

Demonic 2281

Chapter 2281 2281. Taun

"My, my," Caesar chuckled when Noah stopped right in front of him. "Your organization is really going all-out."

"You aren't as secretive as you think," Noah responded as dark matter leaked out of the swords in his hands. "Besides, we can understand the state of the sky even without being part of it."

Caesar glanced at the white layer behind him before showing his smile to Noah again. Wilfred's guess had been on point. Heaven and Earth were about to break free of the old rulers' net, which meant that the final battle was about to enter its last phase.

"Why did you decide to face me then?" Caesar wondered. "You know that Heaven and Earth are about to step forward. Does the current state of the battlefield give you any confidence?"

Noah's army had the advantage now, but everything would change once Heaven and Earth appeared. The balance would shift again, creating a gap in the overall power that Noah's allies couldn't fill.

"Why are you even complaining?" Noah mocked. "I thought you wanted me here."

"I expected some of your smart plans," Caesar revealed. "The way I see it, my side still has too many assets. Heaven and Earth's arrival will be your end if nothing changes."

"Why do you want to lose so badly?" Noah sneered.

"I don't want to lose," Caesar stated. "You know that. I only want you to struggle as much as you can."

"Heaven and Earth must be desperate to need so much help," Noah joked.

"This is my plan, not theirs," Caesar calmly replied. "Also, we are talking about the tenth rank. You would do anything in your power too."

"I would have never put myself in a similar situation," Noah sighed. "How can a breakthrough have value when I have to trust my enemies to complete it?"

"Your tongue is as sharp as ever," Caesar commented. "It's a pity that I know what you are thinking."

"Which is?" Noah asked.

"Opinions are worthless," Caesar replied. "The winners are right."

Noah couldn't help but wear his cold smile. Caesar had spoken the whole truth. The final battle was more than a struggle between two organizations. It was the clash between two almost opposite paths.

Noah's organization expressed pure individuality. Its experts strived to ignore limits and labels through sheer will and countless feats. Meanwhile, Heaven and Earth had reached their current power by fusing paths and creating a safe environment for their followers.

Truth be told, Noah believed that both paths could work. Power had multiple aspects, and Heaven and Earth had seized as many of them as possible.

Still, Heaven and Earth's overwhelming power had forced the world to create worthy enemies. That trend didn't specifically involve living beings, but experts like Noah and his companions had benefitted from it.

That had created two incredibly powerful fronts that had no option but to clash. Their very survival depended on their victory, and part of Noah saw it as a pity.

'Maybe we are both worthy of achieving the tenth rank,' Noah thought while comparing the two organizations. 'Maybe the universe can't accept both of us to reach that power due to how strong we have become.'

Random thoughts about the average strength of the rank 10 existences crossed Noah's mind. That level of power had never been so close, so Noah couldn't help but develop hypotheses.

'Will I end up at the bottom of the food chain?' Noah wondered. 'Will I be stronger than the stars?'

Noah obviously couldn't find real answers, but it made sense to believe that his basic level would be far higher than his peers after reaching the tenth rank.

After all, Noah would have to defeat Heaven and Earth to advance. The rulers were an existence that had fused two immense paths to create a superior power, so destroying them would place him in a greater realm.

'I might be able to hunt down the stars right away,' Noah thought as bloodlust seeped out of his figure.

"I'm flattered," Caesar stated when he sensed Noah's bloodlust.

"You aren't worthy of so much attention," Noah snorted as he pointed his swords toward Caesar. "As for my companions, they will be fine. I know that your fate has seen that."

Caesar's smile widened while his eyes fell on the massive dragon trying to find an agreement with the landmass. The fact that Noah and his stronger companions had joined the major battles wouldn't matter anymore once Shafu learnt how to use that giant sword. No one under the ninth rank would be able to remain in the higher plane at that point.

"I guess this is our best chance to destroy your forces," Caesar declared.

"Why do you even bother to taunt me when you know what's about to happen?" Noah sighed, and three intense auras promptly filled a distant spot of the higher plane.

Emperor, Queen, and Vesuva released part of their energy before transforming it into waves that flew toward the many rank 9 cultivators that still filled the battlefield. Those attacks weren't too powerful, but the three experts had never intended to use them to kill their opponents. They were only warning them.

"Are you sure that this is the best approach?" Queen wondered. "Some of those battles might need our power."

"You can go," Vesuvia giggled. "I'll stay with Emperor."

"As if," Queen snorted.

"You have seen how strong Divine Demon and Sword Saint have become after their breakthroughs," Emperor stated. "We can help with the enemy leaders, but we can't face Heaven and Earth in our current state."

"So, we are putting our lives in their hands," Queen commented.

"They have overcome the Cursed Labyrinth," Emperor replied. "They have created a force that gained the upper hand against Heaven and Earth's army. That's more than we ever did."

"I like this wise side of you," Vesuvia teased.

"Why don't you stop it already?" Queen scolded before taking a deep breath to calm down.

Queen, Emperor, Vesuvia, and Cursed Reality had already reached their peak. They were monsters, but they couldn't get any stronger. Instead, many of their new companions had yet to show their true power.

Queen became aware of an annoying truth after a quick inspection. She had already accepted that Noah and the others could surpass her level, but she had never thought the gap to be so vast.

A mere glance in Divine Demon or Sword Saint's direction told Queen that those two could now match her power. They might even surpass it in an actual battle.

That wasn't the end of it. The organization still had Noah, Alexander, and King Elbas among the major experts who had yet to face their breakthroughs. June, the pig, and Wilfred were also promising, and Supreme Thief seemed up to something too.

It was impossible to predict how strong those experts could become after their breakthroughs. Yet, they needed significant feats to reach that point in their cultivation journeys, and they involved powerful opponents.

Handling a seemingly simpler role felt demeaning for an expert at the peak of the ninth rank. However, Queen felt forced to accept it. The overall power of her organization would multiply if even a fraction of her companions could improve.

"Just do it already," Queen eventually ordered.

"Very well," Vesuvia laughed before closing her eyes.

Faint dark energy came out from the void and expanded throughout the higher plane. Tremors ran through that fuel before echoing Vesuvia's voice. "Every rank 9 cultivator is now our opponent. If you interfere with other battles, we'll come for you."

Chapter 2282 2282. Future

The announcement forced most assets on Heaven and Earth's side to halt their actions. Queen had been clear. Her team would go after any cultivator who dared to hinder the battles among the leaders.

Vesuvia smiled seeing Queen accepting that less important role, but she refrained from teasing her. The situation was too serious to waste time joking. After all, most of the higher plane was about to target them.

Many privileged cultivators had died during the previous phases of the final battle, but Heaven and Earth's side still had a decent number of powerful assets.

The privileged cultivators were only a part of that army. Heaven and Earth's side still had inscribed weapons, avatars, and creatures built to counter specific powers.

However, Queen, Vesuvia, and Emperor wouldn't handle all of that on their own. The higher plane still featured vast forests of roots, the improved dragons, and their incredible leader.

Noah's side had more than enough to keep the privileged cultivators busy, and the latter knew that. Tricks and ploys could probably work and allow those assets to interfere with the leaders' battles, but none found that approach reasonable.

The privileged cultivators gave one last glance at the major assets on the higher plane before focusing on their new opponents. A large platoon flew toward Emperor, Queen, and Vesuvia while the remaining experts approached the dragons and the roots.

A tremor ran through Caesar's aura, and Noah couldn't help but notice the event. Caesar seemed to grow stronger as the various assets took place in their new positions, but those improvements were hard to study due to the faint nature of his world.

"Are you scared?" Caesar joked.

"You," Noah called. "You fulfilled your fate."

