

Demonic 2131

Chapter 2131 - 2131. Peaceful

"Can't you speed up the exploration with your dreams?" Noah asked after he understood how long it would take to complete the exploration of the fifth floor.

"I'm dreaming you getting out of the Cursed Labyrinth," Pellio said while pouring more tea on his cup. "You are doing it, isn't it?"

'Why do I always get the crazy ones?' Noah cursed in his mind before moving his attention on June and Gabrielle.

The fifth floor wasn't hard to clear, but the time required to find a solution depended on the knowledge of the formations' field. Noah could reach the next area by trying every possible combination, but June and Gabrielle were with him, and they could quicken the process.

Being an expert in the formations' field didn't grant immediate solutions. June and Gabrielle still had to see multiple combinations to understand the general trend of the floor and the winning layout that it was trying to hide. That took a long time.

The issue wasn't with the floor's size. The area was relatively immense, but rank 9 experts could go over it quickly. However, the number of possible combinations and the requirements behind their changes were annoying to meet.

First, the group had to find every metallic pillar in the area. That was easier said than done in an ever-changing environment, but they eventually cleared that requirement.

After that, Noah and the others had to witness the transformations that each pillar caused. Those changes happened in a random cycle, and each metallic structure generated a specific set of layouts depending on what stood before.

Combinations that changed depending on what they transformed and specific layouts hidden behind different pillars forced the group to cross the fifth floor multiple times before stopping to make a point of their situation. June and Gabrielle studied everything Noah had noted down through the dark world. They had instinctively found a pattern, but they had to discover how to obtain that layout before moving again.

It took a while, but the group eventually began to move again. They advanced carefully, making sure never to get too close to a pillar unless it met their needs, and the floor changed during the process.

At some point, after reaching the eleventh pillar since the beginning of that march, everything started to tremble. Cracks appeared on the rocky walls, ceiling, and ground as their fabric shattered to release the energy they contained.

Noah didn't immediately absorb that energy. He didn't know if the floor needed it to create the teleport, so he let it spread among the falling rocks and crumbling shards. June and the others instinctively gathered around him, and he pulled Pellio's close since the expert barely noticed what was happening around him.

The event turned out to be completely safe. The various tunnels and pillars transformed into bright waves of energy that shone on a vast hole hovering at the center of the fifth floor. A single glance was enough to tell everyone that the cavity led to the next area. The teleport was already complete, which made the fuel in the separate reality ready for the taking.

The horned turtles had remained quiet for most of the exploration. Noah was giving them his dark matter to keep them satisfied and calm. They had basically become parasites, and even the seemingly endless energy inside his black crystal had started to require the ethereal blackness' assistance at some point.

The appearance of so much energy in the environment could solve eventual future problems connected to the turtles' hunger, but Noah didn't trust their self-control. He absorbed those bright waves inside a different area of his black crystal and released the pack only afterward. He would decide when to award those creatures with that fuel.

"Did you complete it?" The upper tier turtle asked when it saw the hole hovering in the now dark environment.

"Of course," Noah stated as he pretended not to see the knowing smiles that had appeared on his companions' faces. "I believe your bodies are fine now."

"I must admit that your energy isn't bad," The leader exclaimed. "I've never tasted something so rich."

"You can have more as long as you stop complaining," Noah promised.

"Really?!" The leader hissed as its reptilian eyes lit up.

"Not right now," Noah explained. "I also need to recover for a bit. Hopefully, the next floor can take care of your issue."

Noah didn't really believe his words, but he was partially lying anyway. The fifth floor didn't feature battles, and it had even rewarded its challengers with a lot of energy. It seemed that the Cursed Labyrinth had used that area to make the experts rest after the previous trials, so the following struggles would probably be harsh.

Still, the turtles didn't need to know that. They were at their peak now, and that was enough. Noah would simply give them the stored energy if the situation required it.

The dark world enveloped the entire group and prevented the Labyrinth from separating them during the teleport. The sixth floor soon unfolded in everyone's vision, and Noah felt the need to curse when he saw another peaceful environment.

Four waterfalls ran from four mountains placed at the edges of the separate reality. Those streams transformed into a spiderweb of rivers once they expanded on the slightly barren plain.

The ceiling featured an azure sky with no clouds. The water was clear, and short green grass grew along the shores of the rivers. The barren part of the ground had a yellowish color that revealed its sandy properties, and the cozy glow that filled the entirety of the area highlighted the peaceful aspects of the sixth floor.

The turtles inevitably felt attracted by the environment. The intense aura that only powerful divine items could radiate filled the whole floor, and the general peace that accompanied it only enhanced its appeal.

"Calm down!" Noah roared as soon as he sensed the turtles moving toward the plain.

The edges of the dark world transformed into a prison that prevented those creatures from leaving and hindered their senses. The pack didn't like that change, but the upper tier specimen accepted that approach.

"Boss, block my senses too," Old Tyrant requested. "I also want to get down."

"It's the same for me," Fiery Mountain admitted.

"It's so tempting," Gabrielle added.

"The tea is hot now," Pellio exclaimed, but everyone ignored him.

"I don't feel much," June announced.

"Me neither," Noah stated. "I can understand why this area can be tempting, but I don't feel the same drive."

Noah preventively blocked his companions' senses, leaving only he and June able to inspect the floor in its entirety. There was something off in the general peace that filled the area, but the two of them seemed immune for unknown reasons.

"What do we have more than them?" Noah asked.

"Each other?" June shrugged her shoulders, and Noah instinctively reached her cheek.

Fiery Mountain cleared her throat, and the two forced themselves to snap back to reality. Noah and June wouldn't believe that their feelings were the reason behind that immunity.. There had to be something connected to their worlds, but they failed to find it from their position.

Chapter 2132 - 2132. Warning

The area appeared empty. The tempting aura that filled the peaceful environment was the only significant aspect of the sixth floor, and the underground world also seemed devoid of life.

The environment's layout was quite peculiar. The many rivers had random courses, but the mountains stood at the exact center of the floor's edges. That had to be planned, but Noah and June couldn't find anything connected to that detail.

The pack of turtles, Gabrielle, Old Tyrant, Fiery Mountain, and Pellio remained inside the dark world hovering in the sky while Noah and June inspected every corner of the sixth floor. They dived in the rivers and stopped the flow of the waterfalls, but their search for clues remained uneventful.

"We can try using our companions as guinea pigs," June suggested.

"Who did you have in mind?" Noah asked.

"Gabrielle," June responded without showing any hesitation.

Noah shook his head, but a laugh escaped his mouth. The two returned to the dark world to explain the situation to Gabrielle, and the latter immediately agreed to play that role.

The tempting aura that filled the sixth floor had strange effects on Gabrielle. The expert felt attracted by the surface as soon as she left the dark matter, and that feeling only intensified when she descended toward the ground.

Noah and June inspected her reactions and the changes in her aura. Gabrielle slowly fell into a daze, and she instinctively began cultivating near a river. Still, the energy that tried to flow inside her world ended up spreading into the environment.

The sixth floor seemed to use Gabrielle as a tool to improve its overall state. Her world generated energy on its own, but the environment transformed that fuel into four different currents that flew toward the four mountains.

The situation was far more than peculiar. Gabrielle's cultivation method was rather complicated. She had to summon her purple crystals and deploy them into a specific array to enhance the energy released by her figure. She would then reabsorb that fuel after it went through a few enhancements.

In theory, nothing could force the enhanced energy to change its course. External influences would only make that fuel disperse. Yet, the sixth floor managed to take it for itself.

The only possible explanation was that Gabrielle herself had deployed the purple crystals so that the energy would go toward the four mountains. She had decided to give power to the floor, but Noah and June felt sure that she didn't do that on purpose.

The peaceful expression on Gabrielle's face even described how she believed that her cultivation was going well. She didn't sense that theft, which was enough to prove the dangerous properties of the floor. The calm aura appeared able to mess up her senses in ways that even the dark world would struggle to achieve.

