

Chapter 231 - 231. Special

Phoebe saw blood coming out of Manuel's mouth.

She saw how the anger in his eyes slowly turned into astonishment before vanishing altogether.

The light in his eyes disappeared as life left the noble, Manuel died right in front of her eyes.

"WHAT HAVE YOU DONE!?"

Phoebe screamed.

She could have never imagined that a student from the academy would kill the heir of a noble family!

Noble families were the most powerful organizations after the Royal family after all, who would want to antagonize himself with them?

However, Noah wasn't a common cultivator.

When Manuel attacked, he had already decided to kill both of them.

First, he had come there to test himself, there was no better opponent than an injured cultivator with a rank 4 body.

Second, those two were isolated from the rest of their group.

Once Noah saw that nobody else was coming, he decided that it was better to take care of that unexpected threat.

Third, he knew that his rank 4 body had been exposed, the woman in front of him simply didn't realize it just yet.

Lastly, he needed a bait for the Excavating worms.

If large quantities of "Breath" were to be expended in that room, many magical beasts would be attracted, preventing Noah from walking into a trap.

"I killed him."

Noah plainly answered, inspecting Manuel's body to gather all his belongings.

"Do you understand what have you done? The Gousho family will never let you off the hook, they will make you pay and no amount of protection can save you!"

Noah picked a space-ring and Manuel's weapon and turned toward the woman still sitting on the ground.

"You really don't understand the kind of situation you are in, do you?"

Noah shook his head after he said those words and slowly neared her.

After that phrase, something clicked inside Phoebe's head and her eyes widened in understanding.

She remembered that Vance was younger than Manuel and yet he managed to defeat him just by using his brute force.

'That shouldn't be possible, unless...'

Her thoughts raced until she finally reached a conclusion that surprised her even more.

"You have a rank 4 body. But how? You are too young."

Noah nodded but never stopped nearing her.

"See, when you are blessed with wealth and power, you usually forget that you aren't so special. You can even be a Royal but, in this place, rules can't protect you."

Then, Noah began to run at full speed toward her.

Phoebe was surprised and forced herself to stand up, wielding her spear to block the incoming attack.

However, her injury was heavily hindering her movements, she was far from her peak strength.

'I can win this, he is the strongest student of his generation but I've cultivated for three years more than him, he can't be that powerful.'

Yet, her beliefs were shattered after their first clash.

Noah immediately used the first form of the Ashura, creating twenty ethereal sabers that attacked Phoebe from every direction.

She was surprised once again and hurriedly rotated her spear to block the incoming attacks.

The spear vibrated at an unusual rhythm, slowing Noah's attacks when they became too close to it and reducing their might.

Most of Noah's attacks were blocked by that defensive form but some of them managed to slip through her defense.

The sabers slashed her robe, which blocked many of them, allowing only two cuts to appear on it.

Yet, when the attacks surpassed the defense of the robe, they were unable to injure Phoebe.

Noah felt as if he had hit a hard rocky wall and he was unable to break it.

'This is annoying, her defense is tight and I can't waste much time.'

Noah saw that his attacks were ineffective and decided to use the ability of his body.

The membrane around his heart tightened and poured in his circulatory system the liquid "Breath" that it contained.

Phoebe had used her best defensive methods to block the attacks and was amazed to discover that the man in front of her still managed to touch her skin.

'I have the best defense of my generation but he can break it!'

Then, she saw how Noah's veins turned black and began to pulse at an even rhythm.

More attacks came in her direction after that and she had no time to think about that sudden change.

Her spear rotated again, emitting the same vibrations as before.

Yet, that time her technique wasn't able to completely block the attacks and she was slowly pushed back by the relentless assault.

It had to be said that she was injured, she could not exert her full strength since her legs were wounded.

Also, Noah had stopped trying to find weak points in her techniques and began to focus on her weapon while using the full power of his body.

Phoebe was continuously pushed back.

Her legs hurt and her hands slowly became sore and numb, she could not last much longer if she limited herself to defend.

'What should I do? I can't properly attack in my current state and this Vance isn't showing any signs of getting tired. I should stall as much as I can and wait for Lord Daniel to arrive.'

She decided in her mind and focused all her energy on defending as much as she could.

The vibrations created with her martial art increased and began to affect a larger area in front of her.

Even Noah's movements started to be affected by those vibrations, yet he had already reached another conclusion in his mind.

His attacks began to emit a black smoke that accumulated all around Phoebe.

'A spell? But I'm using a rank 4 martial art with a rank 4 body and a defensive inscribed item in the second rank! Is he getting anxious?'

A trace of hope appeared in her eyes which was immediately shattered when she saw the effects that the spell had on the battle.