"The final battle was always meant to reach this state," Caesar announced while spreading his arms. "My fate is bearing fruits, so my world grows in power and depth."

Potential flowed toward Noah's mind as he tried to find the tendrils of fate that Caesar had planted in the higher plane. He could sense his influence everywhere, but he failed to locate specific expressions of his power.

Caesar seemed to have fused with the entire higher plane. His influence was no different from the void standing right under that dimension. He existed, so the world strived toward his fate.

"Does it even have any will?" Noah wondered. "How did you push your power to the peak of the ninth rank?"

"Softness is not weakness," Caesar explained. "Even a single drop of water can destroy a mountain with enough time and resolve. I simply had to become a waterfall to affect the entirety of the higher plane."

"What a waste," Noah sighed.

"I knew you wouldn't agree with my methods," Caesar smirked.

"Your methods are interesting," Noah admitted. "I would have even admired them in another life. Yet, I feel only pity now."

"You should defeat me before going all arrogant," Caesar laughed.

"You have turned yourself into a force that can affect the very future of the higher plane," Noah stated.

"Yet, you used your power to help Heaven and Earth. What a coward."

"Ignorance is a bliss," Caesar declared. "I don't blame you. It's easy to speak like this when your mind fails to grasp Heaven and Earth's might."

"You simply opted for the safest bet," Noah snorted.

"It wasn't a bet," Caesar corrected. "I never gambled anything. I've only shaped an irrefutable future."

Noah kept his cold reptilian eyes on Caesar before unleashing his aura. There was only one way to find answers. His world had to overcome Caesar's fate to destroy the established future.

Special attacks or specific techniques had no room in that battle. Noah was against a force that had already affected the entire higher plane. To defeat it, he had to summon the peak of his destruction and create an area where Caesar's fate couldn't enter.

The void darkened under Caesar's entertained gaze. Black lines spread from Noah's figure and expanded all around the area. The pale light radiated from the sky behind Caesar stopped stretching toward that small battlefield, but his fate still survived.

Noah didn't stop there. The Cursed Sword released its high-pitched noises while the Demonic Sword roared. Screeches and roars also came out of Noah's figure to add destructive properties to the area.

Dark-red and dark-purple shades flowed alongside the black lines and deepened the destruction they carried. The space-time array of the void seemed to twist under that pressure, but Noah remained able to sense Caesar's faint aura.

'More,' Noah ordered to his world as potential flowed toward the entirety of his existence.

Multiple pulling forces appeared in specific spots of the black lines to increase their power. Flowers came out of those dense masses of destruction, and black gales also started to flow out of his chest.

'More,' Noah ordered again.

The ethereal blackness gave up on any attempt to save energy. The entirety of Noah's potential flowed toward his centers of power and companions to push their abilities past their peak.

The immense amount of energy condensed in that single battlefield made many experts turn their heads to inspect the scene. To their surprise, Noah's destruction had become so thick that their senses failed to grasp what was happening inside the array of black lines.

The Rulers' Resolve, Decumia, Marcella, and the old man couldn't ignore that curious event. They glanced toward Noah and noticed how their basic abilities failed to pierce the black lines. They would have to empower their senses to understand what was happening, but their enemies prevented them from doing that.

Only Divine Architect had the time to study the event. King Elbas snorted when he saw some of the balcony's tiles opening to allow the arrival of multiple scanners. Those inscribed items flew in front of Divine Architect's crystal eyes before a frown took control of her expression.

"What is it?" King Elbas mocked. "Are you worried about your companion?"

"Worry doesn't affect my mind," Divine Architect commented. "I'm merely planning my next creations. Your leader will provide important materials."

"You have acknowledged his power," King Elbas laughed.

"The essence of his destruction is idiotic," Divine Architect pointed out, "But his power is undeniable. It's a pity that I have to wait even longer to get my hands on him."

"You can have him if you want," King Elbas joked while taking out a few inscribed items from his body.

King Elbas tinkered with his inscribed items for a few seconds before snapping his fingers. Divine Architect wasn't paying any attention to him, but her frown deepened when her scanners crumbled.

The event had been sudden. Divine Architect didn't even sense the attack, but she was knowledgeable enough to understand what had happened.

"Your poor taste extends to your behavior," Divine Architect sighed. "Countering mere scanners doesn't prove anything."

"I just want to piss you off," King Elbas stated.

"Such a pointless action," Divine Architect declared. "Very well. Let's put an end to this situation."

"It was about time-!" King Elbas exclaimed, but a surge of power coming from Noah's position forced him to interrupt his line to focus on the area.

An immense pitch-black sphere had replaced the area occupied by Noah and Caesar. King Elbas and Divine Architect couldn't inspect its insides even after summoning their inscribed items, and the other leaders shared their powerlessness.

Noah's destruction had become so intense that nothing could pierce it anymore. He had created a domain that separated him and Caesar from the higher plane and granted them a personal battlefield that no one could affect.

Chapter 2283 2283. Isolated battlefield

Caesar appeared curious about the new environment. He inspected his dark surroundings and waved his hands among the thick array of black lines that filled every corner of his vision.

The black lines didn't release their destruction when Caesar touched them. They were firm and stable even if they contained a dense expression of Noah's destruction.

That stability wavered as soon as Caesar tried to summon his aura. A sliver of pale-blue energy began to leave his fingers, but he immediately retracted it when he saw that everything around him started to shake.

A single spark could trigger a chain reaction capable of damaging most of the higher plane. Caesar was inside a ticking bomb, but he wasn't alone.

"This is reckless even for you," Caesar commented.

Noah didn't answer. His eyes darted left and right as he inspected his creation. He felt quite proud of that technique, but he could also see its shortcomings.

The technique was simple at its core. The ethereal blackness contained every aspect of Noah's existence, so he had fused his many abilities to create an incredibly powerful expression of his destruction.

Snore's violent dark matter, Duanlong's pulling force, Night's severing power, the parasite's corrosiveness, the Cursed Sword's bloodlust, the Demonic Sword's general properties, and Noah's abilities had fused. They had given birth to something that even Caesar had to respect.

"I need to get reckless," Noah stated. "I can't beat you otherwise."

"You can't beat me anyway," Caesar teased.

Noah heaved a sigh before pointing at the edges of the spherical area. The black battlefield wasn't big compared to the immense higher plane, but Caesar couldn't measure its width since the black lines hindered his senses.

"Your fate doesn't exist here," Noah declared while drawing a circle with his fingers to highlight the personal battlefield. "This isn't a separate dimension or reality. This is a domain that your power has yet to affect or taint. You will die for real if I kill you here."

"The same goes for you," Caesar uttered. "No one can help you among this darkness. It's your world against my world."

"Not quite, am I right?" Noah chuckled. "Your power relies on the fate you planted in the higher plane. That energy doesn't exist here. You are nothing more than a peak rank 9 cultivator in this environment."

"While your own destruction surrounds you," Caesar continued. "I understand my situation, but that won't change the outcome of our battle."

"Will you fight then?" Noah wondered. After all, he had never seen Caesar's real offensive. The latter had only relied on his fate during their past encounters.

"I don't see other options," Caesar replied while letting his gaze wander among the blackness. "I knew something like this would have happened, but it still feels strange. I almost forgot what it was to live among the darkness."

Caesar wasn't speaking about the environment's color. Noah's technique had forced his very awareness of his surroundings to regress to a point before the birth of his fate.

Generally speaking, Caesar didn't need his senses to study his surroundings. Inspecting the fate planted in the higher plane was more than enough to grant him a comprehensive understanding of what was going on.

However, Noah had removed that ability with his destruction. Caesar couldn't even expand his consciousness. He was completely blind and in the dark. Noah's words managed to reach him only thanks to the black lines.

