

Chapter 111 - 111. Bargain

It took a few hours for the air-ship to traverse the capital.

Noah had never moved his eyes from it, trying to memorize its patterns.

Then the ship lowered its altitude and moved in the direction of a red forest.

"That one is Arolyac forest. They say that a mighty magical beast was killed in that spot and its blood has forever tainted the trees in there."

June was still on his side, pointing from time to time the details about the environment.

'Wait, don't tell me that I have a friend now?'

The people Noah cared about were only his mother and William and, since Lily was dead, William remained the only person he could trust.

However, he found out that June's character wasn't that bad.

'We are actually quite similar.'

He didn't want to admit it but he perfectly fitted the description of a cultivation addict.

'I guess I'll see how it goes in the academy. If she is trustworthy, I might even consider giving her Eccentric's inheritance. I must be sure that I will always be stronger than her though.'

He didn't forget his deal with Eccentric Thunder but he wasn't so reckless to give that amount of wealth to someone he knew nothing about.

The ship floated over the red forest, Noah could clearly see how even the trunks of the trees below him had shades of red in their colors.

'A magical beast so strong that it changed the environment this deeply. Could the King of the valley do the same?'

They flew for some more kilometers until they were deep in the forest.

Only then the ship began to descend.

It landed on a treeless spot on the terrain and Thaddeus gestured for the students to gather near him.

He then threw a rune between the group and they were immediately teleported on the ground.

The ship was on their side and, from below it, the students could admire the magnificence of that machine in a better way.

Thaddeus then waved his hand and the ship was absorbed by the crystal he was holding in his palm.

"Follow me. We will group with the other students and then travel to the academy."

The terrain had shades of red too but it could not compare to the color of the leaves on the trees.

They were dark red and seemed to shine with a dull light.

Noah was the most sensitive of the group and immediately noticed something.

'The concentration of "Breath" is at least twice the normal one!'

It seemed that the trees were naturally gathering "Breath", increasing its concentration.

'No wonder the location of the academy is inside this forest.'

The group moved for one hour until they reached an encampment that had about fifty tents.

"Thaddeus, you are late this year!"

A massive man came out of the bigger tent.

He was two and a half meters tall with bulging muscles on every part of his body.

He was quite hairy with a long curly beard but he was also bald which contrasted with the amount of hair on his body.

"Students, he is Bruce Nairti. He is the professor for the real-battle course."

The students bowed toward him but Bruce didn't deign them of even a look a moved next to Thaddeus, strongly patting his shoulder.

"So, how is your flock this time? I have one that killed sixty Fire wolves."

Thaddeus smiled slyly.

"What about Wanda?"

"Only forty-five Six-legged horses on my side."

A middle-aged woman with black hair came out of another tent.

She had a warm aura around her, it could make anyone instantly trust her.

"I'm Wanda Hamman, alchemy teacher in the academy."

She performed a slight bow to the students.

Thaddeus was a bit surprised.

"You took care of two groups and that was your best one?"

Wanda smiled and sighed softly.

"My luck this time was really bad. Managing two tests wasn't the right choice after all."

At that moment, a loud snort resounded in the area and an imponent voice followed it.

"Eighty-five Giant bears! This year I finally won!"

A woman with short brown hair and a blindfold on her right eye arrived through the trees followed by a group of youths.

Thaddeus announced her.

"Megan Iccck, general cultivation course, specialized in body-nourishing methods."

Megan spoke toward the other teachers.

"Thaddeus you still have to say yours. Is the Royal dynasty really afraid to lose some Credits?"

The students widened their eyes after she mocked the Elbas family, they were the rulers of the continent after all.

However, Thaddeus didn't seem to care and replied to her.

"I'm afraid that this time I really was the luckiest of all. One hundred and thirty-six Ice-born Yetis."

Only after Thaddeus spoke did the students realize what was happening.

Noah lowered his head and stealthily moved to the rear part of the group, he had no intention of being at the center of the attention before even seeing the academy.

'Why the fuck are they betting on who has the stronger new student?'

The other teachers released a surprised sound and looked in the direction of Noah's group.

"Someone surpassed Daniel's record?"

Bruce asked turning to Thaddeus.

"Yes. Vance let them inspect you."

Noah sighed and moved toward the lead of the group.

He arrived in front of the professors and bowed to them.

"He surpassed Daniel? But he so too young!"

Megan complained and gestured to a student behind her to move near her.

"Let me see what he can do. Justin, go and fight him."

Justin was a tall youth about seventeen years old.

He had a long greatsword sheathed on his back that he didn't hesitate to wield.

Thaddeus looked toward Noah with a pleading expression.

Noah sighed again and faced him.

"I want five percent of the prize."

Everyone's eyes widened looking at the youth trying to bargain with the teacher.

Bruce and Megan exploded in a sonorous laugh while Wanda covered her mouth with a hand to hide her smile.

Thaddeus recovered from the amazement and put again his sly smile on his face.

"Deal, but you can't use that spell."

Chapter 112 - 112. Academy

Noah shrugged his shoulders and faced the tall youth.

Two sabers materialized in the air as he slowly approached Justin.

Justin stood still, waiting for his attack.

Noah lazily launched five wind slashes that were immediately crushed by one swing of the greatsword.

'He should be around June's level. Well, Thaddeus didn't say anything about my other spell.'

Justin saw that Noah wasn't taking him seriously and pointed his sword at him.

A large bullet made of air shot in Noah's direction which forced him to block the attack.

He crossed his sabers and successfully blocked the bullet but he was flung away by the force of the impact.

"Hey, you! This is not a game! Don't you have any face?"

Noah landed a few meters away unharmed and raised his gaze toward the youth.

His eyes shone with a dark light after he heard those words.

Twenty wind slashes were instantly released from his position which crashed on Justin's greatsword.

He managed to block them again only to find out that twenty more slashes were coming from a different direction.

He hastily activated a spell that made his sword incredibly sharp and fast which cut away all the attacks.