The smoke destroyed the vibrations that she was creating, allowing Noah's attack to freely clash on the spear and pierce her defense.

Chapter 232 - 232. Monster

'What is that!? A rank 1 spell can't break my defenses so quickly!'

Phoebe was terrified.

Noah's attacks were directly clashing with her spear, transmitting the entirety of their power to her.

She took large steps back, enduring the pain that her movements caused.

Yet, the black smoke began to affect her robe, slowly consuming it and reducing its power.

Also, Noah never stopped pressing her, no matter how much she retreated, he was always in front of her.

Then, her back hit the wall of the underground room, preventing her from retreating.

Noah's assault became even more violent at that moment.

Phoebe struggled to block the attacks but, without the effect of her martial art, she could not defend as well as before.

Many cuts appeared on her robe and wounds began to accumulate on her body, Noah had finally managed to make her bleed!

Also, the black smoke accumulated around her figure, continuously consuming her robe and skin.

'Will I die here?'

She couldn't see any way out of that situation and ultimately began to consider that option.

'What can I do? What can I do?'

She began to panic, committing some mistakes in the execution of her forms which were promptly exploited by Noah.

Two of his attacks stabbed her on the waist, putting an end to her struggles for survival.

"Why? I didn't deserve this."

Phoebe's soft voice resounded in the room as she lost her strength and let go of her weapon.

Noah's eyes became dark after hearing her words but he didn't stop his offensive and stabbed her chest to inflict a fatal wound.

Her skin was hard and rough, it resembled a rock, yet it couldn't stop Noah's blows when he used his full strength.

Life left Phoebe right in front of Noah's eyes.

Another noble had died because of him.

Noah didn't waste time and gathered her belongings, hurriedly taking her body to where he had left Manuel's one.

Then, he covered the area with the black smoke and waited for every trace of them to disappear.

'Next, the battlefield.'

Noah used the toxic smoke to erase every trace of the battle from the underground room, destroying the bloodied terrain and covering the traces of cuts from the walls.

'This should do.'

Noah thought after another inspection of the room.

He took out a couple of potions and immediately drank them.

The battle had revealed itself quite challenging and Noah wanted to return at his peak form as fast as he could before the wave of worms arrived.

'She was strong, without my spell, it would have taken a lot to defeat her.'

Noah judged in his mind as he sat on the ground to rest.

Then, her last words resounded in his head and made him fall deep in thought.

'How many of those that die really deserve it?'

Noah remembered all the experiences of both his lives.

'In my previous world, poor people were exploited till they died of hunger. Wars were everywhere and the powerful men were only concerned about their personal gains, the weaklings were always discarded.'

'Here is the same with the exception that a single man can become a powerful entity, so powerful that rules and ethics have to bow to him. That's why the means for power are controlled so strictly and the nobles manage to always accumulate more power over time. Good and evil are human ideas after all, they are not absolute in their meaning.'

That was a conclusion that he had already reached in his previous life.

However, in his previous world, humans could not escape those rules.

They were bound to the meaning that the few powerful men decided, they were forced to work to buy their freedom, they were puppets in the scary monster that society was.

Noah had lost any attachment to life there, he only wanted to spend the rest of his life in solitude, doing the few things that he liked at his own terms.

In that new world though, humans could rise in the sky and destroy mountains, they could become gods and reach for the stars with just their thoughts.

Noah had finally found something that surpassed any rule or ethic, something above the vague meaning of good and evil, something that made him want to live again.

Yet, humans acted always in the same way.

His cultivation journey was obstructed by his status and by those that wanted to control him, in the eyes of the nobles, he was just a pawn that had to be restricted and used.

'Tell me, my disciple, what can you do against a faster, stronger opponent that you can't outsmart?'

William's words from his first training session resounded in his mind.

Noah had understood the meaning behind that teaching long ago.

The world was unfair.

Giving up on your ambition was the key to survival if you didn't have a lofty status.

'Is that even life? A life of compromises can only lead to a life of regrets. Death does not scare me, what I'm afraid of is living another pitiful life and abandoning the very reason that keeps me alive. I simply can't do that.'

Noah had already reached that conclusion long ago but Phoebe's words had reminded him of those old doubts.

A crawling sound sounded in the room, it seemed that the magical beasts had arrived just as Noah had predicted.

Noah sighed and stood up, he knew that he could not rest anymore.

'There is another answer to his question.'

He smiled a little thinking about his Master back in Balvan mansion.

'If my opponent is faster than me, I will lay a trap and prevent him from escaping; if my opponent is stronger than me, I will escape his grasp until he is exhausted; if my opponent is smarter than me, I will sever his limbs and render him unable to take any action; if he is all three of them...'

