

DEMONIC 991

Chapter 991 991. Adventure

The growth of the Hive didn't concern only the old generation of Elders. Too many forces had gathered there in the last years, and they were finally showing results in that peaceful period.

The soldiers from the Odrea nation had accepted their past after God's Left Hand gave them access to Shandal's emotions. Their anger wouldn't vanish quickly, but they took pride in their determination.

After all, they had been able to stir the feelings of a god. That achievement was worthy of being recorded in the historical records of the world.

Many human cultivators reached the heroic ranks too. The Hive had countless methods to stimulate the growth of its assets, and the alliance with the Council gave them a friendly opponent to surpass.

The copying formation taught them how to fight in life-threatening situations, and the events with the assets of the Council provided experience in battles against cultivators.

The Hive gave them access to various cultivation techniques, and Thirty-seven's disciples held many classes that covered multiple inscription methods.

The rivalry among the domes and the sects of the Council gave them another reason to improve. The Hive had reached the point when it could create small conflicts among its forces to stimulate its overall growth.

Noah benefitted a lot from that peaceful period. His power grew smoothly, and his experiments increased his understanding of the world of the laws.

He had also started to learn how to endure his hunger to improve his control over his instincts. Noah would purposely starve himself from time as a form of training, and the results were more than satisfying.

His body slowly changed as it harmonized with the dark matter in the heart. Noah was already a unique existence since his hybrid status came from a technique, but the presence of a fourth center of power modified him further.

The only problem was that his breakthroughs were far away.

His mind had been in the fifth rank for a while by then, but the sixth rank appeared unreachable. His improved spherical rune kept enlarging his sea of consciousness, but Noah had yet to sense the arrival of a limit.

His dantian improved quickly since his expertise with the world of the laws improved day by day. He wielded them with every new creation and destructive ability, and his cultivation level benefited from that.

Yet, he wasn't even halfway through the liquid stage. That wasn't surprising since cultivators usually spent centuries at those levels, but Noah felt eager to become stronger.

His body's growth slowed down in that period, and his starving sessions had nothing to do with it. There were fewer targets that could nourish it enough to cause substantial improvements.

There was a limited number of creatures in the upper tier of the fifth rank in the world, and eating weaker beasts barely satisfied his hunger. The dantians of the Ravaging Demon sect's experts had given a boost to his body, but everything had proceeded slowly after that.

Even the hybrids had started to behave, so Noah didn't have any reason to eat them or turn them into materials. He had reached the point when he needed to move his attention away from the landmasses if he wanted to find suitable prey.

Noah wasn't too worried about his cultivation level. He knew that he was already growing as fast as he could. The only issue was the boredom that came with spending decades repeating the same training.

He loved growing stronger, but he had never spent such a long period secluded in his training area. His mind was becoming tired of the pale environment of the separate dimension. He wasn't keeping track of it, but he felt that he had spent a century there already!

Having power was great, but using it felt nice too, especially when the experience gained in adventures could further push his improvements.

Noah had a map that depicted various areas of the sea laid on the floor. Elements floated on his spread palm as he inspected the locations that could provide him with a fruitful journey.

The Hive had never been better, and he didn't need to pay attention to his tasks anymore since there were a few trusted leaders among the hybrids now. Only the creation of living weapons would stop, but Noah had created many of them already.

He could leave without looking back. The political environment was stable anyway, so the Elders didn't need him there.

The elements in his hand exchanged part of their fabric among themselves as if they wanted to fuse. There was a black spark, a violent flame, a breathing rock, and a drop of dark water that changed form continuously.

Noah's dark matter had managed to copy the water element in that long period of training. Still, the enlightenment didn't come from Faith's individuality or other cultivators with that aptitude.

His understanding had come from the Divine Stele. Noah had studied it for a while when he tried to copy the remaining elements, and he found a match with those divine remains.

The individuality described in the Stele was all-encompassing and boundless. It didn't have specific features because it could take any form. That matched Noah's ambition and his vast individuality. Water that could be anything had identical qualities with his dark matter.

As for the other elements, Noah didn't have any luck with them. Nothing inspired him when it came to the wind aptitude, and he loathed the light radiated by Daniel.

He needed different inspirations, and he couldn't find them if he remained in the alliance's territories.

He intended to set off on his own. Noah missed the freedom that he had when he was a lone cultivator, and he wanted to revive that feeling now that his power allowed him to go almost anywhere in the world.

The only one he would accept in the journey was June, but they couldn't even talk, let alone travel together.

The tunnel outside the hunting areas of the seven confirmed rank 6 creatures inhabiting the sea often appeared in his eyes. Not even Shandal had explored that location, but it seemed the only possible target for Noah.

Everything would be more accessible if he could hunt those powerful creatures, but he had to stick with beasts in the fifth rank for now. His breakthrough to the solid stage might give him a chance to fight them, but it was too distant to think about it.

Noah memorized the layout of the bottom of the sea and began to make his preparations once he set his mind. He was going to explore that tunnel and cultivate in the open.

The sole idea that he could ignore the political limitations for a while already cleared his mind and the Elders approved his decision when he notified them.

Noah filled his space-ring with resources that could help him in the journey, but he didn't request any life-saving item. He did get another ring though. He needed that to store the beasts killed as he traveled.

After he settled and prepared everything, Noah left the separate dimension to venture through the sea.

Chapter 992 992. Lizard

Noah's awareness sent mixed messages as he flew above the surface of the sea. He was in the areas west of the new continent, and he would reach the eastern coast of the old one if he continued in that direction.

According to God's Left Hand's map, the tunnel was somewhere in that part of the sea. The fall of the piece of Immortal Lands had changed the seabed's layout, so Noah had to explore a bit.

His consciousness couldn't quite perceive the amount of danger hidden in the depths of the sea. The fauna there had innate hiding capabilities, and the dense waters at the bottom helped in covering the presence of powerful creatures.

There was a chance that Noah wouldn't be able to sense certain species specialized in ambushes, but his instincts would cover for most of the fauna. He was still a hybrid. There weren't many creatures capable of catching him by surprise.

Noah dived inside the sea and ignored any magical beast that he found on his way to the bottom. That area wasn't the hunting zone of any known rank 6 creature, but it didn't hurt to be careful in such a mysterious environment.

The seabed was rocky, and deep ravines appeared from time to time as Noah's exploration continued. He ventured in the gorges that his consciousness couldn't fully cover, but they were mostly empty or inhabited by magical beasts' packs.

Noah spent days exploring the bottom of the sea. His "Breath" allowed him to remain underwater basically endlessly, so he didn't resurface at all during that time.

A small cavity eventually appeared in his view. It was narrow, but it stretched for kilometers, and it seemed to lead toward deeper areas.