However, Noah was already in front of him at that moment.

Justin reactivated the spell and his complexion paled, his greatsword became so fast that it directly intercepted Noah's melee blow.

Then, Justin's vision became black as a three meters tall bat stopped his attack with its claws.

A cold sensation invaded him as two blades were laid on his throat.

Noah spoke in a soft voice to his hear.

"If this wasn't a game, you would have been dead."

Noah retracted Echo inside his body and moved back toward Thaddeus.

The left part of his upper clothing was shredded, showing his defined body devoid of any sweat.

Thaddeus nodded and threw two shining crystals to him.

Noah grabbed them and noticed that they were Obsidian Credits of the same brilliance of those that Solomon gave to him.

'One hundred Credits for a little show, these nobles are crazy.'

However, all the youths were staring at him with wide eyes with the exception of Justin that had his head lowered.

"I believe that we can move now."

Thaddeus spoke and the other professors nodded at his suggestion.

Noah followed while June neared him and began to storm him with questions.

"What was that bat?"

"A bat."

"It's a spell, right? Otherwise, you would have used it during our fight."

"Maybe."

"Is that your only spell?"

"I don't have spells."

Seeing that he didn't answer any of her questions, June became a bit annoyed.

However, Noah could see that her battle intent was aroused again.

'Don't tell me that she wants to fight me using spells now.'

Noah ignored her but he could feel her stare during the whole walk.

After another hour of march, a small mountain appeared in their sight.

Thaddeus took out a token from his storage device and pressed it on the surface of the mountain.

The terrain in that spot moved and created an entrance large three meters on the ground.

It resembled any other underground cavern if not for the fact that the daylight shone inside the passage as if it wasn't a subterranean area at all.

The professors didn't speak and simply crossed the entrance.

The students behind them followed and were stupefied at the sight on the other side of the passage.

Buildings of various height stood in an orderly way on an illuminated plain.

There was a long river that divided the plain into two parts and birds sang from the vivid red trees planted in some areas.

Noah raised his gaze toward the sky and was amazed to discover that they were still inside the mountain as the roots of the trees were hanging from the ceiling.

However, the terrain of the mountain from its insides was completely transparent which allowed those in the interiors to clearly see the environment outside of it.

'How many things are possible thanks to the "Breath"?'

Noah did another comparison with his previous world.

Even though something like that could have been achieved with the technology, the effects were far more marvelous when it was the "Breath" that powered the process.

Thaddeus turned and faced the students.

"We will wait here a bit. Those that bought their ingress will be teleported from the matrix in the Royal city directly here. Once they arrive, I will explain your duties as students."

Ten minutes passed and soft light illuminated an area at fifty meters from their position.

Twenty-five youths led by a woman in golden armor appeared from the formation on the ground.

The woman bowed toward the professors and joined their group.

Thaddeus smiled and spoke to her in a warm tone.

"Sister, your timing is impeccable."

She smiled too and looked at the students in his group as if searching for someone.

Then her gaze stopped on Noah and remained fixed on him for a few seconds.

She then faced Thaddeus again and spoke.

"It seems that these years will be interesting."

Thaddeus nodded and stole a glance in Noah's direction.

"Incredibly interesting."

She then gestured to her students to join the other group.

It was clear that those that earned their ingress thanks to their qualities felt superior to the others and a bit of scorn was present in their eyes as they saw them coming close.

'That noble is here too.'

Noah spotted Samuel Muwlos' figure between the newly arrived and shook his head cursing his ever-present bad luck.

Thaddeus then raised his hand to attract everyone's attention and began to speak.

"You are now officially part of the Royal Academy. A token will be given to you which allows you free ingress here and that will register your merit points. You will need to swear an oath before that but don't worry, it's nothing too restrictive. There will be open lessons during the first week of your enrollment to give you a general idea of all the topics that are taught here. At the end of this week, you will be requested to attend a test that will evaluate your nature. The results of the test will be known only to you but they will help you greatly in choosing the courses more suitable for your disposition."

Chapter 113 - 113. Lodging

"You will also be examined every year in those courses and, if the results won't be satisfying, you will be requested to abandon that subject. You will still be able to attend it but it will cost you some Credits."

Thaddeus stopped speaking for a moment before resuming in his explanation.

"You must also complete a mission for the academy every two months. There is a large board on the right side of the river where you can find all the tasks that you can complete. Being successful in a mission will grant you merit points that you can exchange for techniques, materials, or weapons. These services will be open for you after you undergo the test of your nature."

"Lastly, any professor can choose a disciple and finance him. It is a great honor so be sure to shine in your respective fields."

Thaddeus pointed to a building on the right side of the river.

"Go in that structure and obtain your academy token together with a book containing the regulations and the other details of the academy. Your lodgings

will also be decided there. Remember to visit the board to know the calendar of the courses, your lessons start tomorrow."

Thaddeus gestured to the group to disperse and the students bowed before going in the direction pointed by him.

The environment was peaceful and the density of "Breath" was high, there were small bridges on the river to facilitate its crossing.

In a few minutes, the students of the Grayshade class arrived in front of the structure.

Before someone crossed its entrance though, a voice sounded from inside it.

"The twenty-five with the highest battle prowess first."

Those that had passed the test entered the building, Noah and June were among them of course.

A big hall unfolded in front of them and, at the end of it, a desk was placed with an old woman writing something on a paper.

She raised her look and spoke.

"The strongest among you can come forth."

The students turned to look at Noah.

'So much for laying low.'

He sighed and then moved toward the desk.

"Place your hand on this tablet and read these words loud and clear."

She pointed at a marble tablet with inscriptions on it while handing him a small sheet.

'Never reveal the location of the academy, the secrets of the academy, the activities of the academy, the teachings of the academy....'

An oath was written on it which basically prevented him to speak of anything regarding the academy to outsiders.

Noah found it reasonable and made the vow while placing his hand on the tablet.

A rune attached itself to his skin and then was absorbed by it.

'I wonder what kind of after-effects do you have if you break the oath.'