A hundred or so magical beasts came out of the tunnels of the room.

That time, there weren't only rank 3 magical beasts but even their weaker versions.

'If he is all three of them, I will become a monster and do all it takes to defeat him.'

#### Chapter 233 - 233. Rescue

In the underground room, puddles of blood were everywhere on the ground.

Noah was sitting among them, quietly cultivating to aid his recovery.

He had just vanquished the assault of the Excavating worms and had used again some of his potions to refill his centers of powers.

'There were rank 1 and 2 specimens this time. I'm getting closer to the leader.'

He thought.

The last ambush featured weaker beasts, which meant that the number of rank 3 specimens had been drastically reduced.

'Maybe this is another trap though, I don't really know how cautious I have to be against something with a Bloodline inheritance.'

The knowledge about that rare case was limited, something like that had happened only a few times for it to be successfully studied.

'I should dump part of the corpses somewhere, I don't really have any use for them. Also, I have four space-rings to inspect. I should probably go deeper in the lair before doing that.'

He had fought twice in that underground room, the traces of battle had become too evident.

He wasn't afraid of the other cultivators in Daniel's group, if he met them, he would simply kill them or lie.

Yet, he was sure that the pack of worms was planning another assault.

'I don't know if the rank 4 creature thinks as a beast or as a human. It's obviously trying to probe me but I don't know if its plan is to exhaust me or something else. I should probably spend a day or two hidden in a small cave to recover with my potions, using the "Breath" blessing now would be too dangerous.'

He had initially thought that the "Breath" blessing was his biggest advantage in that environment but he had to reconsider that idea.

He didn't expect for other cultivators to arrive, using that mineral would expose his position to them and facilitate their regroup.

'The worms aren't a problem but I don't think I can win against two cultivators as strong as that woman, especially if Daniel is one of them.'

The battle against Phoebe made him realize that his real advantage was still his Demonic form.

His technique was slightly superior to hers but he couldn't achieve a fast victory with just his martial art.

He was dealing with nobles older than him after all, they were powerful and well equipped.

'I need to save my mental energy and the liquid "Breath" in my body for the fight against the rank 4 beast. I've already spent too much of the latter.'

The mental energy recovered while the cultivator rested, it wasn't affected by the external environment.

However, the liquid "Breath" in his body depended on his dantian which was struggling to refill itself in the dungeon.

Luckily for Noah, he had a large accumulation of potion and pills which could help in any situation.

'Let's find that cave and rest.'

He thought, enveloping his figure with mental energy and moving toward a deeper part of the lair.

Meanwhile, a young man was running at high speed in one of the tunnels.

He was in a pitiful state: his robe was torn and broken, he was sweating profusely, and some open wound still dripped blood on the ground as he ran.

About forty rank 3 worms were behind him, they were faster than the cultivator, the dungeon was their territory after all.

'Fuck! If only Lord Daniel or Milo were here! Damned beasts, why are they so accurate in their ambushes?!?'

That man was Troy who had been separated from the rest of his group.

He had been lucky, he had managed to enter one of the tunnels as soon as the floor broke, suffering only some minor injury.

Yet, all his stronger companions had fallen deeper in the lair, leaving him alone in the upper parts of the dungeon.

Initially, he had thought about finding a way out and call for help, yet the magical beasts never allowed him to do so.

They began to assault him, never allowing him to rest or recover, forcing him to dive deeper into the lair to escape their attacks.

After almost half a day of continuous fights, Troy was exhausted.

His protective robe had been destroyed, his centers of power were almost empty, and his body alone wasn't enough to deal with those beasts.

Ten or so worms appeared right in front of him, blocking his path.

'Dammit!'

He cursed in his mind and stretched his hand toward the beasts.

A fox made of fire came out of his arm and jumped toward the worms, engulfing their figures in a raging fire that destroyed them immediately.

Troy jumped through the curtains of flames and continued his escape, yet his complexion had worsened even more.

'That was my last spell, I need to find somewhere safe to recover or I will die.'

Troy knew that without the aid of his spells, he would be overwhelmed by the high number of beasts in the pack.

Then, the wall on his side broke and tens of rank 3 worms fell right over his figure.

Troy didn't have time to dodge and was submerged by the tide of magical beasts.

'Is this the end?'

He thought as the worms began to bite his body and tear his flesh.

However, at that moment, wind slashes ran through the room and severed the heads of many worms, killing them on the spot.

Another cultivator appeared, jumping directly in the middle of the group of beasts and sending even more attacks on them.

He wielded two knives that he waved without hesitation, inflicting fatal wounds on each beast.

He walked unmatched among the worms, those rank 3 creatures couldn't even touch him.

"Milo!"