Noah and June could find multiple explanations for that event. A simple illusion could be enough to trick Gabrielle so deeply, but their main doubt remained. They couldn't find what made them immune to that influence, and even the experiment with Gabrielle wasn't leading to results.

'What do we have more than her?' Noah wondered.

The answer couldn't concern their cultivation level or path. Noah and June were very different in that field, and their companions also matched their apparent power. Still, a reason had to exist, and the two did everything in their power to find it.

The lack of clues forced Noah and June to interrupt Gabrielle's cultivation to interrogate her, and the expert finally revealed some of the secrets of the sixth floor. She appeared lost but still herself. She wasn't under the effects of an illusion, but there was something strange in her behavior.

"Why, what?" Gabrielle gasped as she inspected her hands.

The expert didn't stop there. Gabrielle bent forward to lay her ear on the ground. She was looking for something, and Noah and June immediately thought about her lost energy.

"The mountains took everything your world generated," Noah explained.

"Oh, that's good!" Gabrielle announced before frowning. "Wait. Why did I say that?"

"Try to find the answer," June insisted.

"I-, I," Gabrielle stuttered before straightening her back and inspecting the four mountains. "I feel a connection with the environment. Well, I felt it. It's gone now."

"What kind of connection?" Noah questioned.

"I don't know," Gabrielle responded as a warm smile appeared on her face. "It felt close, deep, and even personal. I think the floor wanted to fuse our powers."

"We did dual cultivate many years ago," June whispered.

"That wasn't exactly fun for me," Noah recalled, but June promptly laid her head on his shoulder.

"What do you think all of this means?" June asked while taking Noah's arm.

"Maybe the sixth floor is trying to find a lover," Noah joked.

"We can offer Gabrielle then," June played along. "They are already so in love with each other."

"I'm still here!" Gabrielle complained as a tinge of fear appeared on her face. "I will leave now. I can't control myself when I'm here."

Gabrielle basically ran away to return inside the dark world, and the couple inspected her during her flight. Their minds tried to find more reasonable solutions after Gabrielle vanished among the dark matter, and a few ideas inevitably took form.

"The connection was about energy," Noah commented. "I can create avatars that reflect my existence, but I don't know how deep they can go with the fusion. I'd need to cut the connection as soon as something tried to reach my world."

"We can't even sacrifice anyone of our new allies, sadly," June sighed. "What if the floor is offering us a different path?"

"Do you want to do it here?" Noah asked.

"Something might happen if we show the floor our connection," June suggested. "You don't even have problems with your instincts now. We can try to go over the phases of the dual cultivation before going for the real thing."

"It might work," Noah admitted.

Everything was still quite vague on the sixth floor. The search for a connection might have merely been an excuse to steal Gabrielle's energy, but Noah and June wouldn't discover anything if they didn't perform more tests.

"I'll tell the others to hide," Noah declared before shooting toward the dark world and moving it toward the farthest corner from the surface.

Noah explained the plan to his companions, and they naturally remained dumbfounded. Fiery Mountain even felt a bit worried, but the presence of the dark world slightly reassured her about her safety.

"Boss, are you sure you can maintain your focus on the technique in the meantime?" Old Tyrant asked. "I wouldn't dare to see something."

"Don't worry about that," Noah calmly dismissed Old Tyrant. "It wouldn't be the first time with an audience."

Fiery Mountain shook her head and retreated deeper into the dark world while Old Tyrant and Gabrielle found themselves out of words. Pellio didn't hear anything about Noah's explanation, while the turtles didn't care about the approach as long as it worked.

Noah left his companions to return to June at that point. The dark world prevented the experts from studying the outside world, but tremors and shockwaves eventually began to reach it.. The dark matter endured everything perfectly, but the occasional lightning bolts and destructive powers that flew in its direction pierced its surface.

Chapter 2133 - 2133. Answers

Noah and June didn't initially intend to go at it so intensely, but the sixth floor's reaction proved their approach right. Nothing happened when they replayed the various passages of the dual cultivation performed in the past, but everything changed when they lost themselves in their passion.

Gabrielle had given energy to the mountains when she cultivated, but something entirely different happened while Noah and June expressed their feelings. The rivers, sandy ground, grass, and waterfalls lost power as something began to take in the underground world.

Noah and June didn't completely understand the reason behind that reaction. They had theories, but they stopped caring about them once they saw that their approach was working.

Old Tyrant, Gabrielle, and the turtles imitated Fiery Mountain and retreated on the other side of the dark world when they saw that attacks were piercing the black crystals. Nothing reached them, but they didn't want to test their luck.

Only Pellio remained in his position. His face didn't show any trace of fear, but his companions didn't know how aware of the situation he was. He didn't flinch even when a shockwave pulverized the tea in the human ranks he had brewed.

Doubts appeared in Old Tyrant and Gabrielle's minds as Noah and June continued to let their passion run free. They exchanged a gaze that expressed their confusion before looking toward Fiery Mountain, but she had no real answers for them.

"Are they even fine?" Gabrielle eventually asked. "I've seen battles less violent than this."

"Only an amazing existence could be the boss' partner," Old Tyrant proudly announced, even if his face continued to show how amazed he was about the whole matter.

"You got lucky that he doesn't want more than one," Fiery Mountain commented.

Gabrielle wanted to contradict Fiery Mountain, but another shockwave suddenly reached the dark world and made everything tremble. The black crystals dispersed its power, but everyone inside the technique could sense the might that it carried. Needless to say, Gabrielle decided to remain silent afterward.

Even if the turtles had retreated, they didn't hide their approval toward the event. The upper tier leader appeared quite pleased about the whole matter. It couldn't help but accept Noah properly when it saw him behave as a magical beast.

The event went on for a long time. Old Tyrant and the others grew used to the chaos unfolding outside the dark world after a while. They started to cultivate, and they decided to open their eyes only after the dark crystals around them dispersed.

"The path to the next floor is open," Noah announced after calling back the dark world.

Old Tyrant and the others found a very different environment once they opened their eyes. The sky had remained unchanged, but everything else had transformed while Noah and June were busy expressing their feelings.

Deep holes had replaced the four mountains, and the barren areas had transformed into a series of gorges that created a complicated underground labyrinth. The rivers had also vanished, and an immense lake had appeared in their place.

A vast whirlpool rotated at the center of the lake, and a dimensional passage had appeared at the bottom of that structure. The sixth floor had opened the door for the next area without sacrificing the entirety of its environment.

The different environment attracted the group's attention, but many eyes quickly fell on Noah and June. He had his legs crossed, and she was sitting on his lap. Their faces didn't reveal anything, but they appeared unwilling to separate.

"Is something the matter?" Noah commented as the three cultivators and some turtles tried to find signs of the recent event on their bodies.

"Not at all, boss," Old Tyrant responded.

"Good job out there," Gabrielle awkwardly said.

Fiery Mountain only rolled her eyes flew forward, but she did her best not to get near the couple. Instead, the turtles hissed approving cries that had no human meaning, and their leader didn't hold back from voicing a comment before crossing Noah. "You might be a creature worth following."

"You are already following me," Noah growled coldly, but the upper tier turtle only voiced a happy hiss as it moved toward the lake.

Pellio began to fly forward, but Noah grabbed his mat before it could leave the area. The expert stopped brewing tea, and his eyes opened when he turned to look at Noah.

"The next floor will be the seventh," Noah exclaimed.

"And?" Pellio asked.

"And the Cursed Labyrinth has nine floors," Noah continued. "We are about to reach its end, so everything might become more dangerous."

"I'm sure you'll be fine," Pellio reassured. "I've dreamt about leaving this place. The images are almost as clear as reality."

"Why did the creators even make the Labyrinth?" Noah questioned. "What's the goal behind this place?"

"I don't know," Pellio responded.

"Dream about it," Noah ordered.

"I can't," Pellio replied. "The creators' power prevents me from seeing this structure in its entirety. I would have left on my own otherwise."

"You said that the Labyrinth attracts experts for various reasons," Noah reminded.