It was already his second one but he still didn't know what would happen if he didn't follow its restrictions, he simply had a very bad sensation about it.

The woman nodded.

"Name?"

"Vance."

After a few seconds, she handed him a token with his name written on it.

"Bind it with your mental energy. I already assigned you the first empty room toward the source of the river. Here is your book with all the required information about the academy."

Noah received the token and the book but could not help to have some doubts.

"What is the difference between the source and the end of the river?"

She answered briefly.

"The concentration of "Breath" is higher on the source."

At her words, Noah understood why she divided the students.

'They want to nourish the already strong ones. It makes sense.'

The powerful gets everything while the weak is blamed, that rule was set in stone in that world.

Noah exited the building while he bound the academy token.

Immediately, a map of the academy was projected in his mind with all its various buildings and their functions.

A small spot on the map was glowing with a red color.

'That one should be my room.'

He put everything back in his space-ring and moved in the direction of his lodging.

He decided to give a look to the board first since it was on the same side of the river of his accommodation.

There was no one on the streets of the academy and, when he arrived at the board, a large square appeared in his sight.

At its center, a large wooden panel was erected with tens of different tablets affixed on it.

Noah inspected the contents of the various missions before finding the tablet regarding the courses of his class.

'These tasks have a lot of requirements. Apprentice alchemist, beginner inscriber, rank 2 dantian. They all seem important assignments.'

Since he still didn't know the value of the merit points, he didn't bother to look at them and just memorized the calendar of the courses.

Then, he went toward his lodging.

After walking for a few minutes, he arrived in front of a small house.

There were many like that one along all the right side of the river, Noah was sure that he had spotted more than five hundred of them.

He checked again on the map and confirmed that it was his house.

Noah neared the token to the door and a mechanical sound came from it.

The door opened at Noah's push and its insides were shown to him.

There were two rooms inside, one with a big and comfortable bed and another one with a bathtub.

It was very simple in its furniture but Noah appreciated the absence of useless things.

The density of "Breath" was more than twice the one outside the forest which made Noah quite happy about his location.

He sat on the bed and took out the book with the regulations and began to read it.

He would nod from time to time while the remaining pages to read diminished.

After he read through all the book, he sorted the most important information in his mind.

'I can't kill or gravely injure other students but small fights are allowed. The enrollment to the academy lasts till you are twenty years old, after that you need to apply for a position and pass a test if you want to remain in this space. I will think about the other information after I have an idea of the techniques that I can obtain here.'

It was still the middle of the afternoon so Noah decided to rest before waking up at night to resume his cultivation.

Chapter 114 - 114. Lesson

Noah opened his eyes, stopping his cultivation.

It was dawn and he had to attend his first lesson.

A wide smile was on his face due to the results of his meditation.

'This is great! Cultivating here is way more profitable, I might reach the solid stage in less than one year at this pace.'

The density of "Breath" was high and that affected the speed at which it was absorbed in the dantian.

He had already cultivated for some months in the Dark vortex cultivation technique so his advancements in the liquid stage were not small.

Now that he lived in an environment where the "Breath" was so dense, it was no wonder that the time required for the breakthrough would diminish.

'I wonder how the concentration is at the source of the river. Well, I should probably get going, today there is the lesson about general cultivation.'

He took a bath and exited his lodging, moving toward the other side of the river.

The right area of the academy was assigned to the students while the left one was for courses and special training zones.

Along the way, Noah saw the other students of the Grayshade class walking in the same direction.

They all had radiant smiles and seemed eager to reach the building where the lesson would occur.

"This place is amazing, isn't it?"

June appeared behind him.

She had large eyebags but her figure was brimming with excitement.

'This maniac probably trained for the whole night.'

He then realized that he had done the same thing and cursed internally.

'Why is she so friendly anyway. I'm not exactly the most approachable person in here.'

Noah rarely smiled in public and when he did that, it was a fake one.

His cold aura always accompanied him, scaring away most of those around him.

However, there seemed to be exceptions in the academy.

The Eeggi siblings spotted Noah and joined him in his walk.

They began to speak with June about the environment in the academy and their preferred courses.

However, June was quite reserved when she spoke with them, she didn't seem too experienced in human relationships.

"What about you, Vance?"

The three turned to look at Noah when the red-haired man asked the question.

His name was Ford, Noah had learned it during their trip on the air-ship.

'Are they talking about my courses? How should I know, I barely know anything apart from the three centers of power.'

Noah shrugged his shoulders and gave a short answer.

"Those that increase my battle prowess."

They were a bit surprised.

June nodded and her battle intent was aroused but Ruth rebuked a bit.

"There are way more applications to the "Breath" than simply using it to fight! Inscriptions can create marvels like the flying ship and improve the daily life of everyone. Alchemy can create potions to deter magical beasts from invading the human territory! Using this wonderful energy only to cause more violence is a waste!"

Ruth seemed really invested in this topic but Noah had a different view of things.

He had already seen a technologically advanced world and the image of the King of the valley assaulting its cities formed in his mind.

'A life where all humans are forced to be similar to each other in their mediocrity is only possible in a world with no external threats. And even there, humans will find a way to create more conflicts.'

He had understood the human's nature, his mind was broadened by the experiences of his two lives.

He continued to look in front of him toward the nearing appointed building while he answered in a cold tone.

"All those things are useless if you die due to your weakness."

Ruth was stunned by his answer but June and Ford were of a similar view.

She was about to reply when they reached the structure where their first lesson had to occur.

"This conversation is not over."

Ruth said running toward the entrance.

Her brother followed while June remained with Noah looking at the figures of the Egggi siblings speeding in the distance.

She spoke with a soft voice while her expression became dark.

"She is so naïve."

Noah could not help but nod slightly.

The building was two-story-tall and, on the ground floor, it had a large room full of seats.

'This really resembles the universities of my previous world.'

The seats encircled a small desk where Megan Iccek was sitting.