'This fits the description on the map,' Noah thought as he analyzed the entrance further. In the beginning, the rocks were of the same color as the rest of the seabed, but they became darker in the deeper areas.

'Lava?' Noah guessed when he saw that feature. There was bound to be a scorching core at the center of that world, so it wouldn't be strange if the tunnel reached the layers of magma.

Noah's cultivation level had reached the point when he could walk on fire and endure the fall of mountains. He didn't fear those calamities. The only issue was whether he could remain trapped underneath the rocky layer above the magma.

Noah was still analyzing the entrance when his consciousness sent warning signals to his mind. He quickly hid inside the tunnel and remained in wait to see the cause of that sensation only to see a massive lizard-like creature walking at a few hundred meters away from his spot.

God's Left Hand's map gave a general description of the seven rank 6 creatures inhabiting the sea, but none of them resembled that giant beast.

The lizard had the head of a crocodile, but it had long legs and a muscular body that showed only a few patches of scaled skin. Its teeth laid outside of its mouth when it kept it closed, and a dark substance came out of them, leaving a black trail where it passed.

Noah didn't recognize its species. It probably was one of those ancient magical beasts that the world had mostly ignored since it lived in the sea.

The creature was a beast in the sixth rank, but it didn't seem able to sense Noah. It didn't even try to hide its presence and walked through the seabed as it looked for prey.

'Eight confirmed creatures,' Noah noted that beast in his mind. He had to prepare for when his body reached the sixth rank, so he had begun to make a list of the possible prey that could satisfy his hunger once he was at that level.

Noah relaxed after the lizard disappeared and resumed his analysis of the area. His consciousness couldn't reach its end, but the temperature rose as he went downward.

Tremors suddenly spread, and the dangerous sensations from before reappeared in his mind. Noah stopped moving and focused on hearing to understand whether the lizard had returned for a specific reason.

The tremors caused by the walking beast converged in the area above the tunnel before silence fell again. Noah could feel it. The lizard was right above him at that moment.

Noah condensed his consciousness and retracted his "Breath". He tried to conceal his presence as much as possible so that the creature above him wouldn't create a mess in the area.

His eyes moved left and right as he waited in silence, and they eventually noticed that some of the black substance released by the lizard had entered the tunnel.

When the substance entered in Noah's field of view, the intensity of the dangerous sensation inside his mind exploded and forced him to act.

Noah quickly jumped backward, and a giant mouth pierced the rocky seabed, destroying the tunnel in his previous spot. The lizard had directly stabbed the terrain, but it had kept its maw sealed.

The lizard spread its mouth, and Noah saw how the tunnel began to crumble as a large hole formed there.

'It works as a sensor!' Noah thought as he kept on retreating. The lizard's attack had been too precise for it to be a lucky guess, and the only variable in the area was the substance released by its teeth.

It seemed connected with the creature's mind, and it used the substance to scan the area as it looked for prey.

More hypotheses appeared in Noah's mind. He could guess how the creature's speed was only average among its peers, so it needed to sneak on its enemies to make up for it.

However, all those ideas were mostly useless at the moment since Noah had no chance to fight a being in the sixth rank. Those were just pieces of information that he noted because he expected to hunt the beast at some point.

Noah continued to run along the tunnel while the lizard lifted its head to stab another spot.

The creature's giant mouth missed Noah by a few meters, but only because he had resorted to his movement technique at the last time to sprint away. The lizard had calculated where he would be. Its only mistake was not knowing Noah's actual speed.

Noah felt lucky to see that the lizard wasn't resorting to any innate ability. The dark substance seemed the only skill in its possession, but he didn't take that for granted.

The temperature rose as Noah descended. Smoke appeared as the rocks around him became utterly black.

A red environment eventually appeared in his view. The lizard had stopped its offensive because its head couldn't reach Noah's position anymore, but he had continued to explore since he didn't dare to go back anyway.

Noah crossed the tunnel's exit only to find himself flying above a sea of magma that had a few floating rocky platforms on its surface.

Chapter 993 993. Carps

The tunnel connected the seabed to an immense underground area filled with magma. The ocean's water mixed with the scorching liquid and formed large rocky platforms where it managed to lower the temperature.

The crimson light radiated by the magma shone on Noah's face and revealed the metallic properties of his skin. The "Breath" around his body prevented him from breathing the air there, but he was sure that it was scorching.

Tremors still swept the areas above him. It seemed that the rank 6 lizard was unleashing chaos now that it had lost its prey. The rocky ceiling in that immense underground chamber threatened to fall every time it shook.

Noah didn't want to remain there. He wasn't afraid that the lizard could catch up with him since it would have to dig through hundreds of meters of sturdy rocks. A rank 6 creature could do it if it put enough effort, but he would be far gone by the time it reached the magma.

The real issue was the stability of the ceiling. The water and magma were in a fragile harmony, and an earthquake could generate an eruption or worse.

Noah had already accepted that he would have to find another way back to the surface when he decided to return. Still, he didn't want even that area to change completely.

Noah knew where he would resurface with that route, but he couldn't say the same if he changed location.

'Now what?' Noah thought as he spread his consciousness to analyze the area. His plan ended there, after founding the tunnel. He didn't know what to expect from that point onward.

Another series of tremors swept the rocky ceiling, and a few large boulders fell through the waters to enter the layers of magma. Trails of bubbles expanded in every direction as soon as the harmony between the two liquids broke, and large black platforms formed everywhere.

It was as if a large patch of the red sea was solidifying right in front of Noah's eyes, creating instabilities that altered that already unstable environment.

Some pillars rose from the magma and swam through the water to move toward the ceiling, creating cracks that tried to reach the seabed. It was only a matter of time before the entire area crumbled.

Noah couldn't help but curse the lizard in his mind as he dived toward the magma. He couldn't let that his only way downward become another layer of rocks. His journey would be over before even starting otherwise.

The dark matter came out of his body to protect him from the magma. Noah dived toward the crimson depths, ignoring the chaos that was spreading around him.

Noah eventually managed to leave the chaotic area behind, and the crimson sea around him returned to a peaceful state. The magma became denser though, which made him feel like he was moving through a scorching jelly.

Nevertheless, his mind was calm. That environment would be deadly for any human cultivator and even from many experts in the fourth rank. Yet, it was nothing worth considering for him. His instincts didn't even react at the dangerousness of the magma.

They did react at some point. Noah was descending slowly now that the lizard's threat was gone, so he didn't fail to notice the signals sent by his consciousness.

Noah stopped and released his aura. The fierce pride of a hybrid in the upper tier of the fifth rank spread through the crimson sea.

