

Demonic 1971

Chapter 1971 1971. Weak

The young-looking cultivator's law involved puppets born from his existence. He could take tiny pieces of himself and insert them into the matter of the world to give birth to different living beings that carried his power.

The effects of the expert's law were quite powerful. The many living beings had different features that could replicate magical beasts, plants, and humans. Still, their true value came from their power being only slightly lower than their source.

Wilfred and Steven found themselves against an army of middle tier creatures capable of performing battle formations. Those puppets could limit the effects of the two experts' abilities to corner and damage them slowly but relentlessly. Moreover, there didn't seem to be a limit to how many living beings the expert could create.

That ability obviously had heavy drawbacks. The expert couldn't move after creating the army, and his complexion paled every time he severed a piece of his existence.

The cultivator paid the price to show that striking superiority. In theory, his weakened state was a significant flaw in his incredible technique, but his two opponents couldn't exploit it since the army of puppets didn't give them the chance to advance. They were actually struggling to kill the few specimens that they managed to attack.

A platoon of humanoid puppets surrounded by masses of roots and branches forced Wilfred and Steven to perform multiple escape maneuvers in a row. They couldn't retreat since a group of spiked armadillos had blocked that path, and many big turtles even stood above them.

The two experts could dive in the storms under them, but their opponent was creating a new platoon while they kept running away. His complexion paled whenever tiny silver spheres came out of his body and mixed with the air or chaotic laws to generate long alligators that prepared themselves to close the last path available to his opponents.

It wouldn't take much before Wilfred and Steven found themselves locked in a cage made of middle tier creatures, but they had yet to develop a good plan to handle the issue. They even felt a bit desperate since they struggled to destroy the puppets in front of them.

Wilfred's muscles had long since bulged beyond their natural state. His arms had become as thick as his chest, but blood had tainted his skin in some spots. His veins couldn't handle that prolonged empowered state, so they popped whenever he released an attack.

Steven had created an invisible shield around the duo. He tried to imitate Noah's dark world and support his friend while improving his overall situation, but he failed to do even one of those things correctly.

The issue wasn't with his power. Steven's invisible energy would force gaseous stage cultivators to retreat to prepare their best attacks. However, his opponent was a liquid stage expert capable of creating an army of middle tier puppets. That battle appeared beyond his reach.

The two experts descended through the storms, but roots and branches stretched forward to block their retreat. Those magical plants were faster than them, so a tight array of silver hindrances soon formed on their path and forced Wilfred and Steven to rely on their power.

Wilfred clashed with the roots head-on. The magical plants had created a wall, and he didn't hesitate to slam his fists on it. Everything trembled, and some branches even shattered, but the structure remained intact and continued to stop that retreat.

Steven's attack arrived right after. He landed next to Wilfred and pointed at the spot where his fists had landed. His determination surged as he looked at the small hole created by his companion. The entirety of his energy focused on a simple thought. He wouldn't let simple roots blocking his retreat.

Invisible energy seeped inside the hole and transformed into a pillar that slowly enlarged it. The passage became large enough for the two experts, but the platoon of humanoid puppets slammed on the shield created by Steven's determination and made them fly in the distance.

Steven spat a mouthful of blood as his shield trembled. Cracks appeared on his invisible protection and made him unable to think clearly. Wilfred grabbed his companion and followed the movements of the defensive technique, but he soon found more humanoid puppets on his path.

Wilfred mustered all the power that he was capable of to throw a punch forward. A soundwave resounded inside the invisible shield as his physical strength flew to clash against the humanoid puppets. The hybrid had launched an attack that would force gaseous stage cultivators to retreat, but those creatures didn't even bother dodging.

There were only five humanoid puppets on their path. Wilfred's shockwave slammed on them and focused most of its power on the specimen in the lead of that small group. Cracks opened among the whiteness and connected the area to the void, but the creatures remained mostly intact.

The specimen that had endured most of the physical strength had lost its left shoulder and arm. Cracks had opened on its torso, but it had remained on its feet. The other puppets were even better off since they had only trembled when that power had slammed on their figures.

That scene depicted how the battle had gone until now. Wilfred and Steven found themselves unable to defeat the puppets properly, so their opponent had the time to generate the army.

Everything had started with only twenty creatures, but the two experts had more than a hundred of them to deal with now. Wilfred and Steven's insecurities could only intensify in front of that massive difference in power. They found themselves unable to even think of a path that could lead them to victory.

"You have overstepped," The cultivator in the distance announced.

The liquid stage expert was in a distant spot of the sky. He was sitting cross-legged among the whiteness while a series of roots surrounded his figure to protect him from unexpected attacks. He spat some blood as more silver spheres left his figure and completed the platoon of alligators, but he appeared used to those damages.

"I know what you are thinking," The cultivator continued. "You are correct. Your existences can't match your companions. Noah, Divine Demon, Sword Saint, and Alexander are leagues above you. Even Xavier Elbas is struggling to keep up with them, so how can you two consider yourselves their equals?"

The cultivator wasn't really paying attention to the mental state of his opponents. He was only following a battle tactic that Heaven and Earth had come up with after discovering that he was against Wilfred and Steven. Those two experts were the weak links in Noah's team, so the rulers tried to do their best to take them out.

The approach was working. Wilfred and Steven struggled to think about valuable battle tactics that could bring them out of that situation. The new platoon even joined the array of enemies and closed the last path that they could use to escape. Doom had arrived, and the two experts could only inspect it with cold eyes.

Wilfred and Steven exchanged a glance. They had decided long ago that death was the only alternative to victory. Their opponent was the very world, so they had high requirements to meet. That battle was only one of the many struggles that they would have to face in the future, so they decided to forsake everything to set their laws aflame. They betted everything on the fact that their breakthrough would arrive if they won.

Chapter 1972 1972. Knowledge

Wilfred and Steven had talked about their situation. The long travels and the many training sessions had given them the time to discuss their condition, and the conclusions felt obvious. They were under their companions in terms of sheer power, potential, and battle instincts.

That realization wasn't too tough to accept. Both experts had seen their companions achieve the impossible multiple times. The world had tried to suppress them, but they had always managed to succeed in finding benefits among those struggles.

Noah, King Elbas, Alexander, and Divine Demon were true monsters of the cultivation journey. They went looking for punishments to maximize their benefits. They wanted Heaven and Earth to show them the flaws in their laws so that they could improve past the impossible limits that they had placed on themselves.

Wilfred and Steven had tried to do the same, and they had also succeeded in some instances. Yet, they had eventually fallen behind their companions. That alone showed their inferior potential and gave them insights on a different issue.

The potential was an important part of the cultivation journey, but everyone could improve it. That was even truer for existences who treaded along with Noah. His ambition was an incredible fuel that made his companions ignore limits set by their laws.

Wilfred and Steven couldn't use their lack of potential to justify their inferiority since being with Noah gave them the chance to improve that feature. Their issue had to come from something else, and the only variable left to inspect was their mindset.

Steven had always known that his mindset wasn't on par with his companions, which sounded hilarious since his law expressed determination. He had even thought to be among the most driven cultivators in

the entire higher plane before meeting Noah and the others. After all, he was one of the leaders of the cells that went against Heaven and Earth.

Instead, Wilfred had always believed himself to be fine with his mindset. He had never considered himself the smartest of his group nor the best in terms of innate talents, but he was resolute. He had never stopped giving his everything without hesitating, and that had been enough, at least until now.

Confirming their inferiority had led to a simple conclusion. The two experts had to fix their issues during the breakthrough to the ninth rank, but advancing was impossible when they didn't have actual achievements on which building their power.

