

DEMONIC 941

Chapter 941 941. Tough

The arrows were fast, and their size didn't affect the speed that they were capable of. They were made of a pure blue light that left a shining trail wherever they flew.

Noah had sensed the danger thanks to his increased awareness, but he had understood its origin only after the arrows appeared. After all, his senses were screaming non-stop due to the many powerful cultivators fighting around him. There was a limit to how accurate his perception could be in that situation.

Also, he wasn't one of the targets of the arrows. They were aiming for the leaders of the factions.

Elder Julia saw the attack and retreated. Each arrow had the power of the peak of the fifth rank, and there were four of them targeting her.

Luckily for the Elder, the arrows didn't seem able to make sharp turns since they only managed to shift their trajectory slightly when she performed an evasive maneuver.

However, they were fast and massive. The shockwaves that they created flung Elder Julia in the distance, even if she had stepped away from their trajectory.

Noah's eyes widened at that sight, and he started to retreat. He wasn't worried about Elder Julia's state since the sudden attack didn't hit her directly. The problem was the enemy in the solid stage that was now lacking an opponent.

The man in the solid stage that Elder Julia had fought until then reacted as Noah feared. He analyzed the battlefield for less than an instant before diving from his higher position in the sky to help Icy Stare.

The fact that she was having trouble against Noah was evident. It wasn't hard for the solid stage cultivator of the Empire to choose who to help, especially since Noah's status made him famous.

Taking down the Demon Prince of the Hive would show how hard it was to defeat the Empire. That higher-up of the defending army couldn't let go of such a chance.

Noah didn't care about fame, and that battlefield wasn't the right place where to test how well he would do against an enemy in the solid stage.

He retreated without any hesitation and spewed flames on his path to hinder the charge of the cultivator hunting him. However, that only gave him a few seconds since Elder Julia's opponent used a defensive spell to cross the flames and launched an attack once he was close enough to his target.

Noah saw three metallic birds forming right in the middle of his flames. They started to flap their wings as soon as their bodies stabilized, and they shot at high speed against him, uncaring of the fire that surrounded them.

Noah could only think about his survival in that situation, which pushed him to let go of any restraint.

Black smoke started to come out of his body and took the shape of a scaled armor in a matter of instants. Four arms formed from his fuming torso too, and they wielded the copies of the Demonic Sword that had appeared while Noah cast the Demonic Form spell.

Noah executed the second form of his martial art and launched the Black Hole spell that had hovered above his head until then. After that, he turned to continue his retreat.

He didn't want to spread his corrosive smoke near his allies, but there was a cultivator in the solid stage against him. Noah wasn't going to hold back in that situation.

A fissure appeared among the sea of flames, but the metallic birds didn't disappear with Noah's attack. Cracks spread on their dark-silver bodies, but they kept flying toward him at a slower speed.

They met the Black Hole spell at that point, and an explosion happened. Still, even that attack couldn't block all the birds. Two of them fell apart during the detonation, but the last one used the metallic shards of its companions to protect itself and heal part of its body.

Noah stopped retreating when he sensed that. The spell of a solid stage cultivator was scary and powerful, but it seemed that he could handle it if he used his most potent offensive.

He felt ready to face him if necessary. After all, he knew that Elder Julia would soon rejoin the battlefield.

Four arms rose once again from his torso, but a dangerous sensation suddenly appeared on his right. The temperature around him dropped, and he noticed that ice was spreading in that area of the sky.

Noah didn't even have time to curse since dozens of icy-figures took form in the frozen sky and shot toward him. It seemed that Icy Stare had managed to follow him since he had stopped to launch his previous attacks, and she had cornered him in a challenging situation.

Another fissure appeared among the black smoke released during his escape. Noah didn't stop the second form of his martial art since the remaining bird was still the most dangerous attack coming at him.

As for the icy-figures, he spewed flames at them, hoping that they would gain him enough time to deal with whatever would come next.

The corrosive smoke had affected the structure of the metallic bird, and the slash destroyed it once for all. Instead, the flames wrecked the icy-figures and melted their shards, but they didn't manage to reach the frozen sky.

Noah saw more shapes taking form inside the ice spreading around him and sensed that the solid stage cultivator was about to cast another spell since he had caught up with him. The same scene was about to repeat itself, and Noah didn't know if he could handle it without revealing Snore.

However, a torrent of wind blades suddenly swept an area inside the black smoke and revealed the solid stage cultivator who used five metal birds to protect himself. Elder Julia reappeared on the battlefield too, and she nodded at Noah before shooting toward her opponent.

Noah's reptilian eyes became cold at that point. He could focus on his sneaky opponent now that the Elder was keeping the major threat busy. Also, he was already in his Demonic Form. He could worry less about his safety.

A horizontal fissure appeared in the army of icy-figures and turned them into nothing more than shards and maimed shapes. The second form of his martial art reached for the layers of ice too, and it pierced them without any problem.

Noah spread his consciousness when he saw that the ice had stopped spreading. His senses sharpened as he searched for the cultivator that had tried to trap him into fighting against the solid stage expert.

A tremor swept Icy Stare as soon as Noah found her. She had started to retreat when Elder Julia returned, but Noah had turned his attention toward his original opponent too quickly for her to escape the range of his senses.

It didn't take much for her to sense a pair of vertical pupils on her back. Icy Stare didn't need to turn to know that Noah was right behind her, trying to hunt her before she could return to her allies.

Chapter 942 942. Instants

Icy Stare didn't commit a mistake. She didn't underestimate Noah, and she had even predicted that he would block her superior's attack.

Her problem was that Elder Julia had returned on the scene too soon, even after she had endured the shockwaves generated by the arrows. She didn't try to sneak up on the solid stage cultivator of the Empire either before rejoining the battlefield.

Icy Stare could only guess that Noah was so important to the Hive that even its higher-ups would ignore the possibility of taking a powerful opponent by surprise to help him.

The cultivators of the Empire didn't have that mentality. That organization had never been short on assets, and its members rarely valued themselves as more important than their mission.

They had learnt to sacrifice everything for the greater good of their god. The only real recognition they could get would arrive once they reached the sixth rank and became a powerhouse.

That was the reason for her flawed judgment. Elder Julia had come back as soon as she could to help Noah, which put Icy Stare in a troublesome situation.

Icy Stare left a trail of ice as she retreated to return to her allies. Countless shapes formed inside those frozen areas too, but nothing seemed able to stop the Demon Prince of the Hive chasing after her.

Noah waved his blades non-stop as he charged directly through the thick ice and half-formed figures. The Demonic Form gave him all the protection he needed, and his physical strength made him ignore any hindrance on his path.

Also, the corrosive smoke released by his figure and the black lines shooting from his weapons destroyed any form of defense that tried to slow down his advance. Icy Stare would be able to stop him only if she decided to go all out.