Of course, Caesar only needed to leave the dark area to regain access to his fate and senses, but he didn't know in which direction he had to fly. Moreover, Noah wouldn't just stay still, and the various black lines were a variable that Caesar couldn't ignore.

Everything in that environment pointed toward Caesar's defeat, but he showed no fear. Some nostalgia had appeared on his expression, but that was it.

"I believe you only saw a dark spot in your predictions," Noah announced.

"Indeed," Caesar exclaimed. "I couldn't remove this moment of darkness in my future no matter how I altered the higher plane's fate. That alone confirmed that you had the potential to match my expectations."

"Which means that I can kill you here and now," Noah pointed out.

"My predictions don't stop here," Caesar responded. "This darkness merely interrupts them for a brief period. I know what will happen afterward already. I know I'll get out with my life and power."

Noah didn't speak anymore. He tapped the Demonic Sword on one of the black lines next to him, and the latter started to shake wildly. The event caused a chain reaction that spread through the entire black environment before converging toward Caesar.

Caesar smiled when the black lines around him started to shake. The tremors grew wilder until multiple explosions happened and engulfed him with violent, destructive energy.

Noah had shot forward as soon as he released his attack. His figure crossed the black lines without affecting their stability or structure. They were an expression of his destruction, so his body could merge with them.

The situation was different for the explosions. The violent energy released by the black lines still had a connection with Noah, but he had no control over it. That would only limit its destructive power.

Nevertheless, Noah dived right through the violent waves and let them wound his body. Entire patches of his skin completely disappeared, and the same went for half of his face. Part of his skull appeared in the open, but his cold eyes remained fixed on his target.

Noah plunged forward. He felt his blades stabbing a foreign power before unleashing their abilities. The Demonic Sword released destructive dark matter, while the Cursed Sword went silent to condense its bloodlust into a single attack.

The immense power released by the blades pushed the violent storms. That destructive energy fused with the black lines and made them expand to refill part of the area cleared by the explosions, but a small chunk of that isolated battlefield remained empty.

"This brings me far back," Caesar's voice seeped out of the dark matter inside the empty area and pushed it away. That energy fused with the black lines and made them grow, but Noah's attention remained on his opponent.

The dispersion of the dark matter revealed Caesar's figure. The two blades had stabbed his chest, and their attacks had ripped away part of his insides. Noah could almost see Caesar's internal organs from his position, but he felt no joy at that sight.

"You might have cut me away from the rest of my fate," Caesar exclaimed while spreading his arms, "But my world remains superior to yours. You can hurt me only if I let you."

"You said it yourself," Noah growled while using cries that Caesar could understand. "You can't see what will happen here. I have the chance to surpass you."

"Oh, mighty demon," Caesar laughed as faint energy spread from his fingers. "Creating a blind spot in my predictions doesn't make you able to defeat me. I might be rusty, but I still remember how to expand my fate. I only need to make this technique fall inside it."

The faint energy expanded before disappearing. Caesar merged his power with the destruction around him, and the black lines started to twist under his influence.

Noah didn't hesitate to wave his swords. The weapons cut Caesar's chest horizontally before releasing violent energy that flew toward the nearest black lines.

More explosions happened, and Noah didn't use the chaos to attack again. He let the environment stabilize and absorb the lingering destruction while he and Caesar swam inside it.

An even larger clear area appeared once everything stabilized. Noah and Caesar floated on opposite sides of the space without destruction, but they remained pretty close.

"You detonated part of your technique to hinder my fate," Caesar announced while inspecting the new injuries on his body. "I wonder for how long you can do this before exhausting your destruction."

Chapter 2284 2284. Efficiency

The various major battles had resumed after the surprise caused by Noah's technique waned. Even King Elbas and Divine Architect had started to tease themselves relatively seriously.

Most of those experts had taken their time to inspect the power expressed by Noah's isolated battlefield. After all, his technique had created a blind spot in everyone's senses. That was far from a usual event.

Still, two experts had resumed their fight before everyone else. Sword Saint and the old man had gone back to their powerful exchanges right after confirming that Noah had grown stronger again.

The privileged cultivator was on the defensive. Sword Saint wasn't giving him the time to launch attacks due to his relentless offensive, but that didn't bring the advantage in his favor.

The old man seemed to have no problem dealing with the countless powerful attacks flying in his direction. He dodged and deflected everything effortlessly, without summoning any unique technique or energy.

The privileged cultivator was suffering injuries, but they were superficial, at least for him. He let Sword Saint cut his chest, arms, legs, and face as long as the damage didn't reach his world.

Sword Saint was a true maniac. His devotion wasn't something that his companions could match. It was so deep that he had allowed the sword path to turn him into its avatar. However, that didn't make him clueless about other powers.

Sword Saint's fighting experience was immense. He had spent a vast part of his life challenging powerful experts to hone his techniques and understanding of his path. He was on par with Noah and Divine Demon in that field, so it didn't take him long to understand his opponent's ability.

Nevertheless, that understanding didn't grant Sword Saint the chance to exploit eventual flaws. The old man didn't have any. His ability was beyond mistakes. He was simply perfect.

Every leader on Heaven and Earth's side had given up on containing the landmass, so Sword Saint and the old man fought all across the higher plane. Sword Saint chased his opponent without taking breaks, but his offensive wasn't leading anywhere.

Sword Saint launched a barrage of silver slashes that fused to create a sharp river during their flight. The privileged cultivator was running away from Sword Saint's optimal range, but the arrival of the attack forced him to stop.

The silver river crashed on the privileged cultivator, but its structure shattered a few seconds after the impact. The attack transformed into countless shards that flew aimlessly through the void.

The rain of shards hurt the privileged cultivator, but his innate defenses limited those injuries to his skin. Part of the silver energy tried to stab him deeply, but the power coming out of his world fended it off.

Stopping such a massive attack without any unique method was theoretically impossible. Sword Saint had reached the solid stage. He had become so strong that even King Elbas would struggle to defend against his offensive.

However, the privileged cultivator had shattered that attack effortlessly. He had destabilized the very structure of the silver river to turn it into smaller chunks of energy that were easier to handle.

The privileged cultivator didn't show only experience with that approach. His defense was incredibly precise and efficient. He could fend off powerful attacks by exploiting their innate flaws, and he moved to achieve that.

Sword Saint followed with a sprint that brought him right before the old man. The expert swung his arm to launch a cross-shaped slash aimed at the privileged cultivator's chest, but the latter instantly teleported away.

Sword Saint was ready for that evasive maneuver. The old man had already used it multiple times during the previous exchanges. He could perform an instantaneous short-distance teleport to avoid the bigger attacks, but that behavior had made him predictable.

The old man reappeared above Sword Saint only to find himself surrounded by a series of sword-shaped masses of energy that rotated to point at him.

The attacks shot forward and threatened to pierce their way toward the depths of the privileged cultivator's world, but the latter released a shockwave right before the impact.

The silver swords suffered greatly as the shockwave passed through them. Their structure wavered and put them in a position where they couldn't express their real power.

The old man used that change to tap on each silver sword gently. The gesture made those attacks crumble, and their energy quickly vanished into the void.

Sword Saint didn't immediately charge forward again. He had seen enough of those exchanges to know that another offensive wouldn't work. He needed a different tactic, but he didn't want to come up with ploys. They went against his existence.

"Efficiency," Sword Saint exclaimed as he watched the shallow injuries on the old man's figure closing up.

"Not quite," The old man responded. "Though I guess it's close to the truth."

"Your world allows you to perform incredible acts with little to no consumption of energy," Sword Saint continued. "You are like Xavier, but you don't need his tools."

