

Demonic 1891

Chapter 1891 1891. Calm

The old rulers agreed to take care of the challenging mission, but Noah knew that they wouldn't depart right away. Such a unique task required a long period of study, even when it came to beings that represented the original version of Heaven and Earth.

The mission would involve a deep understanding of the current state of the world and expertise in different abilities, and the right mindset. Destruction was nowhere near simple to spread, and Noah knew that far too well.

The lack of proper tasks or missions for Noah's group forced them to remain inside the city. Their existences could accept the many magnificent buildings and their functions more easily after defeating the ghosts. They felt like a reward for their efforts, so their laws didn't cause any problem when they settle inside specific structures to continue their training.

Alexander requested more items than his companions since he was approaching the ninth rank. The process required a massive amount of energy and inspiration, and many buildings inside the city could help him in those fields. The old rulers only had to help prepare the conditions that could benefit the hybrid the most.

The other experts limited themselves to pick training areas that suited their existence and wait. Everyone's priority was to develop new trump cards before their inevitable return among the storms, which required a deeper understanding of their laws. Sadly, only a long period of seclusion could provide that.

The old rulers kept everyone updated about their discoveries. They took their mission seriously, and they even acknowledged that the order came from a relevant figure in the stormy regions. They wouldn't consider Noah at the same level as the dragons, but he had stepped on the right path to gain the same recognition and even surpass it.

First of all, the rulers confirmed that the ghosts had vanished. They used sensors and decoys that radiated their energy, but nothing appeared. Those creatures weren't hunting for them anymore, and that already improved their situation a lot.

The freedom gained after the achievement of Noah's team wouldn't only improve the old rulers' study of the world. It could also allow a thorough inspection that they were desperate to obtain after remaining in the dark about many details that involved the storms and chaotic laws as a whole.

The end of the study would give the old rulers the knowledge required to create the perfect weapon for the current situation of the world. The mess would start at that point, but Noah's group would most likely remain outside of it. After all, they only needed it as a distraction.

Noah's cultivation didn't proceed as well as he wished. His existence was ready to step into the ninth rank, but he had energy requirements to fill. Moreover, he wanted more. His current understanding didn't satisfy him, especially when it came to some of the new aspects of his law.

Luckily for him, the dragon had given him part of the knowledge involving four features that greatly interested him. They had even revealed how he had to improve his current state, which saw adding time to his law.

The study of the spheres proceeded smoothly due to the straightforwardness of the process. The dragons' items were pure knowledge that he only needed to absorb and transform to improve his current abilities. Yet, Noah didn't want a simple improvement. He needed something stronger than that. Ideally, he had to create something entirely new that could take Heaven and Earth by surprise.

Noah was quite lost about the matter. The idea of creating a new ability when his understanding had yet to improve felt impossible. He had already perfected everything he had after completing the final slash and Shafu. The other aspects of his power didn't work well together or were too weak to suit his current strength.

It felt almost necessary to expand his understanding of his aspects, and the dragons' spheres were the perfect tool for that. They had profound meanings that could stretch even beyond his usual approach to laws. Noah had a path. He felt only annoyed by its sheer length.

The slow absorption of the spheres' knowledge didn't make Noah forget about King Elbas' desires. The expert had never truly requested them, but it was clear that he wanted the dragons' understanding too, and Noah didn't refuse to help him simply because he had lost the bet.

Noah began a translation of the sphere during their study. He couldn't replicate them perfectly because his understanding would inevitably alter the knowledge contained in those ethereal items. Yet, King Elbas was fine with that, so Noah used his dark matter to copy their structure and fabric.

Noah had yet to complete his study of the spheres, so his copies would come out as incomplete. Still, King Elbas wouldn't care about that either as long as he increased the number of resources at his disposal. He was a maniac in that sense, but that was fine at his current level, necessary even.

The rulers didn't say anything for entire months, and that silent period stretched through the years. The experts couldn't do much to quicken the process. They could only do their best to make use of the safety generated by the city while an existence stronger than them took care of the inspection.

Noah didn't remain inside his building all the time. He often visited King Elbas or Divine Demon to exchange ideas on the path ahead. The two experts represented paths that went in opposite directions, so their insights on the development of new abilities could help him in the issue.

Divine Demon was pure inspiration. The world and his mental ability would fuse to create the perfect technique in each situation. He didn't need a trump card since each of his powers was a trump card.

King Elbas was the exact opposite. He was pure calculations. His vast storage items had numerous techniques and inscribed materials meant for an endless number of situations. He never stopped creating, and his habit had only worsened after getting his hands on the cauldron.

The three experts even gathered in the same building from time to time. Their conversations were mostly lighthearted, but they ended up touching on the cultivation fields, especially when Noah passed part of the copied spheres to King Elbas.

The sharing of opinions and ideas helped, but only on a superficial level. Their existences were too unique by then, so they could never affect each other too much. King Elbas, Noah, and Divine Demon had a few common traits, but they became completely different when they touched their laws.

It felt strange to know that they all knew how to move forward, but they found their companions' words almost impossible to accept completely. Their minds had started to work in unique ways that matched their existences, so foreign ideas inevitably transformed into something different that matched their laws.

It was during one of those gatherings that a change in the routine inside the city happened. The old rulers had yet to provide an overview of the world, but their companion let his special training area and made sure to expand his aura to announce his new cultivation level.

Everyone in the group immediately gathered around him at that point. They wouldn't miss listening to Alexander's experiences for anything in the world. His breakthrough had been a success for all his centers of power, which instantly made him the most knowledgeable among them about the path ahead.

Chapter 1892 1892. Orders

"I believe it will be different for all of you," Alexander explained as his eyes moved among Divine Demon, Noah, and King Elbas, "Especially you three."

His words didn't carry any mockery or insults. Wilfred, Robert, Steven, and Sword Saint knew that their laws were relatively simple compared to those three experts.

Divine Demon could accomplish miracles with the help of the world, King Elbas was an even vaster version of Alexander, and Noah was Noah. Their potential was boundless, and that would inevitably affect their breakthrough to the ninth rank.

"What we concluded with Lord Lewis has been quite correct," Alexander continued while lifting his palm to show a small tongue of scarlet flames.

Different energies flowed toward the flame and altered its power. Alexander made sure to show the effects that mental energy, "Breath", and primary energy had on the ability so that the experts could notice when he called upon a different power.

The mental energy only made the flame flicker, the primary energy expanded it, and the "Breath" made it far bigger than before. Those were natural reactions that the experts could immediately recognize. After all, that fire was a simple innate ability seized by a magical beast. They knew exactly how they worked.

A different type of energy started flowing through Alexander's hand after the hybrid finished the initial demonstration. That power felt ethereal but haughty. It carried an intense feeling even if it were hard to study.

The flame didn't only expand when that energy flowed inside its structure. It went through a qualitative change that transformed its scarlet color into a pale-red blinding radiance.

