

Chapter 181 - 181. Doris

Noah had flown for about half a day over the swamp.

He had met with five more groups of Swamp lizards containing rank 3 creatures and he had easily cleared them, storing the corpses of the rank 3 beasts in his space-ring.

'Twenty-five lizards and one Poisonous toad, I'm nearing the required quota for two months.'

He didn't pick up the other bodies of the Poisonous toads because their value was lower than the Swamp lizard ones, the space of his storage devices was limited after all.

He could already go back to Elbas city and obtain the discounts on the materials but, since he was already in a hunting area, he decided to gather more bodies so to not be forced to hunt frequently.

His experiments with the Elemental forging method required a long time so he would rather focus completely on them instead of being interrupted due to his duties as a hunter.

'I should rest now, I'm starting to feel some fatigue.'

He had used Echo's wings, the Shadow steps spell, the Blood drain spell, and the partial Demonic form for the whole time.

Even if he still had a lot of mental energy remaining, he chose to take a break in order to return to his peak form.

The swamp occupied a vast area and there were many small pieces of terrain not covered by the muddy waters.

Noah randomly chose one of those spots and landed on the branch of a tree.

'The situation doesn't seem too out of control. Just with the damage that I've caused today, the advancement of the swamp should have been greatly slowed.'

Noah thought as he ate some of his stash of food.

'I should buy another space-ring, eighty cubic meters are too few for my current needs.'

Noah trained shortly his centers of power before going to sleep.

He woke up as the first light of the day shined over the environment.

Yet, gray clouds immediately covered the sky, it seemed like it was going to rain soon.

'The rain should force more lizards out, today I should be able to find enough of them to return to the city.'

Noah flew again in the air and resumed his search for magical beasts.

It began to rain soon and the number of groups containing rank 3 beasts increased.

Noah vanquished each one of those groups with no hesitation, the number of corpses in his space-ring rapidly increased to thirty-three.

'I'm almost reaching the maximum capacity of what I can carry. I don't think that I can fit much more of them.'

However, at that point, Noah met the first hindrance in his hunt.

It was a green lizard, three and a half meters tall, with a scaled body and a long tail.

Its head was triangular and its four legs were thick and brawny, it seemed a small boulder placed in the middle of the swamp.

'Here is the rank 4.'

The giant lizard had its black forked tongue immersed in the water of the swamp and its dark eyes moved continuously, inspecting everything in the area around it.

'Is it looking for me?'

Noah had unleashed quite a slaughter in the previous day, uncaringly killing a few hundred lizards in the perimetric parts of the swamp.

Those magical beasts used their tongues as an investigative method, capable of extending the surface perceived if they used the water as a channel.

'They must have sensed their numbers decreasing and they sent out this creature to explore, they are quite wary of external dangers.'

He knew that his actions couldn't go unnoticed, the whole swamp could be considered the lair of those beasts after all.

'Should I stop?'

Noah thought.

The lizard hadn't found him and, if he remained outside the water, it would be difficult to be discovered.

'I will just go around it.'

Noah changed the direction he was flying to and went looking for other rank 3 beasts, instead of moving toward the center of the swamp, he was exploring its external area.

He found more rank 3 beasts and the number of corpses stored became forty.

Nevertheless, he was forced to stop his hunt due to an unexpected encounter.

On one of the trees in an area not covered by water, a middle-aged woman stood staring in the distance.

Following her line of sight, Noah saw two rank 4 Swamp lizards in the distance.

'That makes three already.'

Noah thought, moving his gaze back on the woman.

The woman sensed something and turned in his way, she and Noah stared at each other for a while.

Noah then took out the token from the Hunters' guild, making her relax.

She showed a token identical to Noah's one and pointed toward another area away from the rank 4 beasts.

'Does she want to talk?'

Noah nodded and flew where she indicated.

The hunter followed him closely, making big leaps to jump on the sparse trees present in the swamp.

'She doesn't seem to be using spells but that doesn't seem like a rank 4 body.'

Noah analyzed her strength as he flew, he wouldn't trust somebody just because they belonged to the same organization.

"Doris, right?"

He asked to the nearing figure as he landed on the muddy ground.

The woman jumped off a tree and landed right in front of him.

"Yes, you must be new."

She spoke in a friendly manner to Noah.

"Vance."

Noah said, moving his gaze on the big creatures in the distance.

"How many rank 4 lizards did you meet?"

He asked in a plain voice.

"These are the first that I've met in a week that I explore the swamp."

"I've met another one, there has to be more of them."

Doris nodded.

"They were in the center of the pack till now, something must have happened in order to have rank 4 beasts patrolling. Wait, was that your fault?"

She realized that the only thing that changed since she had been there was Noah's presence so there had to be a connection between his arrival and the new behavior of the beasts.

Noah shrugged his shoulders before answering in a plain voice.

"If by fault you mean hunting them, then yes. I thought that the whole point of being a hunter was about collecting beasts' corpses."

Chapter 182 - 182. Puddle

"We are not supposed to spoil other hunters' work! You just disrupted my pace of killing!"

Doris angrily shouted at Noah.

Water continued to pour from the sky, Noah watched coldly as the middle-aged woman rebuked him.

"So what?"

Noah answered, he wouldn't really care if his actions endangered other people.

From his point of view, if you weren't strong enough to face situations with rank 4 beasts than you shouldn't have come there in the first place.

"You have to compensate me for my losses! I'd say that one monthly quota is enough to pacify the situation."

She smiled saying those words.

'Does she want me to pay her? I thought that only nobles could be so naïve.'

His appearance was one of a young man but he clearly exuded the aura of a strong cultivator, asking for compensation in that way suggested that he was clearly being underestimated.

"Have fun with your remaining time here, I'm going in that direction."

Noah didn't deign her of an answer and unfolded his wings again to continue in his hunt.

"Wait, the rules describe this situation perfectly! If a hunter is to spoil the hunting zone of other cultivators of the guild, he has to recompense them with his own wealth!"

Noah stopped, he didn't really read the rules of the guild, he didn't believe that they were so strict so he didn't bother inspecting them.