"So?" Pellio asked.

"So, you must know something," Noah stated.

"I do," Pellio admitted. "I know that you are thinking too hard about this structure. The Cursed Labyrinth offers different environments and situations, so it's only normal that various experts end up reaching it."

"How is it normal?" Noah questioned.

"Because it's part of the world," Pellio explained, "And it isn't at the same time. It has desires, but it also experiences the higher plane's whims."

"I can understand you and Fiery Mountain," Noah declared. "She needed a place Heaven and Earth couldn't reach, and you are here due to your enmity with the creators. However, the same doesn't apply to the turtles, Old Tyrant, and Gabrielle."

"You are looking at this system from the wrong perspective," Pellio stated.

"How so?" Noah asked.

"Maybe the other floors felt alone, so they have summoned different experts," Pellio suggested.

Noah went over the matter in his mind. Something began to make sense once he tried to see the Cursed Labyrinth as a living being or as a structure that reacted to the creatures in its insides.

That different perspective allowed Noah to justify the transformation of the sea. The environment might have changed due to the blood and corpses that had tainted it, but it still felt strange that it had begun to feed the turtles. Its connection to the Labyrinth had remained in place, so the structure could have fixed the issue.

The situation was different with Old Tyrant, Gabrielle, and the liquid stage cultivator that Noah had failed to save. There was an upper tier magical plant on that floor, and its infective ability probably required new beings. The Labyrinth might have reacted to that necessity, leading to the arrival of the three experts.

"You are still trying to find a reason," Pellio commented.

"It might help with the next floors," Noah responded.

"Are you sure?" Pellio asked. "Every floor is different. Trying to find answers will only place barriers in front of the truth."

"What's the truth?" Noah questioned.

"You know the truth," Pellio replied.

"No, I don't," Noah sighed. "I wouldn't have this conversation with you otherwise."

"Why does your ambition exist?" Pellio asked. "Why do I dream and make tea? Why do the turtles eat? Why does she launch lightning bolts? Do you have the answer to these questions?"

"Yes and no," Noah exclaimed as he began to understand what Pellio meant.

The Cursed Labyrinth had multiple creators, but Noah had never heard of them. That was normal since it was hard to find other rank 9 existences among the storms and the weak sky. Many of them also minded their own business and didn't look for fame.

Yet, all of those powerful existences aimed to expand their worlds, and the Labyrinth could be exactly that. Its creators might have built it only to express their power and have an environment that Heaven and Earth couldn't touch.

The state as a separate reality made the Cursed Labyrinth a place both outside and inside the world. That gave it influence over the higher plane, but it also put in the way of Heaven and Earth's fairness, which created multiple reasons behind the presence of experts on its floors.

Still, its cores remained the same as every other world. The Labyrinth was like Noah's ambition or June's desire for battles. It existed because its creators had felt the unstoppable drive to build it. Overthinking the matter couldn't lead to answers because they simply didn't exist.

"Did you find your answers?" Pellio eventually asked.

"No," Noah said, "But I understand what you mean. I guess I wish things were different."

"Why? Because of the final battle against Heaven and Earth?" Pellio questioned.

"We need more to win," Noah exclaimed.

"You are getting more," Pellio responded.

"We need more than this," Noah declared. "We need more than the creators too."

"Then we'll find other creators," Pellio continued, "If I decide to follow you."

"You are already following me," Noah nodded, and Pellio wore a smile before half-closing his eyes.

"He isn't easy to talk with," June commented after Noah let go of the flying mat and Pellio could reach the group near the dimensional passage.

"But his ability will be useful in the higher plane," Noah announced. "We can use him to find other allies."

Chapter 2134 - 2134. Slaughter

The seventh floor didn't give Noah and the others time to think. As soon as the group crossed the dimensional passage, they found themselves immersed in a sea of winged insects that radiated divine auras at different levels.

The dark world that enveloped Noah and the others kept the insects away, but the latter tried to drill through the black crystals as soon as the teleport ended. Those creatures resembled Heaven and Earth's swarm of flying cockroaches, but their bodies were far different, and their aggression was also far greater.

Those insects had two pairs of pincers and long legs featuring sharp tips. They seemed born to pierce the matter, and small holes also appeared in the fabric of space as they moved their limbs and mouths.

Noah roared and used the dark world to enhance the pride carried by his voice, but the insects didn't react. A large part of the swarm had mere rank 7 and rank 8 specimens, which would generally freeze under his heavy voice. However, they didn't flinch. Actually, their violence seemed to intensify after confirming that the giant black crystal contained powerful beings.

The upper tier turtle launched a loud hiss to test the approach again, and Noah even supported it through the dark world. Yet, nothing happened, and the group watched as the flying insects drilled through the black crystals to converge on their position.

"Pellio?" Noah called.

"Deep to the left," Pellio said after closing his eyes. "I dream about a hive-like structure. It might be their nest."

"What else?" Noah asked.

"The tea is almost ready if you want some," Pellio responded.

"Go all-out," Noah promptly growled as his aura exploded outward.

June could only rejoice at that outcome, and her companions didn't show any hesitation either. Multiple auras filled the dark world and expanded past the black crystals as everyone mustered their power. Even the turtles voiced battle cries that temporarily suppressed the buzzing noise caused by the immense swarm.

Noah kept track of everyone's power before forcing the dark world to explode outward. Multiple flares shot out of his technique, and his companions flowed into different ones to spread throughout the battlefield. Only the turtles remained in their place, and Noah didn't affect their decision.

Noah also flew inside one of his flares, but the energy inside the dark matter around him eventually ended. He found himself in the middle of the swarm, and the lack of allies in his surroundings allowed him to unleash the entirety of his power.

Snore, Night, the parasite, Duanlong, Shafu, the Demonic Sword, and the Cursed Sword came out of his figure. The black crystals even created small dark worlds all around him to activate the workshops. The entirety of Noah's arsenal appeared on the battlefield, and many flying insects directly crumbled under its pressure.

The battle unfolded immediately, and the workshops soon helped by releasing entire hordes of six-armed dragons. Attacks flew in every direction as Noah unleashed everything he had to create a massacre.

Those creatures had the same iconic weaknesses as most insect-like magical beasts. They didn't need much to improve and reproduce themselves, but their bodies were frail, even when it came to specimens in the upper tier.

Noah didn't need to rely on his ambition to vanquish the pack, but his ethereal blackness sent potential toward his assets on its own. His world wanted to join the fight, and he wouldn't suppress it.

Noah's greed, pride, hunger, and destruction reached unheard intensity levels as the slaughter continued. The insects didn't hold a chance against him, and he never held back.

That type of battlefield was perfect for June, and Noah had even made sure to send her far away from the rest of the group. She was completely alone, with nothing but enemies around them, so her lightning bolts ran freely.

Old Tyrant, Gabrielle, and Fiery Mountain couldn't abandon themselves to the battle like Noah and June. They were only gaseous stage cultivators who had yet to cross the normal limits of their level. They were powerful, but they still had to retreat or directly escape when a series of upper tier insects flew in their direction.

The pack of turtles initially struggled a bit, but they soon recalled how to handle those types of battles. Their size was a weakness against those piercing creatures, but they could deploy simple battle formations that forced their opponents to converge on their hard shells. The fight became a matter of endurance at that point.

Pellio was an oddity on the battlefield. His figure didn't radiate a proper cultivation level, but the flying insects still tried to pierce him. However, they found nothing to eat or destroy. They simply crossed him as if he didn't exist at all.

The weaker flying insects were too dumb to understand something as deep as Pellio's existence, so they kept attacking him. Instead, the stronger specimens soon gave up on him to fly toward other battlefields.

Noah did his best to study his opponents and the seventh floor as a whole while going all-out. His attacks didn't leave much to inspect, but he still forced himself to find the hidden purpose of that area.

A few odd features became clear as the area grew devoid of flying insects. Those creatures appeared insane. They only wanted to attack even in front of Noah's undeniable superiority. They showed no presence of survival instincts or fear as they slammed on his slashes and ended up pulverized by the destructive energy that they carried.

