

Chapter 121 - 121. Private lessons

Noah exited the inventory building.

He was deep in thought but he could not hide the excitement that he felt.

'I should really find a way to make money. Well, at least now I have the means to improve all my centers of power.'

The Yin body for the body, the Kesier rune for the mind, the Dark vortex for the dantian, and the Three forms of the Ashura coupled with the Shadow steps spell for his combat style.

He was eager to go back to his lodgings but there was another matter that had to be completed.

Noah went to the building where he received the academy token.

The same old woman was on the desk inside the structure.

"I need to state the courses that I want to attend and I would like to ask information about one of them."

Noah handed his token to the woman that gestured him to continue.

"General cultivation, real battle, and study of magical beasts. I would like to know more about the Elemental forging course though."

The woman nodded and wrote something on a tablet on the desk.

She then raised her head to look at Noah spoke in a calm voice.

"You need to request for an external teacher but it will cost you."

Noah was aware of that aspect and replied.

"How much?"

She sorted some kind of inscribed sheet before answering him.

"There is only one cultivator affiliated to the academy that teaches it. He requests for three hundred Credits for every private lesson."

'That much! What I have is just enough for ten lessons!'

Noah was quite conflicted about that.

On one side, he already had everything he needed to increase his strength in the incoming years.

On the other one, he was afraid that his lack of knowledge in the inscription field would be a hindrance to his future advancements.

'Fuck it, it's just money.'

"I accept. How does it work then?"

The woman wrote a line over the sheet and then did the same with the token.

"It might take a while for him to arrive at the academy. Just attend your normal courses, the token has the schedule already stored in it. You will be informed when your requested teacher arrives and you will directly pay him."

Noah took the token back and bowed.

He hurriedly went back to his lodging.

There were no lessons for the whole week and Noah had too many techniques to catch up with.

He looked at the Yin body first, but he found out that it was required to be cultivated at night.

Since it was still midday, he chose to inspect the rank 0 spell.

'Shadow steps, it creates small circles made of "Breath" under your feet. Stepping on them will propel you at fast speed in the desired direction.'

It was a movement type spell, it could vastly improve Noah's footwork making his fast martial art more deadly.

There was also another reason why he chose it: it was completely compatible with his flight through Echo's wings!

Noah focused on the diagram and memorized it in two hours.

It was a rank 0 spell after all, learning it took no time to Noah that was already halfway through the first rank of the sea of consciousness.

Noah stood up and replicated the lines of the diagram in his mind.

Mental energy and "Breath" were expended but their quantity wasn't much.

'This consumption is totally sustainable in long fights. I only need to train in it.'

A small black circle appeared under his sole as Noah raised his foot in the air.

Noah stepped on it and pushed with medium strength.

The ring shattered but Noah jumped till the ceiling of the room, blocking the impact with his hands.

'Definitely worth the consumption, I should train more in an open space.

Maybe I can pick up some simple missions already.'

He tried some more times to get used to the sensation of the activation of the spell and then moved his focus to the martial art.

'Three forms of the Ashura, it basically consists of three techniques that have to be implemented in my martial art to improve its rank. However, I'm not totally sure that I have enough "Breath" and mental energy to use it. I should just memorize the moves for now, I'll try its actual prowess outside the academy.'

Noah trained in the three forms, his sabers swung across the room as they moved according to the instructions of the martial art.

He could clearly feel that there was an incredible power behind the positions and he tried to mix them with his already mastered art.

In the end, the night came.

Noah could not wait anymore and he stuffed some food from his space-ring in his mouth and sat on the floor with the Yin body scroll open in front of him.

'I first need to choose where the absorption should begin. It is usually advised to equally distribute the "Breath" on the body but I'm quite sure that my seven acupoints know what to do.'

His acupoints refilled the "Breath" in his body as soon as it was used.

However, since he reached the liquid stage that "Breath" had become quite useless in battle.

Noah focused on his acupoints.

The Yin body method of absorption was similar to his Dark vortex cultivation technique.

The Dark vortex was created consuming part of his "Breath" to attract the one of its same kind.

The Yin body created a vortex that rotated at a certain rhythm that attracted only the "Breath" of the darkness element and distributed it in certain parts of the body.

In the Yin body method, the focus was on the bone marrow.

Noah didn't need to create a vortex since he had already seven of them and only focused on changing their rotation rhythm.

It was hard at the beginning since even a slight mistake would stop the attraction of the "Breath".

After attempting for four hours, Noah finally managed to control one of his acupoints to follow the described rhythm.

A cold sensation enveloped his back, the "Breath" that was absorbed sent chills down his spine.

As more and more "Breath" entered the vortex, the acupoint below it began to darken.

A wave of coldness invaded Noah, the new "Breath" traveled through his body and completely vanquished the one that was already stored by the Seven Hells method.

Little by little, that emptied space was being filled by a dark and cold gas.

Chapter 122 - 122. Daniel

Since the Yin body was a body-nourishing method specific for the darkness element, it was obvious that the absorbed "Breath" would be of that same element.

The Seven Hells method didn't distinguish between them and had freely stored "Breath" of various types but, with the new method, that "Breath" had become a hindrance for the advancement of the body.

The dark gas slowly filled his body, lowering its temperature.

Noah endured the coldness and pushed the new "Breath" toward the dantian.

The dantian then refined the gas and dispersed it through his skeletal system.

His bones began to emit a soft aura that slowly nourished the other parts of his body.

'So that's how it feels like to use a method that requires the dantian.'

The refinement of the dantian was necessary for the process to render the cold "Breath" absorbed by his acupoint harmless.

If his body tried to directly assimilate it, it would create a great deal of damage.

Noah continued to practice in the Yin body for the rest of the night, trying to automate the procedure.

When the sun rose, ending the night, Noah had managed to use two of his seven acupoints for the absorption part.

He stood up and felt the "Breath" accumulated in his bones slowly nourishing his body.

It was a cold sensation but Noah didn't feel the slightest uneasiness.

Conversely, he was feeling his body becoming stronger!

