

Chapter 101 - 101. Begin

A loud voice sounded in the district on the morning of the entrance test.

"Gather toward the ingress and await further instructions."

Noah was cultivating and opened his eyes after hearing the voice.

Meditation was refreshing for the body of a cultivator and if it was paired with enough sleep it helped maintaining someone's peak form.

Noah, of course, didn't train his mental energy the day before the test, so he felt rested and full of energy.

He exited the room and saw that all the other contestants did the same.

They moved silently outside the manor and toward the appointed spot, a tense air surrounded the young men and women and no one was friendly to each other like on the day of Noah's arrival.

After all, depending on the test, they could all be enemies in a few hours.

Only the girl with red hair seemed somewhat at ease as if uncaring of the incoming trial.

She even waved her hand toward Noah that limited himself to nod before ignoring her.

When they reached the ingress of the district, six beautiful women appeared in their line of sight.

They were holding large buckets and their eyes were closed as they stood motionlessly in place.

The voice then sounded again.

"Leave your keys in the buckets, once everyone has done it, we will move."

The process took ten minutes as more than one hundred youths had to drop their wooden cards.

When the last card was dropped, a figure appeared in the air above them.

He had a green full-body armor and he floated staring at the group below him.

"Follow me and remember that an envoy from the Elbas dynasty will be overseeing your behavior."

The group moved in silence along the streets of Ebonrest city while the man walked in the air leading them.

Noah felt a stare full of hatred coming from behind him that belonged to the noble that tried to prevent his ingress in the manor back when he arrived in the district.

'Please, mighty Royals, let the test be a fight to the death.'

He dreamed of that unlikely chance.

The Royal family couldn't put so many lives at risk, the cultivators present there were the best of the best of the new generations of nobles after all.

After another ten minutes of walk, they arrived at a large square that had a big diagram at its center.

On the sides of the diagram, there were stands full of the family members of the participants.

Meals and beverages of any kind were put in front of them as they stared at their descendants below them.

'No chances of laying low with this much audience.'

Noah thought.

The guard in the air signaled to the youths to gather in front of the diagram and then a bright light shone from the highest place in the audience spots.

A man donned in a golden robe appeared on the throne placed on the opposite side of the participants who raised his hand to silence the crowd in the square.

"I am Thaddeus Elbas, the administrator sent from the Royal Academy for this test. I will now explain the rules and the theme of the trial so pay attention."

He moved one of his blonde curls away from his forehead and resumed his explanation.

"The formation that you see in front of you is a teleportation matrix, it will send you all near the peak of Shelfan Mountain. As you know, that area is full of dangerous magical beasts, mainly Ice-born Yetis, most of them in their rank 3 version. Once you are teleported there, a rune will appear in your sea of consciousness that will keep count of the number of magical beasts that you manage to kill and of their rank. That number will be also shown here. The five of you that will kill more beasts will pass the test."

He stopped for a few moments to make sure that everyone understood the first part.

Noah was already cheering internally after hearing Thaddeus' words.

"Now the rules. You must go back to the edges of the teleportation area for that number to be valid. Its borders cover all the mountain area so you just need to descend and at some point, you will reach it. If you break the rune, you will be immediately teleported back here but all your kills will be invalid. If you harm another participant, we will know and we will disqualify you. It is allowed to steal someone else's kill however, so be careful. The rune will also gather information about your other qualities since we have reserved ten spots for those of you that don't excel in battle prowess. The time limit of the test is three days and you must return to the teleportation area before that time or your kills will be invalid."

Thaddeus stood up and spread his arms wide.

"This will be all for the explanation. Remember to not be reckless and to preserve your life. Good luck and may the test begin!"

The formation at the center of the square began to shine and the guard from the Voydol family in the air yelled loudly.

"Everyone inside the formation!"

The group of youths moved immediately in the borders of the diagram which shone more brightly as the last of the participants entered its range.

In a few seconds, all the men and women at the center of the square disappeared and, in their place, four big blue screens appeared in the air.

The screens had the names of the participants written on them with a "zero" next to each name.

At the same time.

Noah resisted the pressure of the teleportation with ease and when he opened his eyes, he found himself in a snowy environment.

The area was so cold that he had to circulate the "Breath" in his body to fight back the assault of the frigid temperature to his skin.

'This cold is unnatural, it can even damage a rank 3 body!'

Some other people were around him who were slowly opening their eyes.

'It seems that we were all sent to different locations.'

He looked around and saw right behind his back that a vivid red line was drawn on the terrain.

'That should be the border of the teleportation area so the test is on its opposite side.'

He smiled a little, his cold aura fused with the one of the surroundings, scaring the participants near him.

'Let's see if there is really someone that can surpass me!'

Echo began to scan the area as Noah charged directly toward the peak.

Chapter 102 - 102. Cold

A big figure swung its thick arm toward a black silhouette.

It resembled a bear but with humanoid features, it had pure white fur and it was tall five meters.

However, it was slow, both in its movements and in its attacks, allowing the black figure to slash one of its shoulders.

GRRRRR

A low growl resounded from the tall beast as a wound appeared on its body but the cold winds in the surroundings gathered on that spot, fixing the injury.

'They are easy to fight but hard to kill.'

The black figure was, of course, Noah, testing the limits of the rank 3 Ice-born Yeti in front of him.

He had moved deep into the mountain range toward its peak, separating himself from the rest of the participants.

'In five hundred meters this is the first rank 3 that I met. I should climb a bit more.'

They had been teleported in the peak area of the mountain but they were still many kilometers away from its summit.

The Yeti roared and charged toward Noah seemingly angry for the injury just suffered.

Its frame was impressive but its speed was not even worthy of consideration.

Noah simply dodged its assault and appeared on its back as he placed his hand on the beast.

Black smoke was released which devoured in a few seconds all the rear area of the creature.

The Yeti fell dead on the snowy ground and a "1" appeared on the golden rune inside Noah's sea of consciousness.

'Finally some reactions. I believe that the rank 2 versions don't count or they are worth something only in big numbers.'