"I'm not worthy of such praises," The old man humbly announced. "Xavier Elbas is an unparalleled inscription master. Even Heaven and Earth acknowledged him."

"Is this a façade?" Sword Saint asked.

"What do you mean?" The privileged cultivator questioned.

"Your humble behavior," Sword Saint explained. "Are you using it to make me lower my guard?"

"That wouldn't work against you," The old man chuckled. "You are going all-out. You all are. I suspect nothing could make you hold back."

"How is someone as strong as you so humble then?" Sword Saint asked.

"I'm not that strong," The old man replied. "Heaven and Earth wield true strength. Everyone else is weak compared to them."

"Your devotion is commendable," Sword Saint praised.

"It's not devotion," The privileged cultivator stated. "I'm simply sticking to my role."

"I take it back," Sword Saint snorted. "A cultivator who doesn't recognize his own worth is pitiful."

"My own worth," The old man sighed. "Pride and similar feelings are hindrances on the path to power."

"My entire organization proves the exact opposite," Sword Saint declared.

"Wrong," The old man corrected. "It will prove that if you defeat the sky, which can't happen. You lack the power to do it."

Sword Saint didn't want to argue over that pointless topic. Only facts could prove one side right, and Heaven and Earth had yet to show their true power. The battlefield would reach that point soon, but now he had other things to handle.

"Aren't you the leader of your army?" Sword Saint wondered. "The other experts don't seem suitable for that role."

"Heaven and Earth are our leaders," The old man uttered. "Everyone else is an asset. I merely happen to be the most restrained and cool-headed of the bunch."

"Because you are pitiful," Sword Saint mocked.

"Efficiency," The old man repeated. "You really got close to it. I guess it did start as something similar, but entire eras have passed. It's hard to remember right now."

"What kind of power needs you to throw away pride and similar feelings?" Sword Saint wondered. "No ability is worth that."

"It's not about the payoff," The privileged cultivator exclaimed. "Perfection already is a good reward."

Chapter 2285 2285. Gentle

Sword Saint didn't say anything. The old man's revelation made sense, but his actual limits remained unclear. Testing them in battle was Sword Saint's only option.

King Elbas, Noah, and even Alexander would have come up with various plans to take down the old man. Still, Sword Saint didn't have such a flexible world. His devotion came from the firm belief that a blade could cut anything and anyone.

"Did my determination leave you speechless?" The old man asked while raising his arms to prepare for the next attack.

"I was only thinking," Sword Saint responded. "The sword path is boundless. I know it contains a blade that can cut through perfection. My understanding is simply too poor to draw it during this battle."

"So?" The old man asked. "Are you giving up? I'm sure Heaven and Earth would welcome back all the understanding you stole."

"What a pointless question," Sword Saint sighed. "I'll pursue the only approach in my power."

"Which is?" The old man questioned.

"Unleashing everything I have," Sword Saint stated before his figure exploded with blinding silver light.

The old man had to bring his arms before his eyes since his eyelids couldn't protect them from the sharp light radiated by his opponent. Yet, he soon found out that his flesh didn't provide much help either.

Sword Saint's aura was surging with enough power to turn everything coming out of him into sharp blades. His very existence was transforming into an attack that the old man struggled to block.

Of course, the privileged cultivator only spent a few seconds in the middle of his surprise. He quickly mustered his strength and started moving his arms to summon one of his unique techniques.

The old man's eyes started to bleed due to the sharp light piercing his eyelids. Two red lines fell from his closed organs and tainted his face, but he didn't stop his gesture.

His arms moved slowly to perform odd gestures. They seemed to turn ethereal and multiply as the technique continued, and the river of light falling on them soon started to shrink back.

No barrier had appeared to stop Sword Saint's energy. His light had begun to fly backward under the effects of a technique that he didn't understand.

The two waves of energy inevitably clashed to create an explosion that gave birth to a silver rain. The privileged cultivator almost disappeared behind that bright event, but Sword Saint didn't let him off the hook so easily.

Sword Saint had merely unleashed his aura. The power contained by that gesture was strong enough to pass for an attack, but he had yet to begin his offensive.

The old man only saw a silver light flashing at his right before a torrent of energy engulfed him and dragged his figure away. He tried to use his legs to perform the same strange technique as before, but his limbs vanished under those sharp currents.

That obviously wasn't enough to take down a privileged cultivator at the peak of the ninth rank. The old man let the river pierce his skin and sever his extremities for a few seconds before a shockwave came out of his figure.

The shockwave destabilized the silver river and allowed the old man to start flying out of it. Yet, a new wave of sharp energy trapped him before he could reach a safe area.

The event naturally surprised the old man. He had studied the attack and had come up with a countermeasure, but his efforts couldn't completely free him.

An explanation arrived quickly. The old man noticed something odd in the energy around him. Its nature wasn't steady. It slowly changed and transformed to create a different attack.

"Feeling overwhelmed yet?" Sword Saint's voice resounded as he teleported next to the privileged cultivator.

Sword Saint could swim freely among the silver energy even if it carried intense destructive properties. That sharpness couldn't hurt him.

"Accept the sword inside you," Sword Saint announced. "Worship it!"

"This is indeed a great display of power," The old man said as the silver river removed all the skin from his face, "But it's far from enough."

The old man let the river cut the entirety of his skin. He transformed into a humanoid gory mess that continued to suffer injuries, but his mind contained no fear.

The privileged cultivator began to join his hands, but the sharp river severed those limbs away. Still, his bleeding eyes remained closed as he played that gesture in his mind.

An ethereal version of the old man's hands suddenly appeared before his chest. Their connection generated a humming noise that spread throughout the whole river before unleashing its effects.

Sword Saint's survival instincts forced him to fly away before the humming noise could touch him. He stopped only when he reached the void, and the event that followed left him speechless.

The river stopped flowing. Its energy froze and turned solid before cracks started to spread through its structure. The whole attack crumbled into a rain of shards, but the exchange didn't end there.

The rain of shards started spinning on its own before converging toward the old man. The attack transformed into pure energy that restored his missing parts and fixed his injuries. Once everything stopped, the privileged cultivator appeared even stronger than before.

"That was quite the technique," The old man praised. "I bet you have far more like them."

"Obviously," Sword Saint declared.

"Maybe I should stop defending then," The old man exclaimed before his figure disappeared.

Sword Saint waved his arms forward to release a cross-shaped slash, but a figure flew right through them. The impact destroyed the attack, leaving the old man and the Sword Saint in front of each other.

"I can't deal with the entirety of the sword path," The old man announced as his arms snapped upward and bumped on Sword Saint's chest. "However, you are only an avatar."

Sword Saint instinctively tried to snort, but his body didn't answer to his will. He felt frozen in his position, unable to move even the tip of his fingers, and the old man used that chance to tap on his chest again.

The gentle tap flung Sword Saint away and forced him to fly until he landed on the sky. The expert regained control of his body after the impact, but his glow seemed to dim as his world became aware of his injuries.

"You can hurt me," Sword Saint whispered.

"Rank 9 cultivators are their world," The old man explained while teleporting in front of Sword Saint. "Our flesh is merely an expression of our power, and the same goes for our attacks. I can handle your offensive. Your body is no different."

Sword Saint raised his arm to point it at the old man, but the latter promptly shouted. "Freeze!"

Sword Saint almost couldn't believe his eyes. The very flow of energy inside his body had stopped at that word. He couldn't move again, and the old man was free to get even closer to him.

"I wonder if your devotion will suffer now that your very existence is turning against-," The old man stated, but a wave of silver light suddenly came out of Sword Saint and engulfed him.