The fire wasn't a simple fire anymore. It became so intense that the expert had to take a step back to endure the heatwaves that it radiated. The inspection slowly revealed something else about its features. The flames had retained their nature, but they had reached a realm that didn't exist in the world. Even specific abilities from cultivators who used flames couldn't achieve that sheer level of power.

"My law is superiority," Alexander explained. "I can apply to all the abilities that I have seized throughout my life, and the same goes to my physical strength and mental prowess. In short, I express my innate role in the food chain."

Noah and the others couldn't help but find everything highly suitable to Alexander and his journey. He had gone from being a hybrid cursed by his own power to the best possible specimen once those flaws vanished.

Alexander had stepped on the last part of his journey. All the experiences amassed in his life had converged to create the current state of his law, but he could still improve it. He had seized his throne among the hybrids, but those creatures weren't the only living beings in the world.

"The storms hide many monsters," Alexander eventually sighed. "I-"

"Go," Noah interrupted the hybrid before he could finish his phrase. "We are past the need to group up to survive impossible threats. The purpose of the storms is to complete our path, so go and complete it."

"Noah," Alexander gasped before clearing his throat, "You might still need me. I can delay my departure for a few millennia."

"Nonsense," Noah snorted. "Cancer isn't an organization that suppresses its underlings. We strive to take down the sky. We can't put any limit to our growth."

The other experts remained silent during that interaction. Some didn't understand the topic, others didn't care enough to say anything, and a few managed to sense the deep meaning carried by those words.

Alexander had found his superiority when he reached the ninth rank. Yet, he needed to build on top of it, which meant proving his law in front of other worthy opponents.

The stormy regions were full of strange, unique, and powerful beings that met those requirements, but Alexander hesitated to leave for multiple reasons. He didn't want to leave his companions alone right after making Heaven and Earth angry while they were still in the eighth rank. Also, he felt that he didn't spend much time with those grand experts, so he regretted departing so soon.

A normal organization in that situation would force its members to stick together. Seven peak rank 8 experts and one rank 9 hybrid didn't make a powerful force inside the stormy regions. Noah and the others had seen packs featuring upper tier specimens and armies with solid stage cultivators in the span of a few centuries during their travels through the winds. Their joint power didn't appear worthy of recognition in that environment.

The weakness of an organization was often the reason behind the decision to make its members stick together, but Noah had the opposite mindset. The power of his force had never come from the high number of underlings. Its foundation was on the few exceptional beings who could ignore common labels and go beyond what the world considered mandatory limits.

Moreover, Noah couldn't stand the idea of an organization suppressing its underlings. He had spent a meaningful part of his life fighting and overcoming similar forces. He had proven how flawed they were even before stepping on the divine ranks.

In his mind, Alexander had to follow his path and return once he fulfilled it. That was the meaning behind the cultivation journey, and the experts had to face it on their own. There was no way around it. Otherwise, June would be with them now.

"Do you have some last orders, Defying Demon?" Alexander sighed before wearing a proud smile.

Alexander had been one of the few experts standing today with Noah who had accepted his leadership without voicing any complaint. His situation had been special since his mental condition had made him prioritize finding a successor, but he had never stopped to respect Noah, even after the ghosts in his mind vanished.

Noah liked Alexander's character. The hybrid had developed a humility that most divine existences lacked after spending millennia submerged in the drawbacks of his power. It had taken him the breakthrough to the ninth rank to retrieve the pride in his ability, but he still didn't show any arrogance toward Noah.

"Don't die," Noah chuckled, "Don't switch sides, and don't be late for the final battle if we end up remaining apart until then."

"That sounds easy to follow," Alexander laughed.

"Oh right," Noah exclaimed as he recalled something. "Make sure to reach the peak. I have the faint sensation that the last battle will be bloody. We need as many powerful experts as possible."

"I would have done that even without your orders," Alexander laughed again.

"I know," Noah shrugged his shoulders, "But maybe my ambition will help if I say something. Well, I suspect I'll learn more about my law after reaching the ninth rank."

"I'm pretty sure something will notify me about your breakthrough," Alexander laughed to cover his obvious compliment.

"I don't even want to think about my requirements," Noah cursed. "I'll probably have to do something crazy again just to meet the requirements of my body."

"The sky is always there," Alexander hinted at the vast amount of energy contained inside the white layer.

"It is indeed," Noah sighed while raising his head to stare at the sky clouded by the orange halo of the city. "How is it? How does the ninth rank feel?"

Alexander also raised his eyes toward the sky while thinking about that question. An answer came up in his mind, and he smiled when he realized how fitting it was for his leader.

"Cramped," Alexander explained, and Noah's gaze couldn't help but intensify.

Chapter 1893 1893. Hordes

Alexander didn't leave immediately, but everyone could feel that the time for his departure would arrive soon. The hybrid had to make sure that his abilities expressed his new cultivation level and that he understood the depths of his new power before venturing into the stormy regions alone.

However, that was a solitary process that the other experts couldn't affect. The end of the meeting started another long period of seclusion that culminated in another exchange of goodbyes, orders, and promises. Alexander left the orange city right after that.

The team of eight that left the black landmass lost its current strongest member, but no one felt sad about it. Actually, Alexander's departure inspired his companions to do better and approach the last realm of the cultivation journey quickly.

The seven who remained in the orange city knew that their existences would force them to imitate their companion. Staying in a group would only slow down the growth of their laws once they entered the ninth rank. The silent understanding that the team would shatter in the following year fell on the experts' minds, but no one spoke about it. They took it as the natural progression of the cultivation journey.

Noah continued his dull training in those years. He had never been the type to enjoy the low and steady improvements, but that process appeared mandatory due to his lack of other options.

The environment of the stormy regions only had powerful forces that he couldn't affect. The mission with the old rulers had been a spectacular achievement, but it had also forced Noah's group to face their limits. Everyone had gone all-out, and Alexander even had to experience a surprising power-up to overcome his challenge. That threat marked the edges of their power, which couldn't help but appear incredibly low in their minds.

The events involving the cauldron weren't too dangerous when Noah thought about it. The ghosts and their peculiar power were the main threat in the mission, but everything around it barely touched what his mind considered as a threat.

A simple rank 9 cultivator in the gaseous stage could only force Noah to go all-out, but that was it. Dwight's power came from the counters that Heaven and Earth had developed, but switching opponents had been enough to solve that issue.

The cauldron was a rank 9 inscribed item in the middle tier, but it did nothing other than generating ghosts. That massive tool had no defenses. It relied on the innate toughness of its materials, which turned out to be quite unreliable since its inscriptions required a seamless surface.

Noah could argue that finding the item was already a spectacular feat, but his standards were completely off due to the fantastic experts in his group. Seeing existences who wielded multiple elements or could ignore the limits among the ranks had become normal after spending so long with King Elbas and his other companions.

Destroying the cauldron had been a challenging mission for his group, but Noah believed that his group had to aim to do more than that. Challenging had to become their new normal since the stormy regions mostly contained monsters. His team's influence on the balance of the world would remain negligible otherwise.