She had her eye closed and her legs crossed, she seemed quite peaceful contrasted to her attitude when she first appeared to the students.

It took the youths a few minutes to place themselves on the chairs.

When the last one arrived, she opened her eye and stood up while speaking with a loud voice.

"Today I will do a general overview of the known information about cultivation, I believe that many of you are already aware of the topics that I will discuss."

The student's attention was attracted and they listened quietly.

"You are all cultivators so you are aware of the three centers of power and of many of their qualities but for the sake of this lesson I need to review them."

"The sea of consciousness is a projection of your mind, it represents your mental processes and can influence any aspect of your daily life, from your thinking speed to the focus in your actions."

"The dantian is the organ that stores the "Breath" and nourishes your essence. Raising its level will increase your lifespan and empower the abilities that use it. It is also what indicates your rank as a cultivator since its effects are more evident overall."

"The body is the shell that allows you to contain that much power. Increasing its level not only will prolong your life, but it will also allow you to raise the rank of the other two centers of power. If your body is weak, it will not be able to contain the "Breath", stopping your advancements as cultivators."

"The body is also the easier center of power to train and its rank should always be the highest compared to your mind and dantian."

"However, things aren't so easy when we talk about ranks above the third. For example, has any of you seen a rank 4 magical beast?"

Some of the students nodded and a few of them stole glances in Noah's direction when they saw that he remained still.

Chapter 115 - 115. Higher ranks

Megan nodded and continued in her explanation.

"Their strength is way higher than a rank 3, far more than the gap between a rank 2 and a rank 3 creature. This is caused by their ascending to a more powerful form of existence."

Most of the students became particularly interested in that part of the speech and Noah wasn't an exception.

He had seen two rank 4 magical beasts in his life and, in both cases, he had felt the same amount of danger.

However, the first time he didn't have a dantian while on the second one he was in the liquid stage.

His strength had risen but he felt no difference when matched against them which always left him doubtful about their actual power.

"Cultivators through the years have divided the nine known ranks into three groups: the first three ranks are defined as human ranks and they are the easier to make progress in."

"The middle three are called heroic ranks and reaching them will distance a cultivator from his mortal nature, elevating his existence to something more than human. Comparing the human ranks to the heroic ones is like asking a child to defeat a fully armored soldier."

"The last three are called divine ranks. As the name suggests, the cultivators at those levels would have completely abandoned their mortal nature to

became an existence worthy of reverence and worship. Sadly, the information about the divine ranks is limited since so few manage to reach that level in their lifetime."

The youths were staring at her with eager expressions.

Noah's eyes were shining with the flames of ambition but he could not help to be confused.

'If it's just about cultivating, how is it possible that so few have reached those ranks? If it's just about cultivation resources, I believe that any large-size noble family could provide them.'

Megan raised her hand to stop the whispers between the students and reclaim their attention.

"That seems easy at first sight but the reality is harsh and Heaven and Earth are not so kind to those that want to raise their power by plundering the "Breath" of the world. There are two big obstacles on the road to elevate your existence."

"The first one is the absence of techniques. Since you would gradually distance yourself from the human race as your rank increases, common techniques are not suitable for you anymore. Also, every individual is different and elevating your rank will enhance your individuality. Simply put, you would need to create your own training methods once reaching higher ranks. The academy through two thousand years of accumulation and research managed to store cultivation methods till the fifth rank but it's always better to develop a personal technique as soon as possible. Luckily, the training for the sea of consciousness has been copied from the Kesier species which solves the problem for one center of power."

Megan saw that many of the students had questions but she hastily stopped them from speaking.

"The topic of the creation of techniques will be explored in further lessons. For now, just listen to me."

The incoming commotion was prevented but the group on the seats was still eager to find answers.

"The second obstacle is the presence of tribulations. As I said, Heaven and Earth don't want divine beings to be born and will try to stop them with calamities. Every center of power has a different calamity and they will occur in the moment of their breakthrough toward higher stages of existence, I mean during the reaching of the fourth and seventh rank."

"Humans and magical beasts share the same tribulation regarding the body which is called Pain Tribulation. It consists in enduring the pain of the reconstruction of the body and, trust me, it will make you wish to be dead. The "Breath" in your body will also change state: it will become liquid in the heroic ranks and solid in the divine ones. That will be all for the evolution process of the magical beasts since they only have one center of power but this is balanced by the immense quantity of "Breath" that they have to store before going through the transformation of the body."

"The tribulation of the sea of consciousness is called Earth Tribulation. You will have to face a copy of yourself in your mental sphere created from the accumulation of your memories and experiences. It will be as strong as you are and it will have your same instincts, I don't have to explain how dangerous it will be."

"For the dantian, there is the Heaven Tribulation and it's the only external one. The sky will gather clouds made of "Breath" that will release magnificent thunders of great might. It is advised to set up defenses and to undertake it in deserted areas as it is really destructive."

She did a short break to be sure that everyone understood her words.

"Now, back to the rank 4 magical beasts. In order to be able to fight them on even ground, a cultivator needs at least one center of power on their same rank. However, the first to advance is always the body and humans' bodies are far weaker than those of magical beasts. So, your mind and dantian must be at a decent level too if you really want to kill a rank 4 magical beast. Yet, without a strong body, how could you be able to sustain the power held by your other centers of power?"

Megan smiled looking at the faces of the students.

"Now you know the importance of the body and this is why I specialize in body-nourishing methods. If in the future you have some doubts about the development of your body, you can ask me, I don't charge much for private lessons. Oh right, remember that as your rank grows, the strength of the centers of power will begin to align. Otherwise, you would have needed to enter a completely different stage before doing a breakthrough in the heroic ranks with your mind and dantian."

The lesson went on for some more time, consisting of Megan answering the question of the students about the topics explained before.

Noah listened attentively for its whole duration and felt very satisfied when it ended.

He was deep in thought when he went back to his lodging.

'My body has stopped improving since it reached the peak of the lower tier of the third rank. If I were to obtain a rank 4 body, would that increase the training speed of my mind and dantian? After this week is over, I need to raise the level of all my obsolete techniques!'