Generally speaking, his aura was enough to scare away most magical beasts. However, the beings sensed by his mind didn't seem to mind it and continued their march toward his position.

Noah could see those creatures with his mental waves once they entered in their range. They appeared as large fishes with a black skin that carried metallic properties.

They swam through the magma quickly, and their mouths drank that scorching liquid as if it was nothing more than water. They had sharp fins, which Noah identified as their main offensive method.

That simple inspection made him recognize their species. They were Fire-eater Carps, and there were five of them converging in his direction.

Their level varied among the fifth rank, and two of them were near the peak of the upper tier. Still, it seemed that the Carps had dull senses since they often readjusted their trajectory as they became closer to Noah.

'They probably didn't see prey in centuries,' Noah guessed in his mind as the dark matter around him expanded to take Snore's form.

He didn't want to go all out in that unstable environment. There was a chance that he could cause intense currents that would drive him back on the seabed.

Still, battling against those beasts without unleashing some intense shockwave was impossible. After all, that was a fight among creatures in the fifth rank.

Corrosive smoke came out of Snore's massive body as the Carps neared Noah. The Blood Companion released a wave of black flames before eating one of the weaker creatures with a quick bite.

The snake had formed too quickly for that beast to change direction in time to dodge the attack. Noah had exploited their weak senses as soon as he had the chance.

The black flames burned the magma and spread toward the other Carps. Even that scorching liquid couldn't do anything against the destruction radiated by Noah's attack.

Large patches of empty areas appeared in the red sea, but more magma quickly refilled them. The movement of that immense mass of dense liquid made the environment unstable and spread its effects toward the surface.

Only the two Carps in the upper tier had resisted the black flames, but their metallic skin showed cracks in some spots.

Noah's destruction had reached insane levels of power as his connection with the world of the laws became tighter. His flames had become able to hurt even living beings that lived among magma!

Snore, Noah, and the remaining two Carps exchanged a couple of attacks, but the latter eventually died under his fierce offensive. They didn't manage to land even one attack on him.

The area around him kept on trembling for a while due to the shockwaves still lingering in the area. They reverberated through the red sea before shooting upward, toward the surface.

Noah noticed something strange in their movements. It seemed that the shockwaves vanished when they went downward.

His curiosity peaked at that point, and he resumed his descent at full speed. It didn't take much before his consciousness found a metallic surface that locked the magma in that area.

Its fabric appeared incredibly sturdy, and the material that made it was something that Noah had never seen before. Further inspections revealed that it was more resilient than anything used by the organizations.

Moreover, that black, metallic layer spread for countless kilometers in every direction. It was a proper membrane that isolated the red sea in the area under the seabed.

'Amazing,' Noah thought before exploring the area. He didn't know what he was looking for, but he felt intrigued when he found deep holes in that metallic layer.

Chapter 994 994. Apes

Magma flowed in the holes, indicating the presence of empty spots in the areas under them. Its quantity in the sea didn't diminish though, confirming the existence of a source somewhere in the ocean.

Noah felt intrigued as he analyzed the holes. The metallic layer wasn't the end of his journey anymore. There was something else hidden in the depths of those Mortal Lands.

Noah didn't know what to expect. The geology of his previous world didn't have the "Breath" in its system. That layout was already strange if he tried to apply the common sense of his past life.

Still, that only made him more curious. The metallic layer was already a useful discovery. It appeared as a material suitable for defensive items, and its durability surpassed anything on the surface.

Moreover, there was tons of it. Mining it would be troublesome due to the dangerous environment, but it was something worth considering.

Noah descended in one of the larger holes after he concluded his inspection. The black material's fabric appeared softer as he reached for its center, but its value would still be high in the markets on the surface.

Magma flowed endlessly, and Noah descended along with it. Yet, the black layer ended at some point, and Noah found himself in a red waterfall.

His consciousness had kept his consciousness spread during his descent. He became aware of the environment on the other side of the hole as soon as he came out of it, and what he saw left him speechless.

There was air around the waterfall. It had a sulfurous smell when it entered Noah's nostrils, but that wasn't even the most surprising feature of that area.

The magma fell on a large red lake, but it didn't increase its width. A small whirlpool near its bottom drained it due to another hole that connected that area to even deeper worlds.

A few Fire-eating Carps inhabited the lake, but they were simple creatures in the human ranks. The most outstanding feature of that place was the environment outside of the lake.

Noah found himself in a green world. Grass grew everywhere he looked, and mountains showed their tall figures in the distance.

The sun's light didn't reach that place, but there were many holes in the black ceiling that acted like the sky of that place. Multiple waterfalls and lakes filled the environment and illuminated it with their soft red light.

Noah could sense magical beasts in the distance. There was a proper fauna there, in a world that existed under a sea of magma.

'How isn't all of this destroyed yet?' Noah couldn't help but question himself. The fact that there was even air under the ocean and the sea of magma was already miraculous!

It wasn't hard to find a quick explanation. The holes in the metallic layer were narrow, and the magma at that depth was dense. There was a limit to how much of it could invade that area.

Also, there were other holes in that green environment too. The magma never had the chance to accumulate over a certain level.

The plants there provided with clean air, and the metallic layer offered constant protection from the red sea on the other side. It was worth pondering who dug those holes, but Noah was more interested in the fauna to bother with it.

He was already placing the black material on one side of a scale and the fauna on the other in his mind. If he didn't find anything interesting, he would let that environment drown to seize the sturdy metal.

Noah left the waterfall and began to explore those unknown lands. He started with the plants there before moving toward lifeforms in the distance.

There didn't seem to be magical plants nearby, but Noah guessed that he would soon find some of them. He didn't believe that the "Breath" didn't influence any of them.

The region where he descended appeared mostly empty of magical beasts. Noah quickly linked that to the presence of so many waterfalls. The temperature was already high everywhere, but it was even higher near the lakes.

Noah experienced another surprise when he reached the first pack of magical beasts. They were small reptiles that ran on two legs and a couple of short arms.

They resembled a small version of the Tyrannosaurus, and their scales weren't nearly as strong as that tall creature. However, they belonged to the same historical period. They were beasts that the surface thought to be extinct.

'Dwarf Raptors,' Noah thought as he inspected that pack of creatures in the human ranks. 'The fauna here didn't suffer from the changes that have swept the surface. It stagnated. I wonder how this place even came to be.'

There didn't seem to be anything natural about that environment. The metallic sky alone appeared as something unnatural and too perfect for the survival of that hidden world.

Still, Noah couldn't notice any trace of cultivators. There was only a wild and peculiar life everywhere he looked.

Noah killed some Raptors and stored them inside his ring before moving forward. He did the same with every other peculiar creature that he found along the way, and he confirmed that most of them were species that had disappeared from the surface.