'I'm back in the Mortal Lands,' Noah thought when he managed to find the hilarious aspect in his situation. 'I'm a small force in a world filled with monsters. The only difference is the lack of intermediate challenges. The storms only have the lowest and the highest level. Well, many realms of highest.'

The storms had random rank 9 existences roaming among the regions and major forces involved in the struggle against Heaven and Earth. Some of those powers didn't end up against the rulers by choice. Still, that didn't change the overall situation in that environment. There didn't seem to be any middle ground that Noah could exploit as his cultivation level increased.

The constant threat of the rulers had polarized the living beings inside the storms into two separate categories. One of them contained existences that minded their own business and focused on their personal cultivation journey, while the other had forces busy fighting Heaven and Earth.

Still, even those trying to remain outside of the struggle against the rulers would eventually end up facing their suppression once their level reached threatening realms. Those existences could either join Heaven and Earth, fight them, or hide at that point.

Noah reviewed that layout multiple times. Ideally, he wanted to find a force on Heaven and Earth's side that he could face at his current level, but they didn't seem to live inside the storms. Yet, approaching the sky wasn't a viable option, and fighting against forces that opposed the rulers felt stupid when he considered the world in its entirety.

'Maybe I should stop thinking like a leader and go on a hunting spree,' Noah wondered as his reasoning and seclusion continued.

The storms seemed to put Noah in front of a crossroad. He could do his best to help against the great battle against Heaven and Earth or ignore everything and focus only on his cultivation level. Finding a balance between those two paths seemed hard, but he didn't want to commit to either one yet.

Those thoughts and issues afflicted Noah's mind while he tested the understanding that the four spheres provided continued to deepen. His priority was to develop new techniques while the old rulers come up with a plan to create a mess.

It was unwise to go out of the city now since he had basically revealed all his techniques. The next punishment sent by Heaven and Earth would probably lead to his defeat if he decided to face it before improving.

Luckily for Noah, the city offered something that even the constant pressure released by the sky struggled to provide. He didn't only focus on deepening his understanding of the four aspects of his law. He had access to countless resources that could benefit his mind in ways that the whiteness failed to achieve.

The orange city was a paradise built on Kesier runes. Noah could enjoy potions meant to expand his mental walls, a rank 9 Kesier rune, drinks that improved his mental sphere, and a constant pressure that lacked negative effects.

Noah's mental walls had set a new record of sturdiness when it came to rank 8 existences since he had forsaken the protections against the whiteness for millennia already. He could go all-out with his

training, and his mind even approached the limits of the eighth rank. However, something seemed to hold him back from touching the actual edges of that realm.

Noah didn't hesitate to investigate the reasons behind that issue, but something interrupted his study while he was about to find an answer.

The entire city suddenly shook, and a violent earthquake spread among its firm streets and buildings. The experts in Noah's group immediately came out of their training areas to inspect the nature of the event, and they remained speechless when they saw a raging array of white lightning bolts fighting against the orange sparks that hid the area.

The barrier around the city was inactive. Noah and the others immediately prepared for the worst, but the old rulers' ancient voice echoed from the buildings and streets before they could act.

"Do not worry!" The old rulers said through the materials that made the city. "We had to bring something back, and the barrier was on the way."

The experts immediately shot higher in the sky to inspect the edges of the city. The buildings stretched almost immensely, but faint figures eventually became visible in the distance as the Tribulation continued to rage. Noah and the others noticed hordes of magical beasts led by rank 9 Kesier apes entering the city from every direction.

Chapter 1894 1894. Risks

"We were thinking really hard about your request, right?" The orange humanoid figure inside the white separate space explained. "And then it hit us. Getting our existence back will take a long time, so it's better to focus on what we can do to mess things up with our current assets."

Noah's group had gathered in the separate space inside the orange mineral to question the old rulers after the recent events. A horde of magical beasts had joined the city. Many of those creatures were in the ninth rank. Still, some featured weaker beasts due to the packs that had managed to hide their presence inside the storms.

"The city is our greatest achievement after separating from the sky," The old rulers continued, "But we can't deny our feats with the Kesier apes. Our knowledge gives us the chance to improve magical beasts, so we sent some of our underlings to gather weak packs."

The world had experienced a massive migration after the destruction of the higher plane. Noah had tried to gather as many magical beasts as possible. Yet, many had already left toward the storms, fallen on the sky, or died against the giants' relentless clash.

The population of the storms had increased after the apocalypse for obvious reasons, but Noah had ignored that event since it didn't involve him. Moreover, he wasn't sure of how many of those creatures could survive in an environment filled with rank 9 existences even if they limited their presence to the peripheral stormy regions.

"What are you even trying to do with these magical beasts?" King Elbas asked as curiosity filled his gaze.

"Well, consider Heaven and Earth as a massive force that can't stop spreading its influence," The old rulers responded while waving their hands to create an orange image that depicted the higher plane.

"All their actions end up causing consequences, and this feature intensifies as they get closer to their victory."

The old rulers described the various threats that Heaven and Earth had to face through those orange images. They depicted the monster looming over the sky, the dragons, and the city, and they used different intensities of their shade to highlight how Heaven and Earth had affected those forces.

Noah's group didn't need a reminder of those forces to understand how Heaven and Earth had affected them. The dragons were on the losing side right now because they came from the rulers' old version, while the other two seemed to grow stronger as the world's defeat grew closer.

Still, their interest in those images intensified when they saw a fourth light materializing next to the city. Noah and the others could see themselves representing a faint version of the other massive threats standing against Heaven and Earth.

"We can't say much about the monster outside the sky," The old rulers announced, "But we can see how your rise to power is affecting the balance of the world. Heaven and Earth must have enemies as long as they remain separate from the world. The dragons and the magical beasts as a whole are growing weaker, so you and the other threats are getting stronger to balance that event."

One of the lights that depicted Noah's group intensified and left to disappear among the storms. The old rulers didn't fail to use Alexander's departure to emphasize their explanation.

"Our power doesn't come from Heaven and Earth," Noah reminded in a cold tone.

Noah could accept that the original idea behind his existence had some connection to Heaven and Earth, but he would never see the rulers' power as the source of his improvements.

"We aren't implying that you grow stronger because of Heaven and Earth," The old rulers corrected.

"The world has a funny way to balance things. It doesn't need to do anything, but everything naturally strives to a preset balance, which is exactly the reason behind this mess and our past defeat.

"It takes only a small ripple to move everything toward the balance. Our meeting is forcing our existence to feel again. We don't know if we are recalling or developing emotions, but we are sure that you have caused this change."

Noah wanted to say many things, but he decided to remain silent in front of the rulers' words. His companions shared his emotions and the complicated thoughts that had surged in his mind. They were all wondering where the old rulers' changes would lead.

The group had accepted to deal with the cauldron even if they knew that giving more freedom to the old rulers might create a new threat. After all, those beings were the reason behind the current Heaven and Earth. Even a major defeat or a separation from the main existence might not be able to change their core.

Noah and the others had to keep the old rulers' changes in check to make sure that they didn't end up returning to their previous state and create a second major opponent. They wouldn't hesitate to take them out if they started to walk on a troublesome path.