Chapter 116 - 116. Talent

The next morning, the students of the Grayshade class gathered in the same building to attend their second lesson.

Thaddeus was the professor of the course and he was smilingly having his speech in front of the youths.

"You must know that runes are a form of inscription. The fields in which inscriptions can be applied are limitless. You can inscribe a weapon and you would obtain a blade that can pierce anything. You can inscribe a ship to make it fly. You can inscribe runes for teleportation. Spells are a form of inscriptions too."

He was holding the lesson regarding general inscriptions of which Noah was particularly interested.

After his adventure in the separate dimension, he had really understood the might of inscription masters.

'The inheritance ground was completely made from runes. The defensive wall of the Balvan family had runes that could protect the mansion from a dragon attacking. My sabers have inscriptions that can make them fix themselves. This power is too useful, I need to understand how it works!'

"However, the requirements to be successful in this art are quite harsh."

He looked in the direction of Ruth Egggi and nodded in approval.

"There is one main school regarding the process of inscriptions which is called "Attunement with the "Breath"". It consists in becoming able to read the fluctuation of the "Breath" and then copying it in a material form. For example, I specialize in space runes, which means that every time I create any one of them, I need to inscribe the behavior that the "Breath" would have during the action that I want to reproduce."

He opened his hand and a small golden rune came out of it.

He then crashed it, making a blinding light surround him.

When the light faded, he had disappeared from his position.

"This is just a simple version but it should be enough to give you an example."

Thaddeus' voice resounded from the back of the room and all the students turned in its direction only to see Thaddeus slowly walking back to his desk.

"However, to make it I had to inscribe the act of teleportation that the "Breath" showed me. I had to inscribe my location of landing and I needed to use my power to make it work."

"To learn how the "Breath" 'speaks', I had to isolate myself for five years in an environment with a high density of "Breath" and attune with its flow. Then I had to learn how to translate that language in the form of inscriptions. Only at that moment, I had become worthy of the title of inscription master. Yet, there are exceptions in this world."

He pointed at Ruth and continued.

"Miss Ruth Eeggi was born with an innate attunement to the "Breath". As you know, the "Breath" is everywhere, it is the essence of Heaven and Earth. Heaven and Earth are the same world you live in so it's no wonder that she is able to predict certain events by reading their "Breath". Her training as an inscription master will focus only on the translation process, I believe that in less than five years she will be able to perform her first inscriptions."

The students turned to her showing envy for the most part.

However, big smiles were on their faces as they looked at her.

'It seems that the position of inscription master is quite worthy of respect to make the heirs of the large-size noble families show courtesy.'

Noah thought briefly and then focused on his situation.

'I believe that the "Breath" is a form of representation of the laws of the universe. In my previous world, scientists used math to understand the laws and technology to make use of them. Here they use the cultivator to

understand and the inscriptions to reproduce them. However, I never felt anything even similar to a language, it's just a form of energy in my mind.'

Thaddeus spoke again, his expression turned in a stern one.

"I will be honest, many of you won't have any success in this field. The first step in the "Attunement" method is to become one with the "Breath" around you and then hear it speak. If you don't have enough talent or your will is too in contrast with the standards of Heaven and Earth, you will never be able to cross the first step."

'Is my ambition an obstacle in the point of view of Heaven and Earth? How can someone test it?'

Noah thought but Thaddeus was immediate in solving his doubts.

"The test at the end of this week will clearly tell you if you have any hope of pursuing the "Attunement" method so as your talents in the different disciplines that the academy teaches."

He sighed briefly.

"There are other methods to create inscriptions but they are generally more dangerous and with a smaller success rate. However, for those that have no talent in the "Attunement" method and still want to pursue the path of inscriptions, the academy will call external teachers to give you private lessons. Of course, you would have to pay every lesson unless they take you as their disciple. Also, many of them are not as reliable as the actual professors of the academy so I advise you to think carefully before deciding to invest your Credits in that."

"Anyhow, you should all have a general knowledge of the topic since it is the most common process to create techniques. With a foundation in inscriptions, the process of creating cultivation methods suitable for you will be easier."

The lesson went on discussing other applications of the art and many students were interested in the runes that Thaddeus used.

He admitted that they weren't his creation but a legacy of the Royal family.

He compared them to a martial art with more requirements, with the most important one being reaching the level of an inscription master.

'This seems so complex.'

Noah thought on his way back to the lodging.

'If I'm not talented in it, there are no real problems in the short run. However, when I will have to create techniques for myself the situation will be tough. I can just hope that I'll be lucky with this one.'

He stopped right in front of his door.

'Shit! If it's about luck, I'll never be able to do it! After the test, I should probably start researching about the other methods that he mentioned.'

Chapter 117 - 117. Mirror

More lessons followed in the next days.

There was the alchemy course held by Wanda Hamman, the real battle course held by Bruce Nairti, and then courses about the general history of cultivators and magical beasts.

Noah was happy to discover that his chances of becoming an alchemist weren't that bad.

He had a strong mind and a good attitude at repetitive works, the only problem was his cold nature that contrasted with the warmth needed to take care of useful plants.

However, during Bruce's lesson, he shined like no one else.

"It's a pity that I already have a student as a disciple and he requires all my attention. Otherwise, I could have become your master right away."

Those were Bruce's words after Noah didn't lose any one versus one fight in his class.

'His student is called Daniel and it seems that he is some sort of celebrity around here. Apparently, he had the previous record of the hunting tests but I broke it. I've probably made an enemy out of him already if he is like the other nobles.'

Noah was in his house pondering about the events of the previous week.

'The courses of general cultivation and real battle are a must to attend. I'm really interested in the course about magical beasts too. As for the others, I'd better wait for the results of tomorrow's test.'

The students had one free day before the test of their nature and Noah was spending it inside his lodging, cultivating.

'I wonder how the test will work, it doesn't feel bad to have a clearer idea of how you are.'