'Such a long time has passed since I last trained my body. It feels good.'

He smiled enjoying the sensation of his strengthening.

'Never mind the battle prowess, I will become used to my new techniques anyway during the real battle class. Right now, I should focus on increasing the level of my centers of power before wasting time in some useless missions for the academy.'

That's what he did in the free week before the beginning of the lessons.

The day was reserved for the Kesier rune and his martial art while the night was spent trying to cultivate together dantian and body through his two techniques.

When the free week ended and Noah exited his lodging, his usual aura seemed even colder and his skin was pale but not in an unhealthy way.

As he moved toward the building, he noticed that the streets of the academy were crowded with young students that he had never seen before.

"It seems that the test period is usually break-time for the students. They were all back in their families or away doing missions for the academy."

June arrived behind him and solved his doubts.

She had even larger eyebags than last week but her eyes seemed more focused.

"I didn't see you two for an entire week, don't tell me that you spent all that time cultivating!"

Ruth arrived with her brother.

The answer to her question was quite obvious seeing the aspect of Noah and June.

"You should enjoy life more! We are young and talented, we can't waste our best years like this!"

June shook his head and snorted while Noah limited himself to look ahead of him.

'Enjoy life? I don't even know when the Balvan family will find me.'

Rhys' face appeared in his mind and some of his suppressed emotions were kindled again.

'I bet that daddy is pretty desperate about Fabian disappearance. What a pity, I'm way too weak to make a move against a medium-size noble family.'

Some traces of killing intent began to be exuded from his figure.

However, before anyone near him could notice it, a big commotion invaded one of the streets near his position.

Tens of students surrounded a tall man of about nineteen years old.

He had short silver hair and a slender body.

A warm smile was on his face as he greeted those that came to welcome him. His aura too was warm and fiery which improved his figure in the eyes of the others.

Ruth suppressed an excited scream and whispered to June.

"That man is Daniel! The prodigy of the Uyde family! It is said that not only his family is one of the wealthiest among the large-size noble families, he is also the strongest student in the academy! Think about it, he has the record in the hunting entrance tests with one hundred and ten Earth lizards killed!"

June was speechless and pointed at Noah behind her.

"But he broke that record."

June didn't hold her voice so all the students near her heard what she said.

Whispers began to resound between the various groups of students until, eventually, those words arrived at the youths surrounding Daniel.

"Someone broke Lord Daniel's record? Hump, I bet he was fighting ants!"

"But I heard that they were Ice-born Yetis, their strength is quite similar to the Earth lizards."

"Nonsense. And even if they did that, Lord Daniel was less than seventeen when he did that accomplishment! We must all remember that."

"But this Vance is not even sixteen apparently."

"..."

Silence reined on the streets and June sensed a cold stare on her back.

She turned and saw Noah looking at her with the same gaze that he had back when they fought.

"I'm sorry, ok? I'll make up for this at some point. I just don't think much about the consequences of my actions."

She bowed while saying these words.

Noah felt like an old man scolding a child and sighed loudly while massaging his temples.

However, some stares and gestures that pointed at him had already begun to appear between the students.

He then felt a scorching gaze on him and turned his head in that direction.

His eyes inevitably crossed Daniel's ones and they stared at each other for a whole minute.

Noah felt that Daniel's nature was completely different from his, he could not explain why.

It was more of an instinct rather than a sensation.

'Is he stronger than me? Well, he is at least three years older.'

Noah felt that Daniel's strength was slightly above his, he wasn't sure that he could beat him.

After their stares, Daniel began to speak.

"So, you must be Vance! Why don't you join me and my friends for a drink? Oh, you can bring your group too, the more the merrier!"

Daniel's smile began even brighter as he gently asked that.

Ruth turned to look at Noah with an eager expression but he answered immediately before any plead reached his ears.

"No, I have a lesson now."

After these words, he walked toward his appointed building between the amazed gazes of the other students.

Chapter 123 - 123. Naked

Noah entered the building and sat on one of the farthest seats from the teacher's desk.

Megan was already there waiting for all the students to gather.

June arrived right after and sat next to him.

"Why didn't you join Daniel?"

Noah replied in a calm tone.

"Because I had a lesson."

"But isn't he the most famous person in the academy?"

Noah shrugged his shoulders.

"Should I care?"

"Well, face is really important to nobles. There is a high chance that his group will retaliate."

Noah shrugged his shoulders again and focused on Megan.

The course went on for a few hours with the Professor explaining the most common usage of the various centers of power.

After that, Noah went back to his lodging and found out that June's warning was on point.

Two male students were standing in front of his accommodation with smirks on their faces.

"Do you think that breaking Lord Daniel's record gives you the right to ignore him?"

The other continued.

"Lord Daniel is too kind and doesn't care about that stuff but you clearly disrespected him this morning. You'd better follow us and apologize in front of him."

Noah understood part of the situation.

'They want to gain points with that guy by using me as a sacrifice?'

Noah shook his head and spoke in an uncaring tone.

"Hey, what is the meaning of "gravely injure" according to the academy rules?"

The two students were a bit surprised by his words and replied honestly.

"Well, any permanent injury of course."

Noah nodded and wielded his sabers.

"I only want to cultivate in peace but if you force me, I will break both your arms and hang you naked on the board on this side of the river."

The two students were speechless for a moment before exploding in a sonorous laugh.

"Who do you think you are!? If you ever touch me, L-"

He could not finish his phrase since Noah had already appeared in front of him.

The handle of his saber hit with incredible momentum the pit of the student's stomach.

The student fell on his knees and began to throw up.

Noah grabbed his head and smashed it on the ground, making him faint.

The other student grew scared and turned to run away.

Noah charged again, a small black circle appeared under his foot, speeding up his assault.

He immediately arrived behind the other student and strongly hit his nape with the bladeless side of his saber.

He fainted on the spot due to the impact of Noah's attack.

'The Shadow steps spell sure is useful!'

He had used the rank 0 spell in both his charges to obtain a greater momentum and the effects greatly pleased him.

