kill him if he slowed down or committed some mistake.

His centers of power never stopped depleting their energy, and Noah could only keep them in check as he continued to fight. He had to follow a specific pace to make sure that he would last until the end of the battle, which only increased the pressure he felt.

It was only due to his vast battle experience that he managed to remain calm and continue to execute his offensive in the most perfect and neat way. He didn't perform any useless movement or attack. Every time he used his "Breath", the golems lost pieces of their body.

Golems slowly started to die more often as the battle continued. Noah could rarely focus one of them for longer than two attacks, so he had spent most of the initial phases of the fight inflicting injuries to anything that came into his range.

The real killing arrived after every golem in the hall had suffered some damage. Noah would engulf them with another series of attacks and worsen the injuries caused during the first phases of the trial.

His sharpness never stopped rampaging through the battlefield either. All the cracks, severed limbs, and even minor dents were the home to countless cuts that opened and continued to damage the dark-blue metal.

The more the battle went on, the more Noah neared the exhaustion. Still, the pace at which golems died also increased due to the injuries accumulated on their bodies.

Noah fought like a calm madman, and the same went for his companions. Only Snore threw itself toward the golems when it didn't have enough time to prepare its dark beam.

Tentacles broke from time to time, and fake cores ended up crushed by the golems' giant feet after they fell on the ground. The dark world would often fail to seize them in time since it had countless enemies walking freely through its dense dark matter.

Noah stabbed his blade on golem's shoulder, and a wave of violent but dense dark matter shot out of it together with his darkness and sharpness.

Night promptly flew toward the other shoulder and severed the entire limb. That denied the golem's attack and gave Noah time to cause a series of explosions with his dark matter.

Once even the other arm fell, Noah shot toward the puppet's chest and threw a violent kick while Snore and tentacles restrained its legs.

The golem fell backward, and Noah held his blade with two hands before rising it above his head and thrusting it down when the creature touched the ground.

A spiderweb of cracks expanded from the spot where the Demonic Sword had pierced the golem. Flares of dark matter came out of them whenever they failed to dig through the dark-blue metal.

Noah stabbed his blade deeper and released more dark matter whenever that happened. The Demonic Sword eventually reached the ground after it dug through the entire puppet.

Noah climbed through the cracks and prepared his weapon to resume his offensive, but he froze mid-air when he saw nothing more than boulders and debris. Nothing moved in the underground hall. Even his companions remained still in front of that silent victory.

'The others should be harder,' Noah thought as he landed on a boulder and let go of the Demonic Sword.

The blade gave voice to a growl before slipping inside his robe. The Demonic Sword was tired, but it didn't want to rest inside the separate space. It also knew that Noah would cultivate soon, so it found it pointless to return inside the black hole.

The underground hall grew darker after Noah defeated all the golems. "Breath" seeped out of its walls quickly and soon filled the entire area. A path even opened on the opposite side of the entrance. That was the last evidence that Noah needed to be sure of his initial success.

Chapter 1407 1407. Halls

The victory in the first hall of the underground hall made Noah confident in his battle prowess. He had managed to defeat more than fifty peak middle tier opponents without taking any break.

That feat put him among the best liquid stage cultivators in terms of battle prowess. The golems didn't reflect the power of actual magical beasts at that level, and Noah had even invented specific techniques for that trial, but his strength was undeniable.

The trial didn't offer Noah much time to rest. The one-week rule was effective even after he cleared the first hall, so he had to focus on bringing his centers of power back to their peak during those days.

Noah wanted to study the dark-blue metal, review his previous battle, and improve his abilities to make them even more perfect for the trial. Yet, the one-week restriction forced him to disregard everything to focus on his centers of power.

Most cultivators would struggle to recover after such a battle, and the same went for some hybrids, even if their resilience surpassed what simple humans were capable of doing. Still, Noah had the black hole, so his condition returned to its peak even before his time ran out.

His fourth center of power also sensed Noah's need to recover quickly, so it redirected its energy to improve that process. Noah was ready for the next hall in six days.

Noah didn't waste time. He left for the next hall as soon as he recovered. A new path had appeared on the walls, and his consciousness sensed multiple presences when he entered it.

The golems in the second hall activated when Noah stepped inside the new tunnel. Their number was almost the same as the previous phase. There were only two more of them there.