However, that would require her to freeze a larger part of the sky, which meant that she had to remain in the same area for a few seconds. That delay would be enough for Noah to catch up, so she could only resort to those improvised methods.

Noah kept on slashing and charging through the ice. Saber-shaped runes had appeared around him too and were already feeding on the primary energy created with his attacks.

Even if Noah had acted as soon as he found his opponent, Icy Stare still had a chance to reach a couple of her allies that were fighting against Daniel and Amos.

Noah didn't want his battle to end up in a group fight. It would be harder to kill anyone if he had to disperse his Demonic Form to avoid hurting his allies. So, he kept on chasing and pressing Icy Stare, waiting for a chance to appear.

Noah was faster than his opponent, even if he was flying through a frozen sky. He was slowly catching up with her, but her allies were drawing near too. Still, Noah managed to obtain a clear vision of Icy Stare at some point. His smoke had destroyed enough ice that he could see the back of his opponent and her head.

The walls of Noah's sea of consciousness trembled as soon as he caught a glimpse of Icy Stare. A long ethereal saber formed in front of him and shot toward his opponent.

The Mental Saber spell was an attack that Noah rarely had the chance to use. Most of the heroic assets of the world knew about that ability, and they would do their best to avoid giving him a clear shot.

Also, cultivators in the fifth rank were resourceful. They had ways to deal with mental attacks, even if they remained hard to defend against.

However, Icy Stare didn't have time to cast specific spells. She could only activate a generic defensive item when she sensed the ethereal saber coming in her direction.

A green vortex appeared behind her. It attracted any form of energy through its suction force and destabilized it in the process. When Noah's mental attack reached it, its body became even more ethereal, but part of it crossed that defense and landed on Icy Stare's head.

The walls of Icy Stare's mental sphere shook after the impact with the ethereal saber. The tremors weren't strong since Noah's spell had lost part of its power, and her mind was sturdy, but she still slowed down her retreat.

Also, the ice around her stopped spreading, which limited the creation of icy-figures.

Icy Stare's focus was on stabilizing her mind. She couldn't do anything to escape from the range of Noah's martial art.

Noah was already wielding the copies of the Demonic Sword and fusing them into one slash by the time Icy Stare's managed to stop the tremors. Her consciousness had returned only to make her aware of the immense danger behind her back.

It was in the instant right before Noah launched his attack that the central buildings in the districts near the floating structure lit up again and shot another series of blue arrows.

Noah had paid more attention to those areas after he saw the first series of arrows. That made him aware that one arrow was coming in his direction as soon as they left the shining buildings.

'Not now!' Noah cursed in his mind as he saw the giant arrow targeting him.

He had noticed the attack in time to dodge it while avoiding the shockwaves that it created. Yet, he would need to start the evasive maneuver now to do so. If he wanted to escape from that powerful attack, he had to stop his martial art.

Noah would be lying if he said that he didn't think about suffering an injury to kill Icy Stare. However, he was right in the middle of a battlefield filled with heroic existences.

That thought had arrived after he stopped his attack and flew downward to step out of the arrow's trajectory. It was needless to say that there was a lot of dissatisfaction in his mind too.

The arrow flew past Icy Stare without causing her any harm before disappearing on the horizon. The cultivators managing that defensive measure had protected her at the last second, giving her a perfect chance to regroup with her allies.

Icy Stare didn't hesitate to pick up speed again and fly toward the group fight. Her mind still felt a little sore, but she was overall fine.

Noah saw her reaching for the cultivators fighting against Daniel and Amos and dispersed the Demonic Form. He needed to help them now, and he couldn't do it with the corrosive smoke threatening to kill them.

However, a white light suddenly burst out of Daniel's figure and filled that area of the sky before Icy Stare could reach it. When the light dispersed, everyone could see how one of his opponents had become nothing more than a pile of bones.

Daniel had killed a rank 5 cultivator in the gaseous stage!

Still, a familiar red light surrounded the pile of bones and replaced it with a series of bones belonging to multiple magical beasts.

Chapter 943 943. Chase

The Second Life formation was still in place, and all the invaders became aware of that after Daniel killed his opponent.

They had always known that the Empire was bound to have robust defensive measures in its main territory. Still, they had believed that having more assets would eventually grant them a victory.

However, that belief had started to waver as the invaders learnt about the many defenses of the Empire.

There were battle formations capable of injuring rank 5 cultivators, arrows flying through the battlefields and disturbing fights, and even the Second Life formation. On top of that, the Empire had many powerful cultivators ready to fight for their lives.

Also, the invaders didn't know if the Empire had some other defensive methods hidden somewhere.

The situation couldn't help but appear grim. Casualties were inevitable in a war, but the Empire seemed capable of making the invaders suffer.

Hesitation spread among the attackers. Many of them wondered if they should give up on those lands and let the powerhouses handle the war. However, they quickly suppressed that thought.

They were fighting for techniques and resources useful in the cultivation journey. Taking the Empire out of the political picture would give to the other organizations more lands where they could grow.

Letting the powerhouses handle the matter would remove any gain from the eventual victory. If a battle between rank 6 cultivators were to happen in those lands, there would be nothing to retrieve afterward.

Also, the fact that the Empire was doing its best to appear challenging to conquer now didn't mean that it would be like that forever. Each defensive measure depleted a large number of resources. After all, they were formations that could threaten cultivators in the fifth rank!

The invaders could use the same approach that they had used in the new continent and slowly exhaust the reserves of the Empire. That would go against their original idea to assert their dominance right away, but it would still place them in a favorable position.

Of course, they would still try their best to defeat the Empire as soon as possible, even if they knew that the war might take a while to end.

Icy Stare kept on flying toward her ally, uncaring that Noah was right behind her, ready to join the group battle. On the other hand, Daniel and Amos were pressing the remaining cultivator with a sea of spells.

Multicolored flames created whip-like forms that tried to entangle the soldier in the gaseous stage of the fifth rank. A halo made of pure white light surrounded them to enhance their destructive properties.

The expert of the Empire could dodge the multicolored fire, but the light around the flames flickered from time to time and radiated a dangerous shockwave every time its brightness spiked.

Noah couldn't help but analyze Daniel's light in the back of his mind. Its energy carried properties similar to the corrosive smoke of the Demonic Form, but it was in the shape of a calm halo that hurt everything that it touched.

Also, Daniel's light didn't have the same violence as Noah's smoke. It didn't express a destructive meaning. It was something similar to a forced purification.

'Similar effects with opposite meanings,' A random thought appeared in Noah's mind as he chased after Icy Stare, who had started to use her ice to help her ally.

Icy Stare knew that such improvised attacks couldn't stop Noah. So, she chose to do her best to keep her ally alive to preserve her chance to survive.