Chapter 2286 2286. Terms

The privileged cultivator didn't expect Sword Saint's attack. In theory, Sword Saint wasn't in the condition to launch any technique, but the old man couldn't ignore what had happened.

The wave of silver light pushed the old man far away, but he eventually managed to get rid of it through his strange gestures. Yet, he showed a confused expression when he reappeared among the void and inspected his opponent still standing on the sky.

Sword Saint had yet to regain complete control over his body, but that didn't mean that he was powerless. His hand had a minor injury, and the old man wasn't to blame for that. It was clear that the wound was self-inflicted.

That alone was enough to explain part of the previous event. The old man was highly knowledgeable, but even his experience fell short in front of an entire path. However, he could come up with hypotheses.

"You developed a new technique," The old man announced as he flew back toward his opponent.

"Not-," Sword Saint muttered before being interrupted by the restraints that affected his body.

The old man drew close, but Sword Saint ignored him. The latter focused on getting rid of those restraints, but most of his energy still escaped his control.

Nevertheless, a long wound suddenly opened on Sword Saint's chest and allowed him to release a massive surge of energy that swept his body clean of the restraint. He became able to move again as his power flowed out of his figure, but his injury didn't close.

"You are copying King Elbas," The old man exclaimed. "You are injuring yourself to release more power. That's not very creative."

"You are clueless about the sword path," Sword Saint stated as he stretched his arms to check their condition. "I didn't create a new attack. This technique has always existed in my path."

"It's not innovative anyway," The old man responded, "But it gets the job done. No wonder you relied on it."

"Such ignorance," Sword Saint sighed. "Don't worry. I'll grant you the knowledge you lack."

The old man stopped flying toward Sword Saint and wore a curious face. He raised his arms to prepare for the imminent attack, but his interest increased when he saw that Sword Saint took a deep breath to prepare for the offensive.

"Ooh," The old man voiced a surprised gasp at the sight of such concentration.

The privileged cultivator would have expected a similar action from Noah or King Elbas, but Sword Saint was atypical. He already embodied the sword path, so he didn't theoretically require to concentrate on summoning his power.

A wound eventually opened on Sword Saint's forehead, and a massive wave of power followed the event. A sea of silver energy shot out of his body and condensed into a giant blade that hit the old man directly on his chest.

The privileged cultivator continued to perform strange gestures while the giant sword pushed him away, but his efforts appeared useless. The attack pierced his chest and dug deep inside him without coming out of his back.

The sword was digging far more than flesh. Sword Saint had launched an attack that could reach the privileged cultivator's world, and the latter found himself unable to block it.

The sharp energy contained in the giant sword unleashed its power once the privileged cultivator's world appeared in sight. The true potential of the attack activated its effects and tried to kill the old man in a single blow, but things didn't go as smoothly as Sword Saint hoped.

The sharp energy reached the old man's world and pierced its edges, but everything disappeared at that point. The power inside the privileged cultivator and the giant sword vanished without leaving any trace of their existence.

Sword Saint couldn't hide his surprise, but he didn't halt his offensive either. He charged forward, transforming into a wave of silver energy that slammed directly on the old man.

The energy separated from Sword Saint and trapped the old man in a frail cage. The latter was ready to break free of those restraints, but Sword Saint launched another attack before that could happen.

A long cut opened on Sword Saint's arm and allowed him to release the same intense energy as before. Another giant blade came out of his body and pierced the old man's chest while releasing its sharp power in his insides.

The sharp energy converged toward the old man's world and pierced its edges, but the event generated the same reaction as before. The giant blade disappeared, and the same went for the power trying to hurt the privileged cultivator's existence.

"You know what is happening," The old man stated.

"You don't know what I'm doing," Sword Saint responded.

"I can guess," The old man exclaimed. "The paths of the universe are immense, far beyond our imagination. The sword path must have attacks that can overcome the ninth rank without using superior energy. You are relying on them."

"That's correct," Sword Saint declared. "This flesh embodies the sword path. I can use its blood to pay the price for that superior power and apply it to a specific art."

"A sword art that only an avatar can use," The old man commented. "What a sight."

"On the other hand," Sword Saint spoke, "Your world contains your idea of perfection. It doesn't have real energy because perfection can't have a fixed form. Yet, it still allows you to defend against my attacks."

"Indeed," The old man uttered while placing a hand on his chest. "You can reach my world, but nothing can truly hurt it. I won't claim to be immortal, but my defense remains the best in the entire sky."

"Your attacks aren't bad," Sword Saint admitted, "Even if they aren't blades."

"I'm not attacking," The old man explained. "I'm defending against your potential attacks, movement, or very life. What do you think will happen once I start defending myself against your world?"

"It must take you a while to prepare such a technique," Sword Saint stated.

"I have time," The old man chuckled.

"I see," Sword Saint sighed before joining his palms. "Time isn't on my side."

"I'm sorry," The old man smiled, but a giant blade suddenly slammed on his body and tried to cut him into two halves.

The giant blade opened a cut that ran from the privileged cultivator's forehead to his left foot. Sharp energy flowed inside his body and tried to reach his world while the attack continued to affect his flesh, but everything eventually disappeared.

"Feeling in a hurry already?" The privileged cultivator mocked as his injury healed.

"Your energy isn't infinite," Sword Saint stated. "Instead, I draw power from the sword path. I'm sure I can last more than you."

"Do you want to turn this into an endurance contest?" The old man wondered. "That doesn't suit you."

"I know," Sword Saint exclaimed as his joint palms started to release a high-pitched noise. "A sea of blades might overcome your perfection, but it won't make any of them superior to your power."

"You need to find the right blade," The old man teased.

"And you need to find how to eliminate my existence," Sword Saint continued.

"Well," The privileged cultivator announced, "It seems that the terms of our battle are clear now."

Chapter 2287 2287. Relentless

"He looks strong," Alexander announced while inspecting the Rulers' Resolve.

"He would be already dead if I could express my true potential," Supreme Thief snorted.

"You said that twenty times already," Great Builder sighed before taking a deep breath to stabilize his condition.

The three experts had yet to resume their battle. A lot had happened since Alexander and the others had decided to join the major fights. The Rulers' Resolve had also been quite captivated by those events, so he didn't force his opponents' hand.

Still, Noah's side had no time to waste, so the three experts eventually accepted that they had to attack again. Their opponent was their only real problem. The Rulers' Resolve appeared truly powerful.

"Did you even recover enough to fight?" Supreme Thief asked.

"That doesn't matter right now," Alexander replied. "We have to kill some of the leaders before Heaven and Earth break free."

"We are about to argue, aren't we?" Great Builder cursed.

"His existence is mine," Supreme Thief exclaimed. "I want his resolve to complete my breakthrough."

"I knew it," Great Builder sighed.

"You can take the nature of his world," Alexander stated, "But I want the energy inside it. I need it for my breakthrough."

"Only the energy?" Supreme Thief questioned. "Are you trying to trick me?"

"Only the energy," Alexander confirmed. "My existence doesn't need anything else. I'm ready to reach the peak."

"I can agree with that," Supreme Thief declared.

"We have a deal," Alexander declared.

"That went better than I expected," Great Builder revealed. "Well, shall we do this?"

"I believe tricks won't work against this one," Alexander guessed.

"His world isn't something we can overcome through strategy," Great Builder explained.

"That's perfect," Alexander announced.

Supreme Thief smirked, and Great Builder heaved a sigh. The three experts had reached a silent understanding, and they didn't hesitate to unleash it.

Alexander and Supreme Thief shot forward. Their auras surged as different abilities formed around their figures. Alexander covered himself in giant and fiery snake-like creatures, while Supreme Thief shone with azure light as multiple mirrors materialized in his surroundings.