He had met some rank 2 Ice-born Yetis in his march but, even after killing them, the rune showed no changes.

'This environment forces the cultivator to expend a great deal of "Breath" to protect his body. Added to the vitality of the Yetis which is boosted in this field due to the cold winds, the test involves more than just brute force to be passed.'

The participants had three days to hunt as many magical beasts they could so they had to be wary of their reserves of energy.

'Yet, there are a lot of nobles from large-size families, I don't believe that they don't have any medicine to keep themselves in top condition. Even I have some of them after all.'

He thought for a bit while the mountain winds assaulted him and he raised his head to look at the summit after he had made up his mind.

'I need to go higher.'

Meanwhile, on another side of Shelfan Mountain.

Another group of youths was climbing the mountain.

There were the two red-haired siblings, the noble from the Muwlos family and some other cultivators.

The noble was currently speaking while taking out a long spear from the body of a rank 2 Yeti.

"This doesn't work, we need to go higher or we won't get any point."

They had decided to group up and to divide equally the kills but it was obvious that the Muwlos descendant was trying to take the bigger share.

"Samuel, I already told you that we should remain on a lower altitude. My sister is never wrong with these things."

Samuel Muwlos snorted and replied to the tall red-haired man.

"And what could your small Eeggi family even know? There are only rank 2 magical beasts in this area! We need to climb if we want to collect points!"

The others in the group nodded and followed Samuel's lead.

The man from the Eeggi family sighed and turned toward his sister.

"Still danger?"

The girl nodded and trembled as she gazed at the mountain peak.

"I feel that the higher we climb, the higher will be the chances of failing the test."

The brother too looked toward the peak.

"Isn't it possible that you are just sensing the stronger beasts up there?"

The girl shook her head.

"No, I feel that the danger will come toward us."

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Many small groups had formed during the first day of the test.

Those belonging to small and medium-size families and even some lone cultivators chose to follow the lead of the descendants from the large-size noble families.

After all, the environment was harsh and the Yetis were resilient, grouping up was completely in the forecasts of the academy.

However, there were still some individuals that chose to challenge the mountain alone.

Noah was one of those and he was currently hidden in a large tree in which he had dug a small hole.

The night had come and, even if he could clearly see in the darkness, the temperature on the mountain had dropped so much that he had to take many breaks during his advance.

'Moving at night will just tire me uselessly. I'd better move tomorrow in the morning. It seems that I've finally reached a more populated area.'

He focused on the rune in his sea of consciousness which showed a clear "22" on its surface.

'The thing is that I can't see the kill count of the other participants so I don't know if I should hold back or push harder. To be safe, it's better to do my best and everything should be fine. I don't believe that there is someone with a spell more destructive than mine.'

He was relying mainly on the partial Demonic form to kill the Yetis as any other of his abilities could only inflict injuries that the winds easily healed.

'I will move as soon as the temperature rises.'

Noah took out his clothes and let Echo come out of his body and envelop him. The body of the blood companion was made of "Breath" which naturally opposed the assault of the cold.

Noah closed his eyes and slept in the warmth of the bat's body.

The next morning, he retracted Echo and donned back his clothes.

He resumed his climb and noticed that the temperature lowered as he reached higher altitudes.

At some point, Echo sent a peculiar image to his mind which made him change direction toward another higher area.

He put one of his knees on the white terrain and peeked at the scenery below him.

There was a slope that created a small cliff on the side of the mountain.

It was a few hundred meters large and only at twenty from the terrain, it was like a small canyon in the insides of the mountain.

Inside the small valley, tens of rank 3 Ice-born Yetis were resting or lazily walking around.

A slight smile formed on Noah's face as he looked at them.

Chapter 103 - 103. Messy fights

Most of Yetis in the valley were laying on the ground, allowing the cold winds of the mountain to nourish them.

Noah had a good amount of experience regarding packs of magical beast and could not help but be slightly confused.

'They are rather peaceful between themselves. There isn't the same aggressivity of the snakes nor the same cruelty.'

Noah was evaluating their behavior as he peeked from the edge on the surface.

'Well, I will see their aggressivity pretty soon.'

Two silver sabers appeared in his hands as he jumped directly in the middle of the beast pack.

Tens of horizontal fuming slashes shot out from his figure as soon as he touched the ground.

ROOOOOARR

The Yetis gave immediately the alarm and jumped toward the little figure.

However, they were slow and a corrosive black smoke began to spread in the area which damaged them, further slowing their advance.

Noah had already vanquished the creatures near him and shot toward the most densely populated area.

The black smoke enveloped him, transforming his normal appearance in a fiendish one.

The Yetis surrounded him but were obstructed by the dark cloud that enveloped Noah so they could never get near his position safely.

Noah used those unhindered moments to kill as many beasts as he could.

Bodies accumulated on the ground as he moved undisputed between the five meters giants.

ROOOOOAR

Another roar resounded in the valley and the assault of the Yetis became more selfless.

They charged into the black cloud uncaring of their skin being consumed in order to stop the threat.

When one of the Yetis was near enough to touch him, a three meters bat shot out from the cloud and stabbed its fangs on the beast.

The bat used the surprise effect to lock the Yeti on the ground and bit hard on its head.

A shockwave was released from its ethereal throat that crushed the Yeti's head on the spot.

Noah was internally satisfied with the strength of his new blood companion as he swung his blades relentlessly surrounded by black smoke.

'Assea would have only been able to take hits on my place while Echo can actively fight on my side.'

That was precisely what continued to happen.

Noah killed everything in front of him while Echo managed his rear side.

Slowly, the entire valley was being covered by the toxic smoke.

About half an hour later, the cloud dissipated, showing Noah's figure in the middle of the empty cliff.

Only some remains of the previously populated pack laid on the terrain.

His complexion was slightly pale and he was sweating, more than half his mental energy had been depleted but he was smiling seeing the results on the rune in the sea of consciousness.

The number "58" was shown clearly on its surface.

'This is the best altitude, I should rest and explore more.'

He reached for the surface and dug another cavity in the trunk of a tree.

He took out a bottle and drank its contents.