Hundreds of icy-shapes flew toward the duo from the Udye family. Daniel and Amos had to redirect their attacks toward Icy Stare's spells since the threat of a cultivator in the liquid stage was too great for them to ignore it.

Daniel's light expanded and created a spherical defensive membrane that melted the outer layers of the icy-shapes when they touched it. Amos supported him by enveloping their figures with his multicolored flames.

Amos and Daniel would have a hard time if Icy Stare focused all her attention on those spells. Yet, she could only launch basic attacks that reflected her individuality with Noah chasing her.

The flames and the white light defeated the last of the icy-shapes right before crossing the layer of multicolored flames. Still, there were now vulnerable spots in their protections, and the cultivator in the gaseous stage didn't hesitate to exploit that temporary weakness.

A small lightning bolt flew through the empty spots of the duo's defenses and exploded when it crossed the layer of flames. The detonation made the fire and light disperse and replaced them with a gray cloud.

Icy Stare reached her companion at that point and started to cast a spell only to interrupt it when she saw two black lines coming in her direction. Layers made of ice appeared in front of her as she resumed her retreat, taking her ally with her.

It didn't pass enough time for icy-shapes to form though. Noah's slashes pierced right through the ice and reached for the cultivators behind it before exploding into a cloud of corrosive smoke.

Everything had happened so quickly that both clouds were still in place even when Noah reached his companions. Only then did the gray smoke disperse to reveal the two nobles.

Daniel was fine. A dense layer of light acted as a second skin and made his entire figure shine. Yet, there were cracks in that protection, which indicated that the lightning bolt had managed to inflict some superficial damage.

On the other hand, Amos had lost part of his torso in the explosion. Almost the entirety of the left side of his upper body was gone, and Noah could even see his internal organs from his injury.

There was something peculiar about Amos' stance too. He stood in front of Daniel, right in the trajectory where the lightning bolt had flown. It seemed that Amos had decided to step forward right before the lightning bolt exploded to protect Daniel.

That kind of injury wasn't enough to kill him. Amos' expression was grim due to all the pain he was experiencing, but he was alive, and his centers of power were intact.

Regrowing the internal organs and arm lost in the battle wouldn't be a problem with the right drugs. The important thing was that his journey as a cultivator wasn't over.

Daniel placed his hand on the left side of Amos' neck, and his second skin shattered to converge its light on his wound. Relief soon appeared on Amos' expression, and his injury stopped bleeding in a matter of seconds.

Noah's eyebrows arched when he saw that Daniel's light had that ability. He didn't know how strong its healing properties were, but it was something that expressed his individuality nonetheless.

Amos nodded at some point, and Daniel retracted his hand. The three of them then turned to look at the black cloud since it had finally started to disperse.

Once the cloud vanished, Noah could see red light enveloping a magical beast cut in two halves and Icy Stare's escaping figure.

Chapter 944 944. Rescue

Icy Stare had managed to escape from Noah's attack once again, but her ally wasn't as lucky. By the time the black cloud dispersed, the Second Life formation had already replaced the cultivator in the gaseous stage with a magical beast.

The Hive had managed to kill two experts in the fifth rank, but the Second Life formation had rendered those achievements vain.

Icy Stare was too far away by then. She had kept on retreating toward the floating structure and had yet to change the course of her flight. Noah could only think that she had decided to withdraw for good, that her role in the first battle over the Empire's domain was over.

Noah glanced at Amos before studying the entire battlefield. The invaders were doing well overall. A few casualties among the rank 5 cultivators of the Empire had happened, but the Second Life formation had always intervened to save their lives.

However, the same didn't happen for the heroic assets in the fourth rank. They would die without any hope to see a red light bringing them back from the dead.

As for the invaders' side, it saw casualties among its ranks too, but in far lower quantity. The three forces outnumbered the assets of the Empire and could use that advantage to limit the losses suffered on the battlefield.

Still, the formations of the Empire were annoying to deal with. Many powerful cultivators had suffered injuries when they fought against the Tyrannosaurus, and the blue arrows worsened their situation.

Even if the invaders saw fewer deaths, the quantity of wounded and incapacitated cultivators on their side was immense.

Noah was about to send Amos away and search for a suitable battle when the central buildings in the districts near the floating structure lit up again and released the now-familiar blue arrows. There were two of them coming in his direction at that time, but one was slightly tilted and didn't point at him.

It took Noah less than an instant to understand that Daniel had become a target too, and quick math in his mind made him realize that his ally wouldn't have to face the shockwave if he relied on his speed. Even Amos would be in danger since there was a limit to how fast he could fly with his injury.

Noah didn't say anything and grabbed the two nobles from their robes before throwing them upward. Then, he activated the Merging spell to follow them and perform an evasive maneuver.

Daniel and Amos became aware of what had happened only when they saw the arrows missing them by a few hundreds of meters. Still, they managed to stop their momentum only when they were even farther away from their original position.

Noah reached them one instant later, and he resumed his analysis of the battlefield without even glancing at them.

"Thank you," Daniel muttered. He knew that he wouldn't have dodged the arrow if it wasn't for Noah.

Even as a cultivator of the light element, Daniel didn't have access to a defensive spell that could protect him from that powerful arrow. Noah didn't have it either if he didn't count Snore, but his awareness allowed him to react in time to escape that attack.

Amos didn't say anything. His life wasn't in danger, but he was in no condition to fight. It would be better if he left the battlefield immediately so that he could start to recover.

Meanwhile, Noah found his other allies.

Elder Austin and Elder Ingrid were busy fighting two rank 5 cultivators in the liquid stage, but it seemed that they had the upper hand in the battle. Elder Justin was against a soldier on the same level, and they appeared to be even. Danielle was in a similar situation, but the threat of the arrows was affecting the power that she could express.

The Elders of the Council were handling the cultivators in the gaseous stage. The enemies outnumbered them, but there was an Elder in the liquid stage among them who balance their power.

The only ally that was in trouble was Elder Julia. She didn't lack the expertise or power to match her opponent in the solid stage, but the many arrows flying toward her kept interrupting her offensive.

The same went for Elder Regina and Andrew Elbas. They were against opponents with a similar cultivation level, but the blue arrows aimed at them tilted the scales of their battles toward the enemies.

Noah didn't use much mental energy during that battle. The runes used the primary energy in the environment, and he had relied on the mental spells only a few times. Also, he had activated the Demonic Form only for a short while, and the same went for the Black Hole spell.

He had mental energy to spare, especially in a place where he found it hard to go all out.

Noah activated the Divine Deduction spell and reviewed the few exchanges with Elder Julia's opponent. He soon accepted that he didn't feel confident in facing him without Snore's help. Yet, he wouldn't be alone in the battle, and his support could benefit the entire war.