After a few seconds deep in thought, he raised his head to face the woman.

"I don't care."

The rain poured nonstop and created large puddles on the terrain where they were standing.

One of those puddles linked itself to the water of the swamp and Doris stepped her foot in it to chase behind Noah that had turned to leave again.

"You newbie! You must follow the rules otherwise-"

**CREEEEEEEEE!**

A loud cry interrupted her words and they both turned where the sound came from.

The two rank 4 Swamp lizards in the distance were viciously staring at them with their tongues still immersed in the swamp.

'Fuck!'

Noah knew that they had been discovered and shot in the air in order to leave the area.

"Hey, wait for me!"

Doris chose to retreat too and followed Noah in his escape.

She stopped using the branches of the trees to move and directly ran through the water, uncaring of the muddy terrain.

Mud could not hinder a rank 3 body.

CREEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!

Another cry resounded from their side, the other rank 4 lizard that Noah had passed previously was attracted by the earlier roar and hastily ran for their position.

Swamp lizards weren't extremely fast in their movements but they could swim skillfully if the situation needed it.

The other two lizards chased them, immersing half of their bodies in the swamp to pick up speed, they were clearly faster than the two hunters.

However, Noah was at ease.

He was in the sky flying freely, those magical beasts had no long-distance attacks so he could run away whenever he wanted.

Doris, on the other hand, began to panic.

She had approached the pack of beasts carefully, being extra cautious not to be discovered.

Since she had no way to escape the stronger creatures, she had to take things slowly or it would have meant her demise.

That was one of the reasons why she was so angry at Noah's behavior, she had planned things meticulously only to be ruined by his appearance.

"Wait, help me!"

She yelled at the youth over her.

Yet, no response came from Noah as he continued to fly, distancing himself from her.

Doris knew that she was being abandoned.

Her eyes became resolute and she gathered strength in her lower body.

She then jumped, leaving a long trail of mud and murky water in the air as she rose to a height of ten meters with her action.

One of her arms stretched and reached for the right foot of the hunter that spoiled her preparations.

'The fuck?'

Noah turned to see Doris hanging from his leg with a smug smile on her face.

He couldn't fly carrying another person with him and his altitude diminished rapidly as both of them began to fall in the swamp.

Noah's expression became dark and two sabers appeared in his hands.

"Wait, we can escape togeth-"

Doris felt the incoming danger and tried to pacify the situation.

However, Noah had already decided.

The first form of the Ashura was executed, coupled with his partial Demonic form that covered with toxic smoke all his material and ethereal attacks.



Twelve fuming sabers clashed on her, leaving deep marks on her body and consuming her flesh.

Her arms were severed, her waist pierced, her throat cut, she stared with wide eyes as the distance with Noah increased due to her fall in the swamp.

Noah hastily grabbed the two arms that were about to fall and stood in the air, coldly watching the scene progress.

Doris fell on the water and the rank 4 lizards immediately reached for her body, biting and eating every piece of flesh that they managed to tear.

Of Doris' figure, only a red spot remained that was quickly carried away by the waters of the swamp.

She was dead!

The lizards then raised their heads to look at the human in the air.

Noah felt three pairs of eyes applying pressure on his mental sphere but incapable of doing any damage to it.

'Not yet.'

Noah thought, replying to the stare of the beasts with one of his own.

'I still can't face you.'

Rank 4 creatures generally had a higher intelligence compared to their weaker versions.

Once they saw that Noah could fly, they decided not to waste time in his pursuit and simply looked at him.

Noah felt that they were threatening him not to come again in their lair.

He continued to stare at the creatures for quite some time, enjoying the sensation of looking down on stronger beings.

'Is this what Thomas felt when he exchanged gazes with that dragon?'

He shook his head and put that thought in the back of his mind as he turned to exit the swamp.

Two arms were in his hands, unceasingly dripping blood in the waters below.

#### Chapter 183 - 183. Spoils

Noah flew for half a day before reaching the end of the swamp.

He was back outside the lair of the magical beasts, on one of the trees of Mellow forest.

Rain continued to pour from the sky, it didn't seem like it was going to end soon.

Yet, Noah didn't care about it and simply inspected the two severed arms in front of him.

There was a space-ring on each of them and he took them both before enveloping Doris' remains with black smoke.

Of the hunter, only her storage devices remained.

'She had a slow pace of killing but she had stayed for one week inside the swamp, her gains couldn't have been small.'

Noah didn't want to go back in the lizards' lair but he didn't even want to go back to the Royal city with only forty beasts' corpses.

The rank 4 beasts were alerted by then which meant that he couldn't hunt as freely as before.

Yet, two months spent on forging were way too short for what he was planning to do, he needed more corpses to fill more quotas.

Noah inspected the first space-ring, using his mental energy to wipe Doris' remaining one.

The process was smooth, there were no added protections to the device and, since the previous owner was dead, Doris' imprint was faint and frail.

'That's not bad, she was actually quite prepared.'

The space-ring was fifty cubic meters wide, it was at the same level as Noah's largest one.

Inside, there were many situational potions and pills, they covered most of the possible dangerous situations in which a hunter could end up.

'Oh, this one can be used against poison, this one is very useful for burns, this can even immediately stop the bleeding. Good, good, Doris was indeed a prepared hunter.'

Noah wasn't an expert regarding potions and similar but he had received a general education about them.

The academy couldn't neglect the teaching of such important resources only because a student wasn't talented in alchemy.

Together with those items and ten thousand Credits, there were also items useful for her cultivation.

Noah found another Earth pill and something that made his eyes widen in surprise.

'Beast's quintessence! Doris probably wanted to reach the peak of the third rank of the body with this!'

The Beast's quintessence was the more powerful version of the Beast's essence, a liquid drug that he had obtained a long time ago.

'It makes sense, since this also derives from magical beasts, she must have bought it for a discounted price. Yet, its value is not low, she has probably saved for quite some time in order to buy it.'

Doris had a rank 3 body, like Noah.

However, her situation didn't seem that good.

She was still in that rank after having lived for at least fifty years, her growth was far below the average of other cultivators, especially considering the rich environment of the Royal city.