"Look at us," The old rulers continued. "Your request made us decide to improve the magical beasts, our original opponent! Maybe we are adapting our existence to the new state of the world and reinventing ourselves inside the role of Heaven and Earth's opponents."

The old rulers' complicated reasoning partially worried Noah's group, but it also brought good news. Improving the magical beasts would definitely cause problems for Heaven and Earth and slow down the arrival of their victory.

The only problem with that process was the inevitable connection that the old rulers would build with those magical beasts. Noah didn't even want to consider if the old Heaven and Earth regained their existence only to become a better version of their original form. They would be able to conquer the world without facing the corruption of their law at that point.

"What do you plan to do with these troops?" Wilfred eventually asked once the silence of his companions became suffocating.

"We'll send most of them back among the storms," The old rulers explained. "They will probably incur in Heaven and Earth's suppression. Those capable of surviving it will transform into new threats for the world and empower the magical beasts' side in this war."

"I bet that you will keep the others here," Noah guessed, and his tone clearly expressed his doubts.

"We offered the city to you during our first encounter," The old rulers replied. "It's still yours to take, together with the Kesier apes and the other magical beasts. Yet, something tells us that you'll keep refusing them."

Noah fixed his cold eyes on the orange figure. Its facial features were still unclear, and the same went for the rest of its body. The changes didn't affect that expression of the old rulers' memories, but it didn't quell Noah's doubt either. The old Heaven and Earth could still lie if they had recalled how to do it.

"Go," Noah ordered. "Cause a mess and buy us more time. Improving the magical beasts is a good plan, so make sure to be thorough."

The sudden answer left the old rulers and his companions surprised, and his departure from the separate space only intensified that feeling. King Elbas and the others quickly followed after him, and they didn't hesitate to question him once they made sure to isolate an area inside one of their habitations.

"I believe I don't need to tell you how dangerous this game is," King Elbas stated once the group made sure that the old rulers couldn't hear them. "We are giving the old rulers the chance to retrieve and improve their old power. We might have to face the best version of the original Heaven and Earth if this goes bad."

"We'll face it then," Noah snorted. "We are playing with forces that we can barely touch or affect. Risks are necessary. Just make sure to become strong enough to face all the mess that our decisions cause."

Chapter 1895 1895. Urge

The experts returned to their respective training areas after a short conversation. They didn't have much to say. King Elbas was only worried about the potential consequences that their actions could have, but he was also aware that they were out of option.

Letting the world continue to move on its previous path would have only led to Heaven and Earth's victory. Noah's decisions might have worsened the situation and put the higher plane on a worse road, but the experts had to prefer it over an inevitable defeat.

The old rulers might regain their original power, but that was a possibility that Noah and the others had to accept. It didn't matter if the world ended up obtaining two threatening versions of Heaven and Earth. Everything was better than a loss caused by a lack of time to improve.

It didn't even matter that the old rulers seemed to benefit a lot from Noah's influence. They wouldn't only regain their previous power with that trend. They would even remove the weakness that had led to their defeat, but that was another risk that the experts had to accept for the sake of obtaining more time.

A faint pressure landed on Noah's mind after he returned to his training area. He could almost feel the world advancing toward its final act, and he could see how his existence wasn't part of it.

Still, that feeling didn't bring new options. Noah remained the peak rank 8 existence that he was before. He was only more anxious about how fast everything around him was moving.

His focus inevitably moved to his mind. Noah had a center of power ready to advance. He could sense his mental walls touching the edges of the higher realms, but they didn't want to move forward. Even the many training methods available inside the city didn't make them take the last step required for the breakthrough.

His mind wasn't actually stuck at the same level. The organ continued to enlarge. It simply did it so slowly that Noah struggled to keep track of its improvements.

The issue ended up making Noah angry. He had the chance to obtain an important improvement, but his center of power seemed to oppose it. The problem didn't even involve his existence. There appeared to be an invisible force locking it into the eighth rank and keeping breakthroughs away.

Noah connected the issue to the unique place that the breakthrough to the ninth rank held in the cultivation journey. Bringing an existence to that realm involved the creation of a new center of power that contained the special fuel generated by the laws. The process was personal and differed depending on the true meanings, but the talk with Alexander had confirmed that what they learnt from Lord Lewis was generally correct.

Noah liked to be prepared for the breakthrough, but he didn't think that those requirements would turn into an actual limit. The only explanation he could think of for his mind's situation was that his other centers of power still required some time to reach the absolute peak of the eighth rank. That prevented a joint advancement to the ninth rank, which seemed a requirement in the cultivation journey.

Noah initially felt the need to play by the rules. He didn't want to mess things up when it came to such an important event in his cultivation journey. After all, his problems didn't come from a bottleneck. He

only had to wait for his other centers of power to reach the peak of the eighth rank before worrying about his situation.

However, the slow and steady study of the dragons' spheres and his failures in developing new techniques slowly made his desire to approach the breakthrough to the ninth rank through the proper paths crumble. Also, the old rulers provided the experts with regular updates about the packs sent into the storms, which only intensified Noah's urge to be part of that mess.

"This was the first species capable of containing three different elements. It's a pity that Heaven and Earth's lightning bolts destroyed most of them."

"These snakes had dragon's blood in their fabric. No wonder they managed to defeat a giant avatar armed with middle tier sparks."

"We need to do better with these wolves. Their power is decent, but they need to obtain a proper resistance to Heaven and Earth to survive these regions."

Similar reports reached Noah's training area every year. The old rulers' voice seemed to grow livelier as time passed. He could hear their excitement toward those experiments grow. It was as if the old Heaven and Earth were loving creating a special army meant to fight the corrupted fairness generated by their new version.

Noah felt the need to join those battles. The dullness of the training area grew unbearable as the years passed. The city gave him everything he needed, and he knew that those benefits were rewards for his feats. Yet, he grew unable to accept them as happily as before after seeing the world changing right in front of his eyes.

Sword Saint and some of his companions shared his feelings, and even King Elbas ended up experiencing the same emotions after many years passed. In theory, the city was a paradise for King Elbas since it gave him the chance to follow countless experiments at the same time. However, he also started to feel the monotony of that environment.

The group had yet to realize that, but their existences had grown addicted to the defiant influence that they spread. Their power benefited from how their laws affected the world, especially now that they were close to the ninth rank. It almost felt like a necessity to be outside and transform the environment.

'I can't do that,' Noah found himself thinking whenever his boredom reached its peak. 'I have the chance to do everything without facing any risk this time. I can't be stupid.'

'My dantian is too close to face risks,' Noah happened to think another time. 'My body still requires a lot, but that only proves how I should give myself some time.'

'Why would I even need the ninth rank anyway?' Noah wondered a few years later. 'My power can already affect existences in the ninth rank. I am a rank 9 existence even if my cultivation level has yet to reach that point.'

'What's with this rush even?' Noah tried to convince himself after a few more years. 'Steadiness brings the best foundation. Do I really want to risk everything I went through to get my mind to the ninth rank sooner?'