The number of waterfalls diminished as he explored other regions, and more magical beasts appeared in the environment. The density of "Breath" in the air increased too and surpassed the standards of best areas in the old continent.

Noah could vaguely guess that he was flying under the old continent by then, but he didn't know if there was a connection with the lack of waterfalls.

Magical beasts in the heroic ranks began to appear as the density of "Breath" increased. Noah collected many specimens that he would study later to improve his knowledge in that field.

The exploration quickly lost its initial excitement since Noah couldn't find anything beneficial to his cultivation. The place was incredible due to its peculiar location and fauna, but they alone weren't enough to stir his complete interest.

'This can become a secret hideout or some special training area,' Noah thought as he flew above that strange land. 'Still, the separate dimension already covers those. It might be better to drown it after seizing some samples.'

Noah's idea remained the same in the following days since he didn't find anything that could surpass the metallic sky's value. Yet, he wouldn't call that world worthless until he explored it in its entirety.

Then, he saw something that made him throw his previous idea away and never think about it again.

As he flew above a mountain, he saw two packs of ape-like magical beasts fighting over some tree. They were all creatures in the human ranks, barely worthy of his attention.

However, his consciousness tensed when he saw familiar runes on the furry skin of the specimens of one pack.

Noah didn't even think. His mental waves went downward, and all the apes in the other pack exploded. No one could hurt the most valuable magical beast with him there.

Chapter 995 995. Insurrection

Noah descended toward the mountain as his aura enveloped the pack of apes. His pressure as a hybrid forced those beasts to stay still, leaving them barely able to breathe.

The sole presence of a creature in the heroic ranks was able to suppress them altogether. In Noah's case, he could make them yield with the most superficial thought.

The apes trembled as Noah neared them to analyze their bodies. Disbelief was everywhere in his expression. That was the most unexpected discovery that he could find in that hidden world!

'Is this the Kesier species?' Noah questioned himself even if he had clear proofs right in front of his eyes. The apes had black fur covering almost all their bodies, but there were strands of white hair that formed complex runes on it.

Noah couldn't possibly fail to recognize those runes. He had their copies floating at the center of his sea of consciousness, right above his half-transparent figure.

The strongest specimen in that pack was a creature in the third rank, and it had three white Kesier runes on random spots of its body. The other apes had similar white hair that created several Kesier runes according to their rank.

They didn't have a fixed spot. The runes appeared in random places of the fur, but they always followed the order that cultivators used to train their seas of consciousness.

All the rank 1 apes had the first Kesier rune, and those in the second rank had the second one. The third rank specimen had the third rune, which made Noah confident that the Kesier species followed that trend.

He knew that already due to the legends spread on the surface, but he had learnt that history rarely told the truth. The Odrea nation's events had taught him that things rarely were what they appeared, mainly when they belonged to a distant past.

The runes on the apes' fur couldn't affect his mental sphere because he had already memorized them, but Noah could sense the pressure that they radiated. Cultivators could train their minds by staring directly at those beasts.

The value of a single specimen of the Kesier species was immense. Powerful organizations would pay a fortune even for an ape in the first rank because they had the resources to nurture it.

That would go out of proportion when it came to a couple of them. The possibility of making those creatures reproduce neared the value of the traces left by divine beings!

Building a pack of Kesiers meant having an endless supply of Kesier runes!

The world had enough of them when it came to the lower ranks, but things changed in the fifth rank already. Whether the organizations could nurture a beast until it reached the divine ranks and contain it, Noah didn't dare to imagine it.

Still, that hidden world had suddenly become too precious to destroy. A valuable material couldn't match the Kesier species in terms of value.

'How can I bring them to the surface?' Noah thought once he confirmed that those apes were the real deal. There was a significant issue with that world's location that he didn't know how to solve.

The sea of magma above the metallic layer was a massive barrier that could stop any weaker being. Those creatures were too weak to swim past that, and Noah couldn't even protect them.

Anything about his existence radiated intense destruction. Noah's spells and techniques would kill the apes before they could even reach the magma.

'I need to find a stronger specimen,' Noah concluded in his mind. The stories on the surface said that the Kesier species battle prowess was quite remarkable, so there was a high chance that they were in the upper parts of the food chain there.

'What should I do with you?' Noah thought, before punching a hole in the mountain to create a small cave. A growl came out of his mouth, and the apes moved inside the cave.

Noah threw some of the beasts he had hunted during his previous days of exploration among the Apes and made the entrance crumble while giving voice to another growl.

His voice was bound to scare them enough to remain in the cave for a few months. Noah didn't think that those specimens were the only survivors of the Kesier species, but he wasn't going to risk losing them.

The tree contended by the two packs appeared as a magical plant that gave birth to large yellow fruits. Noah could sense that they had some particular property, but he couldn't guess their actual value.

Moreover, the magical plant gave off the aura of the third rank. Even when Noah ate one of the fruits, his body didn't experience any reaction.

Noah left the mountain and resumed his exploration toward more populated regions. He stored some of the fruits and put that matter in the back of his mind. The Kesier species had the priority at the moment.

The world became darker as fewer red waterfalls appeared on his path, but the variety of creatures increased. More ancient and extinct beasts filled the environment, and some even reached the heroic ranks in power.

The appearance of creatures in the heroic ranks was only the beginning. More powerful beasts and plants began to fill those lands, and larger packs ruled over entire regions.

Noah felt amazed to see that those areas were even more crowded than some of his favorite hunting zones. The absence of cultivators didn't limit those creatures that thrived without ever having to face clearing operations.

Packs of Kesier specimens appeared from time to time. Their place in the food chain matched Noah's guess since they often ruled any region they inhabited.

Noah stopped holding back after he confirmed that those apes wouldn't become extinct any time soon. He started to hunt them, paying the utmost attention to protect their fur.

His gains culminated when he killed a Kesier Ape in the fifth rank. That single kill had given him two runes in the heroic ranks other than the valuable meat on that level.

Something unexpected happened after he killed the rank 5 Ape. His consciousness sensed movements coming from under him, and the ground opened due to the effects of a spell.

Noah didn't move. The beast's blood still ran down his arms while a series of humans came out of that hole and looked around the area wearing excited expressions.

They were all human cultivators, except an elderly-looking man who radiated the power of the aura of an expert in the fourth rank.

The expert noticed Noah, and his eyes widened when he sensed his cultivation level. His legs suddenly gave up due to the intense emotion, and he quickly kowtowed when he managed to calm down.

"Thank you for killing the king of the region!" The man said without raising his head. "My tribe and I will gladly join the insurrection. May the humans reign over the Apes once again!"