As he felt his mental energy rapidly increasing, he began to meditate to refill the missing liquid "Breath".

In two hours, he was ready to move again.

He didn't climb any further as in the battle that he just went through he had almost reached his limits.

The difficulty of that area was perfect for his level.

It didn't take much for Echo to find another similar spot full of rank 3 Yetis.

Instead of a valley though, the pack was inside a large cavern.

Noah smiled again seeing the beasts and didn't hesitate to wield his sabers and launch himself in another messy battle.

On the other areas of the test.

All the participants had chosen to climb the mountain in search of more rank 3 beasts but they only managed to find some solitary specimens that were scouting the area.

Samuel was quite irritated by the few numbers of Yetis that they ran into.

His rune was still showing the number "7" and it had been a while since it changed.

He had to divide the kills between the other members of his group after all, and even if he took the biggest share, their quantity was still minimal.

"We need to go even higher!"

He ordered those that followed him.

"Why don't you go alone? We won't benefit much from endangering ourselves while you will always make sure to have killed more than us. Also, I think that we are doing pretty good for the second day."

The man from the Eeggi family answered him.

As their altitude increased, the shivers of his sister had become almost unsustainable and he was really worried about her health.

"Why do you even speak to me? It's clear that your sister is full of shit! Look, we climbed so much but the best that we could find were two rank 3 at the same time! I should have never grouped with people from such a worthless family."

The insult didn't hurt the red-haired brother so much as he knew that his social status was far inferior.

"And what we would do if we find a pack with ten Yetis, mh? Will you use me as a meat-shield like the last time?"

These nobles had never faced dangerous situations, and if they did, they were controlled dangers.

Their experience in battle was limited to the hunting they did with their family and to the training that they did in their mansions.

Noah completely outclassed them in real fights to the death.

Added to his powerful spell that fully countered the regenerative ability of the Yetis, it was no wonder that he could kill those rank 3 beasts so effortlessly.

So, the others fought the Yetis with crude methods, using one or two people in their group to distract the creatures while the others launched attacks until they had killed it.

Of course, groups that had fire mages had a slight advantage but even with that and not considering Noah, the highest kill count didn't surpass thirty units.

In the end, the night came even on the second day of the test.

Almost everyone had decided to climb more but they were surprised to find that nearly no beast was present at that height.

Meanwhile, Noah was resting inside Echo's body looking at the mark on his rune.

"126". That should be pretty high right?'

Chapter 104 - 104. Danger

The light signaling the beginning of the third day of the academy test shone upon Shelfan Mountain.

The participants exited their hidings and began to march again toward the summit.

The number of rank 3 Yetis had become scarcer as they climbed and the cause for that unusual situation had to be attributed to a man in a black suit that was in the highest position among them.

That man was obviously Noah who didn't waste any time during the first day and climbed relentlessly until he had met a satisfiable number of magical beasts.

His second day was spent clearing any large pack that he found, leaving the participants below him almost without any targets.

As he woke up, he exited Echo's body and explored once more the area but after a few hours and a single battle, he couldn't find any more Ice-born Yetis.

'I'm only at one hundred and thirty-five, I should secure some other kill before I go back to the teleportation area.'

He had just to run toward the bottom of the mountain and even in a straight line to reach the exit area, the travel would take a maximum of ten hours from his current position.

'I'll climb a little more, as the rune hits "150", I'll go back.'

He moved toward the peak and the environment became increasingly cold, it was nearing the temperature of the nights.

However, no more magical beasts appeared in his sight nor were they sensed by Echo.

'My estimate was a bit arrogant, at this rate, I will not be able to go much further due to this cold.'

He marched for some more minutes and was about to turn back when he saw a tall Yeti in the distance.

It was a peak rank 3 specimen, one of the few that he met on the mountain but surely the tallest of them.

Its height was almost six meters.

'I guess, I should grab the last kill, what can possibly happen after all?'

Echo wasn't sensing anything different coming from its direction and Noah took the chance to fight it without relying on his Demonic form.

He had fought using the spell too much in the last period and he didn't like to depend only on one skill.

He jumped straight at the Yeti and two sabers appeared in his hands during his assault.

The Yeti noticed him but it had to face more than twenty wind slashes coming in its direction before it could focus on the human.

Its huge arms were cut in many spots but the mountain winds promptly gathered there to fix the injuries.

However, Noah didn't give it any time to recover.

He was already behind the beast and slashed vertically with both his blades.

Two deep wounds appeared on its back and more winds gathered on its body.

Noah attacked again, he was using his speed to avoid any reaction of the creature and his precise strikes to deal more injuries than what the winds could heal.

In fifteen minutes, the Yeti was powerless on its knees, showing its defenseless head to Noah.

He didn't waste any time and stabbed both his sabers in its brain while being deep in thought.

'My battle prowess without the Demonic form doesn't reach even a quarter of my full strength. My martial art is falling behind my other skills.'

The rune inside his sea of consciousness showed "136" and Noah nodded internally but as soon as the body of the Yeti touched the ground, his senses and Echo screamed detecting a great danger.

A small snowy hill right in front of him began to move and a deafening roar enveloped the area.

The snow fell from the moving body, slowly revealing the mighty figure of an Ice-born Yeti ten meters tall!

From its mouth full of sharp fangs, the cold winds that filled the mountain came out and dispersed in the environment.

It looked at the corpse of the peak rank 3 Yeti on the ground and anger filled its eyes as it moved its gaze searching for its killer.

In the distance, it saw a small black figure that was running at high speed toward the bottom of the mountain.

Noah had begun to run away the moment he sensed the danger.

Thanks to his rich battle experience, he knew that there was only one thing that could cause those sensations to his body.

'Rank 4 magical beast!'

'Fuck, fuck! I will never, ever trust my luck again!'

Echo was staring at the scene behind him peeking from his clothes, Noah wasn't satisfied with only the colorless images of its scanning ability.

'So, the mountain winds come from the rank 4 specimens. I wonder how many of them there are to fill the entire mountain, or maybe...'

Echo's gaze moved to the summit.

'I bet there is something stronger up there.'