Troy smiled happily seeing that one of his companions had arrived in his help and struggled to defeat the worms that were still attempting to eat him.

Milo arrived in his position and killed the beasts on him before turning and sending tens of wind slashes on the remaining beasts.

In just a few minutes, those forty or so magical beasts had been killed and Troy had been saved.

Chapter 234 - 234. Vance

"Milo, thank you so much!"

Troy struggled to stand up and bowed to his companion as a sign of gratitude.

Milo smiled and shook his head while handing a pill to him.

"This will help to heal your wounds. Focus on recover while I gather the bodies of these worms, we will move as soon as you are better."

Troy took the pill and sat back on the ground.

Milo had a rank 4 body and was older than him, he wouldn't object anything he said.

A few hours passed in which the two nobles quietly cultivated to refill their centers of power.

"Time to go, I'm worried about the others."

Milo ordered and Troy followed without complaints.

"This place is strange, I never knew magical beasts could set so many traps in such a short amount of time."

Troy said, describing the events that led him to that situation.

"It is indeed strange. I was only attacked once and then I didn't find any trace of the magical beasts. They must have been focusing you the whole time since they understood that you are one of the weakest of our group. Luckily, I noticed your spell with my investigative technique, otherwise I would still be wandering aimlessly in one of the tunnels."

Troy lowered his head listening to those words, he couldn't help but feel useless.

Milo put a hand over his shoulder and smiled warmly to him.

"You did well. You are still young but your character is already this strong, I'm sure you'll become a powerful cultivator in the future. If Manuel was in your place, he wouldn't have lasted this much."

Troy nodded at that praise and lifted his head.

"What do we do now?"

Milo smiled again and pointed toward the deeper part of the lair.

"Lord Daniel has surely gone for the core of the lair. I believe that if we follow the movements of the beasts, we will find him."

"What about Phoebe and Manuel?"

"Phoebe is not a problem, she is strong, she can take care of any number of rank 3 beasts. As for Manuel..."

Milo's eyes became cold as he spoke.

"If he dies here, his uselessness will be finally shown to the world."

Troy's expression became complex after hearing those words.

"What is it?"

Milo noticed that change in his companion and asked that.

"Milo, I know that you don't really like him due to the events in the academy-"

"Damn right! He bragged so much about matching Daniel's cultivation speed and then he lost to a brat with common origins. He disgraced the whole noble society with his actions."

Milo snorted, interrupting Troy's phrase.

"I was there, Milo. I was in his class. That guy, Vance, he is a ruthless man. If the Professors didn't intervene during the fight, Manuel would have died there."

"What are you trying to say?"

"I saw him fight every week, Milo. He is honestly the strongest fighter I've ever seen, it was as if he was born with a saber in his hands."

Troy was in the Grayshade class with Noah and June and the real-battle course was one of the most attended ones.

The students there had seen Noah's ability with his weapons, that's why they had never suspected about him having cheated in the entrance test.

"Stronger than Daniel?"

Milo's eyebrows arched as he asked that question.

Yet, Troy immediately shook his head.

"No, no. He is even younger than me, he can't match Lord Daniel's centers of power. I'm just saying, you shouldn't be so hard on Manuel. In that battle, he did his best but Vance has been simply too strong. Also, I think he was even holding back."

"Holding back?"

At that moment, Milo was really surprised.

He despised Manuel for his defeat against a commoner but he had never imagined that the difference in power would have been so large.

"Yes. You probably don't know but it seems that no one is aware of his aptitude. He simply uses his martial art and his puppet every time. I don't believe that, in three years in the academy, he didn't buy a single spell for his element."

Milo fell deep in thought.

He knew some rumors about Noah but they were mostly linked to his battle with Manuel.

Also, Noah was from a younger generation, the heirs of the noble families wouldn't be so interested in someone that young.

"What kind of cultivator is he?"

Milo broke the silence to ask that question.

"Aloof, a true loner. He didn't speak much and he often isolated himself in his lodgings. He seemed to care only about his cultivation and he didn't seem to care about girls until he started to live together with his sparring partner. I have to say that they make a scary couple."

Milo ignored the last part of Troy's explanation and focused on one particular aspect.

"Do you think that it would be worth investing in him?"

Troy was slightly surprised by that question but then he understood what his companion meant.

"Yes, I don't see him becoming weak all of sudden and he would need someone that finances him. I believe we should try to rope him, he will be a huge asset in the Cause."

Milo nodded before turning his gaze toward on side of the tunnel.

"I will consult with Lord Daniel about this, now we should deal with the worms."

As soon as he finished his phrase, many holes appeared in the rocky wall and fifty or so worms came out of them.

There were few rank 3 beasts at that time, with the majority of them being in the second rank.

"It seems that we are getting close!"