The two experts had to prove to the world and themselves that their laws deserved to step on the last part of the cultivation journey. Still, their inferiority prevented them from succeeding in some of the feats that could grant them the breakthrough. So, they had decided that they would put their lives on the line once the next impossible challenge appeared.

Wilfred and Steven unleashed dense auras after they set their laws aflame. They couldn't develop techniques or special abilities that would sharply improve their battle prowess, so they resorted to the only method they could come up with in their situation. They applied the theory behind the secret arts to their very existence.

Steven shouted at the sky as his determination burnt to give him a temporary boost of power. His invisible energy gained dark shades that created a stark contrast with the whiteness of the world.

The shield disappeared and transformed into a dense defensive layer that covered his skin. Its power even increased, but it didn't manage to step into the ninth rank.

Wilfred bent forward as a growl came out of his mouth. His figure inflated as all the muscles in his body grew. Veins appeared on his face, and red shades filled the white in his eyes as multiple blood vessels popped due to the intense power flowing inside them.

The two experts weren't doing anything too extraordinary. Their existences were energy that they could use. The ninth rank would have perfected and transformed them into a proper fuel meant to express their world, but they could still use them in their current state.

Still, their existence didn't have energy similar to Noah's potential. Setting them aflame was the only method that could transform them into fuels, but that only brought the two experts closer to their death.

Wilfred and Steven gained access to a superior might, but they didn't dare to waste time appreciating it. Their centers of power were about to burst due to the massive energy flowing inside and out of them, so they had to use it before their whole figure exploded.

The two experts already knew how to deploy their abilities to avoid creating conflicting effects. Steven expanded his dark shield and transformed it into a drill-like structure that had Wilfred as its tip.

Wilfred continued to accumulate his power as Steven made the drill move forward. The two experts only had to reach their opponent to win that battle, so they unleashed everything they had to make their charge succeed.

The drill-like structure pierced through the platoons of puppets. Steven didn't bother to feel happy about that initial success and continued to send power to his technique. The shield's edges darkened and radiated his determination to destabilize the creatures that dared to stand on his path.

Steven had decided to put his life on the line. His determination had reached an unfathomable level, and the puppets couldn't even come close to matching it. They shattered as soon as the dark shield landed on their bodies and made the pieces of the cultivator's existence fly back toward him.

Steven didn't let the pieces of the cultivator's existence surpass the drill. He had to reach his opponent before his power returned. The dark shades radiated by the determination intensified as Steven forced his law to burn even faster and fly faster than the silver spheres converging on the expert in the distance.

Countless puppets gathered on the drill's path to slow down its advance, but their sacrifice didn't achieve much. Steven was going all-out, so nothing to slow him down. The dark structure successfully reached the cultivator and pierced the roots protecting him.

Wilfred opened his eyes when the tip of the drill pierced the defensive array around the cultivator. He stepped out of Steven's technique and delivered a punch that carried the entirety of his existence.

The entire area crumbled as massive cracks that led to the void opened. The young-looking cultivator directly disappeared when Wilfred's punch landed on his figure. Nothing could survive against that immense discharge of power.

The puppets and many pieces of the expert's existence shattered before falling into the void. Wilfred almost risked entering the darkness too since the last attack depleted the entirety of his power. Still, Steven grabbed him before flying away from the destroyed chunk of the world.

"We did it, my friend," Steven sighed as he inspected Wilfred growing smaller.

The hybrid's muscles lost power. Wilfred's skin caved in due to the lack of energy that afflicted his body. He was falling apart, but nothing arrived to restore his law.

Steven was experiencing the same weakness. His determination fell apart as his existence continued to burn. He didn't experience any power-up after his achievement. It seemed that his law didn't value that victory enough to step on the ninth rank.

"Heaven and Earth had predicted something like this," The cultivator's voice suddenly resounded among the whiteness.

A pillar of light came out of the sky and fell inside the void. The many silver spheres that had fallen into the darkness flowed through the whiteness and condensed to recreate the expert Wilfred had just destroyed.

"We knew that you didn't have what it took to step on the ninth rank through this approach," The expert continued. "Thank you for expanding our knowledge. We won't waste this understanding."

Chapter 1973 1973. Experiment

Heaven and Earth didn't know how to deal with Noah's group. That had become clear after their punishments ended up empowering those rebellious experts multiple times.

The issue was with the limits of the system's fairness. Heaven and Earth had to use those rebels' cultivation level to choose the punishments. They could stretch their power since Noah and the others were far too strong for their actual rank, but those restrictions remained.

Everything had become clearer after Alexander had defeated the perfect counter and Sword Saint had gained access to help from outside the sky. Heaven and Earth couldn't focus on Noah's group due to the stronger enemies that threatened their power, but they had to prepare for those experts' rise to power.

Studying Noah or Divine Demon right away was stupid since their power ignored the limits of the world too much. Still, Heaven and Earth could start for those who were one step behind them, and Wilfred and Steven perfectly suited that role.

The young-looking cultivator didn't need to die during the battle. He could have relied on the rulers' power and deployed specific countermeasures to fend off Wilfred and Steven's power. Even their last techniques would have been useless if Heaven and Earth had decided to step into the battlefield sooner.

Of course, the rulers' condition wasn't ideal, but they could still help in specific projects. Gathering information about Wilfred and Steven was an important step that could lead Heaven and Earth to understand how Noah and his strong companions managed to break the world's limits so easily. Making one of their followers die only to resurrect him later on barely counted as a price to pay for the chance of increasing their knowledge.

Steven and Wilfred were struggling to remain awake. Their existence was burning, and their last struggle had turned out to be part of Heaven and Earth's plan to study their power. They had shown their potential to defeat a liquid stage cultivator, but their incredible feat had become a mere test once the rulers had stepped into the battlefield.

Disappointment and a tinge of despair filled the two experts. They had done their best, but that didn't meet the insane requirements set by their superior companions. Only death waited for them now, and they couldn't do anything to stop its arrival.

"It was fun while it lasted," Wilfred laughed as blood flowed out of his mouth. "Heaven and Earth must be desperate to set these traps against us. Our companions will succeed."

"I wished to fight the final battle with them," Steven sighed as cracks appeared on his skin. "I wonder where they would have led us."

The two waited for death to arrive, but their opponent didn't want to waste time. He raised his hand and released multiple silver spheres that fused with the matter of the world and created a series of humanoid puppets.

The creatures didn't hesitate to shoot toward Wilfred and Steven, and the latter didn't do anything against the incoming threat. They didn't have the power to fight it anyway.

However, the group of puppets suddenly stopped moving. A heavy pressure enveloped them and forced their bodies to crumble. The young-looking cultivator showed a surprised expression as he searched for the source of that influence. Still, the entirety of his power didn't seem to be enough to succeed in the task.

"Who dares?!" The cultivator eventually shouted. "This is Heaven and Earth's research field. No one is allowed to interfere."

"Imagine if we did what Heaven and Earth allowed us to do," A voice resounded among the sky and made the very fabric of the world tremble.

"Don't play around too much," Another voice resounded. "Remember that we have to pay the kid back."

"You are so boring at times," The first voice scoffed.

"Only because you are never serious," The second voice concluded.

Two massive auras eventually appeared among that destroyed part of the world. Wilfred managed to open his eyes only to see Great Builder and Supreme Thief casually strolling among the sky and approaching him.

"You are lucky that I find your laws boring," Supreme Thief laughed before turning toward the cultivator in the distance. "He sounds interesting."

A pulling force came out of Supreme Thief's figure and started affecting the cultivator in the distance. The expert remained stunned when he saw his existence amassing on his skin and seeping out of his figure. His world was escaping his control under the effects of Supreme Thief's ability.