The snake-like creatures left Alexander as soon as the Rulers' Resolve entered his range. Those attacks shot forward and separated to encircle the privileged cultivator before crashing on him from different directions.

Supreme Thief's mirror didn't stay still during his companion's offensive. They also shot forward and surrounded the Rulers' Resolve before gathering energy. Their structure collapsed to transform into flashing spheres that unleashed powerful detonation.

The Rulers' Resolve surrounded himself with an array of grey spheres while his opponents' attacks approached him. The ability launched countless rays of energy meant to destroy the incoming offensive, but yellow barriers appeared on their path and hindered their advance.

The grey rays pierced the barriers while losing energy during the process. That hindrance allowed the azure explosions to overwhelm them and engulf the Rulers' Resolve in violent currents.

The snake-like creatures arrived right after. They crashed on the Rulers' Resolve and filled that part of the void with scarlet shades. That color was so intense that many weaker experts had to divert their gazes and retrieve their mental waves to avoid suffering injuries.

A grey explosion soon overwhelmed the scarlet color and filled the void with a vast domain. The Rulers' Resolve appeared became visible again, and his opponents smirked at the sight of the fuming burns on his body.

Nevertheless, those injuries healed in no time while the Rulers' Resolve transformed his domain into a series of currents that started blowing around him.

Supreme Thief and Alexander didn't let the Rulers' Resolve prepare his offensive. They shot forward and surrounded themselves with different techniques as they dived inside the storms.

The grey currents tried to destroy those techniques, but yellow barriers appeared around Supreme Thief and Alexander and allowed them to pierce those attacks without wasting energy.

The two experts soon reached the Rulers' Resolve and unleashed their techniques. A raging fire and a series of ethereal punches landed on the privileged cultivator, who could only rely on his innate defenses to endure the attacks.

Of course, those innate defenses couldn't do much against Supreme Thief and Alexander. The two experts had already proven themselves able to stand their ground against Heaven and Earth's leaders, and that exchange only added proof to that claim.

The Rulers' Resolve saw large patches of his body vanishing under the enemy offensive. Vast injuries opened while he tried his best to preserve his figure, but nothing in his power seemed able to help.

Supreme Thief and Alexander seized that chance. They summoned another round of attacks, and Great Builder didn't refrain from sending supportive techniques in their direction.

Alexander and Supreme Thief seemed to reach a silent understanding. They both unleashed techniques involving lightning bolts to dig deep into the Rulers' Resolve's existence.

Black and azure lightning bolts crashed on the Rulers' Resolve and filled his body with holes. He wanted to fight back, but yellow patches of energy materialized before every tinge of power that he tried to summon.

The incredible offensive didn't end there. Supreme Thief and Alexander were relentless. They unleashed a third wave of attacks with high piercing properties. The Rulers' Resolve could only suffer injuries under that assault, and his body soon lost any traces of its humanoid shape.

Supreme Thief and Alexander wouldn't let that damage reassure them. They had to be ruthless beyond reason against such a powerful opponent, so they quickly prepared a fourth wave of attacks.

However, the Rulers' Resolve suddenly went dark. His energy condensed in a realm that his opponents couldn't sense, but that didn't stop their offensive anyway.

Supreme Thief and Alexander unleashed their attacks, but their senses wavered when the Rulers' Resolve voiced a deafening cry. A monstrous shout left his maimed mouth, and a dense wave of energy accompanied his voice.

The wave of energy was so dense that it gained solid properties. The shout was so loud that Supreme Thief and Alexander had to summon more techniques to defend their senses.

The soundwave made Supreme Thief and Alexander lose control of their techniques for a second. Only Great Builder could retain his concentration, but his barriers alone couldn't stop the dense energy expanding from the privileged cultivator's figure.

The attack ended up flinging Supreme Thief and Alexander away, other than destroying their attacks. The two experts saw injuries opening on their bodies, but they managed to retreat before they could become too severe.

The two experts eventually materialized next to Great Builder, where they inspected their opponent. The Rulers' Resolve was still shouting, and the same went for his expanding energy. His reserves appeared boundless due to how relentlessly his domain expanded, but the three didn't show any fear at that sight.

"Do not underestimate my world!" The Rulers' Resolve shouted in his new, monstrous voice. "I wield the determination that has created the greatest existence in this realm. I won't shatter so easily!"

"He is really tough," Alexander commented before showing a smirk. "I can't wait to eat him."

"His existence will be a great addition to my collection," Supreme Thief added.

Great Builder wanted to say something, but silver light suddenly flashed in a distant area of the higher plane and claimed his attention. His companions also turned to inspect Sword Saint's heated battle against the old man. The two were going all-out, and the entire world was experiencing their might.

"The maniac might beat us to it," Supreme Thief declared.

"Let's finish this with the next attack," Alexander suggested.

"Fine by me," Great Builder responded.

Chapter 2288 2288. Ice

"We can't rely on random attacks if we want to defeat him with the next offensive," Great Builder declared.

"I thought strategies wouldn't work against him," Supreme Thief complained.

"Tricks wouldn't," Alexander corrected. "What should we do?"

"I thought you were on my side," Supreme Thief protested.

"He isn't blinded by his selfishness," Great Builder explained. "Compromises are necessary at times, especially in these situations."

"You aren't trying to scam me, right?" Supreme Thief wondered.

"That would be a mistake," Alexander announced. "We need your power to evolve. The final battle is far from over."

"Fine," Supreme Thief sighed. "What is this strategy?"

"His power source is quite immense," Great Builder admitted without moving his gaze away from the Rulers' Resolve. "We can't win if we give him the time to heal or summon stronger attacks."

"So?" Supreme Thief asked. "Do we have to coordinate? None of us is good at that."

"I am good at that," Great Builder scoffed. "Anyway, I was talking about something that can last for a while. We must trap him inside an environment that can thoroughly destroy his world without ever stopping."

"I have something for that," Supreme Thief declared.

"Same here," Alexander added.

"We have a strategy then," Great Builder stated.

The Rulers' Resolve could hear his opponents' conversation even if grey storms surrounded his figure. He knew what the three had in mind, but he didn't devise any countermeasure. That would go against his nature.

A power founded on the boundless determination that Heaven and Earth had shown until now couldn't resort to tricks. It needed firm faith and conviction. Its foundation would shake otherwise.

Of course, the Rulers' Resolve wouldn't stay still if his opponents revealed everything they were about to do. He could only hear their general plan before they opted for a mental conversation.

Great Builder, Supreme Thief, and Alexander needed to talk about their approach. Their abilities and creations could easily go against each other when creating an environment, so they had to make sure that everything could work in harmony before attacking.

Great Builder led that mental conversation and handled the challenging job of putting Supreme Thief and Alexander on the same page. Luckily for him, Alexander had no problems accepting Supreme Thief's whims, so the trio quickly reached an agreement.

"Finally!" The Rulers' Resolve shouted in his monstrous voice when he saw his three opponents splitting to reach different positions around him.

Supreme Thief flew under the Rulers' Resolve while Alexander teleported to a spot above him. Only Great Builder remained before the expert, but all three kept some distance.

"Did you decide to face what we are about to unleash?" Great Builder asked.

"You can't break me," The Rulers' Resolve stated. "I don't have to do anything to prove that."

The grey storms around the Rulers' Resolve intensified after his announcement. He was ready to face his opponents' offensive and prove the superiority of his world. However, the trio was also ready.

Great Builder closed his eyes and crossed his legs. Yellow strands of energy flowed out of his figure and dispersed around the grey storms to create the foundation for a technique.