Noah turned toward Daniel, but the latter spoke before he could even say a word. "Go, I'll just use the divine emblem if an arrow comes in my way again."

Daniel knew that Noah couldn't act as a bodyguard. His power gave him the chance to make a real difference on the battlefield, and restricting him to one place would be an insult to his strength.

Noah limited himself to nod at Daniel before activating the Merging spell to fly where Elder Julia and her opponent fought. The two of them exchanged a series of powerful attacks that affected a large area of the sky and shattered the air with every clash.

Countless wind slashes assaulted a series of metallic birds. Elder Julia's offensive appeared endless, but she hid much more under that sheer display of power.

Her individuality made her attacks hard to sense, and she could create slashes anywhere in the area that her consciousness could cover. On the other hand, the cultivator of the Empire had sturdy and robust birds that could withstand dozens of those attacks before showing some cracks.

The only issue was that Elder Julia could attack him from any side while the birds had a limited area of effect. The leader of the Empire was a bad match for the Elder.

However, five shining arrows suddenly flew through the barrage of wind slashes. They forced Elder Julia to stop her offensive and retreat.

She had learnt to sense that defensive measure by then, but her opponent would always try to hinder her path with his metallic birds. His timing was quite impressive too, which made her guess that he was in contact with the cultivators controlling the shining buildings.

Elder Julia ended up suffering small injuries and depleting a lot of energy with every clash, but something was different at that time since no birds appeared on her path.

When she turned to look at her opponent, she saw that a black cloud had appeared in its place.

Chapter 945 945. Idea

Noah had released two black lines as soon as he saw the blue arrows forcing Elder Julia to perform an evasive maneuver. His attack stopped the solid stage cultivator's offensive and forced him to use his metallic birds to defend himself.

The black lines couldn't pierce the cultivator's spell, but Noah detonated them once they were close enough to inflict some damage. The corrosive smoke that they contained enveloped Elder Julia's opponent in a threatening cloud.

A series of wind slashes soon pierced the cloud and ravaged its insides. Elder Julia had immediately understood what was happening, and she didn't hesitate to launch an attack once the arrows had flown past her.

The black smoke affected the power of the slashes, but they still managed to reach its center, where the expert of the Empire was using his defensive methods to fend off the corrosive gas. It was needless to say that the arrival of the new threat forced him to reveal more of his power.

Noah felt a dangerous sensation surging from the back of his mind and warning him that something was coming. He couldn't pinpoint the cause due to the many threats on the battlefield, but he retreated anyway.

Messing with cultivators in the last stage of the fifth rank wasn't a matter that he could take lightly. He was a hybrid in the upper tier, and his abilities were already above those that cultivators on his same level were capable of casting.

Nevertheless, he knew that one serious attack from someone in the solid stage could hurt him badly, and he preferred to avoid that outcome.

The cause of the dangerous sensation turned out to be both the districts near the floating structure and the cultivator inside the black cloud. Two blue arrows shot in his direction, and a series of metallic feathers came out of the remains of the black smoke to reach for him.

Noah promptly activated the Merging spell to escape from the trajectory of the spells. He didn't need to use that ability, but he wanted to put as much distance as he could between him and the feathers to counterattack.

He was already far away when the arrows crossed his previous position, but the feathers were still after him. Noah could only turn at that point and use the saber-shaped runes around him to face the incoming spell.

A loud clash happened. Metallic feathers and black sabers met mid-air and destroyed themselves. Noah's runes had reached the power of the solid stage by that time, and the soldier's spell wasn't as sturdy as the birds. Both attacks failed to cross the opponent's barrage.

The cloud of black smoke had dispersed when the feathers shot toward Noah. The expert of the Empire reappeared in the open, showing how both Noah and Elder Julia didn't manage to inflict much damage.

There were metal feathers all over his body, and the same birds from before circled him at high speed to create a protected area with the soft shockwaves that they released.

A few trails of blood seeped through the feathers and flowed alongside his body until they fell below. The cultivator of the Empire had suffered some light wounds, but it was unclear who caused those injuries.

Still, his expression showed his immense anger and irritation.

"Iron Feathers is an expert with earth aptitude," Elder Julia's voice resounded inside Noah's head at that moment. "Be careful, Prince. His attacks might appear straightforward, but he has a large variety of them."

Elder Julia continued to convey what she had learnt about Iron Feathers during their battle. The truth was that she didn't want Noah to join her fight, but the blue arrows were giving her a hard time.

She needed help, and Noah could hurt her opponent. Also, he was the only one in the Hive who could help her without risking his life.

After all, Noah had been a lone cultivator and had survived dangerous missions. His survival instincts were some of the best among the heroic assets of the entire world. There weren't many cultivators that had experienced so many adventures and benefited from all of them.

"Arrows," Noah replied and activated the Merging spell again to sprint downward. Elder Julia understood the meaning behind his word and performed an evasive maneuver too.

Less than an instant later, four blue arrows crossed their previous positions and disappeared in the distance.

Elder Julia couldn't hide her surprise. She was a whole stage above Noah, and her mental sphere was almost on par with her cultivation level. According to common sense, she had to sense the arrows before him.

Yet, Noah had perceived the incoming danger even before it left the districts. Elder Julia couldn't do that. It was as if Noah had predicted that the Empire would aim for the two of them.

"Can you predict the future now?" Elder Julia asked as she launched another series of wind slash. From her tone, Noah could sense that she wanted a serious answer.

"Beast instincts," Noah calmly replied before slashing multiple times with his weapons. Both attacks slowed down once they neared the metallic birds tracing circles around Iron Feathers. However, they didn't manage to stop them completely.

The wind slashes clashed with the birds and feathers, but they didn't do much. Iron Feathers' defenses were too strict to suffer from an attack that he had already seen before. The same happened for the black lines, and Noah had to make them detonate, hoping that they could affect him.

Another black cloud appeared in the cultivator's spot, but the smoke dispersed quickly since Iron Feathers controlled his defenses to expand their aura of influence.

Noah could finally see Iron Feathers' state now. The expert of the Empire had a few cuts on his shoulders, and various spots on his body lacked skin. It seemed that the corrosive smoke had managed to seep through his defenses at some point.

Still, those small wounds meant nothing, especially for a cultivator in the solid stage. His anger came from the fact that someone on a lower level was interfering with his plans.

Noah's status didn't mean anything in his eyes now. Iron Feathers could only see a cultivator that didn't respect his power.

Iron Feathers couldn't let that happen any longer. Massive four-winged birds appeared out of nowhere and joined the other smaller ones in their flight around him. They even tried to imitate the cries of beasts similar to them. However, they only managed to produce clinking sounds as their beaks opened and closed.

The aura that he radiated was violent and filled with his feelings. Noah could understand the mindset of his opponent, with one look at how his influence was affecting the entirety of the area.