Great Builder promptly slapped Supreme Thief on the back of his head and made him suppress his innate ability. The latter tilted his head and wore an exasperated expression, but Great Builder didn't hesitate to scold him. "They have to take care of this challenge on their own. We can't let Heaven and Earth improve."

"Resurrect me first the next time," Supreme Thief whispered after bending toward Wilfred.

Steven remained stunned in front of the two experts. He knew that Noah had something to do with the resurrection of the two powerful cultivators, but he remained speechless nonetheless. He had grown used to be on the losing side in the battle against the world, so seeing two allies in the liquid stage left him astonished.

"How would you even resurrect without me?" Great Builder snorted while placing his hands on Wilfred and Steven.

"I will steal your ability first!" Supreme Thief announced.

"You have already tried," Great Builder shook his head. "You don't have the patience to be an inscription master."

"I should steal patience too," Supreme Thief guessed.

"You did," Great Builder replied. "You keep it hidden somewhere in that annoying sea of consciousness of yours."

"Can you not be right once?" Supreme Thief asked.

"I'll let you be right once Heaven and Earth crumble," Great Builder promised. "Help me out with these two now."

"You know that I don't like to give back the stuff that I steal," Supreme Thief joked, but he shut up when Great Builder glared at him.

Supreme Thief placed a hand on Great Builder's shoulder and studied the understanding he was gathering during his inspection of the two dying experts. An ugly expression soon appeared on his face when he realized how simple those laws were. He almost felt disgusted.

"Dumb and vague," Supreme Thief sighed. "Did you really think that you could punch your way inside the ninth rank? How can your determination even express power if you don't give it a goal?"

Wilfred and Steven felt too weak to reply. Their existences continued to shatter, so their minds felt quite foggy. They even doubted that Supreme Thief and Great Builder had really appeared on the scene at times.

"Open them up," Supreme Thief ordered. "I'll throw something that might help, but everything will remain up to them."

"Just don't try anything strange," Great Builder reminded. "We are hindering Heaven and Earth's growth. We aren't here to experiment on these experts."

"It sounds strange when your world is an experiment," Supreme Thief complained, but Great Builder made him shut up again with his glare.

Great Builder tinkered with his fingers and transformed them into small knives that cut deep into Wilfred and Steven's laws when he waved them. Their cracked existences appeared in the open, and Supreme Thief didn't hesitate to throw azure spheres taken out of his mind inside them.

Chapter 1974 1974. Dumb

Supreme Thief had stolen countless techniques throughout his life. All of them carried an aspect or the existence's core of cultivators and hybrids, so he could find something suitable for Wilfred and Steven.

Wilfred's issue came from how simple his existence was. He only cared about his physical strength, so he had instinctively developed long-range techniques that allowed him to send that immense force toward his opponents.

Still, mere physical power wasn't enough to reach the ninth rank, not when it wasn't at the true peak. Noah was already stronger than Wilfred, and Alexander could overcome him in that field through some abilities.

Supreme Thief had to add depth to that power. He had to make it worthy of the ninth rank, which involved smarter ways to apply physical strength. He wouldn't give Wilfred anything too complicated, but the hybrid had to learn how to deploy his ability correctly.

Wilfred's punches were brutish expressions of his energy. They could send the entirety of his physical power toward distant opponents without losing even an ounce of energy. Still, they were too simple, and everyone could counter them easily.

Moreover, the same amount of physical strength could give birth to techniques that surpassed the sheer energy input if used correctly. That was the purpose behind abilities in the end. Yet, Wilfred had never resorted to anything similar. He only threw his power forward.

Supreme Thief tried to fix that issue by providing Wilfred with an understanding of many techniques that involved physical strength. He picked the simplest abilities in his memory, but their lack of intricate moves didn't lead to weaker effects. Actually, they were even stronger than the others in terms of pure output of power.

The new understanding filled Wilfred's muscles and mind with power and stopped the shrinking of his body. He regained his previous size, and azure light shone in his eyes as numerous techniques fused with his mental sea.

Wilfred felt incredibly dumb when looking at that sea of techniques. They weren't hard to learn, and their requirements in terms of physical strength weren't even too high. He could have expressed far more power if he had stopped once to study abilities meant for experts like him. It even felt surprising that he had reached that step of the cultivation journey without them.

The process for Steven ended up being far different. His issue came from how vague his determination was. His foundation was a mass of various drives vaguely stuffed together to generate enough power. That wasn't nearly enough to step on the ninth rank, but it also meant that Supreme Thief had to decide which aspect he had to empower.

The decision eventually fell on Steven's anger toward Heaven and Earth. That feeling had not been his main drive in the past, but the recent events had empowered it. The cultivator had gone through the destruction of his cells, Robert's death, and the last defeat against the liquid stage expert.

Heaven and Earth were basically playing with his life. Steven had felt hopeless to change that trend, and the last defeat had even enhanced that feeling. His anger was ready to become the main part of his foundation.

Supreme Thief only had to choose how to empower Steven's anger. He had stolen many abilities that used that feeling as their foundation. After all, Heaven and Earth suppressed every cultivator and hybrid that dared to remain outside of their system.

Supreme Thief sent countless memories inside Steven's existence. He had collected an almost endless number of stories that involved experts who had struggled against the rulers, and their thoughts could bring Steven's determination to new realms. They could transform him into the embodiment of that rebellious feeling.

The transformation happened right in front of the liquid stage expert. The young-looking cultivator didn't move as he tried to understand what to do in that situation.

Heaven and Earth had given him a clear task. His recent victory had almost brought the results that the rulers needed, but Supreme Thief and Great Builder had interrupted that process.

The young-looking cultivator could still make the process succeed. He only had to defeat Wilfred and Steven after they grew stronger to give Heaven and Earth the understanding they sought. His victory could even lead to better knowledge since Supreme Thief was tinkering with the two experts' laws.

At the same time, Heaven and Earth might gain nothing if the young-looking cultivator were to lose. They would lose the knowledge that they had obtained until then and even suffer another major defeat. They would also create two more threats.

The young-looking cultivator struggled to make up his mind about the situation. Heaven and Earth couldn't help him decide due to their dormant state. They could provide energy and understanding, but thinking was outside of their capabilities now. Everything was up to the expert, but only doubts filled his thoughts.

"Shouldn't you trap me here?" The young-looking cultivator eventually asked. "I can easily run away."

"You idiots never do," Supreme Thief commented while continuing to send understanding to the two experts.

"He is right," Great Builder added. "I can already see that vague ambition in your eyes. You might be a puppet of the rulers, but you remain a cultivator, so you desire to reach the higher ranks. Don't even pretend to struggle."

"You know nothing about us," The young-looking cultivator sneered.

"We have fallen at the hands of the rulers already," Supreme Thief laughed. "Do you think we didn't learn anything? We know how you think. You rodents have chosen the easy path, but you still want the rewards."

"Rodents?!" The young-looking cultivator gasped.

"They don't want the punishments," Great Builder continued while heaving a helpless sigh, "But they want the power. They really believe that Heaven and Earth will let them live after they succeed in reaching the tenth rank."

"You are awfully cocky for existences who have already lost to the rulers once," The young-looking cultivator laughed. "Do you think you can reach the peak with those flawed worlds? Heaven and Earth have already proven their superiority."

"Why do you think we are taking it slow this time?" Supreme Thief snorted. "I swear. These rodents are so dumb."

"We are hindering the rulers instead of attacking them directly," Great Builder explained, "At least for now. Defying Demon has a better chance to succeed, so we are letting him do the hard work."

"You are using them," The young-looking cultivator laughed. "You came back to life only to exploit your saviors."

"He is really dumb," Supreme Thief sighed.