The rank 4 Yeti gave another powerful roar and started to descend the mountain to chase toward Noah.

Noah didn't think twice about it and activated the partial Demonic form on his legs, his speed increased drastically.

From behind the rank 4 creature though, tens of rank 3 Ice-born Yetis appeared, they resembled a small army marching toward the world of humans.

Noah saw the scene and paled a bit, there were hundreds of rank 3 specimens that gained speed as they continued to descend and the rank 4 was in the lead position.

'Well, I guess that the test is over.'

At a lower altitude, the group led by Samuel was still climbing in search of more magical beasts.

Samuel seemed anxious as his rune showed the number "25".

He had secured more kills than it was concorded due to the scarcity of Yetis and more discord was sewn between his followers.

"Lord Samuel, I didn't even reach ten units. Could you let me take the next one? Otherwise, my family will really lose face."

A youth from a medium-size noble family pleaded him but Samuel only snorted in response.

He knew that the average for these kinds of tests was around fifty units in the top positions.

He came from a large-size family after all, they had accumulated an incredible quantity of knowledge during the years and hunting tests were frequent.

'Where the fuck are all the magical beasts?'

The ground began to tremble, making the girl from the Eeggi family shake again.

She grabbed her brother's sleeve and stopped his movements.

"Big brother, it's time, we have to run."

Before her brother could nod however, Samuel turned toward her and admonished harshly.

"What run! Don't tell me that you are scared of earthquakes! Fucking small families, they shou-"

His words were stopped by the girl pointing at a spot behind him.

Samuel turned only to see a black fuming figure running at high speed toward them.

Chapter 105 - 105. First

Samuel's eyes widened seeing Noah.

He knew that someone had escaped his men and that he had a skill that emitted black smoke.

He was finally sure that Noah was that someone.

Anger enveloped his mind, he had lastly understood why his group met so few magical beasts.

'He had come here first and killed them!'

He was a proud heir of a noble family, he couldn't let someone with no background surpass him!

However, before that he was able to scheme anything, the army of Ice-born Yetis became visible.

Hundreds of rank 3 magical beasts were following Noah tightly with the imponent rank 4 Yeti in their lead.

All Samuel's anger vanished on the spot as he yelled unconsciously:

"RANK 4!"

From that point, it was chaos.

Someone in their group directly broke the rune in their sea of consciousness moved by fear and a blinding light enveloped them, making them disappear.

Samuel turned and ran uncaring of anything that he had in front.

He swung his arms powered by the strength of his rank 3 body and flung away the other members of his group to make a way toward the bottom of the mountain.

The two Eeggi siblings were sent flying in different directions.

The brother had it easier as he had a rank 3 body too and could withstand Samuel's blow but he still fell for a few meters.

His sister though had only a rank 2 body and slammed powerlessly on a tree, fainting on the spot.

The brother was about to reach for her when others above him banged on his body.

He opposed with all his strength to the force pushing him down but the other cultivators were too scared.

They instinctively used their weapons to create a path through him and he did the same to defend himself.

At that moment, their runes shattered and they were teleported outside of the test area.

Meanwhile, Noah was running at full speed with the army of magical beasts on his tail.

He saw the chaotic scene below him and shook his head internally.

'Fucking nobles, it's just a tiny rank 4, why do you get so scared?'

He focused again on the Yeti ten meters tall.

'Well, tiny maybe isn't really fit for this one.'

He was feeling quite at ease.

The Yetis were slower than him and he had enough strength to reach the teleportation area.

Even if you are the strongest being in the world, why should I fear you if you can't touch me?

These were Noah's thoughts as he descended.

Then he saw the red-haired man trying to reach for his sister and disappearing after he opposed the other cultivators.

'So, the rune can even break on itself if you don't follow the rules. Wait, why isn't she escaping?'

He noticed that the girl that helped him with the key in the manor was laying on a tree unmoving.

'Is she unconscious? Wait, if she dies, will they blame me?'

After all, he was the cause of the rank 4 creature's rage.

The rune could understand if a participant broke the rules, what if it even registered the events that they went through?

Noah was quite doubtful about that but he still chose not to risk his entrance in the academy.

He slightly curved and more smoke came out of his legs.

When he reached the girl, he hastily grabbed her collar and threw her over his shoulders.

The clothes on his back tore and a big bat appeared which absorbed the girl inside its body.

Noah was using the Demonic form, the smoke was toxic to anyone except for him and Echo, he couldn't simply carry her.

And then, his descent continued.

A fifteen and a half years old man was running at full speed with his upper-body naked in a land of snow.

A big bat had its two pairs of wings retracted and was standing on top of his shoulders.

An army of Yetis was closely following him, unable to match his speed.

More and more participants appeared in his field of view and they had the same reaction of Samuel's group.

Teleportation lights shone from time to time and many ran toward the bottom of the mountain uncaring of the test.

Noah picked up a bottle from his space-ring to refill his mental energy.

With the addition of the girl's body on his back, his expenditure of mental energy had increased.

Hours passed and, in the end, the red line on the terrain became visible.

Noah's eyes lit up seeing the borders of the teleportation area and accelerated his pace.

The Yetis were still behind him but he had grown so used to their pressure that he almost forgot about them

'I should probably stop my spells. Even if many have seen Echo and the black smoke, they couldn't possibly have paid so much attention to them since they were too scared of the beasts behind me.'

When he was at a few meters from the red line, Echo was reabsorbed in his body and the partial Demonic form deactivated.

The girl came out in the open and Noah grabbed her with one hand, carrying her like she was some sort of bag.

'She is still sleeping even after so many hours. Damn nobles, they have it too easy.'

Then he jumped across the teleportation area and a bright light enveloped him.

When the pressure on his sea of consciousness vanished, he was back in the square of Ebonrest city.

All the other participants were staring at him.

Many emotions were exuded from their stares: anger, envy, respect.

Some lonely cultivator even had tinges of pride in his eyes.

'The fuck are they looking at.'

However, Noah couldn't care less and looked at the screens in the air.

The name Vance was in the first position but Noah didn't feel too happy about that.