Milo shouted.

Meanwhile, in another part of the lair.

Daniel walked calmly in one of the tunnels.

A white orb was on his shoulder which illuminated the area.

Daniel didn't need that light to see but the orb was useful to attract the worms and detect their movements from behind the walls.

'What is this?'

He thought, stopping when he arrived in a large area full of dark-red puddles.

Chapter 235 - 235. Differences

'Someone has fought here and then proceeded deeper into the lair.'

Daniel concluded in his mind after inspecting the underground room.

He did a quick inspection with his mental energy but he didn't find any trace of life.

'Was this the work of the lone cultivator? Or did one of my group clear this area as he continued in the exploration?'

He couldn't be sure of either possibility, the only method to find an answer was to explore the lair.

'I should gather this blood first, it will be useful after a few rounds of purification.'

Daniel went over each puddle and gathered the blood that made them into one big bowl.

After the puddles were emptied, he performed a technique and stretched his hands over the dark-red liquid inside the bowl.

His hands shone and emitted a specific radiation that heated all the impurities inside the blood of the magical beasts.

Gray smoke came out from the bowl and the blood slowly lost its dark shades, turning vivid red.

'Now this can be used.'

Daniel thought, stopping the technique and putting the bowl inside his space-ring.

The technique he had just used wasn't difficult but it required a long time to completely purify a material, a few hours had to pass for Daniel to complete the process.

His eyes then swept the various tunnels leading downward.

There were many of them, some bigger than others, yet they all had some sort of glowing halo at their ends.

'That light should come from the Obsidian Credits that have already formed, I can't estimate their actual value from here. Well, even if the Elbas family doesn't openly say it, they are their proprieties.'

Daniel not only had a wide knowledge about most of the cultivation topic, but he was also adept at politics and social behaviors.

The Udye family was a large-size noble family, Daniel had received the best teachings since he became able to speak.

Also, when his aptitude was discovered, his family didn't hesitate to invest most of its wealth to invite private teachers to further enhance his knowledge.

An heir born with one of the rarest aptitudes was a joyful event, any noble family wouldn't mind contracting heavy debts to nurture such a promising cultivator.

After all, how many humans could enter the cultivation world?

Only soldiers and nobles were given access to methods that enabled them to cultivate, the others could just dream about becoming cultivators.

However, the soldiers weren't trusted, a cultivator with a rare element but without noble blood was seen as a threat that had to be controlled.

When the coincidences piled up and a noble with a rare element was born, the family to whom he belonged would invest a large amount of wealth to ensure his future success.

That's why Daniel managed to link the pale halo to the fully formed Credits when Noah didn't.

Their life had simply been too different.

Daniel was blessed with wealth and a rare aptitude, his family had imposed its strict teaching on him, which had given him a great amount of knowledge on every aspect of the world.

Noah, on the opposite, had a low status and his rare aptitude had always been seen as a threat.

Also, his personality was quite extreme, which made him disregard even the common knowledge of that world to focus completely on the topics he was interested on.

Aside from fighting and cultivating, his studies only concerned the magical beasts, it was no wonder that he couldn't link that halo to the fully formed Credits.

'The larger tunnels won't restrict my movements and will allow me to detect any threat before it's too late. I should also take it slowly, this is a danger zone after all.'

Daniel decided in his mind and carefully walked toward the largest cave, not knowing that, inside one of the other narrow passages, Noah was silently doing his best to refill his centers of powers.

Noah's reasoning had been different in the selection of the tunnel.

'A larger area will just facilitate the ambushes of the worms. The leader of the pack has a Bloodline inheritance, it knows how the humans act, there is a high chance that the large passages are watched.'

Those had been his thoughts when he decided to hide in that narrow cavity.

And, because of that, Noah and Daniel didn't meet at that moment.

Time passed slowly.

The three cultivators in the Bare Dungeon did their best to reach the deepest part of the lair, yet they moved slowly, wary of the attacks of the worms.

Only Noah stood completely still in that period.

His potions were slowly showing their effects and he was steadily returning to his peak form.

It had to pass a day and a half for Noah to interrupt his cultivation and continue in his exploration.

'These walls are a hindrance, I can't understand if there have been new attacks on Daniel's group while I was recovering.'

Noah thought as he stood up and turned toward the pale halo in the distance.

'I don't even know if they have surpassed my position or if they are still behind me. There are three cultivators left and one of them is Daniel, the situation doesn't look good.'

Noah's plan was to slowly kill all the weaker beasts in the pack to have a one versus one against the rank 4 leader.

However, that strategy couldn't be applied anymore since he discovered the presence of Daniel's group.

Not only the magical beasts would be spread inside the lair because of them, but he also didn't know what their reactions would be once he was discovered.