Meanwhile, the areas that Noah cleared revealed a dark-green fabric of space that contained an incredible amount of energy. That fuel came from the dimension hidden under the floor, which was empty but had a vast stash of power.

The presence of that vast mass of energy seemed to have no purpose, but an idea formed in Noah's mind as more areas became devoid of insects. He used those creatures' behavior to add details and truths to his hypothesis until a vague process took form.

The seventh floor clearly contained too much unused energy. That immense amount of fuel could become intoxicating for magical beasts with no self-restraint. Even Noah's hunger intensified as he realized how much power the area held.

Still, that endless banquet had turned those insects into even simpler creatures. The years spent on the seventh floor in the absence of threats had made them abandon every instinct that didn't involve their hunger. They had turned into magical beasts that lived to eat no matter what happened around them.

The slaughter continued for a long time, but Noah eventually reached the hive-like structure mentioned by Pellio. The place used the energy inside the floor to generate more flying insects, so Noah took it down with a series of slashes.

The floor could grow empty after the nest crumbled. Each kill began to matter, which eventually led to the end of the battle. Everyone could appreciate the dark-green area at that point, but a greater event soon attracted their attention.

Noah and the turtles wanted to seize the energy on the floor, but that fuel began to move before they could do anything. The dimensional layer crumbled and condensed to create a portal that led to the next area.

Chapter 2135 - 2135. Winds

The seventh floor had to use the entirety of its energy to make the dimensional portal stable, so Noah and the others couldn't seize any of that fuel. The event also revealed that the insects had been a challenge, but they couldn't be sure if they had arrived during the Labyrinth's creation or afterward.

The flying insects might have affected the floor like the turtles did with the sea. They might have changed the area's nature, forcing the Cursed Labyrinth to adapt the challenge to its new shape.

Noah couldn't find answers to those questions since the dimensional passage absorbed every clue that the seventh floor might have. Only a maimed version of the space-time array remained after the door to the next area stabilized, so he suppressed his curiosity to advance the exploration.

The portal had absorbed the few maimed corpses that were still floating on the floor, so the turtles couldn't find anything capable of appeasing their hunger. Noah felt forced to give the energy stored previously and let everyone recover for a while before approaching the passage.

The force that triggered the teleportation fell on the dark world around the group, and a new environment quickly unfolded in their senses. An immense plain expanded in every direction, and four massive tornados raged in seemingly random areas.

The sky was grey, and violent winds ran through it. Those currents followed precise paths as they left and reentered the four tornados, and their nature changed every time they fused with those giant structures.

The tornados didn't hurt the plain. Their vast bases appeared glued to the crystal-like azure ground, but their energy didn't seep inside it. That odd terrain seemed immune to the violent force falling on its surface, but there was clearly more to the matter.

The eighth floor was larger than the previous by a lot. That vaster space allowed the many currents to create a system that could run endlessly. Of course, that could only happen if the energy inside the winds didn't change, so Noah promptly gave the order to leave everything untouched.

The plain wasn't flat, but it didn't feature any significant structure. A few shallow gorges and a series of short hills stood on its surface, but they didn't seem to have any deep purpose.

Everyone immediately believed that the tornados and the winds were the keys behind the exit, but Noah felt that something was off. The different space-time array of the separate reality bent and converged at the base of those vast structures, and a closer inspection revealed the presence of dimensional tunnels.

Each tornado had a dimensional passage at its base, and Noah couldn't understand where they led. Pellio also felt lost in front of those doors. His dreams found no hindrances in the entire eighth floor, but they couldn't go past those teleports.

"They can be anything at this point," June commented when Noah tried to find answers in her expertise in the formations' field. "This plain is strange, but it has no signs of inscriptions. The entire area might just be a unique environment with no special purpose."

"Except for the winds," Noah added.

"This layout allows the winds to blow in their set course," June stated. "However, these tornados have no source. Unless they appeared due to someone's influence, it's very likely that the creators have placed them here after creating an environment that could contain them so perfectly."

"The same goes to the dimensional passages then," Noah continued. "The portals can remain stable because they have these winds around them. They don't draw power from the gales, but they are definitely symbiotic."

"Can you find anything about the plain?" June asked.

"I can dig into it," Noah explained, "But I don't want to ruin this harmony. Besides, the plain looks normal from here. My consciousness can seep inside it just fine, and it can't find anything unusual."

The crystal-like ground didn't have any unique ability. It was simply immune to the winds, which explained how it had survived the gales falling on its surface for a long time. The winds didn't even smoothen out its sharp spots. Every corner, hole, or hill appeared necessary for the correct functioning of that endless cycle.

"We have to explore the passages then," June voiced what everyone had already understood but didn't want to say.

That decision created new problems. The tornados were oddly identical. The amount of energy they contained was the exact same as the other structures, and their winds even blew at the same speed.

Noah would have believed that the passages at their bases led to the same place if the space-time array didn't show a different truth.

Noah could sense and calculate that the dimensional passages would lead to entirely different dimensions. Those areas weren't even as close as those usually hidden under the floors. He actually checked that in an area that didn't affect the winds, but he only found an empty grey sky.

"So, there are four keys or a single right path," Noah concluded after reviewing everything found during the inspection.

"If we are lucky," June chuckled.

"I'm getting really curious about these creators," Noah exclaimed. "I hope building separate realities and complicated environments aren't their only abilities."

"What if they are useless in battle?" June asked.

"We make them build multiple Labyrinths inside the sky and start stealing assets from Heaven and Earth," Noah announced.

Old Tyrant and Gabrielle laughed, but Fiery Mountain's expression froze, and her reaction told the two experts that Noah wasn't joking. The sky was an untouchable realm in their minds, but Noah was planning to invade it. They had no idea that he had already accomplished that feat a few times.

"Fine, gather up," Noah ordered before looking toward the pack of turtles. "Maybe it's better if you hide inside me again."

"We don't hide!" The upper tier turtle hissed.

"Do we have to go through this every time?" Noah growled.

Noah expected the leader to complain a bit longer, but it accepted the order rather quickly at that time. His pride even deepened, and he shook his head after connecting the event to what had happened on the sixth floor.

Noah enveloped June and the other cultivator with his dark matter after all the turtles entered his figure. Crossing the tornados' raging winds wasn't a problem, and their passage didn't affect their flow. The environment remained untouched as the group approached the dimensional path and dived right through it.

The choice of the tornado had been entirely random. They didn't have anything special, and the plain didn't help, so Noah had just flown to the closest to his position.

Still, the dimensional passage there triggered a teleport that took a few seconds to activate. The event differed from what the group had grown used to after crossing multiple floors, but no one complained. Everyone simply tried to remain alert as the environment around them changed.

No amount of preparation would have been enough to prevent surprise from filling the experts' minds. Even Noah didn't know what to think when the teleport ended and made his group appear before an immense city.

The sky there had a darker shade of grey, but Noah and the others barely managed to keep their attention on the environment. Their senses inevitably focused on the city's insides when countless presences entered the range of their mental waves.. All of them belonged to cultivators.

Chapter 2136 - 2136. City

The scene was unreal, especially for Noah and June. The two of them had seen the changes in the higher plane. Heaven and Earth had almost destroyed every organization after filling the environment with their weak sky.

Noah knew that other powerful forces existed inside the higher plane. The various small packs, his organization, and the old experts striving toward the peak of the cultivation journey had survived the transformation of the higher plane, but they remained sparse and lonely. Heaven and Earth had made sure of that.

However, the Cursed Labyrinth had proven that belief wrong. Heaven and Earth's Cancer wasn't the last large organization in the higher plane. A far vaster force had survived, and Noah had to go through one of the tornados on the eighth floor to find it.

'Are they illusions?' Noah wondered.

His guess made sense when he considered everything that had happened in the outside world and the very structure of the Cursed Labyrinth. There was a limit to how much energy a peak rank 9 item could contain. In theory, only a world could have enough fuel for an entire organization.