That was because his kill count was at least four times the one of the second place.

'I really overdid.'

"Sister!"

At that moment though, the red-haired man came in his direction, yelling.

Only then Noah remembered that he was still carrying the unconscious girl and he threw her toward the brother.

Chapter 106 - 106. Specializations

The brother caught his sister and bowed toward Noah.

"Thank you so much!"

However, Noah had already moved his gaze back to the screens.

'I guess I passed the test. Why is everyone still looking at me though?'

It wasn't only the participants that were staring at him, even the cultivators on the stands had their eyes wide open looking in his direction.

Thaddeus Elbas was smiling lightly as he inspected Noah, he kept on nodding as golden runes floated in the air around him and entered his mind.

Samuel continued to look at his name on the screen.

He was in the sixth position and he could not help but blame Noah for his failure.

He raised his hand and pointed it to Noah while he spoke with a loud voice.

"He cheated! He endangered the lives of all the participants of the test by awakening that rank 4 Ice-born Yeti. He should be disqualified!"

No one of the others around him spoke though, there was no benefit in Noah's exclusion for them so they would rather accept their loss humbly.

After all, Noah's kill count was so high that it was obvious that he was the strongest of them.

Thaddeus then clapped his hands and the numbers on the screen changed slightly.

The number "25" next to Samuel's name was transformed into a "0".

"Samuel Muwlos has almost killed a participant when he was escaping, his points shall be nullified."

Thaddeus' voice resounded in the square and he stood up.

"The five of you in the top position, follow me. You are now members of the Royal Academy. The others shall remain here, I will announce those in the ten spots tomorrow morning."

Noah and the other four youths moved across the group in the square and arrived in front of the throne where Thaddeus was standing.

All the gazes remained on Noah while the five walked and a few whispers resounded from the stages.

Thaddeus gazed at the five and launched a rune between them.

The rune radiated a blinding light and the pressure of the teleportation pressed on Noah's sea of consciousness.

When he opened his eyes, he found himself in a luxurious room large thirty square meters with a table at its center full of delicacies.

His gaze then moved to Thaddeus that was standing in front of him.

He was looking at Noah with a smile on his face while nodding.

"What a strong mental sphere, it's quite rare for someone of your age."

He had been again the first one to recover from the pressure.

Noah hastily bowed to accept the praise and Thaddeus made a small laugh seeing his action.

"No need to be so polite, in the academy we give importance to strength over status and you are definitely the strongest in your generation."

Noah maintained his bow and replied.

"I was just lucky, my Lord."

Thaddeus laughed again and teased him.

"You know, since I belong to the Royal dynasty, you should refer to me as Majesty and not Lord."

Noah raised his gaze only to see Thaddeus smiling slyly.

The other four had recovered by then and were staring at the interaction between the two with wide eyes.

Thaddeus laughed again and continued.

"Anyhow, for you all, I'm just a professor of the academy. You will soon refer to me as Mister Thaddeus and I'm specialized in runes, mainly those regarding space. Now, you should be tired. You can use everything in this room for your wishes. I need to review the information about the test to fill the other ten spots. Use this time to rest and to get along with each other."

Another blinding light surrounded him and he disappeared on the spot.

'Space runes? There are specializations too?'

He had to stop his thoughts though since he felt four pairs of eyes on him.

He turned and saw that the four youths were all staring at him.

They were two men and two women and an awkward silence was created in the room due to the exchange of glances.

At some point, one of the men coughed and raised his hand.

"I am Troy Orgoo from a large-size noble family. Fire element and sword wielder. Fifth in the entrance test."

Troy had short brown hair and a small stature but his manners were refined and direct.

One of the girls followed his suit and spoke.

"Grace Harlyn, large-size noble family. Wind element. My weapons are the daggers and the bow. Third in the entrance test."

Grace resembled a delicate flower and her skin was white as snow.

She had long blonde hair and her gestures were precise and slow.

It was then the other man's moment.

He was tall and burly, with dark skin and no hair.

A trace of a black beard was on his chin.

"Perry Illou, medium-size noble family. Earth element. I use the hammer. Fourth in the entrance test."

The last girl snorted and replied shortly.

"June Ballor, small-size, thunder element. Spear and second place."

She had long and unruly silver hair that reached her knees.

Her skin was clean and she was undoubtedly a beauty but some scars were visible on the uncovered part of her arms.

She had never moved her gaze from Noah since she opened her eyes and a tinge of battle intent was exuded from her stare.

'I lacked only the battle maniac between my admirers.'

Noah was about to turn toward the food on the table when he noticed that the four of them had begun to stare at him again.

"Oh right, my name is Vance."

And then, he went to the table and picked a roasted chicken wing, eating it cross-legged on one of the couches in the room.

After he finished his meal, he joined his hands on his waist and began to meditate.

June's eyes sharpened and she released another snort before sitting right next to Noah.

She then crossed her legs too and began to cultivate.

The other three looked awkwardly at the pair on the sofa and decided to ignore them.

Chapter 107 - 107. Exposed

Meanwhile, in the square in Ebonrest city.

The various participants had joined their families on the stages.

They were socializing between themselves and inquiring their descendants about the events on the test.

Samuel had his head lowered while a middle-aged man was heavily reprimanding him.

"Don't you dare speak again in front of the Royal dynasty like that! Have you seen how Thaddeus reacted? You made a fool out of yourself!"

Samuel didn't answer, he knew that his emotion had taken control of him at that moment and could only listen to his father's scolding.

"I wanted you to take the test so that you could lose some of that arrogance. So what if you belong to a large-size noble family? There is always a bigger mountain, you need to accept your weakness and work hard to fix it! I won't always be here providing you support, one day the Muwlos family will be in your hand. Try to remember that."

He shook his head and continued.

"Look around you, how many large-size families do you see here? And why should you receive a special treatment?"

He sighed and placed a hand on his shoulder.

"The world is vast and you need more than your family name to survive in it. I hope that in the academy you will work hard."

Samuel's eyes lit up and he raised his head, asking in a timid voice.