The rest day passed uneventfully.

Noah woke up on the next one full of energy and moved toward the appointed gathering area.

The students of the Grayshade class had to reach a certain building on the left part of the river and wait there for further instructions.

Noah walked alone like he was used to but the same three people arrived behind him and started a conversation.

"You know, Mister Thaddeus said that it is highly possible that I will become his disciple."

Ruth said without hiding the excitement in her eyes.

Ford had a wide smile on his face when his sister spoke, being the disciple of a member of the Royal dynasty would be immensely beneficial to their family.

"That is good for you."

June cheered her without much enthusiasm.

She had lost again against Noah in Bruce's class and only managed to tie with Justin.

She was eager to increase her strength so she didn't care much about the test.

Noah wasn't paying attention to their behavior, he was still wondering how his nature could be tested effectively.

June claimed his attention by lightly nudging his torso.

"Do you already know which courses will you attend?"

Noah had become used to June's character.

She was a bit wild in her manners and words but she was pretty straightforward so he could be at ease and not expect any scheme from her.

"Megan and Bruce's ones are a must in my opinion. I'll just wait for the results of the test to think about the others."

June nodded and a slight smile formed on her face.

"It's good that you don't want to relax in the combat training. I don't want to beat you because you were too focused on other things."

Noah shook his head.

"You should first surpass Justin, don't you think?"

June snorted and crossed her arms before replying in a loud voice.

"If we could have used spells that guy was done for! Oh right, I don't even know which element you have."

Noah shrugged his shoulders but didn't answer.

He didn't particularly mind that his element was exposed but he felt that hiding it as much as possible was the best way to slow down Balvan family's research.

'If they knew that a new student with no background and of the darkness element joined the academy, I believe that all their inner circle would go to the Royal city asking for me.'

He was a fugitive after all, he had to take his precautions.

June was disappointed by the lack of an answer but she seemed to think of something and nodded repeatedly by herself.

Then she looked at Noah again and smiled.

"I will just have to force you to show it the next time that we fight."

Noah sighed and massaged his temples.

The appointed building was deep in the left side of the academy.

The area was surrounded by an eerie silence and a big door blocked the sight of the interiors of the structure.

Megan was waiting for the students to gather in front of the building and raised her hand to obtain their attention when the last one of them arrived.

"You will enter twenty at the time. The test consists of an illusionary dimension built after scanning your mental sphere. Nothing happening in the test will be real, it will just be a representation of your dreams and talents. After that, the results for your attitudes regarding the courses offered by the academy will be shown to you."

She then began to call the names of those that obtained the highest score in the entrance test so Noah and June were allowed to enter with the first batch of students.

The door opened and revealed a big circular area with a mirror as its floor.

A large crystal was at the center of the room, it was transparent but it refracted the light that passed through it.

"The formation will scan your sea of consciousness, don't oppose it or the test won't be accurate. Now sit and stare at your reflections on the floor, I will activate the inscriptions."

Megan moved toward the crystal and took out a shining gem.

'That should be worth one hundred Credits.'

Noah judged before he sat and stared at his reflection.

His skin was smooth and slightly pale, his eyebrows were thin and his eyes were bright.

Megan then placed the Obsidian Credit on the crystal and many inscriptions lighted up on the floor like they were the expanding roots of a tree.

Noah felt a stare on his mental sphere.

The external force continued to look at his sea of consciousness for a few minutes until his reflection flickered and he was absorbed by the mirror.

Chapter 118 - 118. Undying Earth, endless Heaven

There was no pressure on his mental sphere but Noah had instinctively closed his eyes.

When he opened them, he found himself in a dark world illuminated only by the soft light of distant stars and by figures on the ground.

There were tens of thousands of white glowing shapes that resembled humans wielding weapons and they were fighting in an immense barren plain with a mountain at its center.

The mountain was incredibly tall with paths along its sides.

The paths were shining as the glowing figures were fighting on them too.

On the summit of the mountain, the brightest of all the figures was sitting on a black throne.

It seemed that it was looking at the massive battle below but since it had no face, Noah could not be sure of that.

However, the throne felt irresistible to Noah and he instinctively took a step toward the battlefield.

He noticed that he hadn't a body either but that he was made of the same brilliant substance of the others in the plain.

Two glowing sabers were wielded by him as he began to battle.

His thoughts were confused and he could not think of anything except reaching the top of the mountain.

He began to battle in the crowded plain, every time he defeated a figure, a bit of its light was absorbed by Noah.

He didn't notice that once a shape was killed, a skull would fall on the ground behind him.

He had random moments of clarity in which he could think about his situation.

'It seems that this world forces me to follow my instincts, I believe that this is all a metaphor for my search of power.'

He realized the intention of the test but he could not stop fighting.

He felt his strength increase every time he defeated an opponent and he slowly neared the base of the mountain.

However, there were only more figures on his path and Noah continued to defeat them one by one.

He lost the perception of time, there was only the next opponent in his mind.

Days passed fighting and then months.

Noah had completely lost himself in the search of power but his sparse moments of clarity allowed him to always move toward the mountain.

The light he was exuding started to surpass those around him as he was becoming far stronger than them.

In the end, he reached the mountain.

He found out that the 'paths' were in reality only one road that coiled all the mountain linking its bottom with its peak.

Noah didn't waste any time and began his climb.

Even more battles happened and more skulls accumulated on the terrain.

He continued his solitary march toward the power that he had always desired.

He was becoming increasingly shining, he clearly felt that his strength had long surpassed the limits of a human of his new world.

Then, he reached the summit.

The most shining figure rose from his throne and launched itself at Noah.

The battle was incredibly hard but Noah felt satisfied when he won.

There was no one else in front of him, only the throne remained on his path.

He slowly neared it, it felt irresistible as if everything he had always desired were to be found there.

He sat on the throne and the scene changed in front of his eyes.

The throne wasn't black anymore but it was white and made of countless human skulls.