'Now, let's take care of these two.'

A great commotion occurred that day in the academy.

One of the new students carried two of his seniors on the board at the center of the lodging area.

The seniors were unconscious and were, most importantly, naked from head to toe.

The new student then hanged them upside down on the board and went away uncaringly.

'I really went too easy on them.'

Noah sighed, he was back in his room.

In the end, he didn't break their arms, he was still too wary of Thaddeus' threat.

'Well, they should have learnt their lesson at least. If they ever come back for more trouble, I'll just be harsher with my methods.'

He was in a good mood since he had had the chance to test his new spell, its effects were like he had predicted.

'I should even be able to fly for longer times since I can continuously use the Shadow steps in the air. I guess I will have to do more experiments as soon as I pick a mission.'

He spent the rest of the day training, waking up early in the morning to attend the real battle course.

There were many people on the streets of the academy and most of them gazed at Noah before whispering in their groups.

'Everyone should now know that I'm not to bother, good.'

His message seemed to be fully conveyed as no one dared to cross his eyes.

"Was it a good fight?"

With the exception of June, of course.

"It wasn't really a fight."

June nodded and continued to move forward.

"We need a sparring partner in today's course. Can I count on you for that?"

Noah thought for a bit and then nodded after adding something.

"As long as you watch your mouth from now on."

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Time passed peacefully for Noah in the academy.

He would attend his three weekly lessons and then spend the rest of his time cultivating.

His knowledge of magical beasts became vaster as it did his expertise in the cultivation topic.

His strength also steadily rose and, with June as his sparring partner, he had become quite used to the changes in his fighting style.

Almost two months had passed since his entrance in the academy and it was time for him to complete a mission.

Noah was standing in front of the board with a pensive expression.

Since the events with Daniel's followers, no one ever bothered him again.

Adding that to his increasingly cold aura, it was no wonder that very few people ever approached him.

'However, if they want some kind of revenge, I believe that this will be the best moment.'

All the missions that he could accept were outside of the academy ground.

If the two students managed somehow to place an ambush on him, things could get troublesome.

'They would need a man in the inside though. Well, even if they do plan something, I will just use this chance to test my progress.'

The oath they swore concerned the academy, the information about its students was quite free to divulge.

In the end, he picked the hunting mission with the biggest reward and moved to the exit of the academy.

He felt some gazes on him and one of them was especially intense.

'Here is the man on the inside.'

Noah turned to look in that direction only to see Samuel Muwlos calmly smirking at him.

He then placed his token on the passage for the outside and hurriedly exited the academy.

Seeing that, Samuel picked a wooden tablet and neared it to his mouth.

"He went out, have fun."

Chapter 124 - 124. First form

Noah ran at full speed toward the appointed location for his mission.

He had to vanquish a pack of rank 3 Sun tigers that occupied a lake in the area near the academy.

Since these magical beasts disrupted the environment of the lake, many precious plants had been lost and the academy issued a mission to restore the zone the way it was.

However, Noah's focus wasn't on the road ahead of him but rather on the branches above.

As soon as he stepped in the Arolyac forest, he felt that someone was observing him.

That sensation didn't stop as he moved but only became more real.

He could clearly sense that someone was following him.

'This time, I won't let them go with just a bit of public humiliation.'

Noah's eyes shined and he uncovered his upper body.

Black rings appeared under his feet and his speed increased drastically.

His figure distanced from the pursuers and they increased their pace to keep their vision of him.

Noah zigzagged between the trees, making his figure hard to follow.

At some point, he reached a large trunk and went behind it.

Shadow steps activated and black smoke was released from his legs as he forcefully jumped in the air.

With the two spells empowering his leap, Noah reached a height of fifteen meters in an instant!

Then, two pairs of wings came out of his back, which carried him at the top of the tree where he was hiding.

As he reached the tallest branch, he used his mental energy to cover his presence and he stood still, waiting for his pursuers.

That usage of the mental energy was one of the skills that he learnt in the general cultivation course.

Since the mental energy could be used to inspect things, of course it could be used to hide them!

However, it could only hide from weaker mental energies, stronger ones would just break its concealment.

His pursuers went right past his position, his movements had been too fast for them to notice that he had disappeared.

Noah watched coldly as the figures went on and, only when he was sure that no one noticed his position, he began to follow them.

From the prey, he had become the hunter!

As he neared them, he noticed that they had stopped after a few hundred meters.

They were arguing loudly, he could not help but shook his head at their poor performance in the ambush.

"I'm telling you he must have gone in that direction, there is no way that I lost him."

"Mal, that guy managed to surpass Lord Daniel's record at that age, I won't be surprised if he knew some tricks."

"And what tricks could ever do to the ten of us. We are nobles! He is just a no one with a bit of talent."

"Norton, if you really think that some commoner with no background can surpass Lord Daniel, then you really deserved to be hanged naked."

"If you ever speak of that again, I swear I-"

He could not finish his phrase since a winged figure appeared behind him at high speed.

Noah attacked him with the bladeless part of his sabers, hitting the student's shoulders and cracking their bones with the impact.

The student smashed on the ground releasing a painful yell but Noah simply stomped on his head.

The student fainted due to the impact.

The other pursuers looked at Noah's figure in fear, his two pairs of wings coupled with his cold expression sent chills down their spine.

Noah turned the youth below him and pointed his feet on his knees.

Then, he grabbed his ankles and forcefully pulled.

The student's legs arched in the opposite angle releasing cracking sounds.

Noah then raised his gaze toward the other students and spoke.

"You know, I was really trying to be a good student but it seems that you think too highly of yourselves. Don't worry though, I will fix that behavior of yours."

One of the students gathered his courage and yelled at the others in his group.

"He is alone and there are nine of us! Let's teach him his place!"

The other youths regained some of their confidence and began to wield their weapons but Noah had already charged at them.

He immediately appeared in front of the one that seemed the stronger of the group and cut diagonally on his chest.

Blood flowed but the wound appeared quite superficial, Noah was still holding himself back.

The youth though backed for a few steps and a bat materialized behind him.