"Father, are you saying?"

"What? Our family has enough wealth to buy the entrance for one person and you are the best candidate. Don't make the family regret this decision."

Back in the luxurious room.

Noah was still cultivating.

June had fallen asleep during her meditation and laid uncaringly on the couch.

She moved a lot in her sleep and at some point, one of her legs landed on Noah's shoulder.

Noah opened his eyes and looked at the messy figure at his side.

'Is she a human or an animal?'

"She must have worked really hard during the test."

Grace spoke looking at the scene.

She was the only one awake, Troy and Perry had taken one couch each and were resting on them.

Noah moved the leg away from his shoulder and stood up, walking toward the table.

He filled a cup with some aromatic wine and drank it slowly while he pondered about his situation.

"You are not the talkative type, I see."

Grace spoke again, a slight smile appeared on her face.

"I didn't know that ladies from the noble families spoke to commoners."

Noah replied while he took another sip from the cup.

The wine was exquisite and it seemed to have a relaxing effect on the sea of consciousness.

Grace's eyebrows arched in surprise.

"You lost your status as a commoner the moment you were accepted in the academy. Maybe you still don't realize it but your future will be amazing only thanks to that. And I'm not even considering your extraordinary score during the test."

Noah was taken aback listening to her words.

'My future will be amazing? This academy seems really incredible. I wonder how much time do I have till the Balvan family finds out that I'm alive.'

He never forgot about the events in the inheritance ground.

After all, he had killed all the young descendants of his family in there, he was sure that their investigations won't be stopped by the simple absence of clues.

'At least all my abilities are unknown to them. They can't easily link me to Vance.'

At that moment, Thaddeus appeared again.

The other three were awoken by the fluctuation of "Breath" and immediately stood up forming a bow.

"Easy with the greetings, I just need to speak with Vance alone for a moment. Hold my hand."

Noah was confused and he raised his guard internally while he held the professor's hand.

They immediately disappeared and reappeared in a small office where only a desk and an oil lamp were present.

Thaddeus sat on the desk and stared silently at Noah.

Then, he raised his finger and an image began to be displayed in the air.

It pictured Noah in his Demonic form fighting against the Ice-born Yetis.

Noah's aura became unconsciously colder and Thaddeus began to speak.

"As you know, my Elbas family ruled over the Utra continent for two thousand years already. We like for our subjects to believe that we don't care about their behaviors but, in reality, we keep close attention to everything peculiar that happens."

He pointed with his other hand at the image.

"I believe that the black smoke belongs to the lost spell Demonic form. Our latest investigations about it had to stop more than one hundred years ago because of two reasons."

"The first one was that the spell was believed to be stored in an inheritance ground in the Shosti domain. We could not afford to send so much man-power there so we simply let the Shosti family share its rewards with us."

"The second one was that the spell linked itself to the sea of consciousness of the cultivator. It is then impossible to pass down and even extracting it will damage its diagram and the person that has it."

He smiled toward Noah and continued.

"However, a peculiar rumor spread out from that area not long ago. A medium-size family lost all its younger generation in the inheritance ground and no traces of them have been found. One really forgettable detail was that among them there was the bastard son of one of the nobles. I think his name was Noah and he was of the darkness element."

Thaddeus retracted the image and shrugged his shoulder.

"It's strange for a cultivator without any background to be this strong and it's even more strange for two cultivators of the darkness element to appear at the same time. I could not help but be suspicious so I dug deeper into the family's weekly reports and created a theory."

"What if the bastard son of the noble and the genius of the entrance test are the same person? Everything would make much more sense, don't you think so?"

Noah was stupefied.

Never could he ever imagine that the network of the Royal family could reach even the medium-size noble families far from the capital.

His eyes had become cold and dark as Thaddeus spoke and, in his mind, he was reviewing any chance he had to escape from this situation.

However, his thoughts were interrupted by Thaddeus' next question.

"So, have you already thought about killing me?"

Chapter 108 - 108. Grayshade class

Noah didn't know what to answer.

He knew that he had no chances of defeating Thaddeus, he was simply too far away from his level.

He thought for a long time while Thaddeus limited himself to smile at him.

Then, he asked the question that pressed him more.

"What will happen to me?"

Thaddeus shrugged his shoulder and answered.

"You will become a student of the academy."

"Uh?!"

Noah was stunned and confused by his answer.

Thaddeus continued.

"What? The academy's main objective is to take the most promising cultivators away from the noble families and bring them into the Royal family's ranks. You might act like a little demon but don't delude yourself: you aren't the first problematic character that my family managed to control."

Noah relaxed a bit hearing those words.

"So, why did you do all that speech before?"

Thaddeus' face became stern.

"Because you needed to understand what kind of a monster my family is. We have been the rulers for two thousand years after all, it didn't happen because we were lucky."

Noah understood.

"You want me to behave?"

Thaddeus nodded.

"I will keep your identity a secret, we would rather have you as our asset in the future than leave you in a cage for life. Just remember that we are always watching so don't pull anything funny or you will be done for."

Noah nodded, he was planning to lay low and focus on his cultivation anyway.

"One last thing. That bat of yours, is it a spell?"

'Is he testing me?'

"Yes."

Thaddeus smiled again and launched a rune toward him.

The light of the rune enveloped Noah and teleported him back in the room with the other winners.

He could see that the four were interested in his private conversation but they didn't ask anything.

Noah sat back on the couch to cultivate, he completely ignored June emulating him again and sitting right next to him.

'When will I be free?'

He could not help but have these thoughts after his meeting with Thaddeus.

'When will I stop being used?'

He laughed internally.

'Little demon? If they want to put a leash on me, they should be ready to pay the price.'

He spent the rest of the night cultivating, eager to see what the academy reserved for him.

The morning came and Thaddeus reappeared in the room.

"We are ready to set off toward the capital, please follow me to the main deck."

He pressed one hand on the wall behind him and a door materialized.

'Deck? Are we inside a ship?'

Noah was confused and followed Thaddeus' lead with the other four youths.

Outside of the room, there was a spacious corridor adorned with paintings.