The mountain had changed too: instead of terrain, the ground was composed of bloody corpses and countless weapons.

The plain disappeared and, in its place, a red sea occupied the whole world.

Noah could clearly feel some familiarity with all the environment.

The skulls and corpses belonged to those that he had killed to reach the summit while the sea was the blood that he had made them shed.

He was alone, the last living being, king of a dead world.

Time passed, Noah felt that he hadn't left the throne for centuries.

He had no reason move, he had reached the peak, the pinnacle of the world.

Then, the level of the sea began to lower until it was completely absorbed in the ground below it.

Slowly, life forms appeared.

They were small shapes made of light that ran freely on the naked terrain.

More and more lights formed until the first human was born.

A second human appeared and then a third.

The world repopulated at a fast pace until the humans were again the main figures of the world.

The shining figures then looked at the mountain and at Noah's brilliance.

One by one, they fell on their knees and prostrated toward the white throne and the mountain of corpses.

'Heaven and Earth gave me a throne, even if it's made of skulls. The Earth revives every time, doesn't matter how much blood you pour on it.'

He raised his gaze to look at the distant stars.

'The vastness of the sky stands uncaring upon me.'

He looked again at the prostrated figures, he was the king of an entire world, there was only worship exuded from its inhabitants.

'I don't want any of this.'

He understood that the throne was just a mean to obtain strength but he had no intention of being a ruler.

'I have no interest in ruling upon the undying Earth, nor on being deluded by the endless Heaven.'

He looked again at the sky, the light of the stars felt familiar, they resembled a bigger version of the shining shape that was previously occupying the mountain.

He stood up from the throne and placed a foot in the air.

A step materialized and Noah proceeded on placing his other foot on the empty air in front of it.

Another step appeared on a higher altitude than the one before.

Noah didn't stop nor did he look at the figures below him, only the shining stars occupied his field of view.

A stairway leading to the firmament formed and Noah continued to climb it until he disappeared in the dark sky.

Chapter 119 - 119. Inventory

Noah opened his eyes.

His image reflected on the floor made of mirrors slowly brought him back to reality.

In the eyes of his reflection, the brightness of the stars in the sky shined like it had become a part of it.

'So, this is who I am.'

He had a deeper understanding of his true nature after the test.

'An endless search for a higher power. It seems that even Heaven can't suppress my ambition.'

He raised his gaze to look at the sky.

Only the clear ceiling of the building was visible but Noah's eyes seemed to look through it.

'I died and reborn. I was suppressed and forged my way to freedom. I shall not be bound by human's law nor by Heaven's will.'

A list appeared in his sea of consciousness which had the names of the courses and his attitude on them pictured on it.

'Attunement with the "Breath", highly incompatible, I had already guessed that much.'

Noah attentively read the list.

He discovered that if he focused on certain courses, an explanation for the judgment of the test would appear.

'My nature is in deep contrast with the fairness of Heaven and Earth which will likely prevent me from ever hearing their language.'

'My talent in alchemy is average, my uncaring nature seems to contrast with some procedures of the art.'

He looked for the tag "highly compatible" and found only two courses that had it.

'Real battle was quite obvious, I was going to attend that course anyway. However, what kind of subject is "Elemental forging"?'

The latter was the only other course where he was highly talented according to the test.

Noah focused on its name and a line of text appeared.

'Since your nature is heavily opposing the will of the world, the inscription method "Elemental forging" is the most suitable for you.'

'Oh, it's another method for inscriptions. My chances to become an inscription master are not null then.'

Noah looked around him and saw that all the other students in the room were lost in thought.

He stood up and went to Megan, performing a light bow when he reached her.

"Am I now allowed to inspect the inventory?"

Megan smiled lightly seeing Noah's eagerness.

"Yes, but remember to declare your courses in the building where you retrieved your academy token. You have one free week to do it. After that, the academy will formally start operating."

Noah bowed again and exited the building.

There were the curious stares of the students on the outside of the test area but he was too excited to care about them.

'Finally, I can choose new techniques!'

Since he had completed the test, he had finally access to the various services that the academy offered.

There were some areas locked behind merit points but the inventory was not one of them.

Noah moved rapidly through the streets of the academy, his mind was focused on a certain building on the map in his sea of consciousness.

When he arrived there, he could clearly see that the structure was completely surrounded by runes and inscriptions.

Two guards in golden armor stared coldly at him when he neared the ingress of the inventory.

"We need to see your token."

Noah took it out from his space-ring and the guards gave it back to him after a few inspections.

"You can enter, Professor Lynn will explain everything to you."

Noah nodded and entered the building.

'These guards are powerful. I guess it's obvious since all the techniques and arts of the academy are stored here.'

The scent of old books and ink invaded his nose, the interior of the building appeared extremely old.

An old cultivator was silently meditating mid-air behind a long desk.

Even more runes were present on the floor from that point onward.

Noah saw the man sitting cross-legged in the air and was slightly amazed.

'This elder is so strong that I can't feel anything coming from him.'

He reached for the desk and bowed.

"Professor Lynn, I'm here to inspect the inventory for the first time."

Lynn slowly opened his eyes and Noah felt a piercing gaze analyzing him.

He slowly descended on the floor and stood up with his arms crossed.

His large sleeves completely covered his hands and his white long beard was freely laid on his chest.

"The academy offers one rank 4 martial art for free. Would you mind telling me your current one and your element so that I can sort those that fit you the most?"

His voice was steady and no trace of his age was present on it.

Noah nodded and spoke in a soft voice.

"Nails of the Kamaitachi and, well, darkness element."

Lynn's eyes widened when he heard the last part but then a smile broke on his stern face.

"What an interesting period to be alive! Give me a moment, I will show you a list of martial arts soon."

He sat on the chair behind the desk and took out a white crystal from a drawer.

He closed his eyes and focused, holding the crystal in his hand.

The white light flickered from time to time and, after a few minutes, Lynn opened his eyes and handed the crystal to Noah.

Noah took it and used his mental energy to probe the white mineral.