"We can take it slowly," Elder Julia's voice resounded in Noah's mind. "There has to be a limit to his reserves, and we are two against one."

Noah wanted to agree with her words, but he had an idea about taking someone's dantian even with the Second Life formation.

Chapter 946 946. Trick

Noah didn't know much about the Second Life formation. He had learnt a bit about its functioning and requirements from Andrew Elbas, but even the Royals couldn't be sure about every detail.

After all, that was a legendary formation that those Mortal Lands didn't see for millennia. The records concerning it were bound to be imprecise and fragmented.

Still, even that little information gave Noah an idea. The Second Life formation would activate only after a cultivator's death, which meant that he could seize anything he wanted from his opponents before that moment.

In theory, Noah could eat the dantian of his opponent before killing him. Even a miraculous formation couldn't affect his meal once the "Breath" inside that center of power became primary energy for his body.

Of course, Noah had thought about that when he first saw the Second Life formation, but he never had the chance to test it out. Everyone in the world knew about his hybrid status, and none of them would ever let Noah become too close in battle.

However, his recent breakthroughs and upgrades of his techniques gave Noah some confidence. It wasn't ideal to use that confidence against a cultivator in the solid stage, but Elder Julia was with him, and he knew that her abilities could create the chance for a sneak attack.

"Yes, we could take it slowly and drain him," Noah said to Elder Julia with a mental message sent through his inscribed notebook. "But we can also try to take him out in one assault."

A cold light shone in Elder Julia's eyes when she heard those words. If that idea came from any other cultivator in the liquid stage, she would ignore it. Yet, she became interested since it came from Noah.

"Speak," Elder Julia said, but Noah suddenly waned her about the arrival of the arrows. The two of them then performed evasive maneuvers to dodge the incoming attacks while keeping their attention on the environment.

Iron Feathers couldn't take the initiative in the battle. As much as he hated to admit it, Noah was strong, and his abilities could threaten him.

Fighting when outnumbered was tricky, mostly since both his opponents were dangerous existences. Iron Feathers could only wait for the two of them to attack or the arrows to make a move.

When the blue arrows forced the two cultivators of the Hive to move, Iron Feathers controlled his three four-winged birds to shoot toward his opponents.

Noah couldn't help but curse in his mind when he sensed that two birds were coming in his direction. He could understand that Iron Feathers was mad that he had interrupted his battle, but he didn't expect him to be so set on killing him.

What was worse was that those massive birds were stronger than the previous ones. They were faster and bigger, but their bodies appeared thinner and less stable.

Noah knew that he didn't have time to activate the spells required by the second form of his martial art, and his saber-shaped runes were still absorbing primary energy.

However, he had something powerful that he could put to use immediately without any preparation.

Noah roared and slashed with his weapons. The world lost its light for an instant as his flames, and black lines clashed with the four-winged birds coming toward him.

Metal shards fell off their bodies as the attack swept them, but they continued their charge through the sea of flames and corrosive smoke nonetheless. Theirs was a suicidal charge aimed only to kill their target.

Noah felt an immense amount of danger coming from those constructs. Black smoke started to come out from his body, and his figure became blurry as he activated the Merging spell.

Nevertheless, he didn't run away from the birds. Instead, he charged directly at them.

The saber-shaped runes formed a conical cocoon to increase his piercing ability, and he synchronized the slash of his weapons so that they would release the black lines when they collided with the birds.

The fact that his martial arts had ranged effects didn't mean that they were meant for long-distance battles. Noah's specialty was still the melee combat, and his forms were more potent when executed directly on his opponents.

A silent clash happened mid-air. Both Noah and the birds continued to fly in their respective directions even after they met, but the effects of the impact revealed themselves soon.

The saber-shaped runes in front of Noah fell apart, and deep cuts appeared on his shoulders even if the scaled armor was almost complete. However, the birds had it worse since a long cut severed their bodies in half.

Noah didn't stop flying forward and shouted a series of mental messages directed at Elder Julia. "Can you hide my presence?"

Elder Julia had dealt with her four-winged bird by then and felt relieved to hear that Noah was fine. Still, his question caught her by surprise.

"It would only last for a few breaths," Elder Julia said after a short moment. Her individuality could work as a cover for certain existences, but Noah's aura was too violent for her to hide it.

Also, they were against a cultivator in the solid stage. There was a limit to how much she could do in that situation.

"I'm coming toward you," Noah said when he heard her answer. "Pressure him when I make my move."

The four-winged birds behind Noah exploded in a storm of metallic shards when their bodies fell apart. Yet, he had never stopped flying forward, so he had escaped their area of destruction before it even started.

Noah reached Elder Julia instantly, and a strong gale came out of her body to fend off the corrosive smoke that he was releasing.

The gale carried subtle effects too. It struggled to seep through the black cloud forming around Noah, but it hid his aura when it reached his body. Then, black flames appeared in multiple spots around Iron Feathers, and black lines came out of it.

The cultivator of the Empire controlled the two-winged birds around him to fend off the attacks and the black smoke that they released in their explosion, but Elder Julia stepped in at that moment.

A torrent of wind slashes swept Iron Feathers, and Elder Julia used all her tricks to force her opponent into a defensive stance. Some of her attacks would be invisible or hide under other spells to unleash their power when they were close enough to inflict some damage.

Noah's offensive didn't stop either, and the black cloud around Iron Feathers grew as his attacks kept on exploding against his defenses.

Nevertheless, the blue arrows soon appeared and forced the offensive of the cultivators of the Hive to a stop. Also, Iron Feathers followed the arrival of the arrows with a torrent of metal feathers that shot toward the cloud created by Noah.

Elder Julia performed an evasive maneuver, but nothing came out of the black cloud next to her. The arrows and feathers pierced it without meeting any resistance, and their passage dispersed the smoke, which revealed no one inside it.

Chapter 947 947. Flaw

Iron Feathers felt confused when he saw that Noah wasn't inside the black cloud. However, that feeling only lasted for an instant since a dangerous sensation rose from the back of his mind and forced him to focus.

Iron Feathers turned as he followed the origin of that sensation and saw Noah charging at him. He wasn't using the Demonic Form because Elder Julia's spell wouldn't have been able to hide him otherwise, and he had even dispersed his other spells.

The Demonic Sword laid on his shoulder, and he kept his arms spread as he neared the cultivator of the Empire. Elder Julia's protection had lasted enough to get Noah close to the expert, but there were still fifty meters left to cross to reach him.

Noah could cross that distance in less than an instant, but Iron Feathers had all the time to control his defenses too. The few feathers remaining around his body and the two-winged birds around him pointed at Noah as they prepared themselves to attack.