'What can I even gain with a rank 9 mind?' Noah cursed. 'I might understand the spheres quickly, but that's it. I should even become able to develop better techniques. I guess understanding the overall nature of the sky is another benefit. Maybe I should stop thinking about this.'

The situation inside his mind worsened so much that Noah found himself requesting more materials he needed without being aware of that. His existence tricked him into failing to calculate his requirements and necessities until the matter became too obvious. That trend became impossible to ignore after Noah saw countless drugs meant for his mind, Kesier runes, and other resources created tall piles inside his training area.

'Fine, I'll do it!' Noah eventually let go of his restraint when he accepted that he couldn't go against his existence. 'I'll force my mind to reach the ninth rank!'

Chapter 1896 1896. Metaphors

Noah didn't recklessly approach his project. He probably was the best expert in the entire world regarding reckless training methods, but he had friends that surpassed him in many fields.

King Elbas' knowledge about inscription methods had never stopped increasing, and his growth had even quickened exponentially after remaining in the city for so long. He was the first expert that Noah sought, but his answers weren't conclusive.

"The breakthrough to the ninth rank is too personal to have opinions, especially for existences who wield higher energy,"

"It's a matter of harmony, but I can't be certain without enough data,"

"Why would anyone even try to reach the ninth rank with centers of power so close to the breakthrough?"

King Elbas mostly offered complaints and doubts. His approach to the matter was purely scientific. He wanted to study data, tests, results and apply them to multiple existences before giving an opinion. It seemed that his law didn't allow him to rely on vague statements. Only truths could come out of his mouth, so he never gave proper answers.

Still, the conversation with the expert brought Noah's focus on a field that he had almost chosen to ignore. The ninth rank required an additional center of power with an ethereal nature, and Noah felt confident that he needed something similar for the breakthrough of his mind to work.

Noah couldn't apply his old and barbaric methods to his current level. The divine ranks wanted more than simple increases of power, even if his existence was ready to reach the ninth rank.

That restriction forced Noah to study the actual rules for the ninth rank before deciding how to break them. Yet, the maximum expert in that field that he could think of was unreliable at best. He even wondered whether that complicated existence was already trying to betray his trust.

"Do you want the secret behind the ninth rank?" The old rulers repeated Noah's question while the two existences sat inside the white separate area. "We thought you already knew it."

"I don't want to know how to reach the ninth rank," Noah explained. "I need to understand the requirements for the breakthrough from a purely technical perspective. Why do existences need a

separate center of power? How necessary is it to have your entire existence near the peak to approach the transformation?"

Noah tried to remain vague with his questions to the old rulers, but they always managed to look through him. It was hard to deal with such strange entities, especially since they didn't think according to the standards usually involving other existences.

"You ask bizarre questions for someone who is preparing a breakthrough," The old rulers revealed as a faint smile appeared on their featureless face. "Don't think that we overlooked the increasing requests for resources. Why would you even need so many Kesier runes otherwise?"

"Let's not talk about this," Noah ordered. "I want to know more about the topic to see how impossible my project is."

"It's quite impossible," The old rulers revealed. "These limits don't come from Heaven and Earth. They are something that the world naturally activates as a response to your existence. It's a defensive method aimed to preserve your power."

"But it's a normal limit, right?" Noah continued. "How hard can it be to ignore it?"

"Many have tried before you," The old rulers explained. "It's not a matter of completing a partial breakthrough. It concerns preventing the ninth rank from being a failure. Your existence might be ready to advance, but your centers of power want to get there together. Having only part of them in the next rank only creates conflicts in the understanding as a whole."

The explanation made sense, but it also didn't. Noah wasn't a stranger to unbalance. He had spent most of his life with centers of power at different levels, and they had often benefitted him rather than hold him back.

However, his next breakthrough would involve matters far more complicated. The ninth rank would give him access to powers that went beyond laws, so he could vaguely guess the nature of the troubles that an unbalance could generate.

When it came to the mind, Noah could imagine how he would become unable to think about the world as an array of laws that created matter and gave it meaning. He would have a center of power striving to become a world while his dantian and body remained busy gathering fuel to reach the same state.

His mind could basically stop helping the other centers of power because it would live in a completely different realm. The premature breakthrough could force Noah to complete the rest of his growth to the ninth rank with fewer assets. He might end up cultivating without a sea of consciousness.

"We do understand how suppressing an urge can be impossible once reached that level," The old rulers continued. "We know that better than every other existence in the plane. We received countless warnings about our path in the past, but stubbornness is part of what makes us strive forward. We thought that the solution was in our grasp, but we ended up causing a war that has lasted for eras."

"Should I just stop and ignore my existence?" Noah asked. "Isn't that worse than failing at my level?"

"You are here because of your doubts," The old rulers revealed. "Part of your existence fears this approach, but receiving vague answers is only making you believe in your talent with even more intensity."

The orange figure heaved a rare sigh, and Noah felt able to sense ancient helplessness accompanying its voice. He could confirm that the old rulers had started to feel again, but that detail wasn't important now. Only the path ahead mattered.

"An existence goes through a transformation in the ninth rank," The old rulers did their best to explain the matter using the entirety of their knowledge. "It's a qualitative change that surpasses every other breakthrough. You shouldn't consider it as a simple advancement. It's a step that opens the path hidden in the universe."

"Imagine going back to the state of a mortal and restarting your cultivation journey. The experts in the ninth rank are nothing more than mortals in the system of the universe. We only caught a glimpse of that greater path, but we failed to step on in."

Those words generated waves of shock in Noah's mind. He had long since desired someone who confirmed that ranks past the ninth existed in the world. He had sworn to create new realms even if the universe's limit ended up being the tenth rank, but it seemed that he wouldn't need to do anything. The world had already solved one of his future issues.

"Now," The old rulers continued, "Imagine being a mortal without a brain, a hearth, or another vital organ. That will be your state in the ninth rank if you decide to advance with a single center of power. You would have a shell meant to be at that level but nothing able to fill it."

"The problem is in the shell then," Noah guessed.

"Your existence is like a nutrient now," The old rulers added. "You are a tree trying to give birth to fruit with the nutrients accumulated throughout your life. You can generate it early, but that would leave it in the open for who knows how long. It will surely become dry if you leave such an incomplete product in the open."

Chapter 1897 1897. Path

The conversation with the old rulers didn't last much longer. They did their best to explain the issue using multiple metaphors, and Noah felt enlightened after hearing all of them. He had experienced insights and caught glimpses of answers in his life, but nothing could compare to his current understanding.

For the first time in his life, Noah didn't only know how to get to the ninth rank. He also understood that level of power in ways that his companions ignored. Even Alexander might fail to reach that knowledge of his current state until he spent millennia experiencing his power.

The issue was as complicated as King Elbas had hinted it to be. It wasn't even a matter of energy or understanding, not mainly at least. The problem came from the frailty of the incomplete superior state achieved through shortcuts and forced training methods.