Noah didn't have to think nor plan anything. He knew what he had to do, and he had also accumulated experience in that type of battle.

Golems moved in his direction as soon as he left the tunnel, and Noah didn't hesitate to activate his abilities. Snore, Night, the Demonic Sword, and the octopus filled his dark world that expanded to cover most of the battlefield.

The second battle went even better than the first one. Noah had polished some aspects of his battle style after the experience gained in the previous hall, and he had learnt more about the golems.

He could exploit their structural weaknesses better and destroy more of them in a shorter time. He even resorted to maim a large group to lower their dangerousness and have an easier way through the battle.

The second part of the trial went smoothly. The walls soon darkened, and "Breath" seeped out of their fabric to allow his recovery. Noah didn't even wait for that energy to fill the hall and sat on the ground to rest.

In a bit more than six days, Noah was ready to fight, and he shot toward the tunnel that had opened after his victory to face the third hall. An army of golems filled his view again, but their numbers didn't worry him.

It seemed that the trial wanted to test his mental resilience other than his overall battle prowess. Noah didn't have the time to think about Supreme Thief's intentions during the challenge, but he began to guess that the expert didn't intend to make the "strength" tower only about physical power.

The tower wanted to force any contestant to stop relying on their "Breath" and mental energy. It was a subtle difference that many ignored, but it marked the difference between Noah's success and failure.

If the Supreme Thief wanted to limit that tower to the physical strength, Noah wouldn't be able to use his dark matter. The fact that almost every expert was unaware of the existence of the higher energy wouldn't stop a rank 9 expert from preventing its usage.

Instead, Noah had managed to exploit physical techniques that relied on his dark matter throughout the entire second layer. The dark vessels were part of his body, but that didn't change the fact that they fed on his higher energy.

The third hall went even better than the previous ones. Even if Noah didn't have enough time to review his battle, his prowess against the golems naturally improved.

His attack became more precise and began to consume less energy. His new techniques also grew in might as he kept using them against those enemies.

The same went for his companions. Night had an innate insight that allowed it to find weak spots in its opponents, but Snore and the octopus had to learn from the battles to hone their skills. Still, the process went smoothly, and they soon brought their efficiency to its peak.

An almost identical challenge followed the third hall, and that trend continued even for the fifth and sixth battles. Noah had spent weeks inside that trial already, but he didn't appear able to find its end.

No thoughts filled his mind. Noah barely had the time to recover, so he couldn't waste any second in pointless reasonings. He could only accept that he would review everything once the trial was over.

When Noah approached the seventh hall, he soon discovered that something was off. He had become so used to the golems' presence that he could immediately understand that the next room featured different opponents.

His worry mounted as he approached the exit of the tunnel, but his expression became determined when he saw that the seventh hall featured a single opponent. It was a bigger version of the golems, and its size reflected its superior power.

'Is it in the upper tier?' Noah wondered as he studied the golem.

The creature didn't activate while he was inside the tunnel, so Noah had enough time to study the new challenge. The seventh hall was taller than the others to accommodate the bigger golem, but its other features were identical to the previous ones.

The golem didn't seem to be completely in the upper tier. It appeared to rest among the two levels of power, and its body carried features that belonged to both of them.

Part of its rocky skin was identical to the other golems, but a few chunks carried crystal-like characteristics that hinted to a superior level. The same seemed to apply to its insides, and that gave Noah hope to win the challenge.

Noah had already tested his power against a body in the upper tier. Jordan had barely bled when his fingers stabbed her palm, so he knew that his power wouldn't allow him to fight opponents at that level.

Yet, the big golem's uneven body would allow Noah to focus the weaker parts and inflict enough damage anyway. The fight was everything but hopeless. There was even the chance that it would be easier than the previous ones.

When fighting against multiple enemies, Noah had to save his strength and limit his attacks' power. However, a single opponent would allow him to go all-out and unleash the entirety of his energy on it.

'I've come this far,' Noah thought as he stepped out of the tunnel. 'No point in going back now.'

When Noah touched the pale-azure ground, the golem activated, and screeching noises filled the hall as it moved toward him. The creature then stopped and half-crouched to pull its fist back.