It couldn't be helped though, spells and techniques were controlled by the noble families, you could only obtain them by paying an overpriced sum or by submitting to the families.

The academy was an exception since it sold those precious resources at a low price, allowing its students to improve steadily.

It was no wonder that it was considered the best place where to train even for those with a noble status, the accessibility to cultivation methods had an enormous value.

Yet, she was in the hunter guild, slowly accumulating the sum needed to improve her centers of power.

As for enrolling in the guards of some noble family, there were hundreds of cultivators on her level in the capital, the competition was harsh.

'Pity she didn't keep her techniques, she must have sold them as soon as she learned them.'

There were no cultivation methods or spells in her space-ring.

It was understandable though.

Diagrams and similar were almost unique in their kind, copying them was hard and required the help of an expert.

Most cultivators would just buy them to learn the described skill and then sell them at a lower price.

Only people that had no immediate need for money would keep them as an insurance for unexpected situations, or to simply hide their powers.

Noah, for example, would never sell the Warp spell, he would rather avoid for another cultivator of the darkness element to appear in the future and be able to use it.

'And I have another weapon that I can't immediately sell, wonderful.'

Doris' knife was in the space-ring.

It was an inscribed weapon so its value wasn't low, yet, Noah could not sell it or it would expose the fact that he had killed her.

'The other one should be the one containing the magical beasts' corpses.'

Noah moved his focus on the other ring.

As he had expected, the device contained twenty or so rank 3 lizards' bodies and was fifty cubic meters wide too.

'With these, I will fill my quota for four months but I can't keep the bodies in this state.'

The lizards had clear knife cuts on their flesh, an expert would recognize the difference between the two hunting methods.

Noah spent an entire day altering the signs left by Doris.

He first used the Blood drain spell to remove the remaining blood from their corpses and then he made additional cuts on their skin, sometimes directly severing the limbs when the trace of the knife was too evident.

Their value lowered like that, yet, when he had finished with each corpse, there was no evident difference between Noah's hunting method and Doris' one.

'This should be enough, now how should I sort things out?'

He liked to keep his space-rings orderly arranged in order to be more reactive in dangerous situations.

In the end, he decided to keep all his personal stuff in one of his new storage devices, putting all his potions, techniques, spells, inscribed weapons, and cultivation resources in it.

Since those items didn't occupy much space in the first place, there were still many cubic meters left for future usage.

The other three rings were assigned for the momentary items like the corpses of magical beasts.

When he finished his ordering, he had two rings on each hand, with a total space of one hundred and eighty cubic meters!

#### Chapter 184 - 184. Quintessence

'I guess my first hunt is over.'

Noah thought that and a bottle containing a dark red liquid appeared in his hands.

It was the Beast's quintessence and its usage was similar to the Beast's essence that he had used in the past.

'I'm not in a hurry to go back, I should just use this and improve while no one is around me.'

Noah was still shirtless so he only needed to apply the quintessence.

He carefully opened the small bottle and smeared its contents on the spots where his seven acupoints were.

The liquid was dense and had a bad odor but its effects were immediate.

The acupoints reacted on their own and began to absorb "Breath" at a fast pace.

Noah immediately put away the bottle and focused on the Yin body, he couldn't randomly absorb "Breath", he had to redirect it through the proper channels in order to obtain improvements rather than harm.

Seven vortexes were created on his back, their rotation speed was incredible, they absorbed "Breath" at a fast pace.

The Beast's quintessence was a potion that momentarily allowed a cultivator to imitate the magical beasts' ability to absorb "Breath", increasing the quantity of nourishment that their bodies received for a short amount of time.

The "Breath" entered his body and accumulated on his back, it was cold like he was used to, he knew that the medicine was working correctly.

He then directed it to his dantian in order to refine it before it could nourish his bones.

Since the "Breath" absorbed that way was in such a higher quantity compared to its normal one, Noah could not cultivate in the Dark vortex technique at the same time or the stress on his dantian would be too much to withstand.

Noah continued to cultivate like that for one week before emptying the bottle of quintessence.

"Fuuu."

He exhaled loudly as soon as the effects of the potion expired and he interrupted his cultivation.

His skin had become even paler and his cold aura intensified.

However, he felt that his strength had increased again.

'I'm still a bit away from the peak of the third rank but I've indeed made some progress.'

Noah concluded after inspecting his body.

He wasn't really sure of how much it would take for his dantian to reach the peak of the gaseous stage and his mental sphere was very far away from the third rank but he was sure that his body was nearing the breakthrough.

'Two years at most and I will face the Pain Tribulation.'

Since in the next rank his body would enter the Heroic ranks, he would face the first tribulation.

'I should go back now.'

It took Noah two days to reach the West gate of the capital.

He had learnt the route by then, which shortened the time needed to return to the Royal city.

When he returned to the room he had rented, he found Ivor sleeping in one corner surrounded by empty jars.

"So, how was your stay?"

Ivor opened his eyes after hearing Noah's words and, as always, it took a while for him to gain clarity.

He didn't answer and simply handed Noah three thousand Credits.

Noah was surprised, he had left him only two thousand Credits and the Moon needles.

"What was the value of my creations?"

Ivor snorted softly and cleaned his nose with his sleeve.

"Those old geezers, they wanted to lower the price because they believed that the items were stolen. Yet, they shut up once they saw the element that the needles had."

Noah waited for him to continue.



"One thousand and five hundred Credits. Sadly, they were two-use weapons or their value would have skyrocketed. You should be proud of yourself, not many inscribed items can silence those arrogant inscription masters. You might climb to a higher social status if you invest more time in the forging."

Noah ignored his words and took out his sabers to inspect them carefully.

He still didn't repair them after his last usage of the Demonic form and their shapes showed some slight cracks.

'My power has increased too much, my current weapons can barely withstand it.'

Every time he used the partial Demonic form, his sabers would undergo a corrosion.

The toxic smoke was too powerful and wild, it was impossible to completely control it even for its user.

'Luckily, the creator of the spell managed to consider my clothes as a part of my body or I would end up naked every time I use it. Sadly, that's the best he could do, this feature can't be exploited in any way.'