They then reached some stairs and climbed them.

When they arrived at the top of them, Thaddeus pressed his hand on the ceiling and a large passage opened.

The light of the sun passed through the opening and the sky became visible.

On the other side of the passage, a large deck unfolded itself in front of the group.

It was more than thirty meters large and had many spots assigned for meditation on it.

Ten more people were present on the deck and Noah recognized the two red-haired siblings between them.

However, his attention was on his surroundings.

He could clearly see that they were still in the middle of Ebonrest city, toward its central part, but he could not understand where their transport was.

'Wait, he called it "main deck" and this place definitely resembles a ship. There is no water around us though.'

He thought for some more time until an idea formed in his mind.

'Don't tell me.'

As if reacting to his discovery, the ship began to tremble.

The youths from less important families were looking around them with a confused expression but those from the large-size families had their eyes open wide in surprise.

Noah instinctively reached for the edges of the deck and looked below him.

The ship was slowly distancing itself from the terrain.

He turned to look at Thaddeus and noticed that he was holding a small crystal in his hand.

'I knew it!'

The ship continued to rise vertically into the air until its form was completely visible.

It was one hundred meters long and thirty meters wide, it almost made no sound while it set off and there was no air pressure whatsoever created from its movements.

There were no masts nor sails and the uncovered part on the outside occupied only a third of the entire machine.

Maybe, it was better to call it a flying submarine rather than an air-ship.

'I thought that my previous world was more advanced technologically but I was wrong. They actually created an air-ship with runes and inscriptions!'

Soft light was emitted from its sides showing the many runes that formed a peculiar pattern on the wooden hull.

"This is amazing, isn't it?"

The red-haired girl appeared on his side and spoke casually.

"The Patriarch once told me that these things existed but I always believed that he was saying that to make me train harder for the entrance test."

Noah didn't mind her too much and continued to stare at the environment.

The air-ship had reached an altitude of more than three kilometers and then stopped its rise.

It then began to move horizontally in a direction unknown to Noah.

"I am Ruth Eeggi, I wanted to thank you for saving my life in the test. I hope that we will get along in the academy."

Ruth bowed and Noah nodded seeing her gesture.

He then inspected the ship for a few more instants before focusing on the new members of the group.

'They don't seem that strong. I wonder what other abilities they have.'

Thaddeus then faced the fifteen young cultivators and spoke in a loud voice.

"You fifteen are now students of the Academy. Adding you to the ones from the other four test areas and the twenty-five that will buy their ingress, we will create a new class. It will be called Grayshade and it will have one hundred students. I will explain more about the rules and the courses of the academy once we group up with the other students."

Chapter 109 - 109. Challenge

The flight of the air-ship continued.

Thaddeus explained that the trip would have taken one month since the Royal city was on the borders of the Utra continent.

Fifteen single rooms were given to the new students and they had access to a big part of the ship.

There were three common halls: the main deck, the library, and the training hall.

The main deck was for those that enjoyed the scenery from the sky or to meditate in the open.

It was also the place where a large table full of delicacies would appear twice a day.

The library had many books regarding the history of cultivators and of noble families.

The training hall had some small arenas where the cultivators could fight themselves using their martial arts.

Noah had chosen to stay on the main deck but, at some point, a problem presented itself.

"Challenge me!"

June stood in front of Noah who was peacefully cultivating on one of the mats on the main deck.

He was not in the mood to study after his conversation with Thaddeus and he wanted to increase his strength as fast as possible.

He found out that his mind would relax more easily on the deck which increased his cultivation speed.

Therefore, he preferred to meditate there rather than in his room.

However, June never allowed him to focus completely on his training.

'It's already the third day in a row.'

June had begun to challenge every person on the ship since she discovered the existence of the training hall.

In only four days, she defeated every student with the exception of Noah.

She had challenged him too but Noah had deliberately admitted defeat on the first day, he didn't care about the title of the strongest and wanted only to cultivate silently.

Initially, June had accepted the outcome and focused on the other students but then Ruth had said something troublesome when she was defeated.

"I feel that even if all of us were to gang up on Vance, we wouldn't be able to defeat him."

Apparently, her good instincts were linked to her talent with inscriptions.

Noah didn't really comprehend how those things were connected but the descendants of the large-size families started to hold her words in high regard after they learnt about her quality.

Since then, June's battle intent was aroused and she spent her days standing still in front of the sitting Noah, pointing her spear at him.

'She is really stubborn.'

June had the appearance of a beautiful girl but her character was the one of a wild beast.

She would just do whatever passed through her mind, uncaring of her surroundings.

Noah opened his eyes and looked at the woman in front of him, her silver hair moved slightly in the soft breeze of the ship and her eyes shined with a golden light under the sun.

She was dressed in a tight brown soldier suit that left uncovered the upper parts of both arms and legs to facilitate the movements and had long warrior sandals that reached her knees.

Noah had to admit that her appearance was extremely valiant.

However, only one word came out of his mouth.

"No."

All the other students were used by then at the morning commotion on the main deck and stared with interest to see if the outcome would have been different at that time.

After all, they all wanted to see the genius that scored one hundred and thirty-six kills in action.

"Aw, come on. Why are you so hard to deal with?"

June complained and began to push Noah with the bladeless part of her spear.

"Vance, come on, fight me at least once. I will let you cultivate in peace from then on."

Noah was reaching the limits of his patience.

The other two days she limited herself to stand for the whole day in front of him which Noah could easily ignore.

That time though she seemed really firm on obtaining her battle.

Noah heaved a loud sigh and moved away the spear to stand up.

"Will you really leave me alone?"

June's eyes lit up and she nodded a few times before adding something.

"But you need to fight seriously, martial art against martial art!"

"Yes, yes, let's just end this."

He waved his hand and moved toward the training hall, June followed him tightly.

The other students became interested too and moved with them.

After a few minutes, June and Noah were facing themselves in the biggest arena of the hall.

June was already in guard, her body was slightly crouched and her spear was pointing fixedly on Noah.

Noah, on the other side, had just wielded his sabers and he began to speak.