Chapter 996 996. Mental Brand

Noah didn't answer the expert in the fourth rank at all. He had been surprised to realize that cultivators inhabited those lands, but the words of the elderly man gave the final blow to his mind.

His consciousness went in the depths of the hole to explore its insides. Noah saw beds, chambers, and large halls built underground to create a structure that could contain at least one hundred cultivators.

A red light came out of the hole. It seemed that the structure reached the layer of magma under the hidden world.

Also, he noticed how there were more rooms than cultivators. Noah didn't know if there was a deeper reason behind that detail, but he felt confident that he had misunderstood a lot about that world.

"What do you mean by reigning over the Apes?" Noah asked after long moments of silence.

The elderly man raised his head at his words. There was a bit of confusion in his eyes, but he didn't dare to show any disrespect toward Noah. Moreover, the idea that he was an outsider didn't even cross his mind.

"Oh, mighty expert," The elderly man started to explain as his head went down again. "You probably come from regions that have managed to free themselves from the Apes. Ours was still in their control before you came and killed the king. It's thanks to you if my tribe can breathe clean air again."

Noah understood nothing from that, except the fact that there were more humans there. Yet, he couldn't believe that magical beasts had managed to overwhelm cultivators.

There was an expert in the fourth rank right in front of him, which meant that those tribes didn't lack techniques. Generally speaking, that was enough for humans to defeat any magical species, no matter the number of its specimens.

However, it appeared that the cultivators had lost that battle there since they lived underground. That location alone could be deadly to those in the human ranks, but they had dared to come out only after he killed the rank 5 Kesier Ape.

'How is this even possible?' Noah questioned himself.

He had tested the battle prowess of the Kesier species on his skin. Those Apes were strong due to the variety of attacks that they could deploy with their mental waves. Still, that could only match part of a cultivator's strength.

"How did you lose the surface?" Noah asked, uncaring that he was losing the chance to disguise himself as a native of those regions.

There wasn't anything to gain from lying about his identity, and the humans there couldn't possibly have valuable items due to their poor situation. It was better to give them hope by revealing that he came from a better place.

"Don't you know?" The elderly man asked in disbelief. "Has your tribe forgotten about our past?"

The leader of that tribe didn't seem able even to consider that Noah came from the surface. He preferred to justify his ignorance by blaming his tribe or the environment where he grew.

Nevertheless, Noah had enough of that exchange and decided to show his cards with his next words. "I come from the surface. Tell me everything that you know about this place."

"Surface?" The elderly man asked, showing his confused expression again. Even after Noah's direct phrase, he still couldn't consider that possibility.

"Surface," Noah said as he pointed toward the metallic sky.

Realization slowly descended upon the elderly man who started to stutter as he tried to give voice to a line. Noah couldn't even begin to imagine how fragile his mental state was since that simple revelation made him lose any dignity as a heroic cultivator.

The elderly man eventually managed to calm down, but his excitement still filled his next words. "D-did you find us? Are we finally going to leave this place?"

Noah's expression remained cold and aloof even when that expert pointed out one of that place's issues. The layer of metallic material and the sea of magma blocked any mental message, which meant that no one could come in his aid.

The Hive didn't know his exact location since he had moved a lot once reaching the red sea. The lizard had even made a mess with the tunnel, so his last known place was useless too.

There was no way to organize an extraction team, and Noah didn't know how to set the separate dimension. Moreover, he wasn't sure if the magma would hinder its correct functioning.

Noah was alone. His best option was to resurface on his own and send the Hive's forces there later on. Yet, he wanted to have a complete understanding of the world before leaving it.

"Explain," Noah said as he released a whiff of his aura. The man's excitement froze when he understood how dangerous his savior was, but his fear didn't stop him from completing his task.

"Everything happened after humans managed to turn the white fur of those creatures into a training method," The expert spoke, and Noah didn't miss the regret in his tone. "The entire species was on the brink of extinction, but we didn't want to stop anyway."

The man was still kowtowing, but Noah wasn't going to permit him to raise until he solved all his doubts.

"We thought to know the Kesier species so much that it couldn't reveal other surprises," The man continued. "We were wrong. Those Apes have an innate survival instinct that only appears when the species' entirety is at risk. It allows them to sacrifice their runes to another being to make it stronger."

"Like a sort of fusion?" Noah interrupted the speech only to see the man raising his head and nodding at his question. Then, he lowered it again to speak. "The old leader of my tribe told me that we chased the Kesier species to this place only to discover that a god had arisen among the Apes."

Noah sensed the helplessness in the man's tone, but his mind was elsewhere. If that man was speaking the truth, there was a magical beast in the seventh rank in that place!

Of course, Noah didn't believe him immediately. Who knew how much time had passed since the birth of the Ape God and if it had existed. After all, the events with the Kesier species had happened in a distant past.

Moreover, there was a high chance that the Ape God had ascended in that period. Noah believed that the current situation was mostly the result of years spent in fear of that memory.

"How do you know that the Ape God is still here?" Noah asked. Even as a scared cultivator that had grown hearing legends, that expert was a cultivator in the fourth rank. He was bound to have some common sense.

The elderly man pointed at his head without raising it before speaking. "The Ape God summons all the humans in these regions every fifty years to leave a mental brand. I saw that creature a bit more than forty-five years ago."

Chapter 997 997. Delay

The Ape God left a mental brand every fifty years, and forty-five of them had already passed since the last gathering. Moreover, the expert claimed to have seen the Ape God, which turned the situation extremely serious instantly.

There was a chance that the scared expert had misjudged a powerful beast for a god, but Noah wasn't willing to bet his life on the weakness of those inhabiting those lands.

A series of fast thoughts surged and vanished in his mind in a matter of seconds. The truth was that no countermeasure would work against a being of such power. Even if only as a magical beast, a god was still a god.

"Stand up," Noah eventually said as he turned toward the expert. "I want to know everything about this summoning and mental brands."

The old cultivator explained everything he knew and even added his name, Winter, to the list. The Ape God spread peculiar mental waves that forced all the humans in their range to converge in its lair.

The brands forced every cultivator to respect the Kesier species' authority and prevented them from attacking any of those beasts.

Winter said that the hatred of the Ape God knew no limits. It passed down some of its emotions when it set the brands, and the cultivators could understand how intensely it loathed humans and the reason behind that.

The Ape God wanted to make those that had hunted its species pay. It forced them to a life of hiding underground, ruled by the same Kesier species that they had almost exterminated in the past.

"Why isn't anyone trying to leave?" Noah asked. It was possible to skip the summoning if he returned to the sea of lava and remained there for a few months.

The orders of the Kesier species' specimens were absolute for the branded cultivators, but some of them didn't have them. Noah didn't, but others had managed to remove it.