'The best-case scenario is that I find the rank 4 creature, manage to kill it, and run away without being found out; the worst one is that I can't kill the leader, they find me, and they blame me for the deaths of their companions. We might end up cooperating if the situation requires it but I need to link Phoebe and Manuel to the beasts.'

Noah thought for a while before finding a plan that suited him.

'I need to find the leader first.'

#### Chapter 236 - 236. Evidence

Killing a rank 4 magical beasts all by himself was a hard task.

Noah's dantian was still in the gaseous stage, it couldn't inflict heavy damages on creatures in the fourth rank and the "Breath" inside it wasn't enough to completely exhaust the beast.

Yet, Noah had the Demonic form spell which dealt damage over time and increased his physical capabilities.

That, added to the ability of his Yin body, gave him some sort of confidence in his battle prowess. Also, the fact that the Excavating worms were generally considered weak beasts further raised his hopes.

However, Daniel's group had changed the situation.

Noah couldn't use his large stash of potions or his "Breath" blessing to engage in a protracted battle with the leader, he would just attract the attention of the other cultivators in the lair.

That's why he decided that he had to be the first to meet the rank 4 worm.

'I need to accurately determine the strength of the leader and plant some evidence near it. Luckily, I have everything I need for that.'

If his strength wasn't enough to kill the worm, he needed to cooperate with the other three cultivators, Noah wouldn't just give up the Bloodline inheritance because the situation didn't favor him.

Noah began to run.

Echo's head came out from the back of his neck to better inspect the area behind him and it used its scanning ability continuously, sending vague images of the area to Noah.

Noah also raised his concentration to the peak, he couldn't allow being caught unprepared in that situation.

He was fast, he crossed tunnels in a few seconds and directly flew down the vertical ones that he found.

His advance was much faster than the other cultivators in the other parts of the lair.

'The halo is becoming clearer.'

His target was, of course, the pale light coming from the bottom of those caves.

The light became stronger until he could finally understand what caused it.

Noah was in a narrow tunnel when he noticed a shiny crystal emitting the same light that came from the deeper parts of the lair.

'That's an Obsidian Credit! Of course! The halo must be radiated by a large accumulation of fully formed Credits!'

Noah realized and didn't hesitate to dig out the crystal from the wall.

It wasn't circular like the currency used by the cultivators, its shape was uneven and sharp, yet it was still a Credit!

'This should be enough to create two hundred Credits, I believe that its value is a bit lower though since it has to be shaped correctly.'

Noah continued in his march and dug out each crystal that he found.

He knew that those minerals belonged to the Royal family but he simply couldn't care less.

'If they really wanted me to refrain from taking them, I'm sure that Thaddeus would have told me that.'

His relationship with the Royal family had always been complex and it was founded on benefits.

Noah believed that since no one prohibited him from taking the Credits, he could freely gather them.

As he went deeper, the tunnels began to lose their rocky composition and turned into proper passages made of shiny crystals.

'This is quite a sight.'

Noah thought as he stabbed his hands in the walls, digging out entire chunks of Credits.

He didn't have effective methods to gather all that wealth so he simply took handfuls of crystals whenever he had the chance.

He also didn't want to slow his advance, that's why he limited himself to those random chunks.

The tunnel led downward and Noah jumped over, smoothly landing in a large shiny area with the help of his wings.

'Is this the center of the lair?'

The room was almost transparent since it was entirely made of Credits, which allowed Noah to see the layout of the lair even from behind the walls.

'There aren't any more tunnels leading downward, it seems that I've reached the deepest area.'

CRUNCH CRUNCH

A low noise arrived at Noah's ears which made him turn abruptly toward one side of the room.

There, he saw a giant Excavating worm calmly eating the crystals of the room.

The Obsidian Credits were a hard mineral but they didn't seem to hinder the worm's meal in the slightest.

'Found you.'

Noah smiled at that sight.

The worm finally noticed something and interrupted its meal to turn toward the unexpected presence.

When it realized that it was a human, it released a low screech and straightened its body, using its lower body to stand vertically in the room.

Only then Noah could make out its exact features.

'Six meters long and one and a half meters thick. Its skin is completely red, probably due to the large number of Credits eaten over the years, and it is strangely silent, which should be caused by its intelligence. This is definitely the rank 4 specimen.'

The leader of the pack stood still, quietly observing the cultivator in front of it.

'Is it studying me? I bet it's surprised that I managed to arrive here without being noticed by the pack.'

Noah had hidden his presence for more than a day, forcing the weaker beasts to focus on the other three cultivators.

Then, he ran at full speed toward the bottom of the lair, the pack simply didn't have time to notice him.

'I should make my move now.'