However, Noah had already attacked. The walls of his mental sphere had started to tremble since he saw Iron Feathers turning, and an ethereal saber formed in front of him. The Mental Saber spell to shoot toward his opponent while he was still busy controlling his metal weapons.

As a mental attack, the ethereal saber was extremely fast. Also, Noah was close to Iron Feathers already, so his attack landed on his head even before he could understand what threat was coming for him.

Iron Feathers lost control of his spells when the saber hit his sea of consciousness. His vision went dark, and his consciousness retracted inside his sphere to stop the tremors that swept its walls.

Generally speaking, Noah's mental attack would often incapacitate his opponents for a few seconds, enough for him to complete the preparations for the second form of his martial art. Still, Iron Feathers was an old monster in the solid stage with a mental sphere that matched his dantian in terms of power.

His mind carried the experience accumulated through centuries of cultivation and battles. The Mental Saber spell incapacitated him only for a fraction of an instant before reopening his eyes and using all his concentration to reclaim control over his metal weapons.

Yet, Noah had reached him at that point.

Noah looked at Iron Feathers' bloodshot eyes and couldn't help but feel some respect for that existence. He could see how the cultivator of the Empire didn't stop the tremors in his mind and was forcing himself to regain control of his mental faculties in a desperate attempt to survive.

Iron Feathers was mighty and worthy of the respect due to a cultivator who had reached the last stage of the fifth rank. Still, Noah had to kill him to tilt the scales of the war on the invaders' favor and to seize his dantian.

The metallic feathers and birds shot toward Noah as he swung his arms toward his opponent. Iron Feathers wasn't ready to give up just yet. After all, he only needed to kill Noah before he could touch him.

A metallic bird aimed for Noah's right shoulder, but he didn't do anything to stop it. A feather went for his left eye, and Noah tilted his head to dodge it. Another bird tried to target his heart, but the Demonic Sword shot forward to slow down its assault.

A third bird tried to attack from his left side now that the living weapon was gone, but Noah's hand shot to grab the metallic puppet by its neck. Then, Noah's right hand touched Iron Feathers' low-waist.

Iron Feathers saw everything happening in slow motion. Noah blocked only the attacks that could threaten his life and let the others stab his body. His expression didn't change either. His reptilian eyes expressed only determination and didn't show any pain or struggle.

Then, Iron Feathers saw Noah's right arm reaching for his low-waist. Noah had arched his fingers during the attack, and his opponent couldn't help but think of his hand as the claw of a magical beast. Noah's pointy black nails helped in conveying that image too.

Iron Feathers hoped that his skin and muscles could resist for even an instant so that he could use his spells to stop the assailant. After all, his body was in the sixth rank of the lower tier. There was a chance that it could give him an instant.

However, he understood that all his hopes were nothing more than dreams when the tip of Noah's nails touched his skin.

Noah didn't feel any resistance at all as he trusted his arm forward. His hand pierced Iron Feathers' low-waist and came out from his back, holding a mixture of blood, muscles, and organs. There was even a shining spherical organ in Noah's palm, which made him retreat his arm quickly to secure it.

Iron Feathers' eyes had widened when he lost his connection with his dantian. He glanced at the arm stabbed in his waist before moving his gaze toward Noah, who was observing him.

Noah's vertical pupils trembled. It seemed that he was ready to launch another Mental Saber spell. Yet, no attack formed in front of him. Noah had just prepared the attack in case the cultivator of the Empire tried to kill himself before he managed to eat the dantian.

After all, Noah didn't know the limits of the Second Life formation. The centers of power were part of an entity, especially when it came to existences in the fifth rank. They would express their individuality and be connected forever with them.

There was the chance that the light of Second Life formation would envelop Iron Feathers' severed dantian even if it were outside his body. Noah couldn't risk that. He had to expose Elder Julia's hiding abilities and suffer a few injuries to reach that result.

So, Noah prepared a Mental Saber spell in case Iron Feathers tried to use his mental energy to control the metallic weapons around him.

Noah retracted his arm and threw the contents of his palm in his mouth before grabbing the expert again. His eyes never left Iron Feathers during the process, but he could see how the cultivator of the Empire lost every hope when his dantian entered Noah's mouth.

A dense amount of energy filled Noah's body. His cells destroyed Iron Feathers' solid "Breath" and turned it into primary energy that nourished all his tissues.

His wounds stopped bleeding and started to heal under the influence of that intense wave of energy, but Noah's focus was on the "Breath" of the earth element still inside his body.

After every part of Iron Feathers' "Breath" became primary energy, Noah felt confident that he had severed any connection the expert had with the second life formation and decided to release him.

Iron Feathers fell, and red light surrounded him when he crashed on the ground. Noah didn't feel anything happening inside him. His theory appeared to be on point. He had successfully exploited a flaw of the Second Life formation.

Chapter 948 948. Sweep

The metal birds and feathers fell apart and turned into energy that dispersed in the environment when Iron Feathers died. Noah checked his body for a while, but he saw no changes in the primary energy nourishing his tissues.

The Second Life formation had replaced Iron Feathers' corpse with the body of a magical beast, but the contents of his dantian had remained inside Noah.

'That was dangerous,' Noah thought as he bathed himself in the surge of energy that was filling every inch of his body. The amount of power contained inside the dantian of a solid stage cultivator in the fifth rank was immense, and it forced his injuries to heal.

It also pushed his body deeper into the upper tier, even if the growth was even lower than he expected.

Noah felt surprised for a second, but he soon found the cause behind that event. The tissues of his heart devoured all the primary energy that converged there. It seemed that his organ had become a bottomless pit capable of absorbing all the nourishment that it could find.

'Four centers of power,' Noah thought as he heaved a helpless sigh. 'I had to predict something like this. Having faith in my body is one thing, but I can't expect it to evolve into a higher form on its own miraculously.'

The addition of his burning heart had increased the requirements of his body, which was something that Noah had overlooked until then. The reason for that was that his center of power was slowly harmonizing with the new organ. It was pushing it toward a different type of existence.

Noah could already predict that his body would require even more nutrients in the future, but he accepted it. After all, he was already lucky that his hunger didn't increase because of that.

'I should be able to face a solid stage cultivator head-on if I use Snore,' Noah evaluated as he waited for his body to recover. He had suffered multiple injuries during the battle against Iron Feathers, and each one of them was quite severe.

Only his skin and muscles had suffered though. Noah had been careful and had planned all his moves thoroughly. Even his last charge hadn't been as reckless as it seemed.

First of all, he had used one of the features of Elder Julia's individuality. Some of the higher-ups of the other organizations knew that she could hide her attacks well, but most of them weren't aware that she could use that ability on cultivators.

Of course, that secrecy had vanished since everyone had seen Iron Feathers fall. Still, the outcome made it completely worth it.

Then, Noah had prepared himself to face Iron Feathers' counterattacks. He had dispersed his spells and used only the Mental Saber spell when his cover vanished.