Winter didn't know much about that topic, but he claimed that experts roamed through those lands and prepared the ground for a revolt. Still, the issue with that piece of information was the same as the others. It came from an unreliable source.

"You can, some can, most can't," Winter replied with a helpless tone. "The Ape God only needs to brand you once to prevent you from leaving. Those who can escape the summoning have learnt secrets that they are slowly spreading through the world."

Noah couldn't understand if Winter had reached an unfixable state of delusion or if he needed to believe in those things to keep living in that world.

His knowledge came from reports left behind previous inhabitants of the underground areas that his tribe occupied after the summoning. That was the only way to communicate through tribes, which meant that they exchanged information only every fifty years!

That wasn't enough for Noah. It barely reached an acceptable level when it came to the reliability of the source of those reports. He needed far more if he wanted even to consider facing a god.

"Let me in," Noah said as his consciousness enveloped the rank 4 cultivator and seeped inside his mind. That process would typically hurt Winter, but he was allowing the inspection of the foreign force.

Noah could see the insides of Winter's sea of consciousness. Four Kesier runes floated above his half-transparent figure, but the rest of the sphere was empty. There was only a shining azure mark lingering at the top of its walls.

The light of the mark flickered rhythmically and radiated a pale halo that spread through the mental sphere. The halo seeped through the sea too, affecting Winter's thoughts and limiting his mental energy usage.

Noah had never seen anything like that. It was rare for a technique that affected the free will of a cultivator to be so harmless. Winter appeared completely fine in the end. No one would notice anything strange in him unless they inspected the insides of his mind.

Moreover, he could confirm that one of Winter's beliefs was on point. Noah could not accurately evaluate auras far above his level, but he recognized the divine presence, especially after his trip to Shandal's separate dimension.

The mark and the light that it radiated were definitely above the heroic ranks in terms of power. Noah didn't know if the Ape God was a proper divine existence or a being that was only half-step inside that realm. Still, sensing the divine made him abandon any intention to test its call.

Now he had a serious choice to make, and there was even a time limit to it.

"Where can I find those that have managed to escape the branding?" Noah eventually asked. Winter knew too little, and there was no point in making decisions with that bit of information. It was better if he directly questioned the experts that were already able to dream about an insurrection.

Of course, Winter didn't know anything about them either. He was a simple cultivator that dreamed about escaping that cycle of tortures, but he didn't have the power to do it.

He even refused Noah's offer to look for other rebels together. Winter was set on trying to ignore the summoning before joining any unruly act. Otherwise, the Ape God would see all his plans and deploy its soldiers to stop them.

Noah left on his own. He had less than five years before the next summoning, and he wanted to discover everything that the world had to offer.

However, finding cultivators that were capable of hiding from a god was the opposite of easy. Noah didn't have any luck and spent those years flying and cultivating.

He kept the red waterfalls nearby and paid attention to the passage of time though. He couldn't risk touching the aura of the god.

He did find something that made him settle on a region until the day of the meeting. Noah had found a solitary mountain inhabited by a member of the Kesier species in the sixth rank.

Approaching that creature was impossible, and the same went for thinking about defeating it. Still, Noah only needed to have direct contact with its sixth rune to train his mind, and that was doable if he played his cards right.

It took him a bit of work and some planning, but he managed to force the mighty Ape out of its lair multiple times a week. He only needed to prepare a series of traps that made use of the instabilities.

The traps wouldn't injure the rank 6 Ape, but they could force it on a pre-planned route that allowed Noah to stare at its sixth Kesier rune from a hole in the black sky.

He had to waste many resources, but his mind improved quickly due to those investments.

The summoning day eventually arrived then, and Noah returned to the sea of magma to escape the range of the Ape God's mental waves. Five years weren't enough for his plans, but maybe he could do something in fifty.

Chapter 998 998. Rebels

Noah didn't want to abandon that hidden world, but he didn't like the idea of involving other organizations in the matter. That was supposed to be his journey, so he didn't want to contact the Demons either.

Still, it was evident that he needed some help. There wasn't only the Ape God as a threat. Other rank 6 specimens of the Kesier species filled those lands and acted as captains of multiple regions ruled by Apes in the fifth rank.

Their political structure was very human-like, even if messy at times. They were doing well for a pack of intelligent creatures, but they remained magical beasts with apparent limits.

'Why every fifty years?' Noah questioned himself as his dark matter prevented the magma around his from hurting him. 'I understand that it is torture, but there must be some other reason. Maybe the brands have a time limit and need periodic maintenance.'

He was cultivating among the sea of magma as he sat cross-legged on the metallic layer. The area turned out to be a good training zone since it forced him to use multiple abilities at once to protect himself, putting his mind under some stress.

The recent experiences with the rank 6 Kesier Ape had further pushed his sea of consciousness. Noah didn't even deactivate the spherical rune in his mind when he stared at the creature's white hair.

It had been a while since he had made use of the properties of his mental energy. He could devour the wills of the magical beasts now that the walls of his sphere had become far sturdier.

He desired a breakthrough now more than ever. Anything improving his current battle prowess would make him take a step into the next realm. From being able to fight only rank 5 cultivators, he would look at the beginning of the sixth rank, even if from a distance.

A soft sensation spread in the hidden world, and Noah sensed its expansion through the metallic layer. He had been initially worried that the Ape God's mental energy could have seeped through the black sky, but the sea of magma turned out to be a safe area.

Noah didn't dare to return to the hidden world in the weeks that followed the god's call. He didn't know if the lingering laws moved by its thoughts would be enough to make him join the summit.

He felt that the situation under him had calmed down only after three months had passed, but he still made Snore check the environment on the other side of the hole anyway.

The Blood Companion didn't sense anything out of the ordinary, and its mind remained calm, indicating the absence of the Ape God's laws.

Not all the cultivators found some underground structures to inhabit, and Snore could see some tribes escorted by Kesier Apes of various ranks. According to what Winter had said, those beasts would become the leaders of specific regions and rule over the humans inhabiting them.

That seemed a good chance to free some tribes and gather as many reports as possible since the strongest Apes were in the upper tier of the fifth rank. The only issue was that there were seven creatures in the fifth rank, and two were in the last tier.

The Kesier species had access to mental waves due to their innate ability. They had a sea of consciousness, but its purpose was mostly belligerent. Their thinking capabilities weren't the first aspect that improved when their minds grew.

Moreover, their seas of consciousness weren't separate centers of power. Their power depended on their bodies. They were similar to the claws and scales of other creatures, nothing more than weapons that improved alongside the body.

Of course, things weren't so simple with the Kesier species. Having mental energy as the primary offensive gave birth to dangerous and hard to track attacks.