Chapter 1408 1408. Over

Noah didn't dare to face the attack head-on. He had already endured the shockwaves released by the weaker golems, and he wasn't sure that he could defend against the same technique performed by a creature that bordered the upper tier.

The dark world expanded in an instant, and Noah shot on the side of the hall. The world became blurry in his vision as his body transformed into a flying sword that circled the golem to approach it from behind.

The golem didn't care about Noah's tactic. It released its punch and unleashed a shockwave that created intense storms. Noah was almost behind the creature, but the storms ricocheted on the walls and filled the whole hall, hitting him in the process.

Blood rose in Noah's mouth as the storms interrupted his movement technique and flung him on the walls. The golem didn't even hit him, but the power it could unleash was enough to dispel his abilities.

Half of the dark world had vanished after the attack, and the golem began to turn toward him to prepare another punch. Noah's determination intensified when he saw that scene, and he kicked the walls behind him to shoot toward his opponent.

Noah had faced so many battles throughout his life that he instantly understood how to defeat that opponent. Its previous attack had shown him that he couldn't escape from the storms in that closed environment. The only possible approach was to destroy the golem before it killed him.

Snore, Night, and the octopus appeared among the dark world and followed Noah during his charge. The Demonic Sword also landed in his grasp as dark matter flowed inside his dark vessels, and fire came out of his mouth.

Noah knew that his flames couldn't burn much in that environment, but even the most minute speck of energy could make the difference between life and death in that situation. He had to rely on all his abilities if he wanted to succeed.

A piercing beam made of dark matter shot out of the Demonic Sword when Noah stabbed it in one of the weaker spots on the golem's shoulder. Night followed the attack by flying inside the injury, and Snore coiled itself around the other arm to restrain the puppet's movements.

The octopus helped the Blood Companion in its task, and Snore followed the exchange by biting on the golem's head and releasing its innate ability.

Two waves of violent dark matter, one chaotic and one dense, engulfed the golem. A large crack opened on its shoulder, and tiny shards fell from its head as the offensive continued. A loud clinking noise also echoed through the dark world as Night came out of the crack and released a roar.

The Pterodactyl had hit one of the tough parts during its dive. Still, it had managed to enlarge the injury as much as possible. Its roar was a simple expression of its battle intent.

Snore and the octopus only managed to stop the golem for an instant. The puppet soon began to pull its fist back, and its movements tore the creatures attempting to keep it still.

Dozens of fake cores fell on the ground as the tentacles broke. Noah had managed to save many of them in the previous battles, so he didn't even record that loss.

Snore's body also broke, but the dark world quickly restored the companions that didn't hesitate to resume their tasks. Still, their efforts ended up being useless since the golem completed its technique and released another shockwave.

Noah had attacked another soft spot during that time, but the storms that filled the hall flung him away again. A mouthful of blood and screeching noises came out of his figure when he slammed on the wall. Still, only a fraction of an instant went by before he shot toward the golem again.

A curved black line flew out of his blade during his charge, and a violent shockwave expanded through the golem's body when he stabbed a soft spot on its back. Night quickly entered one of the injuries, and countless dark-blue chunks fell from the puppet as the offensive continued.

The golem launched another attack, and the cycle began again. Noah found himself on a wall. His body had already started to feel sore, but he didn't hesitate to kick the rocks behind him to charge again.

His moves carried no hesitation. His body moved on its own, without needing thoughts to create a specific tactic. His instincts already knew how he had to attack, and Noah relied on them to optimize his offensive.

His companions seemed able to share his peculiar mindset. Noah, Night, and Snore didn't communicate, but they instinctively coordinated to inflict as much damage as possible in every exchange.

That was coordination obtained after millennia of battles. They even knew that type of opponent, so their teamwork carried no flaws.

Little by little, the golem became slimmer. Large chunks of its body had crumbled under its opponents' relentless and precise offensive. Its torso had become a mess of protruding boulders and cavities, and the same went for its arms and legs.

The damage that it had suffered didn't affect its power. The golem continued to launch threatening attacks that unleashed intense storms.

Noah couldn't escape from those storms, and injuries kept accumulating on his body. The golem had even broken some of his bones, but his incredible resilience allowed him to express the same power throughout the entire battle.

At some point, Noah and Night dived toward the golem's head in a joint offensive that aimed to deal a deadly blow to the puppet. Their figures became nothing more than vague shadows in the darkness of the dark world, and an explosion resounded through the hall when they landed on their target.