Noah slowly waved his hand and took out hundreds of items from his space-rings.

The corpses of the worms that he had accumulated since he entered in the Bare Dungeon were casually laid on the transparent ground, tainting its brilliance with the remaining blood in them.

Also, Noah took out Phoebe's spear and Manuel's sword and threw them in two opposite sides of the room.

The weapons rolled casually on the ground, showing their dented shapes under the light of the terrain.

Of course, Noah had created some fake marks on those weapons in order to fool future investigations.

From those dents, it wasn't clear if the two cultivators had fought against a human or a magical beast.

The leader became enraged and released a loud cry that resounded through all the room and echoed in the various passages.

The battle had started.

Chapter 237 - 237. Metal spring

'Its cry is different from the other worms.'

Noah judged in his mind as he saw the rank 4 creature jumping on him.

Two sabers appeared in his hands as he prepared himself for the imminent collision.

'There seem to be some emotions behind it.'

After that last thought, Noah shut his mind and focused completely on the battle.

The Excavating worms didn't have any special attack or peculiar ability, they only relied on their bodies to fight.

Their strongest part was the mouth where the circular rows of teeth were, that's why they usually pounced directly on their prey.

The worm in front of Noah wasn't an exception, it performed a jump of over twenty meters before hitting the exact spot where Noah was.

Noah stood still, enduring the might of the beast without the usage of martial arts or spells.

THUD!

The power of the leader was too much for him to handle and he was flung away, slamming on the crystalline wall.

Noah felt pain in his arms and even his back seemed to have suffered some slight injury.

However, his expression was one of joy and excitement.

'I can fight it!'

Until that moment, he still had his doubts about the actual strength of his body.

No matter how many rank 3 beasts he had fought, he still wasn't completely confident in his abilities.

Yet, after successfully surviving the attack of a rank 4 creature and suffering only some minor injury, he was finally able to assess his strength.

He could finally battle a beast in the heroic ranks, that thought made him incredibly thrilled.

Noah landed on the ground and unfolded his wings.

The injury on his back had already begun to heal and it wasn't a hindrance to the battle, he was ready to fight back!

Noah shot toward the worm, executing the First form of the Ashura at full strength.

In the eyes of the beast, the human became immediately more dangerous!

More than twenty ethereal sabers were created around him which assaulted the worm without hesitation.

The sabers slashed the worm all over its body, leaving superficial wounds whenever they managed to hit it.

Yet, the worm didn't retreat nor did it instantly attack, it waited patiently, fixing its gaze on the human at the center of the storm of blades.

Then, it suddenly attacked!

The worm was using its superior body to endure Noah's attacks and kill him!

'Fuck!'

Noah cursed in his mind and redirected most of the ethereal sabers in front of him to slow the leader's offensive.

Wounds appeared everywhere near the worm's mouth who continued in its attack, hitting Noah's true blades.

THUD!

Noah was once again flung away by the impressive strength of the rank 4 creature.

'It didn't panic and waited for the right moment to exploit the weakness of the First form, impressive.'

Noah analyzed in his mind.

The First form of the Ashura was able to multiply his attacks even if in a slightly weaker version, yet they were useless if they couldn't manage to heavily hurt the enemy.

The opponent could simply jump straight in the middle of the blades and focus the cultivator that created them.

'I never thought that it could discover the weak point so quickly, a beast with a Bloodline inheritance sure is scary.'

The rank 4 creature waited for Noah to attack again, it stood still among the corpses of the beasts in its pack, warily inspecting him.

'It doesn't even have the usual recklessness of the other magical beasts, I bet that it's waiting for its remaining pack to arrive, the battle cry from before must have had that meaning.'

Noah was a bit hesitant.

The strength of the leader was fearsome but he had yet to reveal his strongest attacks.

However, if he exhausted his energy and didn't manage to kill it before the weaker beasts arrived, the situation would become dangerous.

'What a careful worm you are.'

Noah mocked the beast in his mind as he assaulted it again.

That time, the leader didn't wait for the sabers to multiply and stab its body, it retracted its upper body inside itself and then it shot at an incredible speed toward Noah.

'Has it imitated a metal spring!?'

Noah felt an intense sense of danger coming from the nearing beast which made him resolutely activate the ability of his body.

His veins bulged and turned black, momentarily empowering its physical abilities.

The leader was too fast, it clashed with Noah's sabers before he could even activate the First form of the Ashura, only his two pairs of ethereal arms aided his material weapons in defending from the beast's attacks.

THUUUD!

Noah felt an unstoppable strength crashing on his arms and throwing him away.

He crashed on the walls for the third time, digging into the crystalline surface until the power of the attack was dissipated.