There were other Apes in the fourth rank behind the rank 5 specimens, but Noah couldn't bother to consider them. They escorted weaker tribes, but he didn't mind them either. He had a target, and he couldn't lose it because a few humans couldn't endure his attacks.

Seven pillars made of black flames appeared near the specimens in the fifth rank. The beasts reacted quickly, and an invisible force tried to disperse that fire. Some Apes attempted to compress it to take control of it even. Yet, a series of black slashes came out of them and crashed on the beasts.

Those were Noah's most simple attacks. Their power came from the Warp spell and the improvements that his mind had done.

The two Apes in the lower tier died on the spot due to the violence of Noah's blow. The three in the middle tier suffered grave injuries, while those in the upper tier managed to block the attack altogether.

The human cultivators near the battle couldn't withstand that pressure. Their minds exploded, and they fell lifelessly on the ground right after the first exchange!

More black flames appeared, and more black lines came out of them. The three creatures in the middle tier were the first to give up, and they died one by one as Noah's offensive continued. The Apes had yet to find him, but they had already lost half of their power!

Another pillar of flames appeared between the two remaining creatures. They gathered their mental energy to create shields meant to block piercing attacks, but they suddenly expanded.

Only then did the Kesier Apes notice two figures above them, a human and a tall snake. The human wore a relaxed expression. It was as if that battle didn't worry him at all. On the other hand, the snake had its mouth open as it continued to spit black flames.

The Apes had to retreat due to the danger radiated by Noah's flames, but a series of humanoids puppets rose from the ground, and a barrier made of black water surrounded the two of them.

The poor beasts lifted their head only to see Noah holding copies of his weapon with his fuming arms and Snore generating lightning bolts with its horns.

The apes couldn't do anything once that strong offensive fell on them. Even their strongest defense couldn't do anything against that.

Noah cleaned the battlefield and saved every body-part that had survived his offensive. Meanwhile, the surviving cultivators from the tribes stared at him with a mixture of awe and admiration.

Someone had saved them from the control of the Kesier species by killing seven rank 5 creatures in a matter of minutes!

Noah appeared as a monster in their eyes, but a monster that was on their side.

The cultivators in the tribes weren't the only ones that had watched Noah's battle. A few figures had appeared in the distance right after the fight started and couldn't help but feel surprised about his battle prowess too.

Noah waited to scour the entirety of the battlefield before turning in their direction and replying to their stare. There were four figures there, and all of them were rank 5 cultivators.

"You are the rebels, I presume," Noah said. "I have a few questions for you."

Chapter 999 999. Slaves

Of the four rank 5 cultivators who had watched Noah's battle, one of them was in the solid stage, two were in the liquid, while the last was in the gaseous.

Noah's words surprised them, especially since he didn't show the slightest amount of respect for their power. It was as if he had already decided that he was their superior.

One of the liquid stage experts, a middle-aged woman with short black hair, dark eyes, and pale skin, stepped forward while giving voice to a reply. "And who would you be? I never thought tribes would have the time to experiment with clothes."

Noah's robe came from the Hive, and it was quite luxurious for its kind. It was black with an icy-blue octopus draped on its back. On the other hand, the secret world's inhabitants had shabby and torn clothes, which had endured the passage of time.

"I come from the surface," Noah said while pointing at the black sky. "I am the most talented cultivator in history."

The four experts wanted to laugh, but they couldn't. The pride carried by his words and the battle that they had just witnessed made them wonder whether he was speaking the truth.

Noah had defeated seven beasts in the fifth rank in a few minutes. That accomplishment was something that belonged to the realm of the solid stage cultivators!

Still, the four of them didn't feel like focusing on his ego since he had disclosed something more critical. Someone from the surface had managed to reach that hidden world after countless years!

"Let's get out of here!" The woman said while her companions shot forward to gather the rescued cultivators. "The God knows that its underlings have died. An army will be here soon."

Noah didn't fear the arrival of the army. He would take that as a chance to hunt more beasts. However, his priority was to establish a relationship with the rebels, so he flew after the departing woman.

"Noah Balvan," Noah said when the two of them started to fly in the distance.

"Ana," The woman said as she led the way. "Are you an important figure on the surface?"

"Yes," Noah replied without showing the slightest shame, "But I can't contact them. The sea of magma is too thick, and this metallic layer stops most mental messages."

"It's not surprising once you know its origin," Ana said as she revealed a sly smile. "The Ape God created this metal when it isolated this world. The bastard made a paradise for its monkeys."

Noah didn't manage to hide his surprise at that revelation. His cold expression broke as disbelief filled his face.

He had seen the might of the divine beings once, and he knew that they were able to affect entire continents with their spells. Yet, that place was immense. Noah wouldn't be surprised if it covered half of the surface.

"Are you already trusting me?" Noah asked. Those pieces of information were something that cultivators would usually value a lot. He couldn't understand why Ana gave them away so quickly.

"There are no sides here," Ana said. "You are a human, so you are my ally."

Noah didn't bother to correct her. He only took the chance to question her about the secrets of that world since she didn't intend to hide anything.

"Back when humans discovered the miraculous qualities of the Kesier runes," Ana began her explanation, "All the forces of the surface were busy in a worldwide hunt of the Kesier species. These monkeys couldn't do anything against the world's cultivators' effort and tried to escape in the sea, but humans followed them there too.

"The hunt lasted for years and continued even when they found a path for the core of this world. Yet, no one could predict that the Kesier Apes could sacrifice themselves to boost their leaders' power. The Ape God appeared that day over than one hundred thousand years ago when the humans suffered their first defeat against that species."

The members of the tribes followed closely behind Noah and Ana. No one seemed to mind that he had killed some of their companions during the attack. Their eyes only showed gratitude when they looked at his back.

"The God killed most of our leaders and fused its mental energy with the magma, creating a safe area in the middle of the burning core of this world," Ana continued. "It molded the earth and created a suitable environment where life could thrive, sacrificing cultivators whenever it needed to nourish it. Humans have been slaves since then."

"How can I believe in any of this?" Noah asked. Ana's story was majestic, something that any organization would teach to instill modesty in their cultivators. However, Noah had never heard of it.

"Those on the surface saw it as a natural catastrophe," Ana explained. "The actual core of the world went through massive changes. I'm surprised there is even a surface left at all."

Noah remained doubtful, mostly since she had spoken about events dated more than one hundred thousand years in the past. Simple rank 5 cultivators couldn't live that long, even if they used unorthodox methods to prolong their lifespan.

Ana seemed able to understand his doubts and continued. "This story comes from a direct witness of the birth of the Ape God. We are on our way to meet her."

Noah's eyes widened at that point. Cultivators had long lifespans, but surviving for that long would require a divine power or countless unorthodox methods to preserve their lives.