Echo pushed him on the ground and Noah kicked his face a few times.

Blood and teeth fell on the terrain.

Noah stopped only when he was sure that the student had fainted.

At that moment, a ball of fire shot in his direction.

Echo appeared in its trajectory and endured the might of the spell.

Its body broke in many spots but it recomposed almost immediately.

Noah jumped through his blood companion and shot in the direction of the fire mage, Echo had been absorbed in his body making the wings reappear on his back.

Eight students remained.

They were inexperienced but still equipped with spells and martial arts.

Since Noah could not use the Demonic form for fear of killing them, he used this chance to test the improvements in his fighting style.

Noah attacked the fire mage relentlessly.

In the eyes of the student, Noah's sabers multiplied.

From two attacks they became four, and from four, six.

He didn't understand at all how all these attacks were not illusory but completely real.

In a few seconds, the mage's shoulder was pierced and Noah punched strongly on his face.

His mouth distorted and he retreated but Echo blocked him on the ground, giving time to Noah to neutralize him.

The other seven had reached him by then and attacked with great dexterity.

Since they were all near him, the usage of spells with a wide effect range was limited as it would hurt those in their group.

It became a battle of martial arts!

'First form of the Ashura, endless assault.'

Noah slashed madly at the students encircling him.

His "Breath" and mental energy depleted rapidly as more and more blades appeared in the air.

Seven students attacked Noah in every direction but each of their strikes was blocked and counter-attacked!

Noah's figure was surrounded by the after-images of his attacks that clashed on all seven at the same time.

Chapter 125 - 125. Interrogation

The Ashura was a humanoid magical beast with three heads and six arms.

The Three forms of the Ashura, as a rank 4 technique, could inherently improve the martial art of a cultivator multiplying his attacks till they reached the number of arms of the Ashura.

Each form, on the other hand, had more amazing effects.

The First form could increase the number of attacks by a large amount, creating material after-images through the "Breath" of the cultivator.

However, fighting in that way comported a heavy burden on the cultivator's mind.

Noah was battling seven people at the same time, his mental energy depleted to aid his concentration on his various opponents.

He didn't commit any mistakes though, there were no flaws in his combat style.

He had already been used on dividing his senses with the blood companion so it had been easier for him to learn the First form.

Little by little, all the students were pushed back with many small cuts appearing on their bodies.

In Noah's perception, it was like fighting each one of them in a one versus one battle.

'I don't believe that any of them can match my proficiency!'

He had wielded a saber since the age of eight and he had fought nonstop since that moment, there was no way that some spoiled kids could match his blows.

In about thirty minutes, the seven students were all on their knees, covered in injuries.

Noah drank a potion to refill his mental energy, the fight had almost depleted it completely.

'The martial art is amazing but I still can't use it. The First form is the limit of my current level.'

He was sweating profusely and his dantian was almost empty, yet he had managed to defeat all the youths without gravely injuring them.

He neared one of them and pressed him on the ground.

Then he pointed his feet on his junctures and arched his limbs in their opposite angle.

Cracking sounds and screams resounded in that area of the forest as Noah proceeded to break the arms and legs of each one of the attackers.

Then he tied them up to the biggest tree and slowly stripped them.

The students were either crying, pleading for mercy, or cursing him loudly.

They were eight man and two women, all tied, naked, and with their limbs broken.

Noah spoke to the group.

"I believe that you won't die just because of these wounds and your limbs will be fine after a few weeks of rest. I will go and finish my mission now, I'll take care of you when I come back."

More curses were spewed from their mouths but Noah simply neared the ones that spoke and punched them until all their teeth had fallen.

Silence reigned in the group of tied students after that treatment.

Noah then pretended to go on his way but instead concealed his presence after he was away from their sight a returned to the tree where they were restrained.

He sat on one of the branches and meditated to refill his dantian while his attention was on the students.

"That fucker! How daring he is to-"

"Shut up! This is all your fault! I should have never followed you in this suicide mission."

"I agree, that guy is simply too frightening."

"Frightening? That guy is a demon in a human's hide! He didn't even spare Val and Leah from this treatment."

The eyes of the males unconsciously focused the naked bodies of the two girls who were crying and trying to cover their bodies.

However, their limbs were lifeless, there was nothing that could hide their figures.

"I believe that we should stop bothering Vance, I don't really want to think of what would happen if we lose another time to him."

The students agreed and Noah nodded from his position above them.

'It seems that I won't have to plan a way to secretly kill them.'

Noah cultivated for half a day and then went to the lake that his mission indicated.

Fifteen or so three meters tall yellow tigers were silently occupying that territory.

According to what he had learnt in the magical beasts' course, the Sun tigers stored flames in their bodies which forced them to continuously disperse the heat with external methods.

It was common for their kind to occupy an environment with cold water in it.

'I'll test my martial art a bit more.'

Rank 3 creatures had lost any form of threat in Noah's eyes, they were simply training for him.

Noah used twenty minutes to kill every tiger and stored their bodies in his space-ring as proof of his successful mission.

He then rested to return to his peak form and moved back to the students.

Most of them were struggling to break free from their bindings, they were cultivators after all, their wounds had already healed.

Noah neared them slowly and shook his head showing his disappointment.

"And here I thought that you had learnt your lessons. It seems that you really don't care about your teeth."

The students trembled, since their limbs were broken, they were powerless to oppose to Noah.

"Mercy, please! I promise I will never d-"

A kick stopped him from speaking any more.

Noah sat in front of the naked youths and smiled coldly looking each of them straight in the eyes.

Only when all of them had their head lowered, he began to speak.

"I believe that Daniel isn't aware of your plan, right?"

One of the girls raised her head and spoke through the tears on her face.

"How could he! He is generous and kind, he will neve-"

A slap hit her face while Noah continued.

"Only short answers from now on. If I want to know more, I will ask."

After he was sure that they understood, he spoke again.

"Why do you all follow him? I mean, I understand that his character and his status are amazing but that shouldn't be enough for people to bother me just to improve their relationship with him."

The students lowered their heads, unwilling to answer.

Noah sighed.

"It seems that I have to break your hands and feet too."

He neared one of the girls and held her hand.

He began to apply pressure on his grip and the girl screamed in pain until one of the boys gave him what he wanted.

"Wait! Daniel isn't just talented and wealthy, he is also the only light mage of the academy!"

Chapter 126 - 126. Agreement

'Light element!'

Noah finally understood the reason for his conflicting instincts.

'Talent, wealth, and a rare element. No wonder he has so many followers, his future will be extraordinary.'

He let go of the girl's hand and stood up.

"I believe no one of you wants to get hanged naked on the board, right?"

The youths shook their heads almost immediately.

"Good, you must know that I'm quite short on money lately and this makes me really vengeful. Is it possible that you have some kind of solution to my problem?"

The students understood the meaning behind his words and took out a total of two thousand Credits from their storage devices.

Noah gathered the crystals and nodded at them.

"Just one last thing. You are my seniors so you must have a better accommodation, am I right?"

The lodgings were decided according to the seniority of the students and their distance from the source of the river was chosen based on their strength in their class.

However, the academy allowed challenges between students if they wanted to improve their accommodation.

They could also be traded or given away with the authorization of both interested parts.

Noah didn't really want to challenge other students but since the chance presented itself, he wouldn't waste it.

"So, who of you has the closest one to the source of the river?"

The students turned to look at one of the boys.

Noah smiled and crouched toward him.

The student panicked and began to plead.

"No please, my family invested so much in my studies here. I had to pay an incredible sum to g-."

Noah stopped him and patted his shoulder while shaking his head.

"I know, I know. The love of a family is important in the life of a cultivator. What are a few days hanged in front of the whole academy in comparison?"

The student paled and gritted his teeth.

"Fine but one da-"

A kick hit him in the face.

Noah's eyes shined with a cold light as he focused his mental energy on the youth.

"One day you what? I only wanted to cultivate in peace but you came to me seeking trouble. If it wasn't for the academy's rules, I would have killed all of you already."

The students trembled at Noah's pressure.

They knew that he was telling the truth.

"I will warn you just once: if you ever approach me again with bad intentions, I will gladly get expelled only to taste the pleasure of taking your worthless lives. Are we clear?"

His mental pressure intensified, it could be said that the strength of his sea of consciousness was unmatched among those near his age.

One by one, the students slowly nodded and Noah released the pressure.

"Since we have an understanding, I say that we can go back to the academy. Our story will be that you were ambushed by Sun tigers and that I luckily saved you. Since you were so grateful to me, you decided to treat me with your accommodation, ok?"

Some of them tried to complain but his pressure unfolded again.

"You know, I'm open to suggestions. For example, what was your story for when you were done with me? I don't believe you have the guts to kill me."

They trembled, silently accepting his conditions and Noah helped them getting dressed.

The girls wept to no end and the boys showed only envious gazes at the sight of Noah dressing the women.

Noah was completely indifferent during the whole time.

'What's the point of being this good looking if you are so weak? Luckily, I'm not a total newbie regarding women.'

He had lived for more than forty years over-all.

Even without considering his aloof personality, the bodies of girls that young posed no appeal to him.

When he finished dressing all the students, Noah took out some of his clothes from his space-ring and tied them together to form a large carpet.

Then he threw the students over it while Echo exited his body.

A youth and a big bat carried ten students with broken limbs through Arolyac forest.

Their pace was slow but in half a day they managed to reach the gate of the academy.

Noah put his token on the ground and the passage opened.

Echo went back into his body and Noah slowly carried the crowded carpet into the academy ground.

Samuel was still waiting there with a smirk on his face which turned in an astonished expression as he saw the outcome of the ambush.

Noah saw him and put a smile on his face.

"Ah, if it isn't the heir of the Muwlos family. Come here and take care of these poor students that I luckily rescued. I have a small matter to attend with this one."

Noah grabbed the one that had the best accommodation and uncaringly carried it toward the building where he first received the token.

Samuel waited for Noah to leave before nearing the group of impaired students.

They had all their limbs broken and some of them missed many teeth in their mouths.

"W-what happened?"

He could not help but ask that question.

The students lowered their heads until one of the girls spoke with a soft voice.

"He *sniff* saved us from a pack of Sun tigers."

The story was obviously made up, how could a pack of rank 3 magical beasts beat that badly ten students of the academy?

Samuel wasn't that stupid and replied to her.

"Tell me what has happened. I will report everything to a teacher and we will ruin him!"

That time, it was one of the male students that answered.

"Forget it, Samuel. That guy fights like a demon and he even had room to hold back. He didn't even use that black smoke you spoke about. I just want to stay away from him."

Meanwhile, Noah had arrived in front of the old woman that gave him the token.

She was speaking with a skeptical tone toward the student on Noah's back.

"Are you sure that you, Kent Omon, want to exchange your lodging with Vance's one?"

Kent answered softly.

"Yes, I'm sure."

The woman sighed and shook her head.

"Your tokens please."

Chapter 127 - 127. Professor

It was night and Noah was silently cultivating.

Seven vortexes were on his back, constantly absorbing cold and dark "Breath" and pushing it toward his dantian.

In front of his dantian, another vortex rotated between his joint hands, taking in even more "Breath" from the environment.

The process of training both his dantian and his body at the same time was quite taxing for his sea of consciousness and even the stress on his dantian was not negligible.

However, Noah held on.

When the dawn came, Noah opened his eyes.

A sixth of his mental energy was depleted and he felt nothing but tiredness from the intensive training but he was used to it by then.

One month had passed since the events with the other students and Noah never slacked off.

He occupied his new accommodation and made the best use of the higher density of "Breath" by managing to practice in the Dark vortex technique and in the Yin body at the same time.

He had to review his training schedule though as he had to rest after spending the whole night in that way.

'The advancements of my body are better than what I predicted. Since I was already at the peak of the lower tier, I should be able to obtain a rank 4 body before I turn twenty.'

He had the vague feeling that his fast improvements were due to the Seven Hells method.

Noah laid on his bed and was about to take a short nap when two loud knocks resounded from the entrance door.

'Troubles? Unlikely inside the academy grounds.'

He went to open the door only to be assaulted by the worst smell he ever felt.

Vomit, booze, piss, dirt, sweat, all these odors mixed together to create the most disgusting scent in the world.

Noah unconsciously held his nose and looked at the cause of the smell.

There was a middle-aged man in front of his door.

He had long and oily hair, his beard was curly and full of dirt.

Dandruff was everywhere on his face but, instead of being white, it was yellow-brown due to the smelly sweat that continuously came out of his pores.

His clothes were ragged and full of holes, Noah recognized some dark stains on them that emitted even more smelly odors.

A big jar full of wine was in one of his hands and, on his back, a ragged backpack hanged seemingly empty.

Noah was confused and asked with his hand still on his nose.

"You are?"

The man sniffed and cleaned the remains of his mucus with the sleeve of his free hand, adding another dark stain on his clothes.

"I am the professor that you requested for. You are Vance, right? I'm here to teach you about the Elemental forging method."

Noah heard his words but was still quite doubtful.

He picked his token and, to his surprise, it stated that his requested teacher had arrived at the academy.

"Mister Ivor?"

The man nodded.

"That's right."

It took a bit for Noah to accept the situation.

In the end, he simply moved away from the doorstep and lightly bowed.

"Please come in."

Ivor was a bit surprised by his manners and entered the lodging, sitting on the floor next to its entrance.

Noah's new accommodation was more luxurious than his previous one.

It had three rooms with one big bathtub in one of them and a comfortable bed in another one.

The last one was empty which he used to train his martial art.

Ivor drank from his jar while Noah closed the door and looked at the man on the floor, he could not help but think of him as a beggar rather than a powerful cultivator.

Ivor took a big sip and cleaned his mouth with his sleeve before speaking.

"Give me the Credits and let's start with it. Each lesson will last one hour but most of the time I will just resolve some of your doubts."

Noah took out three hundred Credits and handed them to him.

"Mh, so you don't have any talent in the "Attunement" method and you requested for me. Let me give you some warnings first: this method is far from perfect, it involves a heavy burden on the mental sphere, one misstep and your journey as a cultivator will end."

Ivor pointed at his head.

"My sea of consciousness is full of cracks and there is no hope to heal it. That happened due to the backlash of the method so don't come crying to me if you end up in the same situation, you've been warned."

Noah could not help but imagine the life of the man in front of him.

'He lives with a cracked mental sphere all the time. No wonder he ended up in such a state, he must be in constant pain and yet he keeps on living.'

He had tasted the suffering from a damage on the sphere, he knew how painful it was.

'He is indeed praiseworthy for managing to stay sane.'

"The "Attunement" method uses the "Breath" of the world as the language for the inscriptions. It takes years of studies and constant practice to imitate perfectly the behavior of that energy. Its effects will then be within the range of what the "Breath" allows. For example, let's say that you were to inscribe a weapon with the "Attunement" method in order to make it sharper. You would need to learn the 'words' that the "Breath" uses to indicate that quality and then write it on the weapon. The inscribed weapon will then gain the sharpness dictated by the "Breath"."

Ivor stopped speaking and took another long sip of the wine.

He breathed roughly for a few seconds before continuing in his explanation.

"The sharpness of the inscribed weapon will depend on how accurate the translation of the language of the "Breath" was in the material form. It will also never surpass the limits of what Heaven and Earth consider as sharpness."

He took another big sip.

"However, in the "Elemental forging" method, there are no such limits."

Chapter 128 - 128. Madness

"Imagine the inscription as a line of text. You understand its meaning because it's written in a language that you can read. However, simple words can't express the language of the "Breath", that's why cultivators use inscriptions instead of words. The same goes for the ink used in the writing: normal ink

can't contain the true meaning behind the words of the "Breath". So, what would the ink for the inscriptions be made of?"

Ivor drank a mouthful of wine, waiting for Noah to answer.

"Only the "Breath" can be used to write its language."

Ivor nodded.

"That's right. Nevertheless, in the Elemental forging, it's the will of the cultivator that dictates the effect of the inscription. There is no need for translation or understanding, the cultivator sets the meaning behind his writing."

Noah sat on the floor in front of Ivor and fell deep in thought.

'In the Attunement method, a cultivator learns to hear the "Breath" and copies its meaning, writing it with the "Breath" itself. In the Elemental forging, the cultivator writes his own meaning, it's no wonder that a strong will is needed to create a satisfactory effect.'

A doubt formed in his mind and he raised his gaze to look at the Professor.

"What is the ink in the Elemental forging?"

Ivar nodded again and continued his explanation.

"This is one of the first problems of the method. Even if a cultivator has a will that equals the Heaven and Earth, it will be useless if he lacks the ink that can sustain the meaning of his words. However, only the "Breath" can give birth to such wonderful effects."

Ivor took out a filthy book from his backpack and handed it to Noah.

"You can imagine though that the "Breath" of Heaven and Earth will never follow the instructions of a cultivator, it barely allows some of them to hear its

language after all. That's why, if you want to use the Elemental forging method, you need to steal the "Breath" from Heaven and Earth."

Ivor pointed at the book and Noah carefully opened it.

He was so engrossed by the speech that he totally disregarded the poor state of its pages.

Inside it, a description of a technique to absorb "Breath" and refining it was illustrated.

Noah read with wide eyes before speaking with an incredulous voice.

"Is this really possible?"

Ivor nodded, releasing a small laugh.

"This is only the first part of the method, it will allow you to store the ink needed for the inscription. Then, it will be the time for the forging but I don't want to increase my headache to explain it before you are successful in this part."

Ivor stood up and prepared to exit the door when Noah stopped him.

"How do I know that all of this is possible? For what I read here, many of these processes are conflicting with the theories about cultivation."

Ivor snorted and took out a small sheathed knife from his backpack.

"Have you seen an inscribed weapon before?"

Noah nodded and focused on the knife.

"This is my masterpiece and the only stable product that I managed to forge. I made it imbuing my meaning of sharpness."

He unsheathed the knife by less than a centimeter and hastily put it back inside the cover.

"If you decide to give up, I want that book back."

Ivor exited the lodging, leaving a confused Noah still sitting on the floor.

'Is he brain-damaged? I felt nothing from that gest-'

THUD!

He stopped his thoughts because he heard a thump behind him.

He turned and his pupils constricted looking at the scene.

The bed was cut in two and a long vertical sign was on the wall behind it.

'What the fuck? When did that happen?'

Noah stood up and inspected the bed.

It was a clean cut and some residual traces of "Breath" were still there.

Noah looked again at the book in his hands, his expression became serious.

'I endured the Forging of the Seven Hells because my family wanted to slow my improvements. I find nothing wrong in doing something as dangerous because Heaven and Earth want to do the same.'

He sat on the broken bed and began to read through the pages.

'Absorption and refinement of the "Breath" in the sea of consciousness, this is madness.'

The technique created a way for the mental sphere to absorb the "Breath" in the environment and then refining it as a personal form of energy for the cultivator.

'But the sea of consciousness is almost immaterial, how can it store something so powerful?'

The mental sphere was the most independent part of a cultivator.

Even in the dantian, the "Breath" would oppose the act of compression, maintaining its nature, what would it do to the mental sphere if it was refined in there?

'Maybe that's how Ivor's sphere cracked.'

Noah memorized the technique and decided to give it a try.

'Let's start with the size of half a fingernail.'

Noah concentrated and his half-transparent figure in his sea of consciousness opened its eyes.

Noah moved toward the bottom of the sea, in its deepest part.

'Here there should be fewer damages in case of a failure in the procedure.'

His figure crouched and touched the sphere with his hands.

Slowly, the hands began to trespass the border of the walls, immersing themselves into the substance of his sphere.

After a few minutes, the hands came out of the edges of the sea of consciousness, right into the material world.

Noah felt his hands being disintegrated by the pressure of the outside world but the water inside the sea entered his ethereal body, reconstructing them.

Noah endured the pain and hastily made a gesture which expended even more of his mental energy to create a suction force on the outside world.

In a few seconds, a small strand of black "Breath" reached his hands and used the half-transparent body as a connection to enter his sea of consciousness.

The "Breath" was surrounded by the sea as soon as it entered the borders of the mental sphere and struggled madly to escape the restraints.

At some point, it self-detonated, creating a shock wave that made all Noah's mental sphere shake.

Noah interrupted the technique and opened his real eyes, holding his head due to the immense pain he was feeling.

Chapter 129 - 129. Wonderful

The technique described in Ivor's book was a method to connect the space inside the sea of consciousness with the outside world.

The cultivator had to use his projection inside the mental sphere as a link where the "Breath" had to pass through.

However, the sea of consciousness was a personal space of the cultivator, it was his same mind, not a place appropriate to store "Breath".

But the Elemental forging method did exactly that: it forced the "Breath" of Heaven and Earth outside of their dominion and refined it through the mental energy of the cultivator, making it a form of energy that could be shaped as the cultivator wanted.

The "Breath" had its own will though, it could even oppose the advancements of the dantian, it was no wonder that it struggled to no end when it was put inside a sea of consciousness.

Of course, a failure in containing it led to a backlash.

That was precisely what was happening to Noah.

The "Breath" that entered his mental sphere self-detonated because he had failed to restrain it and that caused the trembling of the sphere.

Waves of pain shot from Noah's head while he could only endure them, waiting for his mind to stabilize.

After about ten minutes, the trembling stopped and Noah could focus again.

He was incredibly pale and cold sweat was everywhere on his body.

His blue eyes were bloodshot but his expression was more determined than ever.

'I can totally do it! I just need to be more careful and start with even smaller quantities of "Breath". Also, I need to be at peak form every time I attempt on the technique.'

He forced himself to eat a small meal and then went to sleep to recover from the effort.

It took a week for Ivor to appear again in front of Noah's lodgings.

He knocked at the door and waited for more than twenty minutes before Noah opened it.

He smirked a bit seeing his appearance.

Noah was pale with large eye bags under his eyes.

The eyes were enflamed and half-closed and his long black hair were disheveled.

"I don't care if you want to quit now. I had to wait a lot for you to open the door so this counts as a lesson and I want to get paid."

However, Noah simply snorted and answered him.

"Shut up and close the door. I've done it."

Ivor was about to retort when he understood the meaning of his words.

"You what!?"

During the last week, Noah had used all his free time in the day to attempt in the method and, in the end, he managed to store a minute strand of "Breath" in his sea of consciousness.

His mental energy was almost completely consumed to render it harmless and without a will but he had succeeded.

A small black ball of the size of a tenth of a fingernail was calmly standing above the sea in his mental sphere.

It emitted a pressure far superior to Echo's figures which slowly enlarged his sphere.

However, that also caused a constant headache which led to his lack of respect toward Ivor.

"S-show it to me!"

Ivor was still incredulous and asked for some proof but Noah only snorted again.

"And how the fuck should I do it? You only gave me the method to store and refine it. I don't even know what to do with this thing stuck in my head!"

Ivor seemed to remember something and took out another filthy book from his backpack, handing it to Noah.

Noah hastily read through it and sat on the floor to concentrate.

Inside his sea of consciousness, his ethereal figure neared the ball of "Breath".

Mental energy was expended as the water rose from the sea and enveloped the ball.

Noah was using all his focus to insert his will on the "Breath" and finally relaxed when his mental energy and the "Breath" had mixed completely.

What remained in the hands of Noah's figure was a dark blue ball.

Ivor had waited expectantly for more than one hour in front of the sitting Noah.

The process had taken a while but he didn't mind, there was only anticipation in his eyes.

Noah slowly opened his real eyes and raised his index finger in front of his face.

A small dark blue ball came out of his finger and silently floated above it, Noah felt that it could control it like every other part of his body.

"WONDERFUL!"

Ivor screamed, interrupting Noah's thoughts.

"Old man, calm down. My head still hurts."

Since the "Breath" was outside his mental sphere, the pressure had disappeared but he still needed to rest to recover completely.

Nevertheless, Ivor didn't care and carefully neared the ball of "Breath", inspecting it with shining eyes.

"You are of the darkness element, am I right?"

Noah was a bit surprised but nodded.

"I guessed so. This kind of shade can only be achieved with the black "Breath" proper of the darkness element and a crystalline blue mental energy. You have all my praises, your will and mental energy must be top tier to be able to succeed in the method in one week."

Ivor sat and drank a mouthful of his usual wine.

"That ball that you created is the ink that you need for the Elemental forging. Of course, it's quantity is still not enough to do a proper forging but you passed the first hurdle."

He pointed at the "Breath" over Noah's finger.

"That mixture is a form of energy belonging only to you. It's not linked to any external rule and it's the main material of the method. What you have to do now is keep storing it in your sea of consciousness to increase its capacity so

that you can accumulate more of it. Remember: never be distracted while you accumulate it and always use your complete focus to restrain the "Breath". You are currently stealing from Heaven and Earth, they will stop at nothing to destroy your mental sphere and take your life with it."

Chapter 130 - 130. Bath

"Wait, what do you mean with that?"

Noah stored the dark blue ball back in his sea of consciousness.

The pressure returned and, with it, the pain but he endured it as he did with any other form of training.

If storing "Breath" in the mental sphere could speed up its advancements, Noah would gladly bear the pain that it caused.

"Well, did you really think that you could take away the "Breath" without consequences? Your tribulations will be way more dangerous than those of other cultivators. It is recorded in the various experiments with the method."

Noah became irritated again.

"Recorded where?"

Ivor seemed to think of something and smiled awkwardly before taking out another book from his backpack.

"It seems that I forgot to give you this. You know, with the state of my mental sphere it's easy to forget many details."

Noah took the book and read through its pages.

There were many experiments recorded with the insights of the cultivators on their sides.

Noah could vaguely guess that there were hundreds of years of tests recorded in the book.

'The value of this knowledge is immense! It spans from ways to better tame the "Breath" to experiments in increasing its density inside the sea of consciousness.'

Noah looked again at Ivor, he could not help but wonder how such a shabby character was in possession of all those data.

"Does every practitioner of the Elemental forging method have access to all this knowledge?"

Ivor took a big sip from the jar before answering.

"Even though this method is recognized as a valid branch of the schools regarding inscriptions, the requirements are too harsh and the dangers that come with it scare away most cultivators. It's hard to find someone with a strong will and a sturdy mental sphere willing to take such risks only to attempt in an incomplete method."

Noah's eyes narrowed.

"You didn't answer my question."

Ivor coughed lightly, putting again the previous awkward smile.

"There are no more practitioners in this method, they are all either dead or mentally unable to be of any use. I'm the only one who is still trying to keep the method alive, that's why I affiliated with the academy. I needed to find someone who could make the best use of our accumulated knowledge."

Noah replied with a suspicious voice.

"Don't tell me, did all the practitioners die because of the method?"

"Well, not everyone. Some of them gave up on performing inscriptions along the way. Let's say that only nine out of ten died or ended up in my condition."

Noah stared at Ivor for a long time before sighing.

'It's not like I had any other options. Also, if I manage to make something like that knife, my power would rise exponentially.'

"I guess I'm now the only heir to the method, am I right?"

Ivor nodded.

Noah's face became stern.

"I want all the data, techniques, applications, and advice that you have. Don't leave anything behind or I will never attempt to do something this dangerous again and your precious method will become history with your death."

Ivor nodded again.

"Deal. As a matter of fact, I can already make you my disciple and live here with you. I can give you pointers every time you have a doubt while you can focus completely on increasing the amount of "Breath" stored in your sea of consciousness."

Noah shook his head.

"No, I won't focus completely on it. Actually, I intend to slow it down, just this much of "Breath" is almost my limit. I have no intention of betting my future on an incomplete method, I will continue practicing in it only because it should be my best hope in creating techniques in the higher ranks."

Ivor took a long sip before falling deep in thought.

Noah could see how the effort hurt him as he continued to drink from the jar every now and then.

After about ten minutes, Ivor gave him his answer.

"It seems the best option, I became too excited seeing that you had succeeded in the first step in only one week. The slow way is the best one in this method since one mistake might ruin you forever. However, I stand for

what I said, I will live here and help you whenever you need me. I just need some Credits to afford the wine, you wouldn't leave your poor Master suffering the whole time, won't you?"

Noah rolled his eyes and replied.

"How much do you need?"

Ivor scratched his beard and spoke in a soft voice.

"Oh, about one hundred Credits every week."

Noah's eyes widened and he could not help but raise his tone to reprimand him.

"That's more than four hundred every month! I only have a bit less than five thousand Credits! What kind of wine are you even drinking to be this expensive? Can't you find another way to ease your pain?"

Ivor shook his head.

"It is indeed a very expensive one done by an alchemy master. I guess I might lower the quantity a bit though if you really can't afford it."

Ivor began to count with his fingers while gobbling large quantities of wine from his jar.

Noah felt a bit of pity looking at him and sighed again.

'He is even willing to suffer in order to see his method being passed down. Well, I can always make more money with some specific mission while I can't underestimate the value of an experienced cultivator on my side the whole time.'

"Fine, four hundred every month, nothing more. Mind you, they need to be enough even for your food supply. Here, give me all the information you have on the Elemental forging method."

Noah handed him four hundred Credits while Ivor unloaded all the contents of his backpack.

There were more than ten books, all in a poor state.

Ivor then began to point at each one of them, explaining its contents.

It was at that moment that Noah remembered something and claimed Ivor's attention.

"There is another condition for you to live here."

Ivor raised his head and waited for Noah to speak.

"You need to take a bath."

Noah said, pointing at the bathtub in the other room.