Noah injected his "Breath" in the sabers and the inscriptions lit up, fixing the broken spots and sharpening the blades again.

"Those are nice weapons, they might be worth a few thousand Credits."

Ivor judged, looking at the silver blades.

"Did they ask about me?"

Noah could not sell his sabers since they were his only weapons so he changed the topic of their conversation.

"Yes, but I've only given vague answers. It won't be much before they find who you are though, your element is too rare to go unnoticed."

Noah nodded, he expected that much too.

After his sabers were fixed, he put them back in his space-ring and stood up, signaling Ivor to follow him.

"Let's go back to the guild and find a new habitation."

"What? But we still have more than half a month of paid rent left!"

Ivor complained but Noah just shook his head.

"You said that yourself, I won't be anonymous much longer. I need to start forging and I'm afraid that this whole building might explode due to my failures in my new creation."

Ivor's eyes widened and a big smile appeared on his face.

"Will you stop testing and attempt in something serious?"

Noah nodded and smiled too, he had to admit that he was quite excited by his idea.

"I can now have discounts on rank 4 materials, there is no reason to wait further."

As he said that, he exited the room, followed by an excited scrounger.

#### Chapter 185 - 185. Focus

Noah was in a wide room, staring at a few items in front of him.

He was deep in thought, sorting the events of the last day.

'Selling the magical beasts' corpses earned me a bit more than two thousand Credits, their value was a bit higher than the Moon needles.'

As soon as he had left his previous accommodation with Ivor, he had directly taken a carriage for the Hunters' guild in order to sell the bodies in his space-ring.

He had sixty rank 3 magical beasts, that amount filled four monthly quotas and awarded him with a ten percent discount on the items deriving from magical beasts.

No one asked him anything about Doris, hunters would often disappear for a long time after all.

The items in front of him were exactly what he had bought on the second floor of the guild, yet, with just that discount, their prices were still high.

'Bones of a rank 4 Undead chameleon and two Beast's quintessence for a total of twenty thousand Credits. If I'm not able to join hunts for rank 4 creatures, I will go broke soon.'

There were about twenty gray bones eighty centimeters long and two bottles with a dark red liquid in front of him.

The Undead chameleon was a magical beast of the darkness element with peculiar qualities.

It could enter a state of apparent death when the environment lacked enough nourishment, only to revive as soon as a prey arrived or the density of "Breath" increased.

Its skeleton and internal organs were highly suitable for stressful procedures due to that quality and were easy to manipulate, which made them the perfect material for Noah's current level.

They were body parts of a rank 4 creature after all, weaker cultivators couldn't process them so easily.

Just the price for those bones amounted to ten thousand Credits which meant that the value of a complete rank 4 beast would be much higher!

As for the two bottles, their price was about five thousand Credits each, Noah had decided to buy them after testing the effects of the quintessence in Mellow forest.

'This place is expensive too. Well, the density of "Breath" is high at least.'

The chamber where he was at that moment was one of the two rooms of his new habitation.

It was near the Hunters' guild and featured an area reinforced with inscriptions that met Noah's needs.

The concentration of "Breath" was also higher compared to the one on the streets of the capital.

However, the price was four thousand Credits per month.

'Sixteen thousand Credits for four months of rent, added to twenty thousand for these items and deducting my gains, I have more than seventy thousand Credits left.'

They were still a lot of money but Noah was worried anyway.

Twenty bones were enough only for twenty experiments after all, Noah wasn't so delusional to think that he could succeed just with that.

'I'll think about it later, now I should focus, it's finally time to become serious.'

He closed his eyes and a small strand of the gaseous "Breath" in his dantian rose from his waist and moved toward his head.

Noah's ethereal figure appeared on the walls of his mental sphere and hastily took the strand of "Breath", using its body to connect the outside world with the interiors of Noah's sea of consciousness.

As soon as the "Breath" entered the sphere, it began to quiver madly, threatening to detonate right at the bottom of the sea of mental energy.

Nevertheless, Noah expected that much and acted promptly.

Mental energy was continuously expended as Noah forced away the will of Heaven and Earth from that minute amount of "Breath".

The process took one hour and exhausted almost all of Noah's mental energy but, in the end, the "Breath" was rendered harmless.

'This will take a while.'

Noah thought as he laid on the floor to sleep.

The "Breath" in his dantian was in the second rank, the difficulty in refining it had increased by a lot.

Noah could only absorb a small piece of it before he was forced to rest.

Yet, just that quantity wasn't his limit.

His sea of consciousness had improved at a faster pace than his dantian and was also the first to break through between the two, it could withstand the gaseous "Breath" of a rank 2 cultivator.

Noah rested and repeated that procedure as soon as he woke up before being forced to rest again.

When the third absorption ended, Noah felt that his headache had reached the point where it could hinder Noah's concentration during the forging, so he decided to stop accumulating "Breath".

After another day of rest, it was time to inject his will.

The black gas in his sea of consciousness was immersed in the sea and Noah stood for three days imagining a saber cleaving the sky in two.

He had become better at imbuing his will on the "Breath", when the process was over, a small black blade stood in his mental sphere emitting a strong sharpness.

'It's time.'

He waited for his form to return to its peak and laid the bone of the Undead chameleon in front of him.

'This will be the body of my creation. It will give it a sturdy composition and it will easily allow for the main material to fuse with it.'

The bone of the magical beast was not the main ingredient in Noah's design.

There was one material that he knew was far stronger and destructive than anything he had seen in his life.

A substance that made possible his escape from the Balvan family.

Mental energy was expended, as well as the "Breath" that he had just refined.

On his two Kesier runes, the black roots lit up and black smoke was emitted in Noah's hand.

Noah focused like never before, trying to control the smoke of the Demonic form spell to stay still in his palm.

He knew that the toxic gas was wild, almost impossible to restrain.

However, if he used his own personal "Breath" to produce it and then use the reinforced connection to manipulate it, will that be enough to make it his main material?

Noah's eyes shone as his concentration reached its peak.