In the end, the Demonic Sword and his body had done the rest. It didn't matter that some metal weapons had injured him or that Iron Feathers had a rank 6 body in the lower tier. As long as Noah could touch a human directly, he would be able to kill them.

The battle had shown him that some of his abilities could match the cultivators in the solid stage.

His martial arts were superlative. His body was in the upper tier, his dantian was in the liquid stage, and his Demonic Form had reached the middle tier too. With his darkness expressing his individuality, those assets together created attacks that surpassed the limits of the liquid stage.

The spells of a cultivator in the solid stage were still more potent for now, but the simple martial art wasn't the strongest weapon in Noah's arsenal. When he coupled it with his Demonic Form, its power would match the experts in the last phase of the fifth rank.

A dangerous sensation startled Noah awake and forced him to perform an evasive maneuver. A series of blue arrows soon crossed his previous position and disappeared in the distance, but his mind kept sending alert messages.

Noah kept on flying in random directions as the central buildings in the districts near the floating platform continued to launch blue arrows toward him. It seemed that the Empire was pissed about the recent event and wanted to make his stay in the battlefield as hard as possible.

However, Daniel and Amos' opponents had died, Icy Stare had escaped, and Iron Feathers had lost his dantian. The Second Life formation had saved them, but the Empire's side lacked assets that could focus Noah now.

The relentless assault of the arrows didn't lead to anything, and the central buildings soon stopped shooting them. After all, Noah only needed to activate the Merging spell to dodge them, while the Empire had to use many resources to create that attack.

With no one there to force Noah in a corner, focusing him ended up wasting resources.

"Can you still fight?" Elder Julia said after the assault of the arrows ended. Her question had a deeper meaning since it was evident that he had yet to empty his centers of power. The Elder was asking if he still wanted to help even after he had done enough already.

Noah nodded, and the Demonic Sword split into two sabers when it sensed his intentions. He didn't hope to retrieve more dantians since the cultivators of the Empire would be aware of his intentions now, but he could still help the invaders' side in its victory.

The Hive could then use his actions to request more resources once the Empire decided to give up. He could obtain many benefits since they were connected to the achievements obtained in battle.

Noah and Elder Julia began to fly side-by-side to join the fights happening everywhere on the battlefield. They initially respected the cultivators that were testing themselves in one versus one battles, but they soon helped them too since the greater good of the invading forces came first.

Red lights started to appear more often as Noah and Elder Julia helped in clearing the battlefield from the presence of rank 5 cultivators of the Empire. The number of powerful assets of the defenders decreased quickly since all the Elders they helped joined them in their sweep.

They then moved their attention to the other factions and helped them to end their battles as quickly as possible too. The invaders could finally start to assert their dominance at that point, and both the Council and the Elbas family accepted the help of the Hive even if they were slowly gaining the upper hand already.

All the experts in the fifth rank of the Empire eventually retreated or died under the positive trend started by Noah and Elder Julia. The Second Life formation prevented most casualties, but the red light didn't arrive for some cultivators who died on the battlefield.

As for the blue arrows, they became less dangerous once all the assets started to work together.

Chapter 949 949. Exploration

The battle had become one-sided as soon as the invading forces gained the smallest advantage. It was enough for them to have one solid stage cultivator in the fifth rank free to help in other fights for the situation to snowball.

Noah had helped Elder Julia, they had helped all their allies, and all the assets of the Hive had supported the other factions. The outcome was a complete defeat of the higher-ups of the Empire. The Second Life formation had saved most of them, but some died nonetheless.

The weaker assets of the Empire felt forced to retreat at the sight of that event. They knew that stronger cultivators rarely joined battles on a lower level, but the fight was over. Remaining on the battlefield would push the higher-ups of the invaders to intervene to limit the casualties on their side.

It wasn't a matter of honor or fear of future retaliation anymore. The strongest existences of the Empire had lost. The weaker one could only accept that they had no power over that battle anymore.

With the retreat of the weaker assets, the invading forces obtained the overwhelming victory they had desired, and they had to thank the Hive for that.

Of course, most of the credits for that achievement went to Elder Julia. After all, Noah had been able to pull that sneak attack off only thanks to her individuality. Still, Andrew and Regina felt that they would have reached the same point anyway, so they tried to avoid the topic while staring at their armies.

It was all about timing. It was customary for the first significant victory to influence the entirety of the battlefield. The Hive had only happened to succeed before the other factions.

Elder Julia didn't mind that the Council and the Elbas family avoided acknowledging the merits of the Hive. That wasn't the best moment for negotiations anyway, and there were more pressing matters to handle too.

Almost all the cultivators of the invading forces had suffered injuries, but the battle had ended far faster than they expected, which meant that most of them had energy to spare. They could still fight, and the Empire was at its lowest right now.

Everything was for the sake of improving their image on the Empire's mind. An overwhelming victory would lead to favorable terms for its surrender. Reaching as far as the floating structure during their first assault might even force the Empire to give up on some of their heroic assets to avoid extinction.

All the higher-ups appeared to agree that pushing a bit forward was the right choice. There didn't seem to be any threat ahead. The rank 5 cultivators of the Empire would be out of the picture for a while too. The only form of defense in sight was the blue arrows, but they weren't a problem with so many powerful invaders.

The invaders left those that had suffered severe injuries behind and started to advance toward the floating structure. The regions under them appeared uninhabited, with only the human cultivators still busy retreating filling that environment.

There weren't any citizens or commoners. Just empty districts and retreating human assets.

That sight worried the invaders since they had seen how the Empire like to act when it was about to lose territories. They advanced carefully, looking for any trace of formations on the ground to see if their opponent planned to blow everything up.

However, they didn't find anything out of the ordinary, except that those districts appeared older when they analyzed them up close. Each one of them had training areas suitable for cultivators in the fifth and fourth rank, but they didn't feature anything special.

There wasn't any defense in place, and the buildings meant for the human assets lacked the proper density of "Breath" most of the time. There were only a few habitations that could help rank 3 cultivators improve, while most of them were regular training areas that could barely meet the standards of those in the second rank.

The domain of the Empire appeared far worse off than the invaders had predicted.

The environment started to improve as they neared the floating structure. The districts still lacked defenses, but there were good training areas, at least. They weren't on the level of the Capital of the Utra nation, but they were good nonetheless.

Traces of defensive inscriptions began to appear eventually. They weren't intricate lines, but they had the potential to express a lot of power. They also seemed to connect every district from that point onward.

The heroic cultivators of the invaders could only slow down their exploration at that sight. They didn't want to trigger any unknown formation, especially since they didn't know the nature of such inscriptions.

They didn't appear too dangerous according to the experts of the Elbas family's evaluation, but it was better to be careful in that situation. After all, they were in the open and near the central regions of their opponent. Anything could happen there.