Truth be told, the Rulers' Resolve had the chance to intervene. Great Builder had already reached his limits multiple times, so dispersing his energy wouldn't be hard.

Yet, that would force Supreme Thief and Alexander's hand. The two would surround the Rulers' Resolve again with a series of attacks that could hurt him.

The Rulers' Resolve wouldn't admit it loudly, but he knew that Supreme Thief and Alexander were fearsome experts. Only one of them wouldn't be enough to defeat him, but the situation was different with the two working together.

The sole fact that his world could lose was enough to destabilize it. Still, the Rulers' Resolve opted for a type of challenge that could remove that disadvantage. If he won it, there was a high chance that his opponents would be the ones to suffer.

Great Builder continued to spread his energy until yellow branches appeared around the grey storms. They surrounded the Rulers' Resolve's technique and created paths that Supreme Thief and Alexander had to follow.

Alexander knew that his turn had come. His aura exploded with power before calming down and transforming into white water that flowed toward the yellow branches.

The water followed the branches and covered them completely before expanding to create a spherical encirclement meant to contain the grey storms. At that point, the technique solidified to give birth to ice.

Supreme Thief's turn finally arrived. His figure released azure light that condensed and darkened in the form of small drops. Those dense and tiny masses of energy fell on the white encirclement and fused with it to add corrosive properties to its fabric.

The yellow branches, the white ice, and the dark drops started to fuse properly once everything was in place. Three pillars stretched out of the spherical technique while its size increased. Those channels enveloped Supreme Thief, Alexander, and Great Builder to absorb energy directly from their world.

The spherical technique shook as its internal surface expanded forward and clashed with the grey storms. A clash that no one could see happened inside that massive structure, and the Rulers' Resolve's voice grew quiet during the process.

Great Builder couldn't provide much energy, but his task mainly involved the management of his companions' power. Alexander's condition wasn't ideal, but his resilience was almost endless, so he gave everything he could to the technique.

As for Supreme Thief, he was still full of power. The spherical technique benefited greatly from his world, and energy never stopped flowing out of him.

The spherical technique soon turned into something similar to what Noah had summoned. The three experts had created an ability that expressed the full power of their worlds without hindering the different natures of the energy inside it.

Moreover, the general nature of the technique directly opposed what the Rulers' Resolve had summoned. The privileged cultivator had created storms, so Great Builder had pushed for abilities that expressed calm and stillness.

The spherical technique eventually started to expand in the opposite direction too. Its external surface stretched forward and increased its size while its color darkened. Its aura also deepened, and the void around it began to suffer under its sheer weight.

Everything went completely silent once the technique engulfed Supreme Thief, Alexander, and Great Builder. The structure had become so big that the pillars had disappeared in its dark insides. The Rulers' Resolve's voice also became impossible to hear from outside, so no one could understand who was winning.

Nevertheless, the technique behaved like a proper living being. The three experts continued sending energy and managing its growth, so it expanded until it occupied a decent part of the higher plane.

Once the growth stopped, the heavy aura disappeared. The technique didn't become only silent. It also lost any trace of power or weight. It turned into a giant structure that seemed to carry no ability or nature. It became a mere block of dark ice with unclear potential and purpose.

Everyone on the battlefield became aware of that big presence, but no one dared to approach it. Even those involved in the major fights avoided getting close to it.

Chapter 2289 2289. Suicide

June didn't like that Divine Demon had decided to join her battle. Still, her companions didn't share that feeling. Even Marcella appeared pleased to have another opponent to handle.

"So," Marcella exclaimed, "It seems that I'll have the honor to fight you."

"Honor?" Divine Demon repeated. "This will be a slaughter."

"How interesting," Marcella giggled.

Divine Demon raised his hand to point his fingers at Marcella, but June shouted a loud "wait" before he could release his attack. However, Divine Demon completely disregarded that cry and unleashed his energy anyway.

The area around Marcella still had the space dragon's portals. Some waves of energy even flowed through them and tried to pierce the smoke around the privileged cultivator, but they appeared too weak to succeed in the feat.

Divine Demon had the chance to use those portals, but he didn't care about them. A giant torrent of blood-red energy shot out of his forefinger and created a sea that filled a massive chunk of the higher plane.

June and the others found themselves immersed in Divine Demon's energy in no time. None of them had the chance to dodge the attack, and Marcella was in no position to perform evasive maneuvers.

Traces of panic spread among the group, but everyone soon realized that Divine Demon's energy wasn't hurting his companions. June, the odd dragon, Maribel, Sepunia, and the space dragon could swim freely among that power without suffering any injury. They actually felt faster in that environment.

The situation was different for Marcella, and the attack even ended up affecting the teleports. The orange portals crumbled under the massive pressure carried by the blood-red sea, and Marcella barely had the time to cast a defensive technique before the smoke around her vanished.

Divine Demon's attack didn't stop there. The blood-red sea pushed his opponents away and crashed into the sky. Currents spread in every direction as Divine Demon's energy kept crashing on the white layer in an attempt to squash anything affected by his power.

The sea carried an immense amount of energy, so the process lasted for a while. A huge chunk of the sky turned blood-red as the various currents flowing on it created a vast and intricate array of rivers-like structures.

The attack couldn't hurt the sky, but they still destroyed the few chunks of space that had survived until now. Everything crumbled to fall into the void, and the blood-red energy soon followed since it couldn't expand anywhere else.

The central pillar lasted longer than the rivers, but it soon ended up in the same situation. Divine Demon's energy couldn't pierce the sky, so it fell into the void once it lost momentum.

The dispersion of the blood-red energy allowed everyone to see the outcome of the attack. No one felt surprised to see a green light shining over the sky, but the state of the figure hidden inside it managed to cause a reaction in Maribel's expression.

Marcella was still alive, and her aura shone stronger than ever. Her smoke had also retained its destructive and defensive properties, but her body didn't share that healthy condition.

Marcella's body had lost large patches of skin. Green smoke came out of those injuries and tried to hide the damage, but her opponents could see right through it. She even missed her entire left cheek, which she couldn't cover so easily.

The privileged cultivator's condition proved that Divine Demon could hurt her, but that wasn't too surprising. Divine Demon was part of Noah's core team, and he was one of the few who had reached the solid stage. His current potential could very well be unlimited.

June snorted at that sight. She didn't want to win like that, but going against Divine Demon was impossible. So, she decided to opt for an approach that would keep her in the fight.

Sparks ran through June's body as her eyes lit up to radiate an orange glow. Her aura surged, and cracks opened on her skin to release part of the accumulated energy.

June didn't hold anything back as she summoned the strongest type of energy that her Perfect Circuit could produce and filled her body with it. Her flesh seemed unable to withstand so much power, but arrays of sparks appeared over her injuries to temporarily seal them.

Lightning bolts also started to come out of her mouth. June overloaded herself in an attempt to accumulate enough power to kill Marcella. Her skin began to shake as she crouched forward. She was ready to unleash her attack, but a figure materialized next to her before she could shoot forward.

Divine Demon teleported next to June to press a finger on her shoulder. All the lightning bolts inside her suddenly disappeared. June found herself devoid of energy, and her anger burst out once she understood what had happened.

"What are you doing?!" June angrily shouted.

"Determination is a good thing," Divine Demon stated, "But don't mistake it for suicide."

June wanted to complain again, but a terrifying aura came out of Marcella's figure and forced the group to focus on her. The privileged cultivator exploded with power and released even more green smoke until a massive area became part of her domain.

The space dragon acted instinctively. It summoned a series of portals in front of its companions to save them from the expanding smoke, but the latter was too fast.