Noah stabbed one of the soft parts on the golem's head, and Night deepened the injury, allowing the Demonic Sword to dig deeper into that dark-blue material. Dark matter flowed violently out of the blade, and Noah's sharpness mixed with it as it ran through the many cracks that filled the puppet's body.

Snore joined the offensive by biting on the largest cracks and releasing its dark matter. Part of the violent higher energy flowing through the fissures ended up flaring toward Noah, but he endured the damage as he continued to push his blade into the golem.

The rivers of dark matter that flowed inside the golem eventually managed to destabilize its structure. The puppet began to crumble right before launching another attack, and boulders exploded outward during its destruction.

Noah found himself with his back on the wall again. A boulder had crushed his left leg, and a few shards had pierced his chest. Blood also flowed out of his mouth, but his smile shone brightly at the sight of the destroyed opponent.

Snore quickly reformed under him and acted as a mouth that carried him toward the largest pile of boulders. A book had come out from the golem's body and now rested on top of the debris. The battle didn't damage it. Its thick black cover didn't have the slightest trace of dust.

'Embodiment of power,' Noah read from the symbols on the cover, but a sudden metallic noise made him turn toward the end of the hall.

One of the walls opened to create a path that radiated a pale-yellow light. It seemed that the trial wasn't over.

Chapter 1409 1409. Sort of

'Again?' Noah shouted in his mind.

He had already seen a similar scene. The same had happened in Great Builder's inheritance when he completed the most difficult challenge in the first layer.

The arrival of the "Breath" in the hall confirmed his victory. The book in his hands hinted that the trial was over. Noah had already obtained his reward, but that underground structure had yet to end.

'I can't recover quickly enough this time,' Noah thought as he studied his condition.

He had broken bones, a crushed leg, damaged internal organs, and a few superficial injuries. Even his mighty black hole couldn't make him battle-ready in a week. Noah would have to focus on his recovery for months to return to his peak.

Still, his curiosity had the better of him. Even in his injured condition, Noah could force himself to run if the situation required it. Yet, he had the vague feeling that he wouldn't get another chance to explore that new path if he turned back now.

Noah glanced at the book before storing it inside his separate space. Snore then shrunk as it carried him toward the new tunnel. The Demonic Sword and Night also flew next to him to ensure that nothing could reach him while he was in that poor condition.

The pale-yellow light made Noah recall the insides of the pyramid. That was the main reason behind his vague confidence that the underground structure wouldn't force him to fight again.

The tunnel was also different. The pale-azure rocks transformed into polished bricks as Noah moved through the passage. That was the sign of a connection with Great Builder's creation, but he didn't jump to conclusions just yet.

He was dealing with the inheritance of a rank 9 existence. His mind couldn't hope to comprehend Supreme Thief's mindset.

A small room unfolded in his vision once he reached the end of the tunnel. Noah was almost expecting to see a bed there, but he found a solitary ethereal figure instead.

The figure depicted a young-looking man with long hair and a patch covering his left eye. A tight robe covered most of his body, and a series of scrolls rested on his back, tied to his torso with a few thin cords.

The man was playing with a cube that transformed whenever he pressed on specific spots. It shattered into a series of smaller shapes only to reform into the figure's hands, who didn't hesitate to sigh at that sight.

"You can come out," The man said without moving his eye away from the cube. "You did a good job out there, but I'm not sure if the real owner of this inheritance would be happy to know that you cheated."

Noah's eyes widened when he heard those words, and the man gave voice to a laugh when he sensed that reaction. He then placed the cube to the ground and turned to inspect Noah, nodding whenever he glanced at his companion.

"I'm kidding," The man continued. "That guy is dead. I don't even remember his name. I stole this piece of his inheritance only to piss off the organization that controlled it. It should still be good stuff. I think that he focused on using his "Breath" to boost his body or whatever."

Noah didn't know how to answer to that interaction, but he didn't fail to memorize the hints carried by his words. The man had clearly said that he had stolen that inheritance and Noah didn't forget where he was.

"Stop remaining speechless," The man said before exploding into another laugh. "You are the first to reach the end of a layer. Be proud of your talent! No one should even be humble after overcoming my trials."