Red waterfalls appeared more often as they proceeded onward. They soon began to fill the environment, creating long streaks of crimson lakes that illuminated the area.

The black sky had large cracks in those regions, and Noah even saw a large chunk of its metallic structure fall while the group proceeded through the heat.

Noah couldn't help but link that area to a possible weakening of the Ape God. It was even older than Shandal, and the lower plane wasn't a place where divine beings could improve.

Ana noticed his interest in the cracks in the sky and revealed an excited smile before speaking again. "We think that the God is losing power. This world is slowly falling apart since its mental waves can't reach these areas anymore. The time to strike back is close!"

Noah didn't share her excitement. No matter how weakened it was, a god was always a god. Also, he had another impelling doubt.

"Why didn't you leave?" Noah asked. "Why do you prefer to go against a god rather than escaping?"

Ana wore a pensive expression as she gazed upward. Cultivators soon appeared among the waterfalls. They used black drills to expand the sky's holes and increase the magma that poured into the world.

They stopped their work for an instant to wave at Noah's group, but they resumed their drilling immediately after.

Noah could vaguely guess why they were expanding the holes in the sky, but Ana replied before he could ask anything. "We are born as slaves. Don't pretend to understand what we want."

Chapter 1000 1000. Skeleton

Noah stopped asking questions after Ana's reply. The truth was that he still thought like a lone cultivator. He had a few people that he cared about, some even deeply, but he was still unable to see his organization's well-being over his.

Instead, the cultivators of the hidden world were different. The new generations were slaves since birth, and they had lived through a pain shared by all their peers.

Moreover, escaping the summoning and obtaining the power to travel through the sea of magma wasn't easy, especially in their condition. The natives passed down their techniques orally, which strengthened their connection with those in a similar situation.

If cultivators were to leave in mass, that world would soon be devoid of cultivators. There would only be commoners with no chances to cultivate, and those who had benefited from that system didn't want to leave them in that state.

Reaching the surface to look for help wasn't an option either. No one would be willing to face a God, and the inhabitants of the secret world didn't have anything valuable to offer.

The magma and sea were dangerous too. The inhabitants of the hidden world couldn't be sure that they would reach the surface at all. Also, the seabed changed continuously. They might never find their way back even if they succeeded in finding reinforcement.

"Are you telling me that no one has ever left this place?" Noah asked. He knew that he was different, but it wasn't easy to silence the cultivators' innate ambition.

"Some did," Ana explained, "But we aren't sure that they made it to the surface. It's not easy to cross the sea of magma with our shortage of techniques. We have been trying to build an inventory for a while, but our leader gets more tired every day, and she is the only one who can use inscriptions."

The trails of magma on the ground soon became massive lava lakes that fused. Noah felt that he was staring at a red sea filled with crimson waterfalls connected to the black sky.

That scenery was something that only heroic cultivators could witness. No human expert could survive in that scorching environment, and even those in the fourth rank struggled due to the high temperatures.

The tribes that Noah had saved didn't advance further, and only the three cultivators that were helping them along the way followed him and Ana across the red sea.

A black structure soon appeared on the horizon. It was a palace with two tall towers placed on its short sides. Its edges and corners seemed to have gone through years of corrosion since none was even remotely sharp.

It wasn't corrosion though. The structure seemed to be incomplete in some spots as if the maker couldn't bother to finish it.

"This metal is hard to mold even when the Ape God's mental waves leave it," Ana explained when she saw Noah looking at the imperfections in the structure.

The structure stood on a rocky platform made of rocks and black metal, which floated on the red sea without a set destination. There were rank 5 cultivators on the edges of the ground controlling its direction and making sure that it remained away from the shore.

Noah and the four experts descended on the platform and crossed the half-finished doors of the structure. There wasn't even the slightest trace of inscriptions in the palace. It was a simple bulk of metal molded in the form of corridors and rooms.

The five of them walked past rooms full of sheets and incomplete diagrams with cultivators studying them. The sheer number of experts in the fifth rank surprised Noah, but his instincts barely reacted when he met them.

'They must be below average in terms of battle prowess,' Noah thought after they arrived in a throne room. Ana had hinted that before, but he didn't know that the situation was so bad.

Noah didn't feel anything when he looked at the tall black throne built at the hall's center. A skeleton sat there, but countless holes filled those bones and clear signs of corrosion covered them entirely.

"Where is this expert?" Noah asked, but the skeleton suddenly moved, and the aura of a rank 6 cultivator spread in the hall.

The skull turned toward Noah, and its jaw opened right before a female voice echoed through the black walls. "I haven't seen one of those in ages."

The voice was quite lively, almost childish, but the experts next to Noah performed a bow toward the skeleton while wearing their most reverent expressions.

Noah didn't take long to understand the situation. He had never thought that something like this could exist, but the "Breath" opened countless possibilities, and one of them was the ability to being alive with only your skeleton left.

"What are you talking about?" Noah spoke without showing any respect. The skeleton-powerhouse had surpassed even Shandal in terms of resilience, but it had lost two centers of power in the process. She was barely even a cultivator anymore.

"Your space-rings!" The skeleton answered. "Those Apes took away every inscribed item when they enslaved us! I almost forgot that humans had even created them!"

The skeleton would always end her lines with an exclamation. It seemed that she used her voice to balance the lack of vitality of her body.

Noah felt interested in the technique that she used to remain alive with a body in that state, but he mostly felt disappointed. He didn't see any other powerhouse on his way to the throne, and the only one was a bag of bones.

The war against the Ape God was only a pointless dream. The citizens of the hidden world had no chance to win.

"Why don't you tell your people to leave?" Noah asked. "I respect your unity. I find it idiotic, but I respect it. Still, you can't free everyone. Most of them would die anyway once the sea of magma fills this world."

"I see!" The skeleton said. "You people on the surface are different from us! But you seem strong, so I order you to help us!"

The skeleton's aura became thicker, and a deadly sensation began to fill the hall. Noah's instincts felt the danger too, but that wasn't his first battle against a powerhouse.

Black smoke came out of his body. Part of it took the form of a tall snake, while the rest became a scaled armor that kept on releasing corrosive gas.

His Demonic Sword roared as it split. Noah wielded the two parts and summoned four additional arms to prepare one of his most potent attacks.

Snore spread its wings and opened its mouth. The sharp feathers began to tremble, and fire accumulated at the bottom of its throat. A rocky armor appeared above its skin too, and black sparks spread on its horns.

The Blood Companion's breathe released a chilling air, and a trail of black ice appeared on the metallic floor of the hall.

"Come!" Noah shouted. "I'm dying to see where my power stands!"