'A fruit in the open, they say,' Noah thought as he returned inside his training area and inspected his piles of resources. 'The issue isn't the difficulty of the task. The problem is that I might really be able to do it.'

Noah wasn't letting his urge seep inside his thoughts now. His reasonable side had tried to make him ignore that project before, but it had started to approve the matter after learning so much from the old rulers.

When Noah removed all the issues connected to the understanding of the laws, he could see the breakthrough for what it really was, and the process appeared feasible due to his vast experience in similar fields. The cultivation journey forced him to create a new center of power that would become the foundation for his new state. He had to become a mortal with divine powers, which hinted at forsaking his mind, body, and dantian to focus on the superior path.

Noah would have decided to abandon his project if he didn't see a path among those complicated explanations and metaphors. Still, the old rulers had tried to convince him that something incomplete wouldn't work when he had the power to tamper with that completeness.

The new ethereal center of power would naturally come out flawed if Noah forced only his mind to advance, but a solution to the issue existed, and he found it in the very nature of the different breakthrough.

The flawed status would come from the fact that only part of his existence was advancing, so he didn't have to rely on the natural process to create the new center of power. The regular cultivation journey could take care of that part for him, but it didn't say anything about artificial approaches. Noah could solve the issue by creating the ethereal organ before the actual advancement.

Of course, that idea brought new problems. Noah would have to predict what his existence would require once he reached the ninth rank to create something accurate. The new center of power could turn out to be unsuitable for the rank 9 version of his law, and it might even fall short when it came to enduring its power.

Noah had to approach the project carefully and create a wide room for miscalculations in advance. The new center of power had to be ductile and immense since it would be impossible to change its nature and enlarge it once his centers of power began to fuse with it. Moreover, it had to include his black hole, which prevented him from using other rank 9 experts as an example.

The sheer difficulty of that problem would normally force everyone to abandon that reckless idea and go back to their steady cultivation. The raw number of risks involved with something that would affect their existences so deeply that anyone would feel scared in front of them. However, for Noah, having a path to follow had always been more than enough.

'I only have to create a rank 9 center of power capable of containing the nature and power of my existence,' Noah laughed in his mind as he lay on the floor and let his mind wander. 'I can't forget that the organ has to be ethereal but able to hold heavy fuels like the higher energy. Right, I can't commit the slightest mistake either because it would ruin my prospects. I'd rather not go full Heaven and Earth and start taking my anger out on weaker existences for eras due to a failure.'

The jokes in his mind ended when he started thinking about the issue properly. Part of him still wanted to abandon that project and follow the steady path, but he felt almost drawn by the many ideas that it caused.

Noah was a hybrid, but his species was artificial. He had a fourth center of power that contained higher energy, but both came from his experiments. His darkness was a variation of the "Breath" created after spending years testing various versions of the same power.

Everything about him seemed to have come out from experiments. His mind was the only center of power that didn't endure heavy modifications, but it had inscriptions running through its walls, and it radiated the scarlet color of his bloodlust. Moreover, Noah had constantly used the ethereal figures of his Blood Companions and personal methods to enlarge it, so he couldn't really consider its current level as natural.

It felt almost necessary for his new center of power to follow that trend. Noah had built his existence piece by piece, so letting the rules of the cultivation journey dictate how he had to step on the next realm felt improper. He had a path and the means to fulfill it. A living being shouldn't need anything else.

'My dantian will advance after my mind,' Noah thought as he began to plan the path ahead to gain an idea of the shape of his new center of power. 'The black hole will follow, and that will be the first major problem. The new dark matter has to be part of my existence, and the energy that it will carry is almost impossible to evaluate.'

Noah already understood that the actual capacity of his new center of power had to stand past every realm ever known to cultivators and hybrids. He had to create something far vaster than his black hole only to hope to contain its improved version.

'I strongly believe that my body will patch things up after its breakthrough,' Noah thought, 'But that will be the last center of power to advance. Moreover, I don't know how much I can rely on my hybrid advantages at that level. In theory, the depths of the new realm should affect my flesh, but it's better not to experience unexpected events.'

A clear idea of his current power took form in his mind. That wasn't even the starting point to his project, so he quickly moved to his first actual step. He had to create a loyal prospect of his breakthroughs to understand how powerful his new center of power had to be, but he had already thought of a method when it came to that issue.

Noah's ambition allowed him to improve materials and existences to make them reach their full potential, and he wasn't immune to his own power. Creating a controlled copy of himself and evolving it to gain an idea of what he had to strive to contain immediately became his first step in that insane project.

Chapter 1898 1898. Copy

Creating copies of one existence wasn't exactly an easy matter, especially for laws as troublesome as Noah's ambition. He believed himself to be far more dangerous than the rulers, so he couldn't allow for two versions of him to exist at the same time.

Still, Noah couldn't even hold back from making the copies accurate since that would only give unclear results. His issue forced him to change the training area and request other materials to make sure that everything remained under his control.

Copying himself wasn't the main issue. Noah had access to the dark matter, which could become everything he needed it to be. Forcing his higher energy to replicate his existence ended up relatively easy since that fuel was a core part of his law. The problems came later when his creations gained his mind.

"So," A small humanoid figure surrounded by countless inscriptions announced, "I'm not Noah Noah. You are the real Noah, and you have created me to improve yourself."

Noah felt a headache growing inside his mind as he inspected the scene inside the orange inscriptions. Those formations featured a tiny version of him that leaked small trails of dark matter whenever it spoke or moved. Yet, it carried an almost identical version of his centers of power and existence.

'I hope these things work,' Noah thought while looking at the inscriptions and the two massive orange crystals that aimed their pointy tips at his tiny copy.

Noah had to bring the workshop to a new level to copy himself. He had to meditate for many years to develop a blueprint and invest many valuable materials to create tiny versions of his centers of power to build that small replica. He had even added chunks of his energies to make sure that everything was as perfect as possible, which led him to his current situation.

"You don't talk," The tiny version exclaimed while wearing a pensive expression. "Right, we don't talk much in these situations."

The tiny version started to inspect its surroundings. It showed cold smiles at the many defenses in place. It seemed to rejoice whenever it realized how much effort Noah had put in making sure that nothing left that room.

"Are we so scared of ourselves?" The tiny Noah asked.

"You already know the answer," Noah sighed. "There can't be two of us."

"I know," The tiny Noah replied in an excited tone. "Though you know that I won't die easily. I live, so I want power."

Noah couldn't find a proper answer. He knew himself better than anyone else in the world, so he understood his tiny version's feelings perfectly. That small replica carried his ambition, which naturally made it desire to be the original and reach the peak of the world.

"We must be desperate to do this," The tiny version laughed. "What is it now? Is the final battle approaching?"

Noah didn't answer. He didn't want to do anything that could trigger the tiny version's ambition, even if he knew how pointless his hopes were. After all, he was about to give it a lot of power.

"I know your desires," Noah eventually declared. "I know your dreams. I know you. You aren't stupid either. You are aware that your existence is only a flawed version of my power."