The smoke on his palm stopped its expansion and gathered in the form of a small black sphere.

Chapter 186 - 186. Bucket

Noah stared at the ball of smoke in his palm with an excited expression.

'It's doable! I can use my Demonic form as a material!'

He wasn't sure that he could use the toxic smoke as part of the forging process until he managed to restrain it.

'The easy part is done, now I need to fuse the smoke with the bone of the chameleon and shape it.'

Noah took the grey bone with his free hand and created an incubating membrane around the two materials.

He focused, manipulating the black gas to enter the beast's body part.

Since he had used his refined "Breath" to activate the partial Demonic form, the toxic gas could be used as if it was the "Breath" itself in the Elemental forging method.

Of course, the difficulty in shaping the item would increase vastly that way.

That method was described in Ivor's "Sword Creation method", it consisted of defining one material as the core and using it to shape the other items.

The notes about the Elemental forging also explained how that was the most effective way to forge when using more than one material, shaping two different ingredients at the same time would increase the difficulty of the inscription by many times.

The smoke covered the bone and tried to enter it in order to fuse with its substance.

However, it was a piece of a rank 4 magical beast, it was hard to shape and resisted the modifications that Noah wanted to apply.

Noah stood still for a long time, his gaze never moved from the black membrane that encircled his hands.

Two hours had to pass for the bone to lose its defenses and allow the smoke inside its matter.

The two ingredients began to combine and faint pressure was emitted as the item condensed according to Noah's will.

'I knew it, the Undead chameleon is the perfect material to use for the first prototype.'

The bone morphed almost without resistance once it allowed the fusion with the toxic smoke, it didn't reject the new substance at all!

Of course, what Noah was doing at that moment was just the initial phase of the experimentation for his masterpiece.

Just two materials weren't enough to create something durable and powerful, there had to be a more intricate mixture in order for the inscribed item to reach a pleasing level in both those qualities.

That difficulty was ignored by the other inscription methods as they only had to perform an inscription on an item to apply a powerful effect.

Yet, the Elemental forging method was renowned for the power held by its creations, the higher difficulty in creating a good product was balanced by the strength of every finished item.

Just by looking at Noah's Moon needles, one could understand the advantages of such a method.

They had the power of the solid stage of a rank 1 cultivator and that with only a rank 3 material!

They were indeed strong but lacked durability, something that items created with other inscription methods had by default as no one would choose to inscribe an item of poor quality.

However, a problem appeared during the fusion of the two materials.

There wasn't any mistake on Noah's side, he had maintained a perfect control over the process for the whole time.



The issue was about the nature of the toxic smoke.

As it originated from a spell that emphasized destruction, it was intrinsic in its nature to destroy everything that was not his user.

The smoke began to corrode the bone.

If even Noah's saber couldn't avoid being corroded, it was no wonder that the same happened with other materials.

Noah tried his best to prevent the corrosion from happening but all he could do was staring helplessly as the black gas reduced the bone to nothingness.

The bone was devoured and the incubating membrane dispersed, the toxic smoke spread in the room before being blocked by the flickering inscriptions on the walls.

'It was a rank 4 material, coming from one of the most adaptive magical beasts in this world and with a matching element. Not even this could contain my spell.'

He sighed, laying on the floor under him.

'Well, at least I know that my Demonic form can injure dead rank 4 beasts. When I obtain a rank 4 body, I should be able to deal with that starved Cloud eagle. As for the forging...'

He sighed again.

It's not that he didn't foresee that circumstance, he knew the proprieties of his spell better than anyone else.

He had already found another way to use the smoke as a material without letting it consume the other ingredients.

Noah stood up and two items appeared in front of him.

One of them was his saber that he wielded with his left hand.

The other one was a bucket, like the ones he used to collect the blood of the magical beasts when he had to prepare for the Body-inscription spell.

'If the Demonic form hurts everything except me, then I have to use me as a material.'

The saber slashed his right wrist and Noah stretched his arm to make the blood drip in the bucket.

His eyes were cold as he looked at his own blood coming out of his wrist, he was quite used to that scene by then.

'First the Horned snake, second the Three-eyed bat, and the Night panther as the third one. Who would have thought that I would be the fourth.'

He laughed internally at that thought, he realized that he wasn't treating his body any differently from a beast's corpse.

'If this gets me what I need, I don't mind throwing away hundreds of liters of my blood.'

His body was alive though and had also excellent healing abilities.

The wound on his wrist closed after a few seconds and Noah was forced to open it again.

Little by little, the bucket began to fill.

He had a rank 3 body, spilling about three liters of blood made him dizzy and pale but didn't endanger his life.

That was also due to the fact that his bones began to emit a cold halo that increased its production.

In about twenty minutes, the bucket was full.

Noah took out another chameleon's bone and immersed it in his blood before going to rest.

## Chapter 187 - 187. Tolerance

Noah filled more buckets with his own blood in the following days and proceeded to sink the remaining eighteen chameleon bones in them.

After sealing them carefully, he stored the buckets in his space-ring.

According to Noah's calculations, those containers had to be sealed at least for a month in order for the bones to change their nature.

The Undead chameleon was a rare creature, its adaptability was widely known between the experts in the magical beasts' field, that was partly the reason behind its high price.

'I guess, I'm eighteen now.'

Noah thought, looking at the light coming from a window in his habitation.

Since he had to wait for the treatment of the materials to be over, he had returned to focus on his training, especially his Yin body.

One bottle of Beast's quintessence was already used and the other one was almost empty, he had enough liquid for only one more night of training.

Noah wielded his sabers and practiced in his martial art, the ethereal additional arms became more real every time his power increased or his mastery of the art neared perfection.

Once he became able to use the Third form of the Ashura, his martial art would lose most of its ties with the Nails of the Kamaitachi and transform into something different.

It was already at the level of the fourth rank after all, his fighting style was mostly set, the time when he would have to create higher tier arts by himself was approaching.

'Generally speaking, martial arts are a weaker version of spells, cultivators perform diagrams with their movements and manipulate the "Breath"

accordingly to obtain a similar effect. I wonder if it's too early to think about it, I still have to master my current art.'