The Cursed Labyrinth tried to act as a world, but it had creators far weaker than Heaven and Earth. It couldn't possibly be enough to give birth to the vast population inside the city, but something told Noah that he wasn't before an illusion. He could smell that all those cultivators were real.

"Try to behave," Noah ordered without mentioning anyone, but Fiery Mountain and the others knew that his words were for June and Pellio.

The city didn't have defensive walls. Its buildings grew taller as they moved toward the center of the immense settlement, giving a pyramidal shape to the whole place.

The level of the citizens also rose near the center of the city. Its outskirts had heroic cultivators who barely touched the beginning of the fourth rank, while the tallest building contained experts that even Noah struggled to sense properly.

'Solid stage,' Noah concluded in his mind without needing further inspections.

The turtles inside the black crystal hissed in excitement, but Noah ordered his companions to keep them quiet. That wasn't the time for a battle. An army had unfolded in front of his eyes, and he wanted to add it to his arsenal.

The group flew above the city, but a heavy pressure fell on them as soon as they entered its perimeter. It immediately became clear that the expert in charge of the area had tried to create a no-fly zone, and the three gaseous stage cultivators struggled to remain in the air among that force.

"Leave," Noah ordered to Fiery Mountain, Old Tyrant, and Gabrielle. "This is above you."

"Boss, what if a battle unfolds?" Old Tyrant asked.

"You would be glad to be outside the city in that case," Noah stated. "Cultivate right past the outskirts, but try not to affect the area too much. This dimension is connected to the eighth floor, so avoid cause problems until we know that they won't affect the creation of the key."

The three cultivators followed the orders, leaving only Noah, June, and Pellio in the sky. As the three moved toward the tallest building, the pressure grew heavier, but they fended it off through defensive techniques. Pellio appeared immune to that force, but Noah covered him with his dark matter anyway.

The central building was an immense tower that ended with a beautiful dome. The greyness of the sky couldn't obscure its flashy scarlet and yellow shades, and the same went for the many windows adorned with bright crystals.

The windows didn't stop Noah's gaze, but he couldn't learn much about the building from those spots. He saw staircases, vast halls, and multiple corridors, but nothing that gave more information about the powerful experts living inside it.

The group's presence didn't go unnoticed, but the citizens didn't panic. The heroic cultivators obviously couldn't sense Noah and the others, but the divine experts glanced at the sky when they perceived their heavy presence. Still, they went on with their lives as if nothing strange was happening.

The event only confused Noah. He had seen a few cities during his first years on the higher plane, so the sight wasn't unfamiliar. However, he was inside the Cursed Labyrinth, so those citizens couldn't possibly be used to the arrival of foreigners.

'Did the leader warn them?' Noah wondered. 'No, I would have sensed it. What is even happening?'

Only the central tower could have the answers to those questions, and the group didn't hesitate to reach it. Noah didn't even have the time to think about how to enter the structure since the dome opened and revealed a landing platform when they entered its range.

"I should start to make tea," Pellio commented, but Noah and June ignored him as they landed on the platform.

A series of praying mats, small circular tables, and sofas filled the vast area under the dome. Scarlet and yellow lights shone on the pale-yellow tiles and gave them a noble brilliance. Everything was as clean and perfect as possible. Even the chandelier hanging from the half-spherical ceiling illuminated everything and prevented the existence of shadows.

The area wasn't empty or flat. A series of steps on the other side of the platform led to a stage that had a large throne. A solid stage middle-aged woman with long black hair and white eyes sat on it, and two cultivators in the liquid stage cultivators stood at her sides to wave large fans.

"You have indeed come," The woman announced in a deep voice that made the whole dome tremble.

"Did you predict our arrival?" Noah promptly asked while approaching the stage but stopping as soon as the two liquid stage men tensed up.

"Not specifically yours," The woman revealed. "I've seen that the Cursed Labyrinth would have attracted experts capable of overcoming its floors. I guess the final battle against Heaven and Earth is upon us."

Noah's eyes sharpened at those words. The woman seemed to know a lot, but her power remained unclear. He couldn't see her world nor sense it, but her cultivation level was more than evident.

"Yes, the final battle is about to fall on the higher plane," Noah admitted. "Heaven and Earth have filled the world with their sky and have prevented the creation of large forces. My organization is the last grand gathering of experts."

"They actually decided to expand the sky," The woman exclaimed in a surprised tone. "I didn't expect them to waste energy so recklessly."

"They aren't wasting it," Noah explained. "They are evolving."

The explanation seemed to leave the two liquid stage experts speechless. They stopped waving their fans, and the woman didn't scold them. She tried not to show any reaction, but her aloofness was enough to prove that she didn't expect that outcome.

"Evolving how?" The woman asked.

"I think it's my time to get a few answers," Noah stated as a cold smile appeared on his face.

The answer didn't please the two liquid stage men. Their grip on the fans tightened, and tinges of anger appeared on their eyes, but they remained shocked when Noah threw a cold glance at them. A mere inspection of his reptilian pupils was enough to tell them that they would lose if a battle were to unfold.

"Right, where are my manners?" The woman chuckled while covering her mouth with a hand.. "I'm Vesuvia, humanity's future and one of the creators of the Cursed Labyrinth."

Chapter 2137 - 2137. Vision

Vesuvia voiced a shocking revelation without flinching, but Noah, June, and Pellio remained calm. A long and silent exchange of glances followed, but the time for words soon returned.

"Why did you build the Cursed Labyrinth?" Noah asked.

"Multiple reasons," Vesuvia stated. "Some only wanted a chance to express their power, while others had deeper plans in mind."

"I bet you belong to the second category," Noah responded.

"I do not plan," Vesuvia explained. "I see and do my best to alter the inevitable."

"Everything for humanity's future?" Noah continued.

"I think it's my time for questions," Vesuvia said.

"I have nothing to hide," Noah declared. "Ask away."

"Who are you?" Vesuvia asked. "You don't belong to humanity."

"I can say the same for every other divine expert in your city," Noah stated. "Cultivators separate themselves from their species as they strive to develop worlds."

"The belonging to a species goes past the mere nature of the existence," Vesuvia contradicted. "Cultivators might evolve past their innate qualities, but they remain humans, even if they take different forms."

"I used to belong to humanity," Noah revealed.

"You have chosen the beast's path, the only path that strays away from humanity," Vesuvia replied. "Also, you didn't answer my question."

"I'm Noah Balvan," Noah exclaimed while pointing at himself before continuing when he moved his fingers on his companions. "She is June Ballor, and he is Pellio, but I think you know him."

"I do know him," Vesuvia revealed. "Dream Lord, it seems that you found someone capable of opening your eyes."

"I only felt like moving," Pellio announced as his eyes opened completely. "My tea was getting stale after remaining for ages inside that floor."

"The others won't be happy," Vesuvia said. "Hatred can last forever in their hearts."

"I'll leave those matters to Defying Demon," Pellio smiled before losing interest in the situation and half-closing his eyes.

"Defying Demon?" Vesuvia asked before understanding that the title belonged to Noah. The expert inevitably felt surprised that Pellio was putting his faith in a gaseous stage hybrid, but that only intensified her curiosity.

"So, Noah Balvan, Defying Demon, we were discussing the nature of humanity," Vesuvia said to get back to the previous topic.

"Not really," Noah stated. "Nothing proves your point. It's a matter of perspective whether to consider individual worlds part of the same category or species."

"And yet there are two different paths," Vesuvia continued. "Those who feed off the world are beasts, while those who absorb it are humans."

"That's the same thing," Noah declared.

"Is it?" Vesuvia asked. "Why can I see most of your group then? Only you and June escape my sight. Even the magical beasts you recruited used to appear in my vision."

The revelation was quite surprising, but Noah used it to gain insights into Vesuvia's power. She claimed to be humanity's future, but the meaning behind that title was unusual. In her mind, even magical beasts could belong to humankind depending on how they approached the absorption of energy.