"So, no magic spells, right?"

June nodded but, before she could reply anything, ten wind slashes arrived in her position.

She rapidly attacked with her spear which created a shock wave in front of her, shattering the slashes.

Noah had moved on her side in the meantime and launched a series of strikes trying to enter her guard.

Yet, June's dexterity with the spear far surpassed his predictions.

She smartly used the length of her weapon to her advantage, never letting Noah near her.

More than fifty blows were exchanged in a few minutes.

June defended waiting for a mistake in her opponent while Noah had never given her any time to attack.

'She is indeed really good. Our martial arts are on the same level, I just have slightly more battle experience.'

Noah left a small opening on purpose and June's thrust arrived immediately as he had predicted.

Noah used his left saber to deviate the spear while his right one aimed for her throat.

The spear missed his chest and stabbed his left shoulder while his blade was laid on the girl's throat ready to take her life.

Noah then spoke in an uncaring tone.

"Can I go to cultivate now?"

June looked in amazement at the scene in front of her.

Her spear was stabbed deeply on Noah's shoulder and blood flowed from the injury.

However, there was no trace of pain or suffering in his eyes, only the cold determination to sacrifice part of his body to take the life of his opponent.

She immediately knew that his mindset was on a completely different level compared to hers.

She retracted the spear and bowed, leaving the arena directly after that gesture.

Noah returned to the main deck without even treating his injury.

The other students could not help but tremble a little when they stared at his back.

Chapter 110 - 110. Elbas city

Noah's trip became quiet.

After his demonstration of ruthlessness, the other students had become quite scared of him.

They were still young after all, their lives as nobles never allowed them to have any traumatic experience.

There were a few exceptions though.

The Eeggi siblings would usually bring him food during his cultivation sessions and June began to respect him as a true senior.

The Eeggi's felt indebted since he saved Ruth's life while June was a battle maniac, she respected strength above anything.

The atmosphere felt a little awkward to Noah since he was among the youngest of the group.

He was currently holding a book with the second Kesier rune hidden between its pages.

Some sweat ran down his forehead as he trained his sea of consciousness.

When he felt that he had done enough, he put back the rune in the space-ring and closed the book.

'This feels really strange.'

It had been more than three weeks since they set off and Noah did nothing but train.

However, he was now in a peaceful environment.

There was no imminent danger nor someone close to him that he was trying to save.

That lack of external pressure that forced him to become stronger left him with some dissatisfaction.

'The first hurdle on the cultivation journey is the access to techniques. The second one is the immense boredom caused by the extended periods of training.'

Noah liked to train, he liked feeling his strength increasing day by day, but he had to admit that he also liked to use that power at some point.

'I should not ask for more dangers now that I'm finally free from them. With my luck, I will end up in some mess sooner or later.'

His mental energy was expended and he had already cultivated for the entirety of the previous night, he was left with nothing to do.

'Maybe I should ask June to spar again. She is the only one that can face me here. I wonder what kind of spells she has.'

He stood up and moved toward the girl meditating on one of the mats near him but then Thaddeus' voice resounded through the ship and he appeared on the main deck.

"We are about to fly over Elbas city, I believe many of you will be interested in seeing it."

'Fly over?'

June stood up and moved toward the border of the deck when Noah spoke to her.

"June, isn't the academy inside the Royal city?"

June's eyes widened like she had seen the most unbelievable thing of her life.

Noah was confused and continued.

"What?"

June seemed to return to reality and spoke honestly.

"Sorry, it's just that I never saw you speaking to someone on your own will."

Noah was momentarily stunned.

'Now that I think about it, I never did anything else except cultivating in this life.'

He never cared much about people even in his previous life.

Since he found a purpose in his other one, he completely disregarded anything else.

He shrugged his shoulder to answer and waited for her reply.

"The academy is inside Arolyac forest which is near the capital. Its exact location is known only to the students and to those in the Royal family though."

"Oh, and why is that?"

"Arolyac forest is a danger zone but many precious materials are hidden inside it. Part of the students' duties is to gather them and send them to the capital."

'Mh, it seems the perfect area to train the next generation of cultivators. Also not knowing the exact location makes it harder for the families of the nobles to reach to them, diminishing their influence on their heirs.'

Then a doubt formed in his mind.

'Wait, she is a battle maniac, how does she know so many things?'

"How do you know all of this?"

June spoke like it was the most obvious thing in the world.

"It's the story of our country, everyone knows about it. It's common knowledge."

'I guess I really should pay more attention to topics outside cultivation.'

He sighed and moved to look at the landscape below the ship.

Rivers and plains occupied the scenery but, in the distance, a massive figure began to appear.

June neared him.

"Didn't you have an instructor when you were a kid?"

Noah vaguely remembered the face of Li Neregnes back in his childhood.

"Kind of."

The massive figure became more detailed and their conversation was interrupted by their astonishment.

Enormous was the word that better described the city that they were looking at.

It was more than one hundred kilometers wide, it started to occupy all their field of view as the ship neared it.

Many buildings eight and nine-story high were shown from above the imponent defense wall.

As the air-ship flew over it, its streets became visible as it did its population.

It seemed that every corner of the city was bustling with life.

Noah saw caravans speeding across the larger roads with magical beasts carrying their carriages.

Massive buildings appeared toward the center of the capital and, in its exact center, a giant castle stood higher than any other structure.

"That's the Royal Mansion."

June spoke when she looked in the direction of the castle.

"The level of extravagance in the capital sure is incredible."

Noah replied.

"Most of the extravagant things are made in the Academy. This ship is one of those."

Thaddeus had moved behind them and spoke with a proud tone.

June stiffened but Noah simply asked another question.

"Why is that? I believed that once you graduated from the academy, you would work in the Royal city."

Thaddeus smiled.

"We are officially working in the capital but the best research ground remains the academy. We are surrounded by precious material and have the best talents in the country, why would we move elsewhere?"

Noah nodded with his gaze still inspecting Elbas city.

'It seems yet another world compared to Balvan mansion.'

He repressed a smile from appearing on his face.

'It's even better than I thought!'