In less than a second, Divine Demon and June's group became immersed inside a giant cloud that carried Marcella's aura. The smoke didn't hinder their senses or power, but the sheer amount of energy released by the privileged cultivator was enough to alert their survival instincts.

"You are as strong as we predicted," Marcella announced as she stood up and used the smoke around her to fix her injuries.

"Even Heaven and Earth can't calculate my potential," Divine Demon responded. "Lies won't save your life."

"What if our prediction saw you becoming an unreasonable monster capable of virtually everything?" Marcella smiled.

Divine Demon tried to remain silent, but his arrogance eventually had the best of him. "I can accept that."

"Of course you do," Marcella laughed. "It is fortunate or, rather, fated that you have chosen me as your opponent. Caesar really knows more than he shows."

"I know what comes next," Divine Demon declared. "Your world is ideal to fight me. I won't be able to win against you and other nonsense."

"You think too little of yourself," Marcella politely replied.

"I doubt it," Divine Demon exclaimed.

"We have long since acknowledged your power," Marcella explained. "I'm talking about the best in your organization, not only you. It's only normal for you to be our match after reaching the solid stage."

"So?" Divine Demon asked. "Are you trying to buy you some time?"

"Don't worry," Marcella reassured. "Heaven and Earth will grant us the chance to fight for a bit. We'll have enough time to decide who is the best between us."

"Without counters?" Divine Demon mocked.

"I told you already," Marcella stated. "You think too little of yourself. You wield an incredible world. Do you really think counters could work against you?"

"You have my attention," Divine Demon uttered.

Marcella spread her arms, and green roots pierced her skin to stretch around her figure. The smoke in the area fused with those plants and gave birth to flowers that shone with blinding light.

"You wield the power of a higher plane," Marcella announced. "I wonder if my boundlessness surpasses it."

Chapter 2290 2290. Plants

June and the others couldn't help but find similarities between Marcella's technique and Noah's parasite. Still, there was something intrinsically different in the aura radiated by those roots.

Noah's parasite expressed one of the deepest aspects of destruction. It could erode anything in the world, and even the strongest experts from the sky feared its power.

Instead, Marcella's roots didn't have a single nature. They flourished and released intense power that affected their surroundings and altered the environment, but they had no specific effect. They actually resembled proper magical plants.

Marcella's technique tried to affect the void, but its power fell slightly short. The different space-time array shook under the weight of the roots, smoke, and flowers, but it didn't change enough to place them above the ninth rank.

Nevertheless, the green cloud changed and transformed as the roots expanded and more bright flowers came out of their surface. The smoke thickened and started to release a pleasant scent that June and the others couldn't fend off.

The seemingly harmless technique surprised the landmass' group. Divine Demon didn't care too much about the details behind Marcella's ability, but his companions didn't share his confidence.

Even the space dragon interrupted its offensive as it stared at the expanding roots and flowers. It could feel the connection with Heaven and Earth in those plants, but its instincts couldn't completely see them as enemies. They were almost part of a natural environment.

June inspected the immense amount of power released by Marcella for a few seconds before wearing an excited expression. That was exactly what she wanted. She was in front of an opponent with immense energy reserves, and she couldn't wait to challenge her.

However, Divine Demon stepped forward before June could muster her energy again. That gesture reminded her of his previous actions, and her anger inevitably returned.

"You won't get to fight her all by yourself," June declared.

Divine Demon's expression gained rare traces of sympathy when he turned to inspect June. He remained silent as his eyes studied the depths of her power. A smile appeared on his face, but some sadness also arrived.

"What?" June snorted.

"This isn't mere battle intent, right?" Divine Demon replied before glancing at the black sphere where Noah and Caesar were trapped. "You are in a hurry to improve."

"All of us are," June pointed out. "That's why we split our opponents. We all must get our chance to improve."

"What if I told you that you can't defeat her?" Divine Demon wondered.

"I'll prove you wrong," June declared.

"My heir really found a troublesome partner," Divine Demon laughed. "I guess it suits him."

"Noah has nothing to do with this," June corrected.

"I know about your deal," Divine Demon revealed. "Well, I should call it "promise". It takes strength and courage to accept something like that during the cultivation journey. Defying Demon is better than me in that field."

June fell silent, but her eyes retained her anger. Sparks even started to flow over her skin. She was ready to fly past Divine Demon to get her battle if he kept hindering her.

"Your time will come," Divine Demon stated as a blood-red flash ran through his eyes. "You know what you need to improve. You shouldn't worry too much about it."

"Stepping aside isn't my style," June joked.

"You might survive if you jump into this fight," Divine Demon uttered. "You might even achieve something since I'm here, but that would leave you broken, unable to fulfill your real role."

June wanted to complain, but her gaze instinctively went past Divine Demon and fell on the sky. The net's light had become incredibly faint. Anyone could understand that Heaven and Earth were about to break free.

"A true demon knows when to save energy," Divine Demon explained.

"You mention demons only when it suits your argument," June complained.

"And I'm always right," Divine Demon laughed. "Step back for now. We'll all need you afterward."

Divine Demon flew past June to approach Marcella. June wanted to follow him. Her world yearned for battle, but a loud heartbeat echoed out of her figure when her gaze fell back on the sky.

June's injuries began to close as battle intent built inside her. Her very skin started to release crackling noises. There seemed to be a storm raging inside June, but she didn't advance. Instead, she retreated until her figure left the green cloud.

Maribel and the others inspected the scene without saying anything. They had understood what Divine Demon wanted from June, but he didn't say anything about them. It was clear that their role had yet to end.

"It's rare to see your wise side," Marcella teased while Divine Demon flew toward her.

"I'm always wise," Divine Demon commented. "You all simply fail to realize it most of the time."

"Then, tell me," Marcella announced while moving her fingers over the roots coming out of her body.

"Does your wisdom understand the nature of my world?"

"I'm wise enough not to care about it," Divine Demon stated. "I only have to kill you."

"Your companions don't share your confidence," Marcella pointed out while moving her eyes among the rest of the group. "Even that creature is confused."

The space dragon had yet to move. It sniffed and relied on its instincts to study Marcella's technique, but it failed to find proper answers. Even its programming couldn't push it to fight against her again.

"The magical beasts are so simple," Marcella sighed. "Even something improved to target Heaven and Earth can fall for such a low-level trick."

"Tricks can't last long," Sepunia's voice resounded in the area as she teleported next to Divine Demon.

"I've stopped your power once. I can do it again."

"The traitor," Marcella exclaimed.

"Rebel," Maribel's voice arrived in the area as she also teleported next to Divine Demon.

"A cultivator who spent most of her life in hiding," Marcella corrected. "I'm surprised you even achieved a decent understanding of your path. Creation and destruction, life and death, you managed to get somewhere without the complete picture."

"Are you trying to instruct us about the cultivation journey now?" Maribel mocked.

"It's always the same with cultivators," Marcella sighed. "Even the sky lacks expert with such a broad vision. You all spend your life admiring and envying the magical beasts without appreciating a far stronger alternative."

"She is trying to buy herself some time," Maribel declared.

"No," Divine Demon said. "She wants us to admire her power."

"My path," Marcella corrected as branches came out of the roots and created a thick net all around her. "Everyone in the world thinks that the magical beasts have the greatest innate advantage. Everyone is wrong."

Some of the branches grew until they transformed into proper trunks. Leaves and flowers came out of them at that point, and the process continued until immense green crowns covered the whole net.

"I should probably thank your idiocy," Marcella announced. "You have left my path almost completely devoid of competition. I could become a queen without needing to compromise."

"A queen of the weakest type of living being in the world," Sepunia added.

"Your arrogance won't last," Marcella exclaimed. "You'll bow in front of the true leader of the magical plants' field."