The tiny version showed a cold smile that didn't reveal any emotion. It was the first time that Noah saw something so deep and unclear, and a tinge of pride inevitably appeared inside his mind. However, his speech had to continue.

"I know that you won't give up on life easily," Noah added. "I'm not asking you to. It's not in our nature. Yet, when you are about to die, remember that causing fewer problems will only quicken my progress."

"Are you trying to appeal to my mercy?" The tiny version asked while wearing a frown. "Are you sure you made everything correctly? That doesn't sound like me."

"I'm appealing to your ambition," Noah explained, "My ambition. We strive to seize power to destroy the sky and venture toward the stars. We'll suffer and risk losing if you oppose the process too much."

"Why do you even bother to say this?" The tiny version scoffed. "You know us. We won't give up, even as a fake."

'I know,' Noah answered in his mind before stretching his hand forward.

An orange barrier materialized when his hand reached the inscriptions. Those protections forced him out of the insides of the prison, but Noah already knew that. He had requested those arrays for specific reasons, so he was aware of their functioning.

A dark aura started to seep out of Noah's palm while it remained attached to the orange barrier. The energy managed to pass, but his skin remained on the other side. That was another feature that he had requested. He needed to fill the insides of the formations with his ambition to trigger the transformation, so orange light had to make some exceptions.

"Are we really sure this is the right path?" Tiny Noah asked. "Are we so desperate to discover the road ahead?"

"Yes," Noah quickly answered as his ambition continued to fill the insides of the formations.

"It might work then," The tiny version replied. "Desperation is a great fuel. We had always been great at channeling it."

"Focus on your improvements for now," Noah reminded as the ambition seeping out of his palm intensified.

The tiny version was an exact copy of himself, but it had smaller centers of power. Advancing would be far easier for it, especially with Noah's ambition involved.

The process started immediately. Noah pressed on one of the lines in front of him, and resources appeared inside the prison. The ambition began to improve the items right away, but he made sure that his small copy seized its benefits.

The tiny version grew in power and size as the process continued. It never became as big as Noah, but its cultivation level eventually stepped into the ninth rank. Its smaller organs and ambition allowed it to become stronger faster than him, and Noah didn't hesitate to take note of the feelings experienced when watching the breakthrough.

Noah had replicated the conditions for a natural breakthrough. His methods weren't exactly perfect since that was only his first time creating a copy of himself, but he still learnt something important that he felt sure he would carry to the final experiment.

The ambition generated by the tiny version had developed the ethereal center of power. The potential that its law had accumulated made it gather enough fuel to turn its true meaning into a force that it could wield like never before. Yet, before it could enjoy it a bit, Noah activated the other formations and started to suppress his copy.

"Not yet!" The tiny figure roared. "You just gave me power in the ninth rank! I can fight!"

The tiny version ended up fighting back against the orange light converging toward it. Slashes, singularities, and various attacks that Noah knew far too well shot out of the being's figure and landed on the orange light that didn't slow down at all. The situation seemed desperate, but the copy didn't give up.

"You'd better use my life for something incredible," The tiny version eventually announced when the inscription had the best over it.

"Of course," Noah announced while watching the copy shattering into a wave of dark matter that vanished under the orange light radiated by the formations.

The first test had been a success. Noah had confirmed what fluid he had to use for the ethereal organ. Now he only had to repeat the process until he felt confident enough to complete his project.

Chapter 1899 1899. Drawbacks and conclusions

The project worked. Noah now had a suitable path, a starting point, and the right environment to pursue his experiments. Nothing held him back either, so he went all-out.

Dealing with his first copy had felt strange, but things only worsened as the experiments continued. Noah had to learn from that experience, so he had to push the copies' level forward little by little to see how the ethereal center of power grew and behaved.

Still, that only made the copies express his personality with even more intensity. The first one already was an almost-perfect replica, so the new ended up showing him how his nature would evolve as he advanced.

"A fake death for a fake existence,"

"Don't you dare to fail,"

"We have always been good at hurting ourselves,"

"Maybe the darkness is where we belong,"

"How can the stars shine so brightly even as my consciousness vanishes?"

All the copies' dying words hit Noah deeply, but he could go over them after remaining in a daze for a few hours. Yet, an intense image had slowly started to take control of his vision due to how often he saw it.

The copies had slight variations in their personalities. The level at which Noah stopped them also modified their dying words. Still, they all shared the same cold stare.

Seeing it only once didn't do much to Noah's mind. Having to go through ten of them didn't bother him either. However, that image transformed into a curse that kept reappearing in his vision even when he wasn't busy with his experiments.

That defiant and careless look that the copies showed in front of their death reminded Noah of his starting point. It forced him to remember what he was before devolving the entirety of his existence to power, and the process affected him more than he liked to admit.

The emptiness that spread inside Noah whenever he recalled what he had once been seemed able to make his foundation shake. The complete aloofness that he had once filled his existence threatened to reappear inside him stronger than ever as his experiments continued.

His flaring ambition was the only thing that allowed him to remain sane. Noah was killing himself over and over again. He was even paying a great deal of attention to the whole process. His entire focus was on memorizing the various emotions, changes, and reactions that his copies experienced, so facing those challenging drawbacks felt only normal in his mind.

Those drawbacks seemed to come from his very existence. The world wasn't affecting the matter, and Heaven and Earth had no influence there either. Noah was alone against himself, and the process inevitably weakened his mental state.

Noah had already died, but his first death became a pleasant memory in front of that hellish period. Something seeped into him whenever he memorized a new aspect of the replicated breakthrough or growth. He experienced the empty acceptance that his copies felt as their bodies dispersed, and everything became almost too much to endure after spending an entire century in that state.

On the other side, Noah's understanding of his breakthrough increased at an incredible pace. He memorized the countless variations, flaws, and possibilities that his future path could generate. He saw many versions of what the ninth rank would bring, and a silent realization eventually appeared inside his mind.

'This won't be enough,' Noah concluded after losing count of how many experiments he had witnessed.

The tiny copies didn't express his real power, but they carried his true core. Noah could vaguely calculate how strong he would become if his existence advanced through normal methods, and that prospect felt too weak for his projects.

Noah didn't only want to fight and win against Heaven and Earth. His desires went far beyond that simple achievement. He had to reach the very peak and stand many realms above the others. His destination wasn't the sky. He needed enough power to continue in his journey forever.

His impossible requirements were something that a rank 8 existence couldn't completely understand, even one as unique as Noah. Still, he could guess how the normal path wouldn't grant him the power that he needed to fulfill his desires. The breakthroughs experienced by the copies actually made him worry about his chances against Heaven and Earth.

As his experiments continued, it became almost obvious that he had to tinker with his breakthrough to improve the power that he would obtain after stepping into the ninth rank. His unreasonable urge had turned out to be a warning cry from his existence. His law had told him that he had to do something to keep the sky like a mere stepping stone in his mind.

That understanding generated two very different forces inside Noah. One was the emptiness that the reoccurring deaths of his copies originated. The other came from his desire to bring his foundation to a level that suited his desires.