"I didn't cheat," Noah said to avoid any misunderstanding. "I cleared the trial fairly."

"Oh, but you did cheat," The man said as his smile began to give off a canny vibe. "I'm pretty sure that the owner wanted to find an heir with a strong body, not a hybrid who can use dense energy. Quite spectacular to watch, but not really in line with the trial."

"He had to create better restrictions then," Noah replied, unwilling to back off from that topic.

"I agree," The man said as he sat on the ground and supported his back with his arms. "It has been quite easy to steal. Your dense energy is far more interesting. I wish I could borrow it for a while."

An intense aura came out of the man at that point. He didn't change position nor expression, but something had triggered his individuality.

The aura enveloped the tunnel and covered the entire underground structure, creating a pulling force that dragged all the dark-blue pieces of the golems toward the last room. Noah's black hole didn't escape that process. He felt his dark matter seeping out of his chest against his will and flying toward the figure.

"Dammit!" The man said once he noticed what was happening. "Sorry about this. It's hard to control myself even in this form. I guess you can't avoid these drawbacks once you reach the peak of the cultivation journey."

The pulling force vanished as the figure waved his hand. Noah quickly reabsorbed his dark matter and began to consider running away before something like that happened again. Yet, he couldn't retreat now that he had understood who had appeared in front of him.

"Are you Supreme Thief?" Noah asked once his curiosity reached its peak.

"The one and only," The man said, "Destroyer of countless organizations and public enemy of the human side. No treasure is safe with me around. I guess that's why they ganged up to kill me."

Noah couldn't even begin to describe the shock that he felt, but some greed began to leak out of his figure. He had entered a secret part of the inheritance after clearing the trial, so a part of him expected to receive more rewards.

"Look at that," Supreme Thief said when he sensed Noah's greed. "A boundless desire also curses you. You might want to learn to keep it in check. Not many can survive with such a flashy feeling."

"How did you die?" Noah ignored his words to ask. "How many rank 9 existences live in the Immortal Lands?"

Even if his greed made him think about potential rewards, his mind went after knowledge he couldn't obtain otherwise. Only a rank 9 existence could have the answers to those questions. Noah guessed that even experts in the eighth rank would find it hard to know that.

"I didn't exactly die," Supreme Thief said. "Death is something that only living beings can experience. Those who reach the ninth rank are much more than that. Killing one of us is akin to destroying an entire world."

"Then, why are you in this form?" Noah asked after memorizing his last line.

"Well," Supreme Thief replied as he wore a shameless expression, "I sort of died. Sort of. Nothing serious though. I have a friend who is working on bringing us back."

Everything connected inside Noah's mind at that point. The similarities with Great Builder's inheritance and the secret room inside the pyramid were part of the same insane project.

Supreme Thief and Great Builder wanted to cheat death!

Chapter 1410 1410. Followers

That piece of information uncovered a plan that left Noah speechless. It involved two rank nine existences that wanted to come back from the dead!

Noah had no words to express his astonishment. It was clear that he knew nothing about the Immortal Lands after his conversation with Supreme Thief. There was simply too much going on under the unaware gazes of the existences in the seventh rank.

"Who has the power to kill you?" Noah asked. "Is the ninth rank the peak of the cultivation journey? Can Great Builder really cheat death?"

Noah stormed Supreme Thief with questions, and the latter revealed a surprised expression when he heard Great Builder's name. It seemed that he didn't expect Noah to make that connection.

"Life can offer such wonderful twists," Supreme Thief said after sighing. "You must be quite unique. I didn't expect to meet someone like you from towers built on stolen inheritances. Maybe you do deserve more than a simple speck of my soul."

Noah's eyes lit up at those words, but Supreme Thief didn't give him the time to ponder about them. He stood up and played with his hair before focusing again on Noah.

"This whole place is only an accumulation of my gains," Supreme Thief said. "The bottom of the towers hides paths that lead to my real inheritance. My corpse is also there. Use this information as you see fit."

Chaos fell on Noah's mental sea. That description matched what he had seen inside the pyramid. Supreme Thief and Great Builder had created similar structures to prepare for their resurrection.

"Heaven and Earth have followers," Supreme Thief continued. "I have always seen them as slaves, but their power can match mine. You will eventually clash with them if you continue on this path. I couldn't defeat them, and you will probably end in the same way."