His knowledge of the cultivation topic was vast.

Most noble families would just rely on their accumulated techniques and spells to nurture their descendants, they had no clue on the theories behind their creation.

Noah didn't realize it but his foundation was really solid, if one didn't consider the specialized fields like alchemy and similar, there were really few aspects of cultivation where he had doubts about.

That was one of the advantages of being instructed in the academy, each of its students would have a smooth cultivation journey and avoid harmful practices.

Night arrived again and Noah emptied the contents of his potion to hasten the improvements of his body.

However, halfway through the night, the effects of the quintessence vanished.

Noah focused on his back and noticed that some remains of the substance were still there but his body seemed to be immune to it.

'I've developed a tolerance, I can't use it anymore.'

Drugs couldn't be used endlessly otherwise there would be cultivators in the divine ranks everywhere.

The bodies of the cultivators were already particularly strong, it was no wonder that as their power rose, they would become used to a treatment faster.

The solution to that was to either undergo a stronger treatment or to stop altogether.

In time, the body would purify itself and allow weaker drugs to affect it.

Noah had already used the Beast's essence in his youth but his body had greatly improved in the time that had passed, that's why he could almost use three full bottles before becoming tolerant.

Since his dantian wouldn't be stressed anymore, Noah spent the rest of the night cultivating both the Yin body and the Dark vortex technique.

When the daylight shone and he was about to wield his sabers, a loud knock resounded from the entrance door.

Noah was quite surprised and focused to be ready for every situation.

He didn't know many people after all, and those that knew where he lived were even less.

When he opened the door, he was met by a familiar smiling face full of golden hair.

"Professor, how come I'm not surprised that you know where I'm staying?"

Thaddeus laughed lightly before pointing toward the interiors of the accommodation.

"Can I come in?"

Noah shrugged his shoulders and turned, moving toward one of the couches of the room and picking one of Ivor's jars along the way.

As he sat, he poured two glasses of wine and drank a bit before speaking in a sarcastic tone.

"So, in which other shady business can I be of help?"

Noah was quite relaxed in Thaddeus' presence.

He knew about the Royal inheritance and he also knew that Thaddeus wanted to use him before some complication appeared.

Since Noah didn't believe that he had come there for the inheritance ground, he supposed that it was about another activity in which the Royal family could not interfere personally.

"Oh, I guess we left a bad impression on you after the last time. That was my bad, I apologize."

He was referring to the match against Manuel.

"Why didn't you use the token?"

Noah didn't care much about that matter, it's not like he would have trusted the Royal family anyway.

"This matter is a bit personal, I wanted to speak in a safe environment."

Thaddeus said while slowly sipping the wine in his glass.

Noah became slightly interested in the matter.

"There is a problem with one of the students. You know, the strong point of the academy is the number of techniques and spells available at a low price, this is what attracts most of the youths and gives us the time to recruit them in our ranks. However, we also know that we can't keep all of them, some students will still decide to return to their families and aim for the position of the patriarch."

'That's obvious, you can't expect heirs from large-size noble families to just join the rulers of the country. They know that they will never be trusted in the ranks of the Royals.'

"Most of the techniques that we sell are copies made by the inscription masters in the Royal Mansion but there are few exceptions like yours and Daniel's one. Yet, the value of these copies depends on how many replicas are around, if all those scrolls were to end in the hands of the noble families, our appeal over the new generations would fade."

"So?"

Noah said, he understood what he was saying but he couldn't see the problem about it.

Thaddeus' expression became complex and he spoke with a soft voice.

"So, one student spent ten million Credits and bought more than one hundred techniques and spells."

Chapter 188 - 188. Negotiation

'Ten million Credits!?'

Noah was speechless, he really couldn't imagine a sum that huge in the hands of a single person.

"How is it possible that a single student is in possession of such wealth?"

He asked the Professor.

"That's part of the problem. We believe that some large-size noble families are planning to build an organization similar to the academy. Yet, their foundation is not as solid as ours, so they are investing that sum to accumulate enough appealing resources. Even if the academy would still be the best school in the country, we can't allow for a competitor to appear."

Thaddeus explained in a serious tone, he was taking this matter quite seriously.

However, Noah really didn't care about such political struggles.

"What do you want from me?"

Noah asked his most pressing question.

"Stop the delivery of the items to the noble families."

"Why don't you do that?"

Thaddeus smiled bitterly at those words.

"We must maintain the social environment peaceful and calm. If large-size families were to be suppressed openly, a conflict would be inevitable. Oh, don't get the wrong idea, the Royal family is fully prepared for an internal conflict, we would just prefer to avoid it."

Silence occupied the room, Noah was considering the offer.

"And what should I do once I intercept the student?"

"You take care of him. It will be an undercover mission with other cultivators of a suitable profile. All the information will be delivered to you as soon as you accept."

Thaddeus answered, the meaning behind his words was quite clear.

'They want criminals to do the job so that they can blame them if something goes wrong. Fucking Royals, they are so pitiful.'

Noah internally shook his head.

The mighty rulers of the Utra nation, undisputed for two thousand years, asking for help from disposable individuals.

'What's the point of having all that power if you can't use it? Rules are bindings even in the cultivator world. Noble families are so powerful and yet so frail.'

He was honestly disappointed by such vision, he felt like a dragon had turned into a scared sheep as soon as one of its wings was pierced.

He didn't underestimate the actual power held by the Royals, he knew that if he made a mistake they wouldn't waste one instant before taking care of him.

However, he felt disappointed seeing such a grand organization unwilling to deal personally with their problems.



In a world under the constant threat of magical beasts, weakness was a sin, even if only a circumstantial one.

"I believe that the rewards would match the enmity with large-size noble families."

Noah broke the silence.

"Name your price."

Thaddeus smiled again, he knew that his proposal had interested the young man.

"Rank 4 cultivation technique of the darkness element."

There was no hesitation in Noah's answer, he knew exactly what he wanted. However, Thaddeus' eyes widened in surprise and he stood up from his seat.