His ambition couldn't remain only a fuel anymore. It had to become his very foundation since no other force in the world knew the depths of his goals.

Noah couldn't use the Demonic Deduction technique to improve reasonings that involved his creation, but the many years spent experimenting allowed him to slowly build a blueprint that could provide what he looked for.

The initial idea behind the creation of an artificial ethereal center of power inevitably changed throughout the experiments. Noah had believed that replicating the effects of the breakthrough so that his mind could have space where to expand and remain would have been enough. However, it became clear that he needed more, and that forced him to increase the level of craziness of his project.

Creating the best possible version of the center of power that his breakthrough would generate wasn't enough. Noah had to go beyond the standards set by the current level of his mind, dantian, body, and black hole so that the final state of his existence could accomplish the many feats that he had planned.

The new project saw Noah handling the breakthrough in reverse. Generally speaking, the current level of his centers of power would set the size, capacity, and nature of the ethereal organ developed once stepping in the ninth rank. Yet, his artificial version needed far more of those aspects.

Of course, his idea could lead to many problems. In theory, the centers of power had to flood the ethereal organ with their energy and create the unique fuel that every rank 9 existence had. Instead, Noah wanted that structure to be able to contain far more than what his centers of power could produce in their current state.

The increased size, capacity, and improved nature would cause problems in the long run if his centers of power failed to meet those superior standards. Moreover, Noah didn't have methods to improve his organs at his current level, so he could only handle that matter once they reached the ninth rank.

Noah was basically gambling on his ability to improve his centers of power once he stepped in the ninth rank, but he didn't mind betting on himself. The experiments didn't show anything promising, but he didn't have options. His existence wouldn't settle for less. He had to give it everything he had, and that moment slowly approached.

Chapter 1900 1900. Extraction

Noah took many breaks to dispel the lingering emptiness that had started to fill his mind. He even made sure to focus on other fields for entire decades to ensure that his conclusions didn't come from the desperate desire to end that difficult process. Yet, the blueprint for his new center of power eventually took form, so the project moved toward its final phases.

It was time to start the actual creation of the center of power, which required a completely different training area. Noah had benefitted a lot from the restrictions and defenses of his former habitation. He would have failed to suppress many of his copies without them, but he needed something else now.

The new training area was a large circular room that had a conical hole at its center. The deep structure featured multiple steps with various inscriptions meant for different features, but Noah only cared about those that could increase the density of ethereal materials.

The core material for his ethereal center of power had to be his ambition. Noah had confirmed that during his first experiment, and his conclusions didn't change during the years spent with the other copies. The issue was gathering it in a pure and suitable form.

In theory, Noah still didn't have access to the right ambition meant to create the ethereal organ. His centers of power would normally need to reach the ninth rank and naturally fuse their energy to build the ethereal structure. However, he had to follow a completely different path, which started with making the core material with his own hands.

Noah had given a lot of thought to the matter and had eventually decided that replicating the normal breakthrough was only a waste of time. Taking his darkness, mental energy, dark matter, and primary energy, evolving them through his law, and fusing them felt pointless when he could directly improve his ambition.

The problem was that his ambition didn't technically exist as a proper force at his current level. It was an influence that could taint other materials and his energy, but it didn't have an actual shape.

Noah could think of a few methods that could allow him to isolate his ambition. Tainting a simple material and slowly destroying it with opposite laws before enveloping everything with his dark matter could work. Still, the old rulers could provide a specific training area for that, and he found no point refusing it.

The inscriptions on the steps of the conical hole lit up when Noah approached them, but he only moved and activated those involved with his project. He didn't recognize most of those orange lines, but the old rulers had given him a detailed description of their functions, so preparing them for the process ended up being relatively easy.

Noah immersed himself inside the hole after everything was ready. He never touched its bottom. He floated in a cross-legged position right in its middle as the inscriptions around him activated and applied their effects on his existence.

The inscriptions could be gentle, but Noah directly made them apply their most invasive approach. He knew that his existence would oppose the procedure, so going through multiple tests to find a balance between pain and efficiency sounded like a waste of time. It was better to go all-out once and put an end to that phase of the project.

Tentacles made of orange light shot out of the inscriptions and entangled themselves to Noah's figure. They transformed into cylindrical tubes that applied an intense suction force once they completely covered him. Immense pain immediately filled his mind, but he didn't scream nor roar. His cold eyes even remained open as he fixed his gaze at the bottom of the hole.

The suction force didn't affect his centers of power. Noah felt as if they ripped away from him something fainter and deeper. He felt weak as the process continued, and pitch-black drops of a dense liquid started to flow from the tubes' bases.

The process was stealing Noah's potential, the same energy that he used to apply the effects of his ambition. He could feel the power accumulated after defeating opponents far stronger than him leaving his body and disappearing from his existence. He would have even forgotten about his achievements if he didn't protect those specific memories during the process.

A black puddle slowly formed at the bottom of the hole as the process continued. Noah suppressed the pain until his potential was on the verge of depleting before interrupting the inscriptions. The tubes disappeared at that point, and he shot out of the structure in a hurry.

The weakness that had filled his existence made him lose control of his movements and crash on the training area's walls. Noah had the energy to stand, but his centers of power didn't want to work. They felt that he had to go through that moment on his own.

Noah didn't curse nor roar. His eyes soon open, and the ceiling became the main target of his cold gaze. That iconic gesture had intensified after the many years spent staring back at his dying copies, but no one could notify him about that detail. He only felt that he was natural to wear that expression.

The memories that the inscriptions had tried to rip away from his existence started to flow through his vision. Noah reviewed his many incredible achievements many times, and potential eventually built inside his being again.

The inscriptions could separate Noah from his potential, but his existence had earned it through blood and efforts. Simply taking it wasn't enough to leave him without it. His law knew that he deserved more, so it gave more as Noah reminded it of what he had accomplished throughout his life.

Noah felt able to move again after his ambition restored his potential. However, he still decided to spend a few months cultivating in silence and reaffirming his determination before going back into the hole and repeating the process. A single extraction of that energy wasn't enough to satisfy the insane requirements that Noah had come up with after experimenting with the copies. He needed to remain in that area for a while.

The companions were the only witnesses of Noah's struggles. They even shared part of his emotions, and their bodies shook whenever they experienced what he went through. The cycle of pain and weakness continued for many years, and he didn't stop even after the black liquid filled the hole. He needed more than he had ever amassed in his entire life for that project.

Needless to say, the continuous extraction and refill of his potential eventually lowered what the ambition could recreate. Noah sensed that he lost part of that energy from time to time, even if his memories remained intact. Still, he didn't mind that too much. Even his existence allowed that weakening of his potential peak due to the importance of that project.

The training area offered multiple containers capable of storing that dense material, but Noah didn't trust the old rulers enough to rely on them even when it came to those tools. His dark matter could easily take care of the matter, and that phase of the experiments soon ended.

Noah had everything at that point. It was time to create the actual ethereal center of power and fuse with it.