"He is probably thinking that we are giving him vital information due to our arrogance," Great Builder added before glancing at the two experts. "How long?"

"I'm almost done," Supreme Thief replied. "Everything else is up to them."

"You are revealing your plan," The young-looking cultivator repeated. "I honestly expected something more from the famous Supreme Thief and Great Builder."

"We are still here, aren't we?" Supreme Thief laughed before focusing on the two experts. "It's done."

Intense auras flowed out of Wilfred and Steven. The two experts widened their eyes as cries escaped their mouths. They shouted due to the massive surge of power that filled their insides.

Their existences were still crumbling, but Supreme Thief had made sure to patch them up with his understanding. Those fixes wouldn't last long, but they would allow them to complete their battle.

"What is this?" Steven asked as his angry gaze converged on the young-looking cultivator.

Steven was feeling different about the world and his opponent. He was experiencing something that Noah had also noticed after absorbing Robert's anger. Heaven and Earth's power had become clearer in his mind, and his existence appeared unable to ignore it.

"To think that the ninth rank would have required me to walk the human path," Wilfred sighed as he tightened his hands into fists.

Understanding filled Wilfred's mind. Countless simple forms raged among his thoughts and taught him better ways to deploy his physical strength.

"Steven, let me try something," Wilfred whispered.

"Be quick," Steven replied while gritting his teeth. "I don't know how long I can hold back."

Wilfred took a deep breath while turning toward the young-looking cultivator. His muscles bulged as he raised his arms and punched the air a few times.

His attacks were slow, and they didn't seem to release energy. However, Wilfred nodded and threw another punch after confirming that his new technique was working.

The young-looking cultivator inspected the scene, but his eyes widened when a massive force appeared at his side. His body shattered as soon as that power touched his skin. The whiteness in the area also broke to open a giant hole connected to the void.

"So, I can fuse multiple attacks before releasing them as long as my body can endure the increased pressure," Wilfred announced while scratching the side of his head.

"As I said, you are incredibly dumb," Supreme Thief commented while heaving a helpless sigh.

"He's coming back," Steven exclaimed, and a white pillar followed his words.

Wilfred's attack didn't leave anything of the expert, so Heaven and Earth had to rebuild him from scratch. The young-looking cultivator appeared among the whiteness and revealed his stunned expression to the four rebels. He couldn't understand how a single attack from a peak rank 8 hybrid had managed to kill him.

Chapter 1975 1975. Playing

The empowerment given by Supreme Thief went far beyond the simple addition of techniques or memories. Wilfred and Steven had added important pieces to their existences, and they fit so well that they struggled to understand how they had managed to grow so much without them.

The techniques that Wilfred had learnt were only a practical application of a part of the cultivation journey that he had ignored for various reasons. The hybrid wasn't actually stupid, but his innate advantages and character had allowed him to grow without relying on special abilities.

That approach to the cultivation journey had initially been a mere decision that suited his existence. However, it had transformed into a proper limit that had prevented his power from evolving for a long time.

The same went for Steven. His determination was incredible among powerful experts, but it lacked depth compared to the true monsters who really had a chance at putting Heaven and Earth into a tough spot.

The memories of the experts who had suffered due to the rulers added depth to the aspects that Supreme Thief had chosen to empower. Steven's determination inevitably changed after gaining those images and feelings, but the process worked as an evolution.

Steven's law wasn't vague anymore. It had gained a goal that added features and intensity to his determination. He had become sensitive to everything connected to Heaven and Earth, and the sheer power added to the effects of his existence had created a dense aura around his figure.

"You should play with him for a while," Great Builder explained while glancing at the sky past the storms. "Heaven and Earth must be too busy to stop the resurrections, so used him to test your powers and deplete their power."

"In short, have fun," Supreme Thief laughed. "You should focus on your existences anyway since they are still incomplete. You'll die if you don't reach the ninth rank after this battle. You might die even if you overcome the breakthrough actually."

"You are so inspiring," Wilfred sneered.

"I make the best speeches in the entirety of the higher plane," Supreme Thief proudly exclaimed.

Wilfred turned toward Steven, and the latter nodded. The cultivator took a deep breath before stepping forward and closing his eyes. He focused on the distance that separated him from his opponent before disappearing from his spot.

The young-looking cultivator had continued to stare at his opponents in confusion. He still felt stunned about Wilfred's attack, but he believed he could counter it with the right preparations. The battle didn't seem completely impossible, but his astonishment intensified when Steven materialized next to him.

Steven placed a hand on his opponent before the latter could do anything about the situation. A peak rank 8 cultivator was touching a liquid stage expert. The event would typically result in the destruction of the weaker existence, but nothing followed reason in that situation.

A dark aura covered Steven before spreading on the young-looking cultivator. The latter found himself unable to summon his power. The law of a mere peak rank 8 existence was cutting him away from the energy and world that the rulers had given him.

"How are you doing this?" The young-looking cultivator asked as astonishment filled his face.

"You have forced me to become your enemy," Steven explained as his grip on the cultivator's shoulder tightened. "I'm not strong enough to affect Heaven and Earth directly, but the situation is different with you pawns."

Steven's determination seeped inside the cultivator's words and started opening cracks in the many flaws that Heaven and Earth had left in that power. The rulers could only create copies in the end, and Steven's existence targeted the imperfections in those structures with the new ability of his law.

Even Noah couldn't do something so specific and thorough. He innately countered Heaven and Earth, and his destruction allowed him to study their power to enhance his effects, but Steven was different.

Steven's determination forced Heaven and Earth's followers to prove their worth. It acted as a judge for the power that they had gained from the rulers and made their flaws expand until they became weak enough to match the achievements reached on their own.

The liquid stage expert saw his cultivation level fall into the gaseous stage before reaching the very bottom of the ninth rank. He regained access to his power only after that event. It was as if Steven's determination had declared that to be the might that his world could express.

"You can't have power to matters ruled by Heaven and Earth!" The young-looking cultivator shouted as pieces of his existence separated from his figure to give birth to puppets.

"We are cultivators," Steven sighed while placing his hand on the expert's head. "Defying rules is what we do."

Steven's ambition seeped into the fabric of the young-looking cultivator's head and forced it to shatter. The destruction then spread to the rest of his body until nothing remained of that fake world.

The expert died again, but Steven immediately looked at the sky. He knew that Heaven and Earth were about to resurrect him again, and his determination instinctively stretched upward to stop the event. However, he suppressed his power and stepped back to let the rulers complete their process.

"Shall we take turns?" Wilfred asked after flying next to Steven.

"Let's explore the depths of our new laws until Heaven and Earth understand what we are doing," Steven suggested. "Hopefully, we will be rank 9 existences by the end of this battle."

The young-looking cultivator came back to life and tried to escape, but a dark cage materialized around him and spread Steven's heavy influence in its insides. The expert's level fell again, and fear appeared in his eyes when he saw Wilfred approaching him.

"You will never reach the ninth rank like this!" The young-looking cultivator cursed. "Your power doesn't come fro-."

The expert didn't have the chance to complete his line since Wilfred performed a simple martial art that made the entirety of his physical strength converge on a tiny spot. The attack opened a hole in the cultivator's head before discharging the rest of its energy throughout the body.

The pillar arrived once again, and Steven made sure to be next to the cultivator right after he came back to life. He placed a palm on his chest and forced his level to fall before shattering his body with a simple expansion of his determination.

Supreme Thief and Great Builder inspected the scene in silence. Wilfred and Steven had surpassed their previous limits, but the ninth rank struggled to arrive. The two liquid stage experts couldn't affect the process anymore, but they didn't let those potential last actions remain unseen. They would watch Noah's companions until the end.