Immediately, a list of about ten martial arts appeared in his sea of consciousness.

There were descriptions on the sides of their names and Noah's attention was completely drawn by them.

Only a few of them had the darkness element as a requirement but they were all martial arts for two-weapon users that focused on speed.

'There is the rank 4 Nails of the Kamaitachi but it's advised to be of the wind element to use it fully. As for those of the darkness element, they all have wide area attacks that oppose my current fighting style.'

His choice eventually fell on the only martial art that valued his fighting style and his element.

'Three forms of the Ashura, rank 4. Limited to dual-weapon wielder and darkness element cultivators. Consists of three techniques that have to be paired with my martial art and they expend both "Breath" and mental energy. It should be my best choice since it allows me to increase my battle prowess without giving up my accumulated experience.'

Noah decided in his mind and reported his choice to Lynn.

Chapter 120 - 120. Trade

"This is a good choice but you must raise your level to fully use these three forms"

Lynn commented on Noah's choice while he stood up from his chair and brought the crystal in a deeper part of the room.

He placed the mineral on a small cavity on the floor and the inscriptions around it lighted up.

When the light faded, a small book had appeared in that spot.

Lynn handed the book to Noah and he stored it, he had still other transactions to do.

"Professor, I wonder if you could solve one of my doubts."

Lynn caressed his beard and nodded.

"Why is the value of spells and techniques so high? Isn't it possible to simply copy the forms and diagrams?"

Lynn smiled lightly before replying.

"When an inscription master writes a diagram, it is generally drawn according to his comprehension. Since it's quite impossible to copy someone else's intention when he inscribes, it is hard to make copies of a certain technique. Martial arts are a bit different as they are simpler in their descriptions, that's why their value is lower."

'So, I can't make a copy of the Surging river spell.'

"Thank you, Professor. I would like to acquire more techniques, the instruction's book said that I could buy them with merit points, Credits, and by trade, am I right?"

Lynn nodded again.

"Do you already know what you are looking for?"

"Darkness spells and rank 4 body-nourishing methods that require the darkness element."

Lynn's eyes widened, he was surprised that such a young man was so certain of what he was in need of.

"The value of darkness spells is quite high since not even the academy has that many of them. I think you can only afford a rank 0 one for now. As for the body-nourishing method, its price isn't low either."

Noah took out a small scroll from his space-ring and showed it to Lynn.

The Professor carefully examined it and was quite interested after a few looks.

Noah spoke before he could say anything.

"I have one thousand Credits and that spell, are they enough?"

The scroll contained the Surging river spell.

Since Noah had no usage for it, it was better to exchange it for something that could increase his strength.

Money was the same: what was the point of accumulating it? It was better to spend it on useful techniques.

He could always make more of it later when he had become stronger.

Lynn put a hand under his chin and fell in thought.

After a few seconds, he picked the crystal again and concentrated.

"Which body-nourishing method did you train into?"

"Forging of the Seven Hells."

Lynn stopped his concentration for a moment and looked at Noah.

A bit of pity was exuded from his eyes when he looked at the youth.

He then resumed his focus and tossed the crystal to Noah when he was done.

The list of techniques and spells wasn't long, it had at best twenty-five names and most of them were rank 0 spells.

'Dark blade, enhances sharpness. Dark membrane, light defensive ability...'

Noah read through them but he couldn't find anything interesting.

He saw a rank 1 spell called Black coil which he could use but he believed that his martial art enhanced with his Demonic form was on its same level.

The others were supportive spells that existed for any other element.

'I couldn't expect much more since I have one of the best darkness spells already. Buying a rank 1 spell now will only hinder my combat style since using the Demonic form will always be the best choice at any moment. I should probably pick a supportive rank 0 one that enhances my normal status so that I can rely less on the Demonic form.'

He switched his attention to the body-nourishing methods.

There were ten methods but only three of them had the darkness element as a requirement.

Of those three, only two of them had special abilities that could be mastered once he reached the fourth rank.

'These two are surely more valuable, they remind me of Kevin's transformation.'

The prices were written on the sides of each name and Noah paled a bit when he looked at the ones of the two methods.

They were priced more than forty thousand Credits each!

The rank 0 spells costed "only" eight thousand Credits in comparison.

He raised his gaze and spoke to Lynn in a soft voice.

"How much is my spell worth?"

Lynn shook his head and replied calmly.

"It is a spell that can express the power of a rank 4 magic. Don't worry, just pick one for each category and you will be fine."

Noah focused again on the two body-nourishment methods.

'Way of the phantom, reaching rank 4 will allow the user to increase his stealth abilities, as well as becoming completely invisible and ethereal for a short period of time.'

'Yin body, reaching rank 4 will give the user a body with high regenerative properties. It will also store "Breath" that can be used to momentarily enhance the qualities of the body, mainly the regenerative one.'

'They seem both really good. The phantom form is really interesting, it could help me escape any situation and I believe that it has many applications in

battle. However, the Yin body seems to match well with the Forging of Seven Hells since I should be able to store more "Breath" than normal cultivators.'

They were both really suitable for survival and it took Noah quite a bit to finally decide.

He passed back the crystal to Lynn and spoke calmly.

"I want the rank 0 spell Shadow steps and the rank 4 body-nourishing method Yin body."

Lynn nodded and replied.

"I will value the spell fifty thousand Credits. Sadly, it is of a common element which makes it easier to copy so its value is barely enough for you to buy what you've chosen."

He returned to the spot where he first took the martial art and repeated the same procedure as before.

When he came back, he had two scrolls in his hands and twenty shining Obsidian Credits.

"These are the method and the spell that you asked for, added to two thousand Credits of change from the value of your spell."

Noah put everything in the space-ring and he could not help to ask another question.

"May I know how much it costs to buy a rank 4 darkness spell?"

Lynn showed a complex smile.

"They are pretty rare and almost impossible to copy. You should have a sum superior to two hundred thousand Credits if you really want to think of buying one."