"What exactly do you see?" Noah asked.

"Humanity's future," Vesuvia promptly replied.

"It's dark, isn't it?" Noah questioned.

"What would you even know about it?" Vesuvia asked as tinges of surprise appeared in her tone.

"A good friend invaded Heaven and Earth's mind to look into the future once," Noah revealed without bothering to hide part of his knowledge. "I was in it, so it was dark."

"I think you are describing different events," Vesuvia exclaimed.

"Are they different?" Noah asked. "I see myself in both of them."

"You are arrogant," Vesuvia commented.

"It doesn't mean that I'm wrong," Noah laughed.

Truth be told, Noah knew that the two events were different. Dreaming Demon wanted to find a way to save the Demon sects and her lover when she decided to invade Heaven and Earth's will, while Vesuvia's ability seemed to tamper with the very future.

However, the similarities between the two events helped Noah establish the ground for a fair conversation and exchange of information. Vesuvia was one of the Labyrinth's creators, but her presence on the eighth floor had to mean something, and Noah wanted to uncover it.

"You are interesting," Vesuvia admitted after a few silent moments went by. "You might be the existence I was waiting for."

"Why did you decide to wait for someone?" Noah asked.

"Wait," Vesuvia ordered. "Leave us."

The two liquid stage cultivators didn't hesitate to follow the order. They left the dome quickly, but their gazes soon converged on June and Pellio.

"They can hear everything you have to say," Noah stated.

"I don't care," Vesuvia exclaimed. "I want to talk with you alone, leader to leader."

Noah could only nod at June and Pellio. The two began to leave, but June made sure to launch a meaningful glare at Vesuvia.

"Don't worry, young woman," Vesuvia chuckled. "I've lost interest in those matters eras ago."

June snorted but let go of the matter. It didn't take long before everyone left the area and the dome closed to give Noah and Vesuvia some privacy.

"Your partner has a funny character," Vesuvia commented. "It's rare to see such passion survive for millennia."

"You should have given the path of the beasts a try," Noah joked. "It's hard not to keep the passion alive there."

"I'll trust you on that," Vesuvia replied dismissively.

"It's safe to assume that there is a couple among the creators," Noah guessed.

"I would have been disappointed if you didn't understand that," Vesuvia responded.

"So, why did you want this privacy?" Noah asked. "I will still tell the others the contents of our talk."

"I wanted to remove eventual interferences before looking into the future," Vesuvia explained.

"Oh, you might want to wait a second then," Noah announced before approaching the hall's wall.

Vesuvia didn't understand what Noah wanted to do, but she opened the dome anyway. A flicker ran through her white eyes when she saw the pack of turtles leaving his figure and filling the sky, but she eventually revealed a gentle smile. She seemed to like how she couldn't see those creatures.

"What now?" Noah asked when the area closed down again.

"You'll look at the world through my eyes," Vesuvia said. "You were right. Humanity's future is dark, but I want to see if your influence can change that vision."

"What makes you think that your power can predict my actions?" Noah questioned.

"I hope it won't," Vesuvia revealed. "I want your power to predict your actions."

Noah could argue on that point, but he decided to remain silent. In theory, his ethereal blackness had unlimited potential since it was a world without precise edges. Still, he felt curious in front of the chance to look deeper into his own power.

"Try not to oppose it," Vesuvia said before a strange force began to leave her figure.

Soft waves of energy filled the hall contained by the dome, but Noah soon discovered that they weren't actually coming out of Vesuvia. They had always been there, but her world was forcing them to show their presence now.

The environment transformed even if no teleport activated. Noah could force himself to look past those illusions, but he decided to let them fill his vision for now. He saw an immense blackness expanding in every direction, and he felt empty before that scene.

"Taint the vision with your power," Vesuvia's voice resounded from every corner of the blackness. "I want to see if you can affect humanity's future."

Noah followed those orders. He raised his hand and made a hint of his potential flow into the blackness. The entire scene immediately trembled, and vague white figures began to form inside it.. Heaven and Earth's aura also spread to fill every corner of the area.

Chapter 2138 - 2138. Keys

"Why is your power giving birth to Heaven and Earth's aura?" Vesuvia asked.

"It's your ability," Noah responded as he tried to study the white figures. "You tell me."

"Are you plotting with Heaven and Earth?" Vesuvia threatened.

Noah's instincts started to scream. Vesuvia had disappeared when the blackness had unfolded, but he now felt her gaze coming from every corner of the illusion. Everything around him seemed ready to attack, but he remained calm.

"Don't insult me," Noah growled as his aura unfolded.

Noah didn't want to destroy the illusion. He was as curious as Vesuvia, but he had to prove that his existence had nothing to do with Heaven and Earth, and his anger was more than enough for that.

A raging feeling invaded the illusion and tried to pierce part of the scenes. The environment trembled, and Vesuvia's aura grew weaker, but Noah's anger couldn't completely suppress it.

Vesuvia felt shocked. Pellio's presence had proven that Noah was incredible, but she remained an old monster at the peak of the cultivation journey. She was as strong as some of the best privileged cultivators, but Noah's aura was almost able to fight back her world.

That couldn't happen, or, at least, it shouldn't. Vesuvia had broken past the limits of her level multiple times during her cultivation journey, but Noah's talent went beyond everything she could fathom. He could reach heights that she couldn't even comprehend.

Moreover, the anger spreading throughout the illusion was enough to prove Noah's stance. No one could fake something so intense and violent. Vesuvia was even able to gaze at some of the memories at the foundation of that feeling, so she knew that Noah was a natural ally.

Nevertheless, the issue remained. Noah's potential had given birth to Heaven and Earth's aura when it fused with Vesuvia's power. The event made no sense, but there had to be an answer somewhere.

Still, the images never grew clear. The white figures even had various shapes, so Noah and Vesuvia failed to connect them to living beings or other items.

"What does this even mean?" Vesuvia whispered, but her voice echoed through the scene.

"How does your ability work?" Noah asked.

"I can look at humanity's future and affect it slightly," Vesuvia explained without adding too many details.

"Can't you look deeper?" Noah questioned.

"I can't," Vesuvia admitted. "You don't belong to my idea of humanity, so I need your power to link my visions to your existence. I would need you to have an ability similar to mine to dig deeper into your future."

Noah's world involved a deep understanding of time, but that aspect of his existence didn't touch upon the laws that Vesuvia needed. She called her ability "humanity's future", but it had a lot to do with fate, which Noah basically rejected.

"Heaven and Earth might even create problems in that case," Vesuvia sighed. "I guess we can't approach the final battle prepared."

"We?" Noah asked. "Did you already accept me as your leader? I didn't even have to ask."

"The forces against Heaven and Earth are natural allies," Vesuvia declared without taking Noah's words too seriously. "I believe you want to fight the rulers."

"I still want to be the leader of their opponents," Noah laughed.

"Focus on stepping on the peak of the cultivation journey first," Vesuvia chuckled as the illusion began to disperse. "No one will accept an existence that can't defeat solid stage experts as their leader."

The dome slowly replaced the blackness and the white figures that had tainted it. Noah inspected the transformation of the scenes in his vision, but his mind was elsewhere.

His anger had almost managed to suppress Vesuvia's power. Noah knew that he wasn't there yet, but he could sense his world approaching the weight needed to affect the universe.

A surprising sight unfolded in Noah's eyes when the illusion vanished completely. Vesuvia was still on her throne, but her complexion had paled significantly. Many lines of sweat also fell from her forehead, and the same went for her robe, which had glued itself to her skin.

Divine cultivators didn't really need clothes, especially those in the higher ranks. A simple wave of their power was more than enough to create a simple fabric that could cover their bodies.

In theory, the matter should be easier for Vesuvia since she was a solid stage cultivator. Noah felt even surprised that her body could produce sweat, but everything made sense when he connected the event to possible drawbacks.