"Are you crazy? Do you know the value of something like that!? You are overestimating your value! Do you think that we don't know about those inscribed items that you ruined master has sold? This fake identity of yours is reaching its limits! If it wasn't for us Royals always suppressing the rumors of a darkness element cultivator, how much do you think your family will take to find you? Show some damned gratitude and remember that your life depends on our goodwill!"

Thaddeus was mad, such a request had clearly enraged him.

Noah stared with cold eyes as his overreaction unfolded and he knew that what the Professor said was true.

He was a pawn and pawns must obey the orders of the kings.

'This matter must be quite pressing for him to react like that.'

"Rank 3 cultivation technique of the darkness element."

Noah took a step back and lowered his price.

Thaddeus sighed and sat back on the couch behind him before answering.

"That is doable but you must join some Royal organization first and to do that you will have to make an agreement. Since you are involved in the Royal inheritance, we still can't do that. It means that it will take some time for it to be delivered to you."

'That won't do either.'

Noah wanted to remain free from bindings, he wouldn't join a noble family just to obtain some immediate benefits.

'Giving myself away can't be done. If I join the Royals, I'll always be an outsider and be suppressed. I don't want to go through the same experiences of the inner circle of the Balvan family.'

He had been restrained for a year and a half in the inner circle of the mansion, spending most of his days being a testing dummy for the heirs and having almost no time left for his training.

'They will probably give me more freedom but a cage is always a cage, no matter how big it is.'

"I want an immediate payment, I might not come back after all."

Thaddeus shook his head.

"Then you have to choose something else, rank 3 cultivation techniques can't be given away like that."

Silence again, Noah was deep in thought, trying to find what he needed the most at that moment.

'That would solve most of my problems.'

Noah found something that fitted his needs and stared for a long time in Thaddeus' eyes before opening his mouth to speak.

"I want a "Breath" blessing, one big enough to be useful through all the second rank of the dantian."

Thaddeus' expression became stiff, the meaning behind Noah's words was clear.

One of the problems in the higher level of cultivation was the amount of time needed to accumulate enough "Breath" for the breakthrough.

Places like the academy or the capital were coveted due to the higher density of "Breath" which facilitated the cultivation process, the improvements of two centers of power depended on that after all.

Yet, if one had a piece of "Breath" blessing big enough, he could cultivate everywhere, without having to bear the expenses linked to better accommodations.

'If I have that mineral, I can just live in normal rooms and still cultivate at a higher speed. Not only that, I can even use it when I'm outside hunting, eliminating the problem of a slower pace of training.'

Chapter 189 - 189. Old enemy

Thaddeus stared Noah for a while.

Giving away a piece of "Breath" blessing wasn't a problem, their accumulation was vast, they had large reserves of that mineral.

The only problem was what giving it to him meant.

'If he obtains it, he won't need the privileges of the Royal city anymore.'

Those were Thaddeus' thoughts.

Cultivators would need better resources as their level increased.

In the Utra country, the resources and the techniques were all monopolized by the noble families, with the biggest shareholder being the Royal family.

It was almost impossible to embark on the cultivation journey without having relationships with them.

That need was amplified by the level of the cultivator.

Taking Noah as an example, his improvements had been minimal since he stopped being a student, even with his hardworking personality.

He had to use precious potions to boost his absorption speed but that method had its limits as his body would become tolerant to the drugs.

The best method was to simply cultivate in an environment rich of "Breath".

Yet, those kinds of environments were mostly danger zones or artificially created.

Noah could not survive in the former and had to reach compromises to use the latter.

However, the value of that mineral was still inferior to techniques and spells, that's why he was quite confident that Thaddeus would accept his price.

'He has to decide between me, a lone cultivator that won't be a threat in the imminent future, or a sudden increase in power of the large-size noble families. It's just about what he fears the most.'

Noah wouldn't be a threat for their dominion for some more decades at least, they had plenty of time to rope him in.

The noble families, on the other side, were already established and powerful.

If they really managed to create a structure similar to the academy, the accumulation of power would shift in their favor.

Also, they would be doing that by using the Royal academy as the foundation for their new school, the Royals would lose too much face if they let that happen.

"Deal."

As Noah predicted, Thaddeus agreed.

"I want the mineral before I have to move"

Noah reminded him.

Thaddeus nodded and stood up, that conversation had left him with a bitter taste in his mouth.

"The stone will be given to you in less than a week, together with the specifics about the mission. I just want you to remember one thing."

Noah waited calmly for the Professor to continue to speak.

"We are not your enemies."

As soon as he said that, he left the room and exited the accommodation.

"Speaking about hidden threats, that Thaddeus must really care about this situation."

Ivor said, appearing from the other room.

"I understand them to be honest. You don't rule a nation for two thousand years without being paranoid about everything that can endanger your position."

Noah answered, laying on the couch and analyzing what had just happened.

"Why are they so into you? Is it because of your element?"

Noah nodded and answered Ivor in a plain voice.

"All they want is control over their subjects. With Daniel being on the side of the nobles, they need someone of equal rarity and talent or their figure would lose importance in the eyes of all the other families. Well, I'm also useful for their dirty work"

"So, will you join the Royals once danger knocks on your door?"

Noah shook his head.

"They must have realized by now that I don't like to be controlled. Once my usefulness is over, they will give me an ultimatum."

He was speaking about these matters with ease as if they didn't concern him in the slightest.

"And what will you do at that point?"

Ivor asked in a concerned tone.

He didn't want to see his student being used by Royals but he also didn't like the idea of losing the last heir of the Elemental forging method.

He wasn't sure he would survive until he found someone else as talented as Noah.

Noah shrugged his shoulders and turned to one side to sleep, saying one last phrase to Ivor.

"I will be long gone before things reach that point."

What Thaddeus had promised didn't take much to arrive.

In just four days, a soldier in golden armor knocked at Noah's door and handed him a space-ring.

The space inside the ring was small, not even three cubic meters, but contained a pile of sheets and a big blue stone.

Noah's eyes widened seeing the "Breath" blessing and he immediately took it out to place it in the reinforced room.

As for the ring, he simply gave it to Ivor to sell it while he was gone.