The young-looking cultivator died countless times. Wilfred and Steven were basically using him as a training dummy, but Heaven and Earth eventually noticed what was happening.

The pillar of light fell only to disperse in the whiteness of the world. The rulers put an end to the endless resurrections and left the two experts without a target.

Wilfred and Steven could only cross their legs and focus on their shattering existences at that point. They had to push their laws to the ninth rank, or they would vanish.

Chapter 1976 1976. Sky

Noah flew back toward the floating lake after his battle was over. Many thoughts filled his mind as he inspected the nature of his power.

Night had advanced into the ninth rank, but his existence contained far more. Snore, Shafu, Duanlong, the parasite, the cursed sword, the Demonic Sword, his body, and his dantian were still in the eighth rank, and he feared that all of them would require a different feat to advance.

The sole thought that a single existence would have to go through so many breakthroughs only to reach the ninth rank would make many experts despair. However, Noah had long since accepted that his requirements were insane, and his recent project with the ethereal darkness had only stretched them further.

Noah wanted to overcome Heaven and Earth, but their power was immense. They were beings on the verge of fusing two separate paths in the journey toward the tenth rank. They wanted to advance as existences and worlds at the same time, and the power they would obtain in the eventuality of their success would be immense.

That knowledge only made Noah's requirements harder to meet, but he didn't fear that issue. Still, the process to achieve his goals grew harder every time he took a step toward the ninth rank.

The path didn't actually become harder, but each success taught Noah how much he had yet to achieve before completing his breakthrough. The farther he went, the more he understood how long the path was, and most of that was his fault.

'Duanlong and Shafu shouldn't be too troublesome,' Noah studied as he flew back to the lake. 'Their existences are simpler, so they should only need energy unless my ambition messes things up.'

Noah didn't completely believe in those thoughts. Night had required a special process to advance. Its existence was unique, but the other companions didn't fall too short, especially since they had been under the effects of his ambition for a long time.

Noah didn't hate the idea of his companions going through special breakthroughs since that would lead to stronger existences. Still, he felt overwhelmed by the massive amount of energy that each process

would require. Snore and the others even had it easier since they weren't actual parts of his ethereal darkness, but that wouldn't save them from the same struggle that Night had to face.

'Don't tell me that I have to invade the sky before reaching the ninth rank,' Noah thought as the storms around him transformed into primary energy that flowed into his body.

The stormy regions were full of energy, but his requirements had already made him disregard fuel under the liquid stage. His centers of power desired more than what the world could offer, so his thoughts inevitably went to the only place that could satisfy his needs.

Nevertheless, the sole idea of entering the sky was insane. Noah couldn't consider it unless all his other options vanished. He wasn't ready for that journey. He would probably be too weak for that invasion even after reaching the ninth rank.

The floating lake eventually unfolded in his vision, but two powerful presences diverted his attention from that marvelous environment. King Elbas and Divine Demon were already on the scene, and a broad smile appeared on his face when he sensed that one of them had reached the ninth rank.

"My heir!" Divine Demon shouted when he sensed Noah's arrival. "Help me out here. Tell this idiot how I'm better than him at everything."

"How can you even call me an idiot after spending the entirety of your divine journey as a forgetful brute?" King Elbas snorted before turning toward Noah. "We need to talk. I have a favor to ask."

Noah was ready to tease King Elbas, but his words left him speechless. Divine Demon also fell silent in front of that surprising announcement. The proud and arrogant King Elbas was openly asking Noah a favor, and his face didn't even carry any trace of shame.

Noah forced himself to inspect King Elbas thoroughly. Divine Demon's breakthrough had initially claimed the entirety of his attention, but a second study of King Elbas' figure revealed that he had gone through faint changes.

King Elbas had always been stronger than his actual level, but there was something else now. Noah couldn't completely understand what had changed, especially since his cultivation level was lower than before. Still, he could sense the new overwhelming might that filled his figure.

That understanding came from Noah's destruction. He naturally thought of ways to destroy everything that entered the range of his consciousness, so he felt how hard it would be to kill King Elbas now.

Moreover, the new confidence showed by the expert hinted at a sharp change in his mindset. King Elbas would have never asked for a favor so openly, and he would have definitely felt awkward about the issue. Still, he could voice that request easily and without revealing any shame now.

"What has happened to you?" Noah asked as his reptilian eyes sharpened due to the increased intensity of his inspection.

"I've evolved past you brutes," King Elbas explained shortly before lowering his gaze, "But I have something to fix before claiming the ninth rank, and I need your crazy mind to come up with a viable plan."

"I'm all ears," Noah uttered while continuing his inspection.

Noah was truly speechless. He had rank 9 mind, but he struggled to understand what King Elbas had become. Those words didn't sound too arrogant in front of fabric that even he couldn't study properly.

"The stormy regions might have decent sources of energy," King Elbas explained, "But I need something more for me. I need you to help me seize a piece of the sky."

Noah had to close his eyes to suppress his greed. It almost sounded fateful for King Elbas to mention the sky right after his reasoning. His mind immediately started to build a plan that could make the journey feasible, but the situation appeared grim.

The sky had multiple issues. Noah wasn't sure whether his group could even touch that white material due to the corrosive influence that it radiated.

Heaven and Earth's devouring power filled the entirety of that white layer. The sky also contained cities filled with cultivators in the ninth rank. Thinking about getting there was beyond crazy, but Noah couldn't stop thinking about that plan.

Noah and King Elbas had already dealt with the sky during the exploration of the void. They had only opened a small hole on its surface, but that feat alone showed that the plan wasn't completely impossible. Still, it required far more planning than they had ever done before.

"How long can you wait before that?" Noah eventually asked.

"I believe I can wait a few millennia," King Elbas replied, and Noah nodded to acknowledge that idea.

Noah wasn't willing to go in the sky in his current state, but everything would change if he managed to bring his companions into the ninth rank. He would have a shot at surviving and seizing important resources at that level, and a few millennia sounded good enough to succeed in those preparations.

Four powerful presences entered the range of the trio's mental waves during their conversation. Divine Demon, King Elbas, and Noah turned to look in the distance, where they saw Supreme Thief and Great Builder carrying Wilfred and Steven. The latter had fainted, but their rank 9 cultivation level was impossible to overlook.

Chapter 1977 1977. Weapon

"What are you even doing here?" Noah laughed at the sight of the two liquid stage experts.

The talk about the sky went in the back of his mind when the four experts appeared. Noah couldn't help but feel happy about that reunion and those breakthroughs. Wilfred and Steven's situation had kept him worried in the past, especially after Robert's death, but they were fine now. They had finally stepped into the ninth rank.

"I was divining locations where we could hurt Heaven and Earth," Great Builder announced proudly while pointing at the fainted experts. "Guess who we found in the middle of the mess?"

"We kept ourselves busy," Noah shortly explained while wearing a smirk.

"We noticed that," Supreme Thief scoffed. "You even stole my technique in the meantime."

"I couldn't possibly leave it there," Noah shrugged his shoulder.

"What a thief," Supreme Thief shook his head.

"That's your title," Noah joked. "I merely defy those stronger than me."

"Where should we drop them?" Great Builder asked, and Noah spread his dark world to create a sea where the cultivator could drop his two friends.

Noah studied Wilfred and Steven after they entered the dark world. Their existences were different from before, but they were stable. They had only suffered and recovered too quickly, so they required time to rest and adapt to their new state.

"What technique are you using to find these spots?" King Elbas asked while nearing Great Builder.

"Something quite simple," Great Builder exclaimed while revealing a complicated formation that seemed to fuse with the fabric of the world. "The technique doesn't do much. I have died and come back to life without Heaven and Earth's help. My world has gained flaws that naturally point at spots where I can hurt the rulers."