Vesuvia had gone all-out to probe into the future of a being outside her idea of humanity. She had basically lent her power to Noah and forced it to focus solely on him. The technique had been arduous and draining.

"Yes, you might be able to kill me now," Vesuvia laughed helplessly. "I know that you considered doing it."

"You can't silence habits developed throughout millennia," Noah stated in a cold voice. "Still, I don't want to kill you."

"Would you say the same even if I told you that killing me would give you one of the keys for the next floor?" Vesuvia questioned.

"I thought you were done testing me," Noah replied without showing any hesitation. "I came here looking for allies against Heaven and Earth. You might find differences between beasts and humans, but I don't. I only acknowledge power, and you have it, so I need you alive."

"Such resolute words," Vesuvia smiled. "Now I know what she sees in you."

"Are you considering hopping on the beasts' side?" Noah teased.

"Nonsense," Vesuvia laughed as she adjusted her position on the throne. "It's just fun to interact with someone who doesn't follow my orders after so long."

"Oh, you don't have to worry there," Noah added. "All my underlings barely listen to me. They'll probably wage war if you try to order them around."

"They must be a lively bunch," Vesuvia commented.

"You have no idea," Noah sighed. "Well, you will once you join my organization."

Vesuvia limited herself to shaking her head and opening the dome. Her two underlings in the liquid stage immediately landed at her sides and began to wave their fans. Pellio and June also flew inside the structure while the turtles reached the experts outside the city after Noah voiced a short growl.

June couldn't help but frown when she noticed Vesuvia's sweaty state. She even teased her by revealing a satisfied smile, but Noah soon made everyone go back to the main topic.

"What now?" Noah asked. "You said "one of the keys". Does it mean that the other three dimensional portals have more of them?"

"Precisely," Vesuvia revealed. "You need two of them to open the path to the ninth floor. I wonder whether you'll change your mind about killing me."

"Tempting," June whispered.

"Will you follow us to the next floor once the path is open?" Noah asked.

"The entire city will," Vesuvia declared. "Of course, only if you can retrieve two keys."

"Why can't you just call your creators friends and get everyone out of the Labyrinth?" Noah asked. "It's already clear that we belong to the same side. Let's get out there and fight Heaven and Earth."

"I'm afraid that's outside my abilities," Vesuvia stated. "I am but a part of the Labyrinth now. I can't contact the other creators or mess with the floors' rules.. My city will follow you if you open a path, but we won't help find the keys."

Chapter 2139 - 2139. Rain And Swamp

Getting back to the plain with the four tornados wasn't an issue since the dimensional portal had remained open. Noah and the others could return to the main area of the eighth floor and move toward other passages, but worries inevitably appeared.

The eighth floor required two keys to get to the next area, and Vesuvia had admitted that each dimensional portal led to a place that could provide one of them. Yet, that also meant that the other dimensions might contain environments similar to the crowded city.

The Cursed Labyrinth had attracted Noah and June because they needed allies for the final battle against Heaven and Earth. However, the eighth floor might put them in front of a difficult choice. They might have to decide to sacrifice potential allies to proceed.

'Hopefully, the creators aren't so sadistic,' Noah thought as he approached the second dimensional portal with his group.

The teleport activated. The Labyrinth's force didn't try to separate the group, but Noah enveloped his allies in his dark world anyway. It had almost become a habit to use his dark matter to defend against possible dangers, and his decision turned out to be correct at that time.

Noah didn't have the time to unfold his consciousness when the teleport ended, or, rather, the environment prevented the expansion of his mental waves as soon as the area stabilized. Rumbling noises filled everyone's ears and tried to affect their concentration, but the dark matter prevented that foreign force from reaching the group.

The second dimensional portal had led the group to an immense bright environment. The sky was dark due to the black clouds that covered it, but the many white lightning bolts falling from them were enough to illuminate the area.

Noah and the others immediately connected the lightning bolts to Heaven and Earth, but they also noticed a few differences after closely inspecting them. Those sparks and crackling rain only tried to imitate the rulers' power without ever stepping into their realm.

The dark world held strong under the rain of lightning bolts, but louder noises came from deeper areas of the dimension. The crackling rain grew more powerful near the end of the separate reality, with attacks that touched the very peak of the cultivation journey.

"Noah," June called while suppressing her excitement.

"I know," Noah stated. "I'm only trying to understand if this area has living beings."

"How can you sense something in the middle of this chaos?!" Fiery Mountain asked.

"Defying Demon has senses that go past the mental waves," Pellio chuckled without moving his half-closed eyes from the short table on his flying mat. "Am I right, Mister Turtle?"

"I smell something," The upper tier turtle commented.

"Me too," Noah revealed. "They must be in the clouds."

"What did the creators even build in this area?" Old Tyrant asked.

"Heaven and Earth's power can't be replicated so easily," Gabrielle commented.

"They didn't replicate it," Noah explained. "These creatures are on my side, our side. They are flaws in Heaven and Earth's system."

"How can you be so sure?" Fiery Mountain asked.

"I can smell it," Noah declared, and Fiery Mountain rolled her eyes.

"What do you think?" June eventually questioned.

"They are different from the sky but also similar," Noah exclaimed. "Maybe they are living beings naturally born from the whiteness, or parasites with the same properties. Anyway, they might be useful in the final battle."

"So, our worries were on point," June sighed. "The eighth floor wants us to decide which forces to bring in the final battle."

"We still have two dimensions left," Noah announced, "But the trend feels obvious already."

Noah felt a bit disappointed, but he had to play by the rules. Usually, he would take a look at the other dimension before making his decision, but the rain of lightning bolts was simply too perfect for June.

"Leave a few of them alive," Noah ordered. "I want to study these creatures before deciding if they can come with us."

"It would be a pity to kill them," June chuckled as she stepped forward and slowly left the protection of the dark world.

"Aren't we going to help her?" Fiery Mountain asked.

"No, we are leaving," Noah stated. "Get back to us once you are done. I'll check on you after seeing what the third dimension has to offer."

"I love you too," June announced before immersing herself in the rain of lightning bolts.

The black clouds seemed to notice her presence, and the crackling rain quickly converged on her. The event involved only the weaker lightning bolts in her surroundings, but the stronger ones in the distance also prepared themselves for her arrival.

Old Tyrant and the others remained surprised when they saw June's figure enduring lightning bolt after lightning bolt without ever flinching. She seemed unable to crumble under that power, and her aura even intensified in the process.

"Let's go," Noah ordered as the dark world condensed and went through the dimensional portal.

"Boss, will she be okay?" Old Tyrant asked once the group returned to the plain with the tornados.

"That's up to her," Noah sighed before leading the dark world toward the next tornados.

Another dimensional portal appeared in the group's view, and the teleportation force soon fell on them. The environment transformed again, and an awful smell managed to seep past the dark world once everything stabilized.

The event naturally surprised Noah, who called upon his potential to enhance his mind's properties to study the area and modify the dark world. The process only took a few seconds, but part of that disgusting scent remained among the dark matter and tried to spread inside the technique.

The scent's properties were unclear. Noah saw that it tried to spread through his dark matter, but he had already modified the dark world to prevent its expansion. Still, part of his higher energy remained tainted, and vague dizziness also tried to affect his mind.

'I barely smelled it!' Noah commented in his mind.

His companions' situation was worse. Old Tyrant, Gabrielle, and Fiery Mountain's eyes grew heavy, and the same happened to the weaker turtles. They seemed about to faint, but Noah had prevented that outcome with his quick improvements.

Only Noah, the upper tier turtle, and Pellio remained at their peak after catching a whiff of that scent. It was clear that the area wasn't only poisonous. It was also too dangerous for beings unable to hold their ground against the peak of the cultivation journey.

Noah and the upper tier turtle also noticed the presence of multiple creatures. The dimension was an immense swamp with no trace of vegetation. The muddy ground had numerous dark-green lakes, and their dark fumes rose in the air and filled the sky with eerie shades.

"How long can you survive in this environment?" Noah asked.