Supreme Thief wasn't praising Noah with those lines. He was only describing the situation of the Immortal Lands for existences that carried laws alien to Heaven and Earth's system.

"Will you continue on your path even after learning this?" Supreme Thief asked, and his expression became dead serious at that point.

"You ask this as if I had a choice," Noah replied as a faint smile appeared on his face. "I either succeed or die trying. My ambition doesn't allow me to walk any other path."

Supreme Thief stared at Noah for an instant before exploding into a loud laugh. He had seemed surprised about his reaction, but he didn't appear displeased about it.

"Perfect!" Supreme Thief replied as his hand went on his eyepatch. "Then come, gaze into my world and learn the true meaning of stealing."

Noah bent toward Supreme Thief, and the expert lifted his eyepatch. Noah's focus went on his left eye, but he couldn't see anything since a blinding blue light filled his vision and made him cut any connection with the outside world.

Countless images flowed inside Noah's head. They didn't depict anything specific. They were nothing more than emotions capable of affecting all his senses at the same time.

A profound meaning seeped inside his mental sea and dispersed among his mental energy. Noah felt that he had understood something immense, but he couldn't describe what it was with his words. His mind also felt unable to recall those emotions. They seemed too heavy for his current level.

"Stealing is only a trick, a drawback of my individuality," Supreme Thief explained once Noah regained his focus. "You will eventually understand this as long as you don't let go of your greed. For now, I can only wish you a fun journey."

"I have so many questions," Noah said, but Supreme Thief's smile widened as he shook his head.

"I won't give you more answers," Supreme Thief said. "Our time together is over. Ghosts can't bother the living for too long."

Noah felt a pushing force driving him away from the hall. His feet slid on the polished floor of the tunnel, and bricks appeared on its exit as Supreme Thief began to seal that passage.

"Heaven and Earth," Supreme Thief's words echoed through the tunnel as Noah slid away. "There is so much to steal, so much to take. You can't suppress us all for too long. Even your infinite and immense power won't be enough to contain us one day."

Noah shouted questions, but Supreme Thief didn't even look at him. That interaction was over, and Noah didn't have the power to delay its end. It was time for him to go.

As Supreme Thief's monologue echoed through the walls, the tunnel closed and cut off his voice. Noah couldn't hear him anymore and flew, driven by that pushing force inside the hall where he had fought the giant golem.

'What the hell just happened?' Noah shouted in his mind once he returned to the previous hall.

His conversation with Supreme Thief felt like a dream whenever he recalled it. The things that he had revealed hinted at a battle that involved followers of Heaven and Earth and independent existences.

'They will surely go after me at some point,' Noah thought as he reviewed what he had learnt.

He did not doubt that matter. Noah had confirmed his status as an enemy of Heaven and Earth multiple times already. They would surely send someone to kill him as long he became stronger.

'I can only focus on my personal power since I can't avoid this outcome,' Noah concluded in his mind, and the book seized after defeating the big golem appeared in his hands.

The words "embodiment of power" appeared in his mind again when he inspected its thick black cover. The book didn't seem old, but it lacked the mysterious vibe that most resources previously handled by powerful cultivators had.

Noah opened the book to inspect its contents and was pleasantly surprised to find that it described a technique that he could use. The "embodiment of power" was a process that used "Breath" as fuel for physical strength, and it was something that only the owner of that inheritance could use properly.

The only problem with the book was that its contents were incomplete. It didn't have any missing pages. The owner of the inheritance didn't complete the technique before writing it down.

That wasn't a surprise since the owner had been nothing more than a rank 7 cultivator in the solid stage when he died. He lacked the expertise to broaden his technique and make it more accessible to other cultivators.

Still, Noah didn't mind that incompleteness. He actually preferred it. Most inheritances would force him to modify his rewards anyway, and he would have it easier if they weren't complete to begin with.

'I might be able to use it with the right modifications,' Noah thought as he read through the contents of the book.

The technique described a series of specific positions that he had to perform while he filled his body with "Breath". His body would slowly learn to feed on that energy after a while and obtain surges of power once it fueled its functions.

That process was similar to Noah's black vessels but also vastly different. It hinted at an idea that had the potential to become the best body-empowering technique in the world.