Noah and King Elbas understood that power quite well, especially since the former's hypotheses had significantly benefited from his status as a mistake. Great Builder had achieved the same power by coming back to life. His predictions had simply become more accurate after the resurrection.

"Did you try to make it like this?" King Elbas asked while talking out a golden sphere from his body and using it to create a similar complicated formation.

"Oh! That's not so bad," Great Builder exclaimed before using his fingers to trace yellowish lines in the sky. "Do you mean it like this?"

"I would pour more energy on these lines," King Elbas said before pointing at part of the formation. "You can increase the efficiency without increasing its consumption too much."

"But I would lose part of the grip on the world," Great Builder contradicted.

"Maybe you should modify these then," King Elbas added.

Noah, Supreme Thief, and Divine Demon exchanged a meaningful glance. They silently left the two inscription masters alone before sitting cross-legged on the sea of dark matter.

Divine Demon raised his hand, and blood-red energy flowed into his palm to create three cups full of wine. The expert handed a cup to his companions, and everyone took a sip without saying anything.

"It's stronger than before," Noah commented before drinking some more.

"It has my personal flavor now," Divine Demon laughed.

"You are lucky that it's good," Supreme Thief frowned. "Many would have stopped drinking after your comment."

"I've seen my heir drinking worse," Divine Demon continued to laugh.

"Trust me. You didn't," Noah smirked while gulping the cup and handing it to Divine Demon.

The expert waved his hand and refilled it through the same blood-red energy. Noah studied the event, but his mind found it hard to understand what had changed in the expert's world.

"You couldn't be the only one reaching unknown realms," Divine Demon sneered after noticing Noah's attempt to understand the nature of his energy.

"Easy for you all to say that after leeching off my ambition," Noah mocked.

"Nonsense," Divine Demon replied. "I would have reached the same level on my own."

"I find it hard to say anything against that," Noah joked. "You would be a legendary species if you were a magical beast."

"I would be the leader of all legendary species," Divine Demon shouted.

"It's rare to find so much arrogance in one existence," Supreme Thief uttered. "Do you mind if I take some of it?"

"I wish it were arrogance," Noah sighed. "This guy might be the most talented cultivator in the entirety of the world."

"You aren't helping," Supreme Thief uttered as a pulling force came out of his figure. "I'm bad at controlling myself."

The dark matter under the trio surged and covered Supreme Thief. Gales also seeped past the innate pressure released by the three experts and turned blood-red before reinforcing Noah's higher energy.

Supreme Thief wasn't trying to steal Divine Demon's talent on purpose. His world had activated on his own, but he remained speechless when he saw his two companions suppressing his pulling force.

"You have become strong," Supreme Thief said while suppressing the effects of his world. "I'm surprised you have taken so little to reach this level."

"We have done crazy stuff," Noah explained.

"Feats that only beings with our talent could achieve," Divine Demon exclaimed.

"Talent alone wouldn't match me," Supreme Thief revealed. "You are lucky I'm not a battle maniac. I would have tried to test my real power against you otherwise."

Divine Demon laughed, but Noah lowered his eyes. Those words had made him think about June. A long time had passed, and he had no idea about her current position. Yet, he was about to plan a mission in the sky, which sounded quite final in his mind.

"What will you do now?" Noah eventually asked.

"I don't know," Supreme Thief said while asking Divine Demon for a refill. "Great Builder usually handles that stuff. We'll probably continue to roam among the storms to hinder Heaven and Earth's plans. We have yet to reach the peak anyway."

"They will probably head for the sky after handling some stuff," Divine Demon announced as his eyes moved between Noah and King Elbas.

"Are you crazy?" Supreme Thief asked as evident confusion filled his face.

"I thought that was certain by now," Noah sighed. "We won't go right away. We'll probably do the same as you to prepare for the mission. This lake seemed an important location, so we attacked it."

"Right, we still have to destroy the weapon hidden inside this area," Divine Demon recalled.

"Weapon?" Supreme Thief asked.

"Noah thinks Heaven and Earth have placed a weapon that might work against their enemies here," Divine Demon revealed. "He is usually right about this stuff."

"Did you hear them?" Supreme Thief asked while turning toward Great Builder.

"We will join them," Great Builder shortly stated before resuming his conversation with King Elbas.

"I guess I'm with you then," Supreme Thief laughed while raising his cup.

"Do you mind making us a cup?" Wilfred's voice resounded from under the sea of dark matter, and Noah didn't hesitate to open a passage to let the experts resurface.

Wilfred and Steven came out in the open and sat with the experts. Divine Demon created two more cups, and everyone soon found themselves drinking happily. King Elbas and Great Builder eventually joined them, and Noah removed the sea of dark matter when everyone felt ready to move.

The white lake was ready for the taking, and they couldn't wait to find out what Heaven and Earth were hiding.

Chapter 1978 1978. Shining

The white lake floated among the sky. A tall mountain stood by its side, and a waterfall descended from its peak. The marvelous environment absorbed and released chaotic laws, and it contained enough energy to make Noah drool.

Great Builder, Noah, and King Elbas thoroughly inspected the area and confirmed that the lake acted as a defensive structure. There seemed to be a separate dimension hidden beneath the shining water, and the experts didn't hesitate to remove it.

The lake was massive, and its energy incredible, but it lasted only a few seconds in front of the experts. Five rank 9 existences, Noah, and King Elbas could seize that power in no time, and even the mountain crumbled after the process was over.

Noah didn't even bother to remain disappointed about his growth. His body improved, but the lake was nothing more than a good meal after dividing its energy with his companions.

The world appeared seamless after removing the lake, waterfall, and mountain. Whiteness unfolded in the group's eyes together with stable space and no trace of portals that could lead to a separate dimension.

"Let me handle this," King Elbas stated at that sight.

Golden light came out of King Elbas' figure and seeped into the world. Noah couldn't understand what the expert was doing, but he could inspect the changes in the fabric of space to study the event.

The world of lines appeared in Noah's eyes and allowed him to see how King Elbas was forcing the arrays depicting the laws of space trembling to no end. The expert was affecting the stability of the area on a deep level.

"I'll help," Noah exclaimed as his dark world expanded and joined King Elbas' intense energy without affecting its power.

The golden final energy and Noah's higher energy worked together to make the world shake. A small shining opening eventually materialized in the fabric of space and started expanding, but Divine Demon snorted when the process took too long.

A torrent of blood-red energy fell from the storms above the experts after Divine Demon waved his hand. The river tainted the whiteness and pierced the passage that Noah and King Elbas were slowly expanding.

A spiderweb of cracks spread from that spot and shattered space in multiple points. The fissures that opened after that destruction didn't lead to the void. They connected the white area to a shining environment that tried to hinder the experts' inspection with its blinding light.

"What are you even doing?!" King Elbas complained while Noah limited himself to sigh.

"You were too slow," Divine Demon explained as a proud smirk appeared on his face.

"How many defenses do you think this place has?" King Elbas shouted.

"What can we even fear at our level?" Divine Demon gave an arrogant remark, but the world started to shake violently and cut off his voice.

The tremors generated by King Elbas and Noah had been soft and in line with the laws of space. They were forcing the portal to open naturally to prevent triggering eventual defenses placed in the shining environment.

Divine Demon ruined that process and triggered all the defenses that the entrance contained at the same time. Multiple middle tier auras seeped out of the cracks before a series of crackling avatars climbed out of the shining dimension to appear in the outside world.

The avatars appeared denser than those usually fought by the group of experts. The crackling energy that made their bodies was brighter. It seemed to aim to the state of higher energy, but it fell slightly short.