The upper tier turtle responded without needing an explicit mention. "My resilience is immense, but this environment might be able to defeat me."

The leader wasn't underestimating the swamp, but it didn't want to show weaknesses either. Still, Noah could see through that vague confession. He understood that the upper tier turtle would probably die before reaching the end of the environment, meaning that he had to handle the matter alone.

"Get out, all of you," Noah eventually ordered. "I'll handle this dimension on my own.. Go take a look to the last portal in the meantime, but escape if it's too dangerous."

Chapter 2140 - 2140. Diffidence

The pack of turtles and the others left through the dimensional passage hovering in the sky. Noah remained alone in the swampy area, and the dark world shrunk to transform into fiendish armor.

The poisonous properties of the swamp grew stronger as Noah descended toward the surface. He could sense the presence of multiple lifeforms, but they remained hidden even when his aura spread to inspect the muddy ground.

The fumes released by the swamps were incredible. They seemed able to match the parasite's corrosive properties, and those effects were only stronger in the dark-green waters. Even Noah hesitated to dive into the swamp. His dark matter couldn't stop the poison completely, and replacing the infected parts of his higher energy would probably not work there.

Noah performed a few tests before giving up on the matter. He could dive into the swamp and limit the damage to superficial injuries, but he found no reason to do that. The lifeforms hidden in the dark-green waters were magical beasts, and he had better ways to deal with them.

"Come out," Noah growled, and his voice spread throughout the dimension.

Bubbles and tremors ran through the swamp and muddy ground. Something moved, but nothing came out. Noah didn't show any aggression, but the magical beasts under the surface still chose to remain hidden.

"Bring me your leader," Noah continued. "I have an offer I'd like to discuss with it."

The roar didn't produce any result. The swamp showed some reactions, but nothing came out. Noah didn't like that lack of respect, but the poison was really powerful, and he wanted to add it to his army.

"I'm going to split the ground if you keep ignoring me," Noah threatened as his blades appeared in his hands.

The Demonic Sword and the Cursed Sword released their auras and revealed their prowess. They had enough power to cut the whole dimension into two parts, and the magical beasts under the surface knew that. The high-pitched noises and dark-red shades radiated by the Cursed Sword even began to taint the swamp with Noah's destruction.

"Go away," A low whisper eventually came out of the dark-green waters and more quickly followed.

"Don't bother us,"

"Leave this place,"

"This is our swamp,"

"Our swamp,"

"Our lair,"

"Our kingdom,"

"Foreigners must die,"

"Invaders must die,"

"The swamp will defeat you."

Noah started to gain an idea of the magical beasts' nature from those whispers. Those creatures were using human words, but the tremors in their voices were impossible to miss. They tried to hide them, but Noah heard everything.

'How can they even be happy in a place like this?' Noah wondered as he tried to find the source of power in the area.

The swamp was different from the sea where Noah found the pack of turtles. It actually resembled Vesuvia's city due to its unclear power source. The Cursed Labyrinth seemed to fill it with enough fuel to sustain the creatures living underground, but they were unnaturally strong.

Vesuvia didn't reveal how she could build such a vast organization inside a separate reality, and Noah's confusion only intensified after inspecting the other dimensions. The rich population in each area would be enough to exhaust the energy of an upper tier item, but the Labyrinth seemed to do fine.

The matter was even stranger when Noah considered the sheer power of each population. Rank 9 cultivators didn't really need the energy in the environment to grow, but the situation was different with the magical beasts, especially in packs with upper tier specimens.

'Is the Labyrinth stealing energy from the higher plane?' Noah wondered as his inspection of the swamp continued.

It would make sense for the higher plane to be the power source. The Labyrinth had even shown its exceptional properties multiple times, so Noah could feel pretty confident in his guess. However, such thefts usually involved a connection with the outside world, and it was incredible that Heaven and Earth had yet to do anything about it.

A torrent of poisonous water suddenly shot out from under Noah and forced him to interrupt his inspection. The attack was slow, and he could sense the lack of aggression behind it, so dodging it wasn't an issue. Yet, the event showed how diffident the creatures in the area were.

"I don't want to fight you," Noah growled. "I only want to have a talk with your leader. You can't possibly be happy in this area."

"Our lair!"

"Our swamp!"

"Our kingdom!"

The whispers returned, and the resolve in those voices forced Noah to accept that those specimens didn't want to hear him at all. Still, that wasn't enough to make him give up on recruiting the pack.

Noah placed his swords on his forehead as his consciousness unfolded. His power flared for an instant, and countless cuts opened on the surface afterward.

The invisible slashes had only affected the superficial layers of the swamp. Noah had made sure not to touch the deeper area to avoid hurting the pack. However, the magical beasts didn't like his action anyway.

Strange screams came out of the swamp as multiple torrents of poisonous water flew toward Noah. The magical beasts had launched proper attacks now, but Duanlong left his figure and ate all of them.

Duanlong growled after the meal. The water couldn't affect its stomach, but it hated its taste anyway. Also, it was very likely that it would need to rely on its innate ability to absorb stronger attacks.

"You are getting annoying," Noah sighed as his potential started to flow into his centers of power.

Noah's level rose, and his aura transformed into a heavy pressure that expanded the damage on the swamp on its own. Dark matter amassed over his blades, and he didn't hesitate to swing them downward.

A giant slash left the blades and pierced the swamp. The attack destroyed everything on its path and absorbed the energy in its surroundings to grow stronger. Only the area's floor could stop it, but a hole still appeared in the muddy ground.

Rivers of poisonous water fell into the massive gorge and tried to fill it, but it was clear that the swamp couldn't go back to its original state so soon. A few strange heads also appeared among that poisonous liquid, and Noah sensed their angry stares converging on him.

"Are you ready to talk now?" Noah roared.

"We do not talk with foreigners,"

"Death to the invaders!"

"Death to the weakling!"

"Death to the fake dragon!"

Noah had already understood that those creatures had limited intellect. The isolated nature of the swamp had probably worsened that feature too. However, he didn't like that behavior and general disrespect. He didn't survive for entire millennia to get insulted by magical beasts.

"Fine, you die," Noah coldly declared as roots started to come out of his arm.

The parasite's aura intensified as flowers bloomed on the roots. It didn't take long before a rain of seeds fell from Noah's figure and started invading the giant gorge.

The parasite's branches grew quickly by feeding off the swamp. Angry screams and curses resounded among the poisonous waters as the magical beasts tried to fight the roots. Their destructive properties seemed to be equally matched, but Noah's power tilted the scales in his favor.

Moreover, the parasite didn't care about the damage that it suffered. Its branches expanded recklessly, destroying and absorbing everything on their path. Meanwhile, the magical beasts were trying to salvage the swamp during the battle, but their efforts were pointless.

"Kill the invader!" A louder, angrier scream suddenly came out of the swamp and made the whole pack turn its attention on Noah.

A series of torrents came out of the gorge and other damaged areas to converge on Noah. The strongest creature inside those attacks was in the middle tier, so he didn't bother to use his full power.

Noah tilted his blades, and a series of slashes came out of them. His attacks cut each torrent in half, killing the creatures inside them, but he spared the middle tier specimen.

The slash that flew toward that powerful creature severed the torrent horizontally and cut it away from the rest of its poisonous waters. Noah could shoot toward its tip, let go of the Demonic Sword, and seize the middle tier specimen with the clawed hands created by the fiendish armor.

The magical beast turned out to be a strange eel. Noah could see its eyes and internal organs, but its skin wasn't solid. A denser layer of the same poison that made the dark-green waters enveloped the creature and kept its insides still.

Needless to say, Noah felt the need to study that strange species, but the pack didn't give him time to lose himself in those thoughts. More attacks came out of the swamp, and the poison skin of the specimen in his grasp was starting to infect the crystals of dark matter covering his hand.

"Die invad-!" The middle tier specimen said, but Noah crushed its head before it could finish its line.. He had tried the peaceful approach, but it seemed that the swamp wanted war, and he wouldn't shy away from it.