The "Breath" blessing was cubic and its proportions were quite precise, it seemed that it had been cut from a bigger piece.

It was one and a half meters tall and almost the same in its other dimensions.

When it came outside of the separate space in the ring, the density of "Breath" increased by a lot and surpassed the one in the best habitation of the academy!

'Well, it's coupled with the already high density of this room. Just this alone can probably only reach a level lower than the one in the academy.'

Nevertheless, Noah was satisfied.

'With this, my training won't be slowed anymore even when I'm outside hunting! I can also use it to lure out beasts!'

Magical beasts would instinctively be attracted by such precious items, Noah could already imagine the number of traps he could set up in his hunts with that mineral.

'To think that I finally managed to get my hands on something like this.'

That was the third time in which he came across a "Breath" blessing.

Due to his personality, he had always desired to obtain one of them, yet they weren't easy to find and no one would ever sell it.

Noah moved his gaze to the sheets and began to inspect them.

His brows furrowed a bit before relaxing in a surprised expression.

'That's quite the coincidence.'

Written on the sheets, there was the various information about the mission from the Royal family, as well as the name of the student that made that absurd purchase.

'Samuel Muwlos.'

Noah's eyes shone with a cold light remembering his previous encounters with him.

Chapter 190 - 190. Vonduhr

Noah had never forgotten how the soldiers from the Muwlos family had tried to prevent his arrival at the entrance test of the academy.

'I wonder if that wind mage will be there to protect him. That one should be an interesting fight.'

The sheets described how Samuel was about to leave the academy after his purchase in the inventory but was instead held back by various means.

'That was probably a plot from the Royals, they needed time to put together a group for the mission.'

As for the objective of the mission, it was clearly stated on the sheets.

'Retrieve the copies of the techniques and kill the student that dared to join a scheme against the Royal dynasty.'

'They must be really mad about this. I almost feel pity for Samuel, I bet he doesn't really know in what mess he ended up.'

Noah shook his head thinking about the idiocy of that young man, he couldn't really understand how most nobles were so stupid.

'One month from now, town of Vonduhr, Three-jugs tavern. That's the gathering point for my team.'

There was a detailed map pointing out the best route to reach the appointed town.

'One month... It might be enough to forge something.'

The bones of the Undead chameleon were being refined in his own blood.



Before he had to leave to reach Vonduhr, he had about two weeks in which he could continue to experiment.

However, that time could be used to increase his power as much as he could.

'Betting on the Elemental forging is quite risky, at least for my current ability in that method. I should just leave the bones to refine and focus on my training, that can only benefit me.'

Of course, the more the bones were left in his own blood, the more they would mimic its properties.

Noah needed for them to be recognized as part of his own body by the Demonic form spell otherwise the black smoke would just consume them.

Instead of risking a rank 4 material, he would gladly leave it to refine for some more time to focus on a more reliable power.

After all, even if the materials were refined correctly, he wasn't sure he could forge something stable in just two weeks.

Having made his decision, Noah didn't waste time and gave Ivor a list of items to buy together with the Credits needed.

He needed to refill his stash of potions and food, he had to buy new sets of clothes, he couldn't be left shirtless in an undercover mission.

After he set everything, he took out the Kesier rune and began to train, every little improvement could be essential for his survival.

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A few weeks later, in a small village near Vonduhr.

Samuel sat in a poor wooden house with his two hands clenched on a cup of tea.

He was trembling and drops of cold sweat ran down his forehead.

"Young Master, it was the decision of the family. You must bear the responsibilities of the Cause."

Abel stood right in front of him, trying to reinvigorate his spirit.

Samuel shook his head and threw the cup on the wall, spilling all its contents on the old wood.

"And what do you even know? I saw the monsters in the academy and I saw the power of the Royal dynasty! They have flying ships dammit! They could wipe out an entire large-size noble family overnight if they wanted and my family wisely agreed to make me the scapegoat for this fucking Cause! Did my father know about all of this? Did he know that his sole heir would be the target of the Royals' hatred?"

Abel lowered his head at the man's complains.

He had been a guard of the Muwlos family for his entire life, he had seen Samuel grow and knew how attached his father was to him.

However, the Cause was too important and the benefits related to it were incredible.

He spoke in an apologetic tone with his head still lowered.

"Young Master, the benefits that our family will receive if this mission succeeds would be enormous. We would forever have a privileged position in the noble academy and we were exempted from paying our share to reach ten million Credits. Your father emphasized your worth greatly for you to be assigned to this role."

Abel's words didn't manage to calm Samuel down who continued in his protests.

"What worth!? I'm basically stealing from the Royal academy! If they catch me, not only me but the entire family will pay the price for the insubordination!"

Abel raised his head and put a hand on the young man's shoulder.

"You've never stolen anything, that's one of our advantages. Since you have rightly purchased those techniques and spells, the Royal family can't personally intervene in the matter, they can just send cultivators unrelated to them. However, all the strongest cultivators are under their rule or loyal to the Cause, even the other large-size families that are neutral have confirmed that they won't interfere with this matter. With me here, the odds are on our side."

Samuel was slightly reassured by his words and heaved a long sigh.

"What is our actual battle prowess?"

Abel sat next to him and took out a map from his sleeve, unfolding it on the table in front of them.

"We have sixty soldiers, thirty-five of them are rank 1 cultivators in the solid stage while the other twenty-five are in the second rank. I know that you are still in the first rank but don't worry, I will personally guard you."

Samuel nodded seeing such manpower and then turned to look at Abel.

"You have a rank 4 body, right?"

Abel made a wide smile and patted his chest in confidence.

"Yes, I am a rank 2 cultivator in the liquid stage, rank 2 mage, and have a rank 4 body. I know that my body-nourishment method is among the weakest rank 4 methods but its power must not be underestimated! Also, it sacrifices most of the physical strengthening to focus on healing abilities! I can be your meat-shield for the whole journey back in the mansion."

Samuel finally became completely calm and gestured toward the map.

"What's our route?"

"We move to Vonduhr in a few weeks and then we take the mountain path to return in the Muvwos domain."