The experts could immediately guess that the shining dimension was unique in its purpose. It wouldn't make sense for Heaven and Earth to store stronger avatars there instead of using them during the Tribulations.

'Is this a proper research ground that Heaven and Earth couldn't have in the sky?' Noah wondered before sending a message through the mental connection.

Everyone had gotten ready to fight as soon as the avatars appeared. Still, no one attacked out of fear of damaging the shining separate dimension or triggering even more defenses.

The experts were waiting for the avatars to climb out of the cracks completely, but a shadow suddenly flew past them and divided their bodies in half. Those crackling giants lost the connection with their lower bodies, which fell inside the brighter light.

The shadow flew over the avatars again before they could understand what had happened, and their heads separated from their maimed bodies. Another attack eventually arrived, and those giants completely shattered into storms of sparks.

Night landed on Noah's head while the experts remained stunned. They turned their gazes toward the giant Pterodactyl standing on top of their companion before performing simple nods.

Night nodded back at the experts, and no one said anything about its cultivation level. Still, everyone felt stunned in front of the overwhelming power that the Pterodactyl had unleashed in a matter of seconds.

The area fell silent after the sparks transformed into primary energy that flowed toward Noah. He rejoiced at that decent meal, but no emotion appeared on his face. His eyes remained on the shining cracks, and Night's attention also converged there.

The shining dimension appeared still. It didn't make any sound nor send more defenses. Night even went back inside Noah's body after confirming that the path was clear.

The group began to descend toward the cracks after Night disappeared. The blinding whiteness filled their vision, but their mental waves managed to pierce that light and explore the initial areas of the separate dimension.

An ample area contained in a crystal-like material that resembled the sky's fabric unfolded in the experts' senses. The environment was as large as a region, and it stretched far in the distance. Noah even sensed the same tinkering of the laws of space seen in the orange city.

Noah and the others exchanged a glance before turning toward King Elbas and Great Builder. The two inscription masters had started to set formations on the edges of the cracks. They were obviously creating escape paths before entering the shining dimension, and their companions let them finish the process quietly.

The group stepped inside the separate dimension after King Elbas and Great Builder confirmed that they were done. The blinding whiteness soon enveloped the experts in its heavy radiance, but their laws and worlds fended it off easily.

Their mental waves could finally expand without obstructions after crossing the cracks. Noah and the others could inspect the walls, and peculiar cavities soon appeared in their vision. Still, all of them had a defensive layer that even their powerful minds couldn't pierce.

The group instinctively flew toward the nearest cavity, where they found a brighter crystal-like structure hidden near its bottom. Noah and King Elbas exchanged a glance before glaring at Divine Demon and waiting for the expert to nod in approval.

The duo started using their energies to inspect that white barrier and slowly uncover its insides. A crack opened before spreading to reveal a three-meters-tall humanoid figure who seemed in a dormant state.

That sight left the group confused. They had initially thought that male figure to be a puppet, but the organic fabric and his three centers of power were impossible to miss since no energy filled his insides.

Nevertheless, everything appeared improved. The cultivator inside the cavity seemed an enhanced version of Heaven and Earth's followers. Moreover, his centers of power were at the bottom of the ninth rank even if they were currently empty.

Chapter 1979 1979. Shares

Noah had a vast experience with the Blood Companion, King Elbas had built countless puppets throughout his life, and Great Builder was the creator of the workshop. The three experts could immediately understand that they were in front of a living being that was only waiting for fuel to fill its centers of power.

It wasn't hard to guess the puppet's purpose. Heaven and Earth had countless laws and followers, but their enemies had continued to increase as they approached the end of their journey. The rulers were also busy, so improving their army would give them the chance to take care of their opponents without losing focus on what they considered crucial for their path.

Heaven and Earth had to defeat the dragons to complete their path, but the monster outside the sky, the orange city led by their old version, and Noah's group were opponents that would require their full attention. However, everything would change if they could improve their outdated followers.

Divine Demon raised his hand, and blood-red energy gathered in his palm. He was ready to destroy the puppet with a single blow, but he held himself back while moving his eyes among Noah, King Elbas, and Great Builder. The expert knew that the current issue could require more than brute force.

"I don't think we can stop this," Noah eventually whispered without moving his piercing gaze away from the empty body.

"The blueprint is ready," Great Builder commented. "The stormy regions and the sky might be full of similar locations already."

"They might need some time to perfect everything," King Elbas guessed.

"This puppet is ready to gain energy and a law," Noah shook his head. "Heaven and Earth are probably trying to find loopholes in their fairness to activate their new army without suffering serious drawbacks. Building a separate dimension inside the stormy region might work in their favor since they wouldn't rely on the benefits given by the sky."

"Do you think that Sword Saint's breakthrough has bought us some time?" King Elbas asked.

"Probably," Noah replied, "But does it even matter? The project is complete. Heaven and Earth will soon have a superior version of cultivators ready to overwhelm us."

"It still feels off," Wilfred broke his silence. "The fairness shouldn't be so easy to break. We would be already dead otherwise."

"They cheated," Noah explained while pointing at the male puppet. "Heaven and Earth didn't invent a new species. They simply built weaker hybrids."

A second of silence followed that revelation, but Supreme Thief quickly added something. "That explains how they have managed to build something like this without triggering drawbacks. Their enemies are getting stronger, so the scales of their fairness have tilted in our favor. Heaven and Earth had the chance to balance it with these living weapons."

"Are you implying that we are to blame for this?" Steven scoffed.

"It would make sense," Noah sighed. "The stronger we get, the easier Heaven and Earth can bend their limits in their favor. The same goes for the monster outside the sky and the orange city. Their influence is expanding, so the rulers are experiencing a new freedom."

Silence fell among the group again. It felt disappointing to see Heaven and Earth using their improvements to find loopholes in their fairness. The event was inevitable, but the experts still found it annoying.

Noah's team had a challenging path already. Having to deal with Heaven and Earth's increasing freedom was another blow that they didn't expect. They knew that their arrival in the ninth rank would unlock a series of punishments that the rulers couldn't deploy before, but the improved army was something completely different.

Moreover, that project hinted at the existence of similar experiments meant to defeat whoever dared to oppose Heaven and Earth. Noah and the others couldn't even start to guess what the rulers could create with their incredible knowledge and resources.

"So," Divine Demon cleared his throat, "Do we burn this place to the ground or not?"

"Maybe give them a bit more to make their minds on the matter," Wilfred whispered.

"There's nothing to decide," King Elbas sighed before glancing at Noah and Great Builder. "I want a third of the puppets for my experiments."

"I'll take a third for the same reason," Great Builder added before turning toward Noah.

"I'll eat the rest," Noah shrugged his shoulders before raising his hand to summon his dark matter.

"Wait!" Divine Demon suddenly shouted. "I also want a share of these puppets."

"Why would you even want something like this?" King Elbas snorted. "You are a brute."

"I need to add them into my world," Divine Demon announced.

"Can't you just wave your hand and recreate them with the energy of the world?" King Elbas complained.

"Stealing energy from Heaven and Earth is always better," Divine Demon explained, and King Elbas couldn't say anything else. His companion's statement was more than reasonable.

"I actually desire a share of the puppets too," Steven coughed. "It's for my world."

King Elbas rolled his eyes, but he couldn't deny those requests. All his companions deserved a share of the puppets, so he limited himself to glare at Wilfred.

"I'm fine like this," Wilfred quickly stated.

"I want my share too!" Supreme Thief uttered before King Elbas could feel satisfied with Wilfred's answer.

"Why would you need a share?" Great Builder complained.

"I am the thief!" Supreme Thief shouted. "I should be the first to steal stuff from Heaven and Earth."