Noah felt his bones cracking while part of the skin on his back had been torn, the leader had managed to inflict some serious damage at that time.

However, the liquid "Breath" in his veins was already aiding his recovery, fixing the small cracks on his bones and repairing the torn muscles.

'This thing has invented a technique!'

Inside Noah's mind, there were no traces of wavering due to the pain but only amazement due to what he had witnessed.

'This beast has actually managed to exploit the proprieties of its body to create an attack that surpasses its limits!'

The body of the Excavating worms was soft, it could be compressed and stretched easily, that's why it didn't have much value as a material for the creation of weapons.

Yet, the creature with the Bloodline inheritance had managed to use that quality to increase the power of its assaults.

Compressing itself before pouncing an enemy largely increased the power behind its attack, just like a metal spring.

'Such a weak type of beast can achieve something like this with a bit of intelligence. The bodies of the magical beasts are indeed on another level.'

Noah finally gave up on trying to fight the leader without using any spell and prepared himself to exit the cavity that his last impact with the wall had created.

However, at that moment, a voice sounded above him.

"Vance, is that you?"

Chapter 238 - 238. Together

Turning back time a little.

Troy and Milo were nearing the crystalline part of the lair.

However, their journey wasn't nearly as peaceful as Noah's.

They had been ambushed many times by swarms of Excavating worms, yet the number of rank 3 specimens seemed to decrease every time.

"I believe that the pack is becoming short of strong magical beasts."

Milo said with a satisfied smile as he collected the corpses of the beasts around him.

"Which means that we are getting closer to the leader."

Troy added.

The Bare Dungeon was publicly a danger zone, everyone knew that a rank 4 creature was laying somewhere.

"Yes, we are. The fully formed Credits are taking the place of the non-formed ones, the central part of the lair starts now."

Milo spoke with a bit of hesitation in his voice.

The threat of a rank 4 magical beast was not to be underestimated.

Milo had a rank 4 body but his dantian was only in the gaseous stage while Troy had a rank 3 body, he was completely useless against a beast in the heroic ranks.

"Do we advance?"

Troy's question was on point.

They had to decide if it was worth exploring further, they wouldn't want to risk their lives for a mission of the alchemy department.

"The question is: will you follow me?"

A voice sounded from behind them which made them turn abruptly.

However, when they saw the golden hair of the young man and his warm smile, they smiled happily and cheered loudly.

"Daniel! You are safe!"

Milo exclaimed, hugging Daniel happily.

Troy was a bit taken aback by that affectionate gesture but he decided to limit himself to a bow and a greeting.

"Lord Daniel, I'm glad to see that you are fine."

Daniel chuckled and freed himself from Milo's embrace while stopping Troy's bow.

"No need for such formalities. You have risked your life for the sake of my mission, there is no need to add "Lord" to my name."

Troy raised his head before bowing again, he really couldn't muster the will to drop such basic formalities.

Milo laughed and patted his lowered head.

"Troy, you have always seen Daniel as a lofty character but, in reality, he is quite simple. He just likes to cultivate and hang out with friends, so you can just address him as Daniel when we are in private."

"You know that I will probably be the leader leading the Cause in the future?"

"That's why I need to make fun of you right now! I won't have the chance in the future."

Troy watched with wide eyes the playful exchange of words of the two nobles and the tension accumulated in the few days spent in the dungeon lessened a bit.

"Any sign of Phoebe and Manuel?"

However, they were still in a danger zone, they didn't have much time to waste.

Milo shook his head at Daniel's question and the mood of the three cultivators turned sour.

"I will go deeper to find some clues about them. You can just find a way back and call for help, I don't want to endanger you more than I've already done."

Milo shook his head again and laid his knives on his shoulders.

"I won't let you go alone against a rank 4 beast, if something has happened to Phoebe, we will make it pay."

Daniel nodded and turned toward Troy.

As he was about to open his mouth though, Troy spoke with a resolute voice.

"D-Daniel! I can take care of the remains of the pack while you deal with the leader! You are far stronger than me but you will still need help against a rank 4 beast."

Daniel saw the unshakable determination in his eyes and sighed before showing a warm smile to his two companions.

"Then it's set, let's save our friends."

They moved quickly, passing tunnels over tunnels until they arrived at the part of the lair completely made of crystalline Credits.

Then, a loud cry echoed in the passage, which made them stop abruptly in place.

"What was that?"

"Someone must be fighting the leader! We should hurry!"

Daniel answered Troy's question and took the vanguard position in his march toward the bottom of the lair.

Thuds and crashes echoed in the tunnel as they moved, telling the story of a battle happening right below them.

Then, they saw the deepest area.

It was a large underground room made of transparent crystals.

Tens of worm's corpses were laid on