The human troops of the Empire were still retreating behind them. The heroic assets of the invaders had surpassed them as they explored those regions, and their human assets were chasing after them to inflict more damage.

It felt strange that the Empire wasn't showing any resistance when so many enemies walked on its ground and sky. Yet, the invaders soon considered the possibility that their opponent had nothing else to deploy.

Its most potent formations were in the new continent, and both landmasses had the Second Life formation. All its heroic cultivators had escaped, had died, or had been injured by the after-effects of the formation. The blue arrows were threatening only when coupled with warriors on the battlefield.

The floating structure radiated an eerie aura, but it didn't seem that its features could spread on the regions nearby. That left the invaders with many training areas in a desolate environment with a series of mysterious but straightforward inscriptions.

The Empire revealed the ability of those inscriptions soon though. As the invaders were about to enter the region with the floating structure, the lines in the districts lit up. It was needless to say that the attackers retreated immediately at that sight.

A series of human figures flew down from the floating structure and reached for a series of districts. There were inscribed chains on their necks, and each one of them was a heroic cultivator. There were even a few of them in the fifth rank!

Noah and the others had imagined that the Empire had restrained itself from using all the slaves in the first phases of the war, but they didn't expect it to have such powerful existences.

Nevertheless, the bodies of the slaves melted down when they landed on the central buildings of the districts, and a blue light started to spread from them alongside the lines on the ground.

In a matter of seconds, blue light filled the entirety of the central regions of the Empire.

Chapter 950 950. Dome

The blue light expanded, only to stop at the beginning of the inscriptions on the ground. The heroic assets of the three invading forces had already escaped from the central regions of the Empire and were staring at the sudden event with curious expressions.

As the experts of the Elbas family had predicted, that formation didn't have offensive properties. It was different from the blue pillars in the new continent. That blue light was denser, and it didn't seem able to harm the attackers even when they tried to touch it.

The blue light worked as a barrier, but it didn't have only a simple protective layer. It was a large dome that covered the entirety of the central regions and the floating structure and its insides. It was as if a solid substance had enveloped that area of the world.

The retreating troops of the Empire eventually reached that area and crossed the blue dome without any problem. Yet, the human cultivators of the invading forces slammed into that protection.

The cultivators of the Empire appeared able to move freely inside that blue world. The dome didn't even block the passage of "Breath", which meant that those regions wouldn't be affected by the formation.

The invaders weren't interested in the nature of that defensive method. After all, the formation was relatively simple, and Andrew Elbas even described some of the features that he could understand with an inspection of his consciousness.

The problem was in its power. The blue light radiated an aura that seemed to surpass the world of the heroic cultivators and stepped inside the divine ranks, even if only by a little.

'A quasi-rank 7 barrier,' Noah thought as he suppressed a curse from escaping his mouth. He didn't expect the Empire to have something like that, and he could predict how troublesome it would be in their strategy.

Andrew Elbas and the other experts of the Royal family started to launch attacks and use inscribed items to study the blue dome. The more tests they performed, the uglier their expressions became.

The mood of the invaders dropped when they saw the changes in the faces of the Royals. The other organizations wouldn't have any chance against that defensive method if they could worry even the most advanced force in the inscription field.

After a series of long and extensive tests, Andrew Elbas made a summary of the properties of the dome. "This light has no offensive features, but it's different from most barriers. Its insides are filled with light too. Every part of the dome has the same sturdiness as the external layer."

Andrew's last words confirmed the fears of his allies. The fact that even the insides of the dome were part of the defenses made the formation far more challenging to handle. It meant that they would have to slowly dig through the light if they wanted to reach the regions inside it.

However, the dome radiated a quasi-rank 7 aura. Even making a crack on its external layer would require the help of the powerhouses. Digging through it in a short period would require an actual god.

"The Empire has triggered the formation with the lives of powerful cultivators too," Andrew Elbas continued. "This makes it far harder to find a countermeasure. Unorthodox techniques usually have other unorthodox techniques as a weakness. We would need to sacrifice lives to create something capable of destroying this blue light."

At those words, the mood of the invaders plummeted. They had enough assets to match those sacrificed by the Empire during the activation of the formation, but none of them would be willing to give their life for the task.

"What about King Elbas?" Elder Regina asked, without even minding if the Royals find her words disrespectful.

She couldn't see any way out of that situation. The citizens of the Empire could walk freely inside the blue substance, while all the other cultivators couldn't even scratch it with their strongest attack.

Only the maximum expert in the inscription field with a rank 6 cultivation level could find a solution. There was no one else inside the entirety of those Mortal Lands with enough knowledge and power to defeat a defense that neared the divine ranks.

Andrew shook his head at her question and replied after heaving a sigh. "I'm afraid the Patriarch can't cancel this formation unless he spends enough time and resources for the task. Even the testing phase would require sacrifices."

Elder Regina went silent after Andrew's explanation. No force would be willing to give away their precious heroic assets, and they didn't even have that kind of power over them.

It was one thing for them to die in battle. Yet, giving their lives for experiments that would only lead to the destruction of a formation was a waste.

The Empire was cornered, and it had isolated itself in a small area of the old continent. It was still a threat since it had managed to salvage most of its powerful assets, but it had decided to seclude itself to save its domain.

Its surrender would have led to a similar outcome. The only problem was that the invaders had lost their advantage over their enemy. Their impossibility to breach that formation made the Empire impossible to bully into submission. It could even decide not to have any negotiation at all.

Of course, that would lead it to a slow but constant weakening since it had isolated itself to such a small area. The invaders didn't know how many resources the Empire had accumulated through the years, but they were sure that it wouldn't keep the formation up to see its power declining incessantly.

After all, the Royals were confident that the formation would require resources every once in a while. Protections with power in the divine ranks had to have a steep cost when it came to the energy necessary to function.

"What do we do now?" Elder Julia asked, even if she knew the answer to that already. She felt annoyed that the blue dome would stop the Hive from seizing the most significant share of the rewards, but she still wanted to hear the opinion of her allies.

"I think it's time to start negotiating the Empire's surrender," Andrew Elbas said while wearing an ugly expression. That event was supposed to be a good thing. Still, he couldn't help but think how hard the Empire would make it for them since it owned such an excellent defensive method.

Elder Julia, Andrew, and Elder Regina stepped forward and sent a few mental messages in the blue light. A passage soon opened in the dome, and the three leaders stepped forward, uncaring that the light solidified behind their back as they moved toward the floating structure.

The war had come to an end, but there was anxiety on the invaders' side. The Empire had lost a lot and was bound to lose more. Yet, it had managed to play its enemies when their victory was so close.

Now they could only hope that the fear of a prolonged siege would force the Empire to give in to their requests.