"Your world doesn't involve these materials," Great Builder continued. "You steal laws and abilities."

"I am the thief!" Supreme Thief shouted.

"You have already said that," Great Builder sighed. "Come on. I'll take you to steal something after this mission. Leave this to Defying Demon's group."

"But you are taking your share!" Supreme Thief replied.

"Because I need materials to save your ass whenever you cause a mess," Great Builder declared.

"This scene feels familiar," Divine Demon blurted while tilting his head.

King Elbas massaged his temples to suppress the raging irritation that was trying to invade his mind. He couldn't believe how many idiots kept appearing on his path.

Great Builder and Supreme Thief bickered for a few seconds, and the latter eventually gave up on his claims. The group would divide the puppets into five equal shares as they explored the blinding separate dimension and continued to study the area.

King Elbas stepped forward and silently announced how he would start the division. A golden speck of light came out of his body and expanded until it created a membrane around the puppet. The light then shrunk to become a glowing layer that adhered to the empty man's skin.

King Elbas performed a pulling gesture with his hand, and the golden membrane brightened before shrinking even further. It transformed into a sphere that floated toward the expert and fused with his body.

Everyone prepared themselves for an eventual reaction of the separate dimension. Their mental waves expanded and spread through the whiteness to check the cavities in their range. Noah and the others expected their theft to trigger traps or similar defenses, but the area remained silent.

"When did you become so good?" Wilfred asked.

"It wasn't me," King Elbas admitted as an ugly expression appeared on his face. "Heaven and Earth simply don't care about a single puppet."

"Which means that they can produce entire platoons at the same time," Noah continued, and everyone's mood worsened.

Chapter 1980 1980. Traps

The moody atmosphere didn't distract the group from their purpose. King Elbas, Noah, Great Builder, Divine Demon, and Steven alternated themselves while exploring the cavities to divide the corpses equally.

The group mostly met puppets at the bottom of the ninth rank, but stronger versions appeared from time to time. They easily calculated how to divide them, and they didn't hold back from speculating about the depths of Heaven and Earth's preparations.

Some of the puppets could become liquid stage cultivators once filled with energy. A few of them could even aim to reach the solid stage after obtaining a world. The rulers' new army appeared immense and scary. It seemed a better version of the Legion, even if its members weren't exactly as strong as hybrids.

Everyone did their best not to trigger traps, but some defenses inevitably activated once the group killed and stole a dozen puppets. Sparks gathered in the crystal walls before giving birth to giant crackling avatars that tried to fill the immense separate dimension.

Many avatars had power in the middle tier. That sight would normally scare away entire armies of cultivators, but Noah's group faced their opponents fearlessly. King Elbas and Noah even made sure to isolate the battlefield to prevent the activation of more traps.

Nothing could stand in the path of the seven experts. Great Builder and Supreme Thief were monsters in the liquid stage, while Steven, Wilfred, and Divine Demon had just stepped into the ninth rank. Their power was incredible, but Noah and King Elbas didn't fall short in that battle.

The horde of crackling avatars vanished quickly, so the group could resume the looting. Each puppet contained a decent amount of energy even if their centers of power were empty. The raw organic materials that made them were strong enough to satisfy most rank 9 magical beasts due to the improvements that Heaven and Earth had implemented to that fabric.

Noah felt something only when he devoured the puppets ready to become liquid stage cultivators, but his potential obtained benefits during the whole process. He was stealing directly from Heaven and Earth, so the anger inherited from Robert's existence intensified after each successful theft.

The separate dimension was immense. Noah and the others couldn't help but remain speechless in front of the sheer number of bodies that Heaven and Earth had prepared for their followers and laws.

The number of bodies described the potential power that the rulers could deploy if their fairness didn't limit their freedom. Moreover, King Elbas, Noah, and Great Builder believed that the separate dimension was only one of the many locations created by Heaven and Earth to contain those puppets, which hinted at the existence of a far larger army.

Noah had always known that the sky could contain hundreds of rank 9 cultivators since Heaven and Earth had been in charge of the world for entire eras. Yet, the contents of the blinding separate dimension made him rethink his initial estimate. The rulers might have thousands of rank 9 experts hidden inside their cities.

Noah wasn't the only one to realize that. The separate dimension was a window that allowed the group to explore Heaven and Earth's power, and some conclusions were obvious. The rulers were far stronger

than predicted, but that felt almost expected at that point. Overcoming them wouldn't be considered impossible otherwise.

The group's mood plummeted whenever they met a puppet with the potential to reach the solid stage after obtaining energy. Wilfred even counted them with his fingers to highlight how deeply those scenes hit him. Those bodies represented opponents at the peak of the cultivation journey that they would eventually face. It was almost normal to feel worried about the future.

Noah felt conflicted. He hated the idea of being so far away from his goal, but those scenes also rekindled his hope. His requirements had become insane after his experiments with the ethereal blackness, so he had started to wonder whether the entirety of the higher plane could meet them. Still, it seemed that Heaven and Earth had him covered. The sky definitely had enough energy.

The group remained inside the blinding separate dimension for a long time. The stronger puppets needed longer to break or capture, and the random activation of traps slowed down the exploration even further. The area was also immense, so the experts spent many years gathering energy or stealing valuable materials.

A change happened after the group hit the ten years mark. An even brighter light suddenly ran down the crystal walls and filled the various cavities that still had the giant bodies in their insides. Intense energy filled the entirety of the separate dimension and made King Elbas prepare the escape route set in advance.

Noah and the others gathered around King Elbas and deployed their defensive abilities. None of them complained when they noticed that their companion waited before activating the teleport. Everyone had silently agreed to inspect the sudden event instead of running away immediately.

The cavities lit up even if blinding whiteness already filled the entirety of the area. Energy entered the bodies inside those holes and activated their structures. Multiple auras spread throughout the separate dimension as the puppets took life and flew out of their chrysalises.

Noah's team could gain a glimpse of Heaven and Earth's new army, and the sight was breathtaking. The puppets didn't gain actual worlds. The rulers had only given them enough energy to make them exit their cavities, but the auras that they released remained oppressing.

Each puppet appeared far stronger than the usual cultivators in Heaven and Earth's system. It seemed that their improved structure could enhance the energy flowing out of their centers of power and add specific effects.

Of course, the puppets' auras didn't have any unique effect now since they lacked worlds. Still, Noah's group could notice and study many features now that the improved cultivators had activated. Nothing escaped their senses as they stared at the army amassing next to the crystal walls.

The army didn't attack. The puppets limited themselves to fix their glowing eyes on the black sea that contained Noah's group. No emotion appeared on their faces, but Noah and Steven could sense a slight annoyance in the auras that filled the separate dimension.

Noah and Steven exchanged a knowing glance. Their anger toward the rulers had granted them improved senses when it came to matters related to the sky. Both experts could understand that

Heaven and Earth didn't wake up to interrupt that destruction. They had only prepared a mechanism that would allow them to salvage most puppets if an invasion were to happen.

The puppets' gazes pierced the dark world and the other defenses around the group of experts before moving upward. The separate dimension started to shatter, and everything turned into primary energy that fused with the world before the experts could absorb any of it.

The usual light of the sky shone on Noah's group and the army, but no storms managed to reach their position. The sheer pressure that enveloped the entire area was too dense for those chaotic laws. Even the largest gales shattered as soon as they entered the range of those oppressing auras.

The many puppets didn't do much. They shot toward the sky as soon as the fabric of space stabilized before disappearing among the storms. Noah tried to use his enhanced sense to keep track of them, but their trace suddenly vanished after they got too far away. It was clear that they had entered the white layer that covered the entire plane.