

Chapter 131 - 131. Ass-licking

Time passed quickly in the academy.

Noah had almost no time left for his daily needs.

He used all his nights to cultivate his dantian and body and all his days between the Kesier rune, his martial art, his courses, and the Elemental forging method.

He had resumed sleeping only every two days in order to make room for all his exercises and some results were finally shown on his ninth month in the academy.

His mind had grown stronger due to the intensive training in the Kesier rune and the pressure exerted from the "Breath" inside his sea of consciousness.

His body had improved due to the Yin body and had finally entered the middle tier of the third rank.

His dexterity with the Three forms of the Ashura and the Shadow steps spell had vastly increased thanks to the continuous sparring sessions with June, the First form was still his limit though.

He had concluded three more missions successfully, they were all hunting tasks and Daniel's followers never created troubles for him again in them.

However, the most important advancement concerned his dantian.

Noah was slowly walking toward a building on the left side of the academy.

He would inspect his dantian from time to time and nod in satisfaction as he looked at its contents.

Black crystals were amassed in that organ attesting his successful breakthrough in the solid stage!

'It has been only two months since I became sixteen but I already reached the last stage of the first rank of the dantian.'

Only a week before, he had felt that he could not accumulate any more liquid "Breath" and he had hastily made preparations for his breakthrough.

He had already one Earth pill from Eccentric Thunder's inheritance, the only thing he needed was to be at his peak form to advance.

The breakthrough had gone smoothly, mostly thanks to the pill, and he had successfully entered the solid stage.

He had spent the following week cultivating to increase the amount of solid "Breath" stored in the dantian and then he had considered his options.

There were some useful facilities inside the academy that were accessible once a cultivator entered the rank 1 solid stage of the dantian but they also required merits points or Credits to be used.

'I only have two thousand and four hundred Credits remaining due to that scrounger but my merit points amount to one hundred and forty, they are enough for two hours inside the Sulfur domain.'

The scrounger he was referring to was, of course, Ivor that had stayed in his lodging for the whole time.

He wasn't much of an annoyance as he would spend most of his time sleeping or clearing some of Noah's doubts regarding the legacy of the previous practitioners in the Elemental forging method but the cost of his wine was beginning to weigh on Noah.

'I need to increase my strength in order to have access to more remunerative missions. With my level, I can just complete those that have only merit points as a reward.'

The Sulfur domain had precisely that use.

It was a closed area where an azure flame burned constantly and enduring the atmosphere near it increased the speed at which the mental sphere enlarged.

Noah wanted to train there not only to improve his sea of consciousness but also to obtain some relief from the constant headache caused by the "Breath" in his mental sphere.

He had never increased the quantity of "Breath" stored in his mind and the pain had indeed diminished due to the improvements in his sea of consciousness.

However, he wanted to speed up his training even more to experiment with the forging method, he had only studied the theory in the last period.

Yet, to enter the Sulfur domain, he needed to be at least in the solid stage of the first rank, so he had to train patiently until he reached that level.

Noah had already registered for one hour in the domain, spending sixty merit points in the process.

He was then left with eighty merit points and was quite eager to test the effects of that faculty.

Noah arrived in front of a circular one-story tall building.

It had a large emblem with a blue flame depicted on it.

Noah had his confirmation that he had reached his destination.

He took out his academy token and went toward the entrance door when three youths blocked his path.

"I'm sorry but today the Sulfur domain is reserved. If you want to complain, you can talk to some of the Professors and I'm sure that your merit points will be refunded."

Noah was quite jumpy in the last period due to the constant headache so he didn't hesitate for one instant to reply with a bit of annoyance in his voice.

"Who reserved it?"

Another youth neared him and made an ample gesture with his arm before speaking with a proud expression.

"Lord Daniel of course. He likes to be alone in the domain and we make sure that he remains undisturbed in there."

'That guy again.'

Noah looked at the three students and noticed how their clothes seemed clean and expensive.

Then he moved his gaze toward the side of the entrance door.

There was a guard in golden armor that feigned indifference to what was happening in his area of patrol.

'These three should be from large-size noble families and they most likely bribed that guard.'

He shook his head in disappointment before fixing his gaze on the closer student.

"I don't care. I have no time to waste for your ass-licking rituals. I registered for one hour and I will do my hour, the only difference will be in what I will step on to enter that building. It can be the terrain if you move aside now or your beaten bodies if you keep blocking my way."

The three students were enraged by Noah's mockery and began to reprimand him in a loud voice.

"How dares a simple junior speak to us in such a way! Get out of my sight bef-

"

His phrase was interrupted since Noah's fist had clashed with his face.

Noah understood that his words had no effect so he didn't hesitate to attack.

Chapter 132 - 132. Azure flame

The student was sent back by the unexpected attack.

The other two were about to jump on Noah but he activated the Shadow steps spell and immediately appeared in front of the first youth.

He had wielded his sabers during his charge and he delivered two fast strikes with the bladeless sides of his weapons.

The strikes multiplied mid-way and became six different attacks that hit the still stunned student on his joints.

Two blows for the elbows, two for the shoulders, and two for the knees.

Cracking sounds sounded from his body as he fell powerlessly on the ground.

The might of a rank 4 martial art coupled with the solid stage and with the surprise effect rendered one of Noah's seniors harmless in a few instants!

And that without even activating the First form!

The other two students arrived on his back and launched a series of attacks with their weapons.

'Echo'

Noah's upper clothes tore and his blood companion came out to block the incoming assault.

Its figure was particularly lifelike and it successfully endured the strikes of the youths.

Its body broke but, as the weapons sank in it, it reconstructed, blocking the movements of the blades.

Noah didn't waste that chance and promptly charged at the closer student.

The other one released his grip on the weapon to prepare a spell but Echo screeched, releasing a sound attack that briefly disoriented him.

It didn't take much for Noah to defeat the youth, leaving him with only one opponent.

Noah neared him with Echo quietly crouched on his shoulders.

"You will not get away with this. Lionel, why haven't you done anything?"

The student yelled, looking at the guard on the side of the entrance.

The guard shrugged his shoulders before replying to him.

"Small fights are allowed in the academy. No one had suffered any severe damage so it's up to you students to handle the situation."

Noah shook his head seeing that the youth had sought the guard's help.

"How can you nobles be so weak? With all your wealth, is this the best you can amount to?"

The student was angered by his words and tried again to launch a spell, his weapon was still stuck in Echo's body after all.

Noah was on him before he finished his preparations and strongly hit his waist, making him crash on the ground.

He sighed and rebuked him to vent a bit of the stress he had accumulated in the last months due to the side effects of the Elemental forging method.

"I believe that your expensive combat teacher in your mansion will be ashamed to know that you tried to launch a spell at such a short distance."

He then stomped his head on the ground, making him faint.

Noah put his sabers back in his space-ring, as well as Echo in his body, and wore a simple robe to cover his naked upper body.

He then turned toward the circular building and moved to enter it.

"That was a nice fight, it's rare to find someone with that battle experience at your age."

Lionel spoke to him before he could reach the door.

Noah replied putting a fake smile on his face.

"I didn't know that you could bribe a guard to reserve the Sulfur domain. If you tell me your price, I might think of making use of your services."

The soldier smiled awkwardly and scratched the side of his head.

"Don't blame me too much, I'm just trying to make a living in a world ruled by nobles. Sadly, the Ultra continent is at peace so we in the Royal army can't earn a decent pay."

Noah reassured him.

"No worries, they are not really a threat anyway."

Lionel laughed a bit looking at the fainted students on the ground.

"Will you apply for the Royal army? I believe you might become a captain in just a few years."

Noah shrugged his shoulders but didn't answer and placed his token on the entrance.

The door slowly opened and a burning air came out of it.

"Think about it. Our position is actually pretty privileged in Elbas city."

Noah nodded at him and entered the building.

The door slowly closed behind him.

He found himself in a long and illuminated corridor, an azure halo was exuded from the end of the passage.

The air was so hot that Noah had to circulate the "Breath" in his body to resist the temperature.

At the end of the corridor, there was a large circular room with a flickering azure flame at its center.

The room had no floor but only a sandy terrain.

The grains of sand were yellow but contained azure shades in their colors.

'What a strange environment. This heat seems to have some effects on my sea of consciousness.'

As Noah neared the flame, he would feel his mental sphere loosening up, increasing its expansion speed due to the internal pressure from Echo and the "Breath".

'I understand, the flame has the effect of increasing the malleability of my mental sphere. Simply put, training here will enlarge my sphere faster.'

"I believe I said that I wanted to be alone."

A voice sounded from the other side of the flame.

Noah peeked and noticed that Daniel was sitting cross-legged on the sand, holding a small sheet in his hands.

"Oh, it's you."

He had raised his gaze and stared at Noah, he could not help but be surprised by his presence there.

Noah didn't speak and simply moved in the area occupied by him.

He noticed that the temperature increased even more as it did the effects on his mental sphere.

He had to use his solid "Breath" though to oppose the temperature, his rank 3 body was not enough in that environment.



He calculated the distance that he had to keep from the flame to last for one hour with his amount of "Breath" and sat on the ground.

Noah took out the second Kesier rune and began to look at it.

The pressure from the insides of his sphere enlarged at high speed the loosened sea of consciousness.

'This speed is simply amazing! I should always spend my merit points to use this building.'

However, Daniel spoke again.

"Am I really not worthy of your attention?"

Chapter 133 - 133. Confidential

Noah spoke without moving his eyes from the Kesier rune.

"It's not that, I just don't have time for other people."

His mental sphere was enlarging at an incredible speed, Noah didn't want to waste any of his time inside the Sulfur domain on socializing.

"What about Murray, Norman, and Scott?"

Daniel asked but those names meant nothing to Noah.

"I don't know who they are."

"The three seniors in front of the entrance door."

Noah shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, them. They allowed me to pass."

One of Daniel's eyebrows arched when he heard Noah's words.

"All they want is to please me. They will never allow anyone inside unless I say so."

Noah didn't move at all, his gaze was always on the rune as he answered.

"So, you do know that your followers are mindless idiots."

Daniel chuckled softly.

"Idiots? Maybe. Mindless? Not at all. It's the nature of humans to stick with the strongest person or the one with the best future prospects. You might not know but I'm the only cultivator of the light element that has been seen in decades."

Noah shrugged his shoulders again.

"Is it something that amazing? Being of a rare element will only diminish the number of techniques available for you."

Daniel continued to chuckle.

"If you have enough money though, that's not a problem. I can have the same number of techniques as other cultivators but of greater might due to my element."

"You sure brag a lot."

Daniel was momentarily silenced by Noah's statement.

An awkward silence occupied the room and only the flickering of the azure flame could be heard from time to time.

Daniel resumed speaking.

"Do you understand that I will become someone important in the future?"

Noah replied plainly.

"There are a lot of important people in the world, should I care about all of them?"

"Well, yes! If you are powerful and you have the right amount of connections and man-power, you are invincible in this world!"

Noah's mind wavered a bit.

He still maintained his eyes on the rune but he spared some thought for Daniel's words.

'A group formed by powerful people is surely stronger than one single person. However, what if someone was so powerful that numbers couldn't make him stagger? At that point, being in a group will only slow you down.'

"Listen, if you really want to keep talking, you better take out some merit points to prolong my staying in this building."

At those words, Daniel shut up.

The hour passed slowly.

Daniel had to exit the building as he had exhausted his "Breath", he had been inside of the Sulfur realm for almost two hours after all.

Noah spent all his time focused on enlarging the mental sphere.

When his time was over, his token sent him a warning.

'If I choose to remain overtime, my merit points will be expended. There is also a feature like this.'

He thought, inspecting the academy token.

'Well, my solid "Breath" is almost completely depleted and I don't think that a prolonged training in this environment is ultimately beneficial to my sea of consciousness. I will simply come here again after one week of normal training.'

He had still eighty merit points, he could afford another hour inside the area whenever he wanted.

Noah exited the building and found out that only the guard remained in front of the entrance.

"They all went away. That Daniel helped them."

Lionel spoke and Noah nodded at him.

He then returned to his accommodation and rested before waking up at night to cultivate again.

Ivor stood most of the time in the empty room, he would go outside of the academy ground only to refill his stash of wine.

However, he respected Noah's dedication and never bothered him unless he was studying the researches of the Elemental forging method.

His attitude made the cohabitation smoother.

As the sun rose, Noah stopped his meditation and was about to rest again when he heard someone knocking on the entrance door.

He went to open it and found Thaddeus standing in front of his lodging with a wide smile on his face.

"I see that you got yourself a better accommodation."

Noah hastily bowed and replied.

"Oh, the students in the academy are too nice. A senior actually willingly gave it to me after I saved him in one of my missions."

Thaddeus nodded while looking at the interiors of the house.

"I believe that he must have felt really grateful to you. And tell me, was that before or after you broke his limbs?"

"..."

Noah raised his head and saw that Thaddeus was looking at him with his usual sly smile.

"Am I in trouble?"

Thaddeus shook his head, laughing softly.

"Not at all! In my opinion, you did the right thing. Lately, the heirs of the noble families were growing up as weaklings, it seems that such an extensive period of peace has softened their character too much. With you here, they might focus more on their battle prowess so you have my complete approval in case you wanted to act a bit more wildly."

Noah was at loss for words.

'Does he want me to be some sort of trainer for their poor battle proficiency? Being the bad guy so that they will value more the qualities useful in battle?'

However, he simply rolled his eyes and spoke in a soft voice.

"There should be some better lodging than this one..."

Thaddeus laughed again at his words.

Silence reined after their last exchange of words and Noah could not help but speak again.

"Professor, did you come here only to let me know that you were paying attention to my behavior?"

Thaddeus seemed to remember something and began to speak.

"Right! No, I actually wanted to make you an offer. I'm putting together a small team of young students to complete a special mission. There will be merit points and Credits as a reward, I felt that you might have wanted to join."

Noah's eyes lit up but he first asked about some of his doubts.

"Why come here though? Could you not put the mission on the board?"

Thaddeus lowered his voice before resuming speaking.

"It's actually a confidential mission. I went looking for students with high battle proficiency and with less affiliation to noble families. You, of course, fit these criteria perfectly."

#### Chapter 134 - 134. Agreement

Noah was interested and gestured to Thaddeus to come inside his accommodation.

He was in need of Credits and he was rather eager to take a break from the monotony of the life in the academy.

Thaddeus sat on the broken bed and took out a small jar exuding the aroma of sweet wine.

He poured it in two glasses and handed one to Noah.

Noah gladly accepted it but, before he could taste the wine, the door of the empty room opened, showing Ivor that fixedly stared at the jar in Thaddeus' hands.

"It's been a long time since I saw the wine of the Peach river."

Thaddeus' eyes sharpened seeing him.

"Ivor, I thought that you had finally resigned in passing down that madness that you call inscription method."

Noah sighed and passed his glass to Ivor.

Thaddeus saw that gesture and his eyes widened in understanding.

"Is he your Master? Is he the reason why you didn't pick my course?"

Noah wanted to give a brief explanation but Ivor was faster than him in replying to the Professor.

"Thaddeus, don't even think of snatching him from me. He is the heir to our method, the most talented and meticulous of all the practitioners of our school."

Thaddeus shook his head while looking at Noah.

"Try not to kill yourself. There are many other methods that can give you the status of an inscription master. Even if you don't have any talent for the "Attunement" method, you don't have to force your way with that practice. Oh, and Ivor, I already have a disciple."

He was speaking about Ruth.

Thaddeus had become her Master in the last period, it was pointless to describe her excitement when that happened.

Ivor snorted and replied after taking a sip from the glass.

"And to what use? Only to become a second-rate inscription master? We both know that on a scale of power of the products, the Attunement method is second only to the Elemental forging one."

Thaddeus smiled, fixing his gaze on the middle-aged man.

"If we consider only the power held by the inscriptions of your method, then I can't argue. But you must remember that the stability of your creations is low while the mortality rate of those that practice in that method is extremely high. Overall, a stable method, even if it loses a bit in power, is way better than an extreme one. Yours has almost disappeared after all, while mine is flourishing everywhere."

Ivor snorted again but didn't answer, Thaddeus' words were unarguable, they perfectly described the current situation in the field of inscriptions.

"Professor, I still need to know the contents of the mission."

Noah stepped in, interrupting their conversation.

He already knew all the disadvantages of the method that he chose so he didn't give much importance to Thaddeus' warnings.

'What's the point of using a safer but inferior method? I'd rather risk my life to obtain something more powerful.'

Thaddeus resumed his focus on Noah and began to explain the contents of the task.

"We finally managed to track down the inheritance ground of the previous Royal family. However, there are a few problems involved that prevent us from attempting to retrieve it."

Noah became extremely interested.

'The inheritance ground of a Royal family! It should be many times more profitable than Eccentric Thunder's one.'

"The first problem is that its entrance is prevented to anyone connected with the Elbas family. Not even those in the Royal army can enter due to the oath that they have with us."

"The second problem is that it's placed outside the borders of the Utra continent. If we act incautiously, the countries nearby might notice something and attempt to claim the inheritance for themselves."

Noah thought for a while before replying to Thaddeus.

"So, you ask those with fewer affiliations with the nobles because we will demand a smaller share of the inheritance?"

Thaddeus smiled slightly before answering.

"That's one of the reasons. The other one is that many of the current large-size noble families had a deep connection with the previous Royal dynasty. We are afraid that if they knew about the inheritance, they might gang up and start a revolution."



Noah nodded in understanding.

'The wealth hidden by the previous Royal family should be tempting enough to create an agreement between the noble families. After all, the Elbas dynasty has only a marginal control over all the other nobles, they don't have all the man-power required to stop a joint revolution.'

"What's my share?"

Noah asked.

Thaddeus promptly answered.

"We can give you two hundred thousand Credits and a prestigious position in the Royal city."

Noah shook his head.

"That's too little. We are talking about the previous rulers of this country and I assume that we have to hide our identities during the trip."

Thaddeus nodded.

"How much?"

Noah stared at the Professor for a bit before naming his price.

"I want ten percent of the total value of the inheritance and a full set of potions and pills useful for the mission. I also want the freedom to choose which prestigious position in the Royal city I will get as well as the priority over the items inside the inheritance that can help my growth."

Thaddeus raised his voice.

"Ten percent!? Do you understand the amount of wealth that a Royal family accumulates during its domain?"

Noah slightly smiled.

"No, but now I know that two hundred thousand Credits are clearly not enough for my services."

Thaddeus' expression froze and Ivor exploded in a sonorous laugh.

"You are getting old, my friend. The new generations are more cunning than you can imagine."

It took a while for them to come to an agreement.

In the end, Noah managed to bargain for three percent of the total inheritance that he could acquire in the form of Credits or items.

The part about the potions and the prestigious position seemed to not concern Thaddeus too much since he agreed almost immediately to those conditions.

When Thaddeus left the room, they had agreed to meet one week from then at the entrance of the academy, there Noah would receive the promised items and meet the other students for the mission.

"I think you could have pushed for five percent, why did you stop?"

Ivor asked that question when they remained alone.

Noah smiled coldly.

"Well, at least they won't get too mad if I keep some souvenir of the trip."

Chapter 135 - 135. Nerere continent

The week passed quickly.

Noah went outside the academy ground donned in his usual black gym suit.

He had left eight hundred Credits to Ivor and used again the Sulfur domain to make sure that he had increased his power as much as possible.

He had only one thousand and six hundred Credits and twenty merit points left, he was in need of the rewards of the mission.

However, his headache had vastly diminished in intensity which left him pleasantly surprised.

'I should really pay more attention to the faculties of the academy.'

Right outside of the entrance, in Arolyac forest, Thaddeus was waiting with three more students.

"Why am I not surprised that you are here?"

One of the students was June and she spoke as soon as she saw Noah arriving.

"We are the best in our class as well as the poorest. It is quite obvious for us to join this mission."

Noah answered.

During the previous months, June had clearly shown her superiority to Justin, gaining the undisputed title of the second strongest in the Grayshade class.

The first spot belonged, of course, to Noah who remained undefeated.

'She is from a small-size noble family, she needs Credits to buy new training methods. I traded the Surging river spell which was valued fifty thousand Credits, I believe that she still hasn't upgraded all her techniques.'

"Let me introduce you before I review the details of the mission. We have to walk a bit so let's move in the meantime. Oh, take these."

Thaddeus spoke and one hundred or so shining bottles appeared on the ground.

"The potions for the mission, divide them equally."

The students gathered the goods in their storage devices and followed Thaddeus over the mountain where the academy was.

"Vance and June joined us nine months ago, they are the best in the real battle class so don't treat them poorly simply because they are your juniors."

He pointed at a tall youth with black hair of about eighteen years old.

"He is Errol. He joined us one year and three months ago and he is the one in his class that has improved the most since he entered the academy. He will be joining the Royal army once he reaches the proper age."

Then he pointed at the last student.

He was a short brown-haired man of about nineteen years old.

"He is Nigel, he joined us almost two years ago. He has talent in understanding inscriptions and his battle prowess is not low. He will be the captain for this mission and his insights will be useful to surpass the trials of the inheritance ground."

They passed the small mountain and ventured deeper inside Arolyac forest.

"The location of the inheritance ground is inside the Nerere continent. It's a wasteland, almost uninhabited, that's why it took so much for my family to find it."

"The problem is that it borders with two other countries. Unless we want to start a war, we need to retrieve the inheritance unnoticed."

"As for the trials, we cleared the first two layers but then we met the restrictions toward my family. Apparently, they were really mad at us to set something like that."

The four students rolled their eyes.

How could they not hate the family that dethroned them?

Thaddeus made an awkward laugh and continued his explanation.

"Anyhow, we learnt something in those two layers. There is a reward every time a layer is cleared and the tests inside have all been battle-related. The difficulty was still low, we only met some low stage rank 3 beasts but we believe that it will rise exponentially as you explore deeper. Don't worry, if you ever meet something that surpasses your ability, retreat. You can always attempt again once you become stronger."

'So, this will be a long-lasting mission. It makes sense, how could a group of rank 1 cultivators retrieve something that valuable?'

Noah thought.

"The maximum number of people that can enter at the same time is four, that's why there are only this many of you. If you manage to clear more than two layers, we will consider the mission a success."

Nigel spoke once Thaddeus finished his explanation.

"Is the total number of layers known?"

Thaddeus shook his head.

"Unfortunately, we were unable to discover it. And having experienced only two layers, we aren't sure of how much the difficulty will increase as you go deeper."

Noah asked a question.

"Deeper? Do you mean that the trials will be underground?"

"Not exactly. You will understand once you see the inheritance ground."

There were no more questions along the way.

They traveled for one entire day before reaching the borders of the forest.

A carriage was waiting for them with a hooded coachman on the rider position.

Thaddeus spoke.

"We will separate here. This carriage will take you to the Nerere continent and across the desert. It's a two weeks trip, sadly the air-ship is too eye-catching so we can't use it. We can't create an oath either since that will prevent you from entering the inheritance. We reached an agreement with all of you so try not to steal anything, we will gladly give you more Credits if you really find something exceptionally valuable."

He stared at each one of the students in the eyes to make sure that they understood his words.

He smiled after he finished with the warnings.

"You can all go now. I wish you good luck. Be careful."

The students bowed and went inside the carriage.

They took a side each, the carriage was big enough to fit four small couches inside it.

After a few minutes, the carriage began to move, their mission had finally begun!

Nigel spoke with a friendly smile on his face.

"Since we have to spend two weeks together, I say that we get to know each other. I would also like to know your specializations since I have to prepare a battle formation. I use the rapier and I am of the water element."

"Mace, fire element."

"Spear, thunder element."

June had stared at Noah since the presentations begun, a slight smile was on her face.

"I use two sabers."

Nigel waited for him to continue but no more words came from him.

"I'm sorry but I advise you to reveal your element. We are working for the Royal family now, if I lack some essential information about our actual power and fail the mission because of that, all of us will be blamed."

Noah thought for a while before sighing and speaking with a soft voice.

"Darkness."

#### Chapter 136 - 136. Tower

The eyes of the other three students widened.

Nigel was the first to recover and spoke with an excited voice.

"Why didn't you tell anyone? You are the first cultivator of the darkness element that has appeared in decades! One day, your fame might match Daniel's one, why would you do these missions instead of finding a Master that finances you?"

Noah shook his head and replied.

"I have my personal reasons to keep this characteristic a secret, I'd prefer that you don't divulge this information."

Errol and Nigel nodded almost immediately at his words.

"Don't worry, we will gladly keep this between ourselves!"

"Yes, we are a team now! We have to respect each other wishes."

The students in the carriage were all from poor backgrounds.

When they understood that they could become the first followers of the next Daniel, they didn't hesitate to reassure Noah with their cooperation.

June was still staring at him with wide eyes.

She came back to reality and released a soft sigh.

"It seems that even my element is inferior to yours."

Noah snorted lightly.

"It's not like it would have made any difference if I were of another element."

June's battle intent was kindled again and she pointed at Noah while raising her voice.

"Hmph! You will see! After this mission is over, I will upgrade all my techniques and teach you who is the strongest!"

Noah didn't reply and took out the second Kesier rune, he didn't want to spend the two weeks of travel socializing.

June saw his behavior and did the same while Errol and Nigel looked at each other in confusion.

Noah had become used to June's character.

He had begun to loosen up a bit when he spoke with her even if their interactions mostly consisted of him teasing her because of his victories.

The trip went on quietly.

The four students would mostly cultivate inside the carriage and take small breaks only to relieve themselves.

Nigel would claim their attention from time to time to explain some simple battle formations that they had to set up in specific situations.

As the day passed, the environment changed drastically.

From the green plains and the mountains filled with woods, the scenery transformed into one of desolation and death.

When the last tree disappeared from their sight and only the yellow sand occupied their field of view, they understood that they had entered the Nerere continent.



There was sand in every direction and no trace of life at all.

The temperature was quite high during the day but not extremely so.

'It doesn't seem that the desertification is caused by the heat, maybe this is another peculiar area like Arolyac forest.'

Noah noted in his mind as the landscape moved.

In the end, the two weeks passed and they reached their destination.

The carriage stopped and the coachman gestured to the students to jump down on the ground.

"I can't proceed from here on, just climb that dune and you'll be greeted by the soldiers of the Royal dynasty."

They had stopped in the middle of the desert, in front of a big dune made of sand.

The students nodded and moved toward the direction pointed by the hooded man.

Everything looked normal but then they began to notice the presence of inscriptions in the sandy ground.

Their numbers increased until the shape of a formation unfolded in front of their eyes.

As they crossed its borders, they felt like they had trespassed some kind of invisible barrier and the scenery changed immediately.

Tens of tents were placed on the terrain creating an orderly encampment.

Soldiers in golden armors ran in every direction doing different errands and an enormous pit was present in the ground in the distance.

A soldier noticed the presence of the four students and neared them with a friendly expression.

"You must be the students from the academy. Please follow me to the tent of the captain, we will inform you of all the details that we discovered in the exploration of the inheritance."

It didn't take much for the group to reach the bigger tent in the encampment. As they entered it, the guard loudly announced them to a middle-aged man sitting behind a large desk.

"Captain, the students sent by His Majesty Thaddeus have arrived."

The man nodded and gestured to the soldier to leave the tent while he stood up to inspect them.

The captain had a medium stature and a seemingly strong body.

His skin was dark but his hair was completely white and long, giving to his appearance an exotic aura.

He nodded after he had stared at the four for a while.

"I'm Preston Bowend, I'm the captain of the troop stationed here. We have been investigating the inheritance ground for more than six months already so I believe that you would want to know what we have discovered so far. Come with me, it will be easier to explain if you see it."

Preston went out of the tent with the students on his tail and moved toward the big pit.

As they neared it, the shape of a tower began to appear in the middle of the sandy scenery.

When they reached the edges of the pit, the eyes of the students were wide due to the astonishment that they felt.

'How much did they invested to build something like this?'

That was Noah's first thought when he saw the structure.

The hole was forty meters large and a big tower stood planted inside.

It was a circular tower with each floor separated by large and inscribed marble bricks but the number of stories that the structure had was uncertain since it was impossible to know how much of its body was still inside the ground.

There were soldiers carefully excavating inside the hole, trying to uncover more of the tower.

Preston spoke with a calm voice.

"We know for sure that the tower has been built directly underground but we managed to expose only five floors. Since there is more of the building underground, we are sure that there are at least six layers in the inheritance. We have already cleared the first two so you will start with the third one. Oh, you might want to know that every floor contains a different separate dimension so the environment changes every time."

Chapter 137 - 137. Inside

Nigel asked a question to the captain.

"Captain, what do you mean by that?"

Preston moved some hair away from his forehead before answering.

"On the first layer, the dimension was an icy field populated by rank 3 Snow bears. On the second one, we were in an underground area against Steeled centipedes. From that, we can imagine that all the other layers will contain a different environment. One thing you might want to know is that they are real magical beasts and not some creations of the inheritance ground."

'They actually created real environments and filled them with the magical beasts corresponding to each location. I don't even want to think at the amount of preparation required to set up something like that.'

Noah thought, marveled by the Royal inheritance.

Nigel spoke again.

"So, we just need to clear the floor to pass it?"

Preston nodded.

"That's the method that we used and it worked just fine."

"Number of specimens?"

"One hundred on the first layer and two hundred in the second one. However, their rank was about the same."

"Do we have a time limit for each floor?"

Preston pointed at the inscribed bricks.

"We deciphered those inscriptions. The time limit was of one week on the first floor and two on the second one. It will be three weeks in the third one and so on, at least for the floors that we can see."

Nigel turned toward Preston.

"Anything else worth mentioning?"

Preston thought for a little before nodding.

"Yes! The passage for the next layer will appear only after you cleared the dimension while the one to the previous floor will be always open. You won't have to worry about not having the chance of retreating. I believe that this is everything we know about the inheritance ground, tell me if you need anything."

Nigel spoke almost immediately.

"We need four separate tents to rest for the night, provisions for the mission, and empty storage devices for the rewards. Any chance to borrow some of the armors of the soldiers?"

Preston shook his head.

"They are inscribed per order of the Elbas dynasty, the inheritance ground would straight up refuse them."

Nigel nodded.

"Then, that will be it. If you manage to have everything done today, we will enter directly tomorrow morning."

Preston called one of the soldiers and ordered to gather the requested items.

Four tents were prepared and the students rested peacefully inside them.

Noah did his usual training but with less intensity, he could not afford to be tired when he entered the tower.

The day passed uneventfully and the four students gathered in front of the pit at dawn.

A soldier had given to each of them enough provision for a one-year journey and a black space-ring.

Noah was amazed when he inspected the width of the ring.

'There are more than one hundred cubic meters of space! And they gave four of them to us! I miscalculated their wealth, maybe I should have really bargained for a higher share of the inheritance.'

"Everyone ready?"

Preston arrived behind them.

"Yes, you can lead the way, Captain."

Nigel answered and Preston made a gesture to the soldiers down in the pit.

They placed a stair made of wood on the sandy walls and the group of four youths descended in the excavation site.

A soldier brought them toward an area in front of the tower where more stairs stood on the sides of the building and he pointed at them.

"You need to climb at the top of the tower where four runes are inscribed on the floor. Just stand on one each and you will enter the first layer."

They hurriedly climbed them till they arrived at the top of the structure where they saw the designed runes.

Nigel raised a hand to claim their attention.

"As we enter, we will run straight for the passage that leads to the lower layer. We will stop once we reach the passage for the third one to reorganize."

Everyone nodded and stepped on one of the runes.

The pressure of the teleportation pressed on their sea of consciousness and, when they reopened their eyes, they were in a field covered in snow.

According to the information given by Preston, they ran toward a certain area.

'This is not as big as Eccentric Thunder inheritance ground but it sure is more realistic.'

Noah noted in his mind.

The other separate dimension that he saw was barren and was quite different from the outside world.

However, the Royal inheritance seemed to simply be a part of the world, there was no influence from inscriptions or runes in the environment.

'Don't tell me that they actually moved a part of the outside world in this dimension. Well, I don't really know which process is harder.'

The sky was clear but, in the distance, he could undoubtedly see the borders of the landscape.

There was a faint circular wall surrounding an area of five square kilometers, delimiting the icy field.

'That should be the wall of the tower seen from its insides.'

The students ran for about an hour into the desolate field until they reached a glowing staircase that led underground.

They hastily went down and in ten minutes they arrived in a completely different area.

It was clearly underground and dark but what stunned the students the most was that they had descended the stairs only to come out from the terrain of the new area.

'Amazing, I didn't even feel when there was the variation from descending to climbing.'

They stood still only for a moment before resuming their march.

The second layer seemed vaster than the previous one but since they were underground, they could not see where the wall of the tower was.

In about two hours, they reached the passage for the third layer.

That time it was a big blue inscribed door that had again the four runes that they saw on the top of the tower on its surface.

Nigel spoke turning toward his three companions.

"Let's rest for a bit before we enter the next floor, we might meet some trouble as soon as we cross the door."

Everyone agreed and meditated to return at peak condition.

Ten minutes later, they were all standing in front of the runes.

"Ready?"

Nigel looked at the others.

"Go!"

All four of them touched the runes at the same time.

There was no problem with the teleportation, the inheritance ground didn't link them to the Elbas family.

When they opened their eyes, they were in a green plain full of rivers and more than three hundred pairs of eyes with vertical pupils were fixed in their direction.

Chapter 138 - 138. Third layer

Noah immediately recognized the owners of those eyes.

"River crocodiles!"

He shouted, reviewing their characteristics in his head.

'They have a strong bite and a scaled body that offers a good defense. They can use fresh water to heal their injuries. In this environment and with their number, we are at a total disadvantage.'

There were more than three hundred beasts in front of them, all in the third rank.

They had a body four meters long and one and a half tall.

The crocodiles didn't hesitate to charge at them, they swam in the rivers toward their position.

Nigel wasn't slow in his reaction and began to yell orders.

"Let's get in formation! We hold the first wave together and then alternate between two groups. Vance and June first and then me and Errol. Try to finish them in one hit!"

The four students aligned, wielding their weapons.



Noah didn't hesitate to uncover his upper body and release Echo.

They were only rank 3 magical beasts but their number was too high to underestimate them.

The first wave of beasts arrived.

The crocodiles jumped from the rivers and assaulted the students with their maws wide open.

Noah launched a series of wind slashes that multiplied mid-air and crashed in the middle of the mouths of the creatures, almost severing them in half.

June thrust with her spear that sent piercing blows from its tip, engraving bloody holes to any beast in the ten meters area in front of her.

Errol swung a massive black mace, sending shockwaves in front of him that made the crocodiles bleed from every orifice due to the might of the vibrations generated from his weapon.

Nigel thrust his rapier with his left arm behind his back, his weapon created sharp watery lines in the air that cut everything that passed through them.

The power of four students of the academy using their rank 4 martial art was shown at its fullest in that situation!

Tens of crocodiles died as soon as they entered the range of the attacks of the youths.

Scales, blood, and lifeless bodies fell continuously on the ground tainting the plain and the water of the rivers.

However, the assault of the magical beasts seemed endless.

More and more beasts jumped from the rivers to crash on the group of four.

Noah controlled Echo to block the attacks that were about to land on the defenseless spots of their formation, as well as finishing the beasts that survived the clash and wanted to reach the river to recover.

Minutes passed and Noah and his group were slowly losing ground.

At some point, Nigel gave another order.

"Spells!"

Noah and June jumped in the vanguard.

June's spear released faint sparks that increased the range of her attacks while Noah activated the First form of his martial art.

The horde of crocodiles was momentarily pushed back, giving time to Errol and Nigel to retreat of a few steps and concentrate on their spells.

The tip of Nigel's rapier shone with a blue light and he thrust it repeatedly, seemingly in the empty air.

However, from the top of his weapon, tens of water bullets shot out and pierced the crocodiles right in the middle of their skulls.

Errol waved his mace which lit up and released a flaming phoenix that launched massive fireballs on the most crowded areas in the pack of beasts.

The assault of the beasts was finally slowing down!

"Change!"

Nigel yelled again and June and Noah interrupted their techniques and moved in the rear position, leaving Errol and Nigel to physically face the charge of the beasts.

June closed her eyes and her spear began to gather orange sparks through all its body.

She then reopened them and forcefully lunged toward a crowded area.

A thunderbolt shot out from her spear which reduced to ashes anything that passed through.

Noah limited himself to deliver ranged strikes that multiplied mid-air due to the characteristics of his martial art.

Six wind slashes shot out from his figure every time he moved, there was the faint image of four additional arms on his torso.

Echo, in the meantime, continued its hunt for wounded prey or helped the students in the vanguard. Sometimes, a black fuming thread linked its body to Noah's one.

"Change!"

Nigel yelled again and they switched their roles, June and Noah went back in the vanguard position.

That was a simple battle formation that Nigel came up with after he had learnt about the abilities of the students in the group.

Since the moment when a cultivator casts a powerful spell was generally his most exposed one, he decided that they would have had to alternate between front and rear position.

Needless to say, the effect of the tactic left even Noah surprised.

'Well, it can only work since all of us have a high proficiency in close combat and Echo is covering for any weak point that appears.'

Noah thought.

The beasts had diminished so much that he had time to analyze the battle.

"Charge ahead!"

Once the remaining crocodiles were less than fifty, Nigel gave the order to finish them.

In less than fifteen minutes, the third layer of the Royal inheritance was emptied of any trace of life with the exception of the group from the academy.

All the four youths sat on the ground as soon as the battle was over, they needed to recover from the fight.

Even though the battle lasted less than one hour, they had to constantly use their rank 4 martial art to repel the horde of magical beasts and they even used some of their most powerful spells at certain intervals.

"Vance, what is that puppet? It's extremely useful and its expenditure of mental energy doesn't seem high."

Errol pointed at Echo that was quietly guarding Noah while he meditated.

"It's a spell."

Noah replied calmly.

At that point, some inscriptions lighted up on the circular wall in the distance.

Their light gathered in the middle of the green plain and shone for a few minutes before fading.

In that spot, a mountain made of Obsidian Credits and inscribed items appeared.

Nigel smiled and turned to the other students.

"Who wants to inspect the rewards?"

Chapter 139 - 139. Guilt

The four students neared the mountain of goods.

They all had an amazed expression as they looked at the amount of wealth piled on the ground.

Errol was the first to speak.

"Just the value of these Obsidian Credits is more than a million! And there are more than a thousand inscribed items!"

There was some greed in his eyes as he kept staring at the rewards.

'This is only the reward for one layer and it is worth a ridiculous amount of money. Isn't it way too much for just three hundred rank 3 magical beasts?'

Noah thought while keeping his eyes fixed on the items.

With the exception of their value in Credits, there was nothing that really interested him.

Errol, on the other hand, neared a big metal mace with many runes on its body.

He swung it a few times and then inspected it carefully.

After a few minutes, he nodded happily and raised his head to look at the others in his group.

"No one minds if I take this?"

All three of them shrugged their shoulders, the Royal family wouldn't really care if one of two of these items were to disappear.

Also, they were all from poor environments so they could understand the need for better equipment.

Errol happily put away his new weapon and asked a question looking toward Nigel.

"So, how should we divide everything?"

Nigel answered in a calm voice.

"Let's just split it into four piles of equal dimension. Like this, the remaining space in the space-rings will be the same for all of us. We will see if we need to change this disposition in the next layers."

He was quite sure that they could clear more floors.

After all, the battle had been tough but not extremely so, they were all uninjured.

The youths split the goods equally and put everything in their black space-rings, June, Nigel, and Noah had uncaringly seized a few thousand Credits for themselves in the process.

When the pile of rewards was moved away, they noticed that a staircase had appeared in the terrain below it.

"We should all rest until we return to our peak form. When everyone is ready, we will go to the fourth layer."

The other three agreed with Nigel's plan and freely rested on the plain.

Half a day went by before all of them entered the staircase for the next floor.

They were already wielding their weapons with Noah being shirtless and they slowly moved on the steps of the stairs.

It happened the same switch of directions and they came out from the terrain of the fourth layer.

The environment was covered in white fog with faint purple shades which limited the field of view of the students to less than ten meters in every direction.

They looked at each other and nodded silently, Nigel pointed toward a direction and the others followed.

'I feel that something is looking at my mental sphere, the sensation resembles the one that I felt during the test of my nature.'

Noah thought.

He had felt that his sea of consciousness was being observed since they arrived on the floor.

However, as he thought of that, he noticed that the fog had become denser around him and that he had lost sight of his companions.

'Is this an illusion? It's impossible that I really separated from them, right?'

"Noah."

A female voice sounded from the fog and Noah's eyes broadened listening to it.

A figure moved through the fog toward his position.

Little by little, its features became clear.

Large icy-blue eyes, thin eyebrows, long black hair, it was a face that he remembered perfectly.

"Noah, you've become strong my child."

Lily appeared in front of him, her expression was one of pain and bloody tears fell from her eyes.

"Mother."

As his emotions were stirred, his mind became hazy and he unconsciously answered her.

She drew close to him and continued to speak.

"Can you save me now? Have you become strong enough to take me away?"

A bit of guilt assaulted him, he could not control his emotions as he usually did and they began to attack his mind.

"No."

He honestly answered, even though almost three years had passed from her death, he was still very far away from the power that he needed to avenge her.

Her expression became uglier and more bloody tears came out of her face.

"When will it be enough? You had many chances to take me away if you just had chosen to give up on cultivation! We could have lived a simple life, away from all these struggles for more power but you chose to leave me in the mansion! Do you know how many abuses I had to endure? Do you know what your father did to me every day? You could have stopped all of that!"

Noah lowered his head, the guilt became uncontrollable in his mind.

He had always known that if he had put his mind into it, he had a chance to take Lily away before she died.

A favor from William and a life as fugitives would have done the trick but that implied that he had to give up to any ambition regarding the cultivation world.

She wasn't his real mother, not in his mind at least, but she gave him nothing else but love.

Without a doubt, she had managed to leave a deep mark on his second life.

"If you had known, would you have given everything up for me?"

She spoke again and Noah's expression became complex.

He answered honestly.

"I don't know."

He mostly suppressed those thoughts with his constant training but as the question was asked, he had to admit that he really was conflicted about the situation.

On one hand, there was the search for power that he desired.



On the other one, the woman that gave everything up for him.

Lily touched Noah's cheek and lifted his face so that he could look at her.

Noah saw how her beauty wasn't covered even with all the blood that came out of her eyes.

"Don't worry, I forgive you. Now, just stay still."

Her hand flickered and reappeared next Noah's throat.

Before it could hit him though, Noah grabbed her arm and squeezed it in anger.

#### Chapter 140 - 140. Fog goblins

Noah's eyes became cold as he regained control of his mental faculties.

"Do you know what were her last words to me?"

Lily's expression became confused and she tried to retreat but Noah's grip on her arm was firm and unmoving.

"She said: don't care about me. That woman managed to endure any kind of pain in order to give me enough time to develop."

A warm smile appeared on his face as he thought about her.

Lily panicked and spoke.

"How did you manage to break free from the illusion? Your mind was lost in guilt!"

Noah shook his head.

"I didn't, it's just that she always smiled every time she looked at me."

She replied in a confused voice.

"Then, how did you regain control of yourself?"

"Because you tried to ruin my image of her and that made me angry."

Black smoke came out from the hand holding her arm.

"So angry that all the guilt disappeared and I could think clearly again."

The smoke enveloped the arm and the scene shattered, revealing a skinny green limb that was holding a knife made of bones.

"You know, I might be a psycho incapable of choosing between my mother's life and cultivation. Call me a demon or whatever, I don't care."

The smoke consumed the limb almost instantly and Lily escaped Noah's grip.

"But if you thought that using my memories of her was a smart tactic, then you really understood nothing of her."

She had killed herself to protect Noah, to prevent the Balvan family from using her to hurt him.

Noah couldn't let an illusion do the same thing that she tried so hard to avert.

Black smoke came out from every part of his body, turning into a protective armor and covering him completely.

The scene shattered in many parts, incapable of enduring the might of Noah's spell.

Lily's figure turned into a humanoid green beast with pointy ears and a large nose.

It spoke as it retreated.

"Wait! The humans you came with are near you, you might hurt them if you keep going."

Noah yelled in a rough voice to reply.

"I DON'T CARE! DEMONIC FORM!"

The spell completely activated and he turned into the fiendish figure that constantly released black toxic smoke.

The beast tried to run but Noah arrived in front of him in an instant.

He grabbed its throat and slowly watched its body being devoured by his spell.

When nothing was left of the beast, he looked around him to inspect the situation.

'That was close, if Echo and the "Breath" in my sea of consciousness didn't oppose the illusion, I might have died.'

He had lied to the beast in order to confuse it.

It was true that he was incredibly angry but it was thanks to the internal pressure in his mental sphere that he managed to regain clarity.

'Now, I should first get rid of this fog.'

He focused and his mental energy depleted at high speed.

More smoke was produced and it devoured the fog around him.

As the fog disappeared, the environment shattered revealing the true form of the fourth layer.

It was a rocky location, with purple crystals sparsely embodied in the terrain.

'They should be Fog goblin and those crystals enhance their innate ability to create illusions. Otherwise, it would have been impossible for me to get affected by simple rank 3 magical beasts.'

After he had seen their aspect and the environment they were in, Noah guessed which kind of magical beasts they were facing.

The Fog goblins were humanoid magical beasts.

Their intelligence was high, almost on par with the human's one, and they mostly targeted intelligent beings as their prey.

They covered an environment with fog that they naturally secreted which was used to confuse their victims.

However, their actual battle prowess was low, once their illusion was broken, they were even weaker than rank 2 beasts.

'I should first find the others and then go wild.'

He released even more black smoke and carefully watched the scene transform.

The first to appear was Nigel, he was in a confused state and a goblin was hugging him while he cried.

Noah sent Echo to kill the beast and hastily made it retreat to avoid to disperse more smoke in his position.

He was trying to save them after all, if he was careless, he could kill them with his spell.

He then found June who was sitting on her knees with her face lowered.

She was biting her lower lip so hard that blood flowed on the ground.

A goblin was in front of her, holding a knife.

Echo arrived in her position in an instant, killed the goblin, and returned to Noah.

He lastly found Errol.

He had some cuts on his body and he was retreating in panic.

Noah vanquished the goblin and stopped his spell.

Echo returned in his body and he carried each one of them in the spot where the passage for the third layer was.

There was no fog in that position after Noah went all out with his Demonic form so they slowly regained clarity of mind.

"Vance, what happened?"

June asked as soon as her eyes focused.

"Fog goblins with their abilities enhanced by those purple crystals. Stay here, I will gladly clear this layer alone."

He turned before she could reply to him and disappeared in the fog.

"Noah, my child."

"Noah, I'm your mother!"

"Don't worry my child, I can endure a bit more."

Many figures of Lily appeared around him as he moved.

However, the only reaction that they caused was an increase in the coldness of his aura.

He freely launched fuming wind slashes in every direction, cracking the illusion as the partial Demonic form devoured the fog.

Lily's figures shattered many times, increasing Noah's need to vent.

'My mother might be dead but you are alive enough to withstand my anger!'

It took Noah an entire day to kill all the magical beasts in the floor.

The Fog goblins, when they saw that Noah was unaffected by their innate ability, began to hide.

Since his field of view was hindered, he decided to completely vanquish the fog itself with his spell.

He had to drink many potions to keep up with the consumption of mental energy.

Nevertheless, the test was completed and he rejoined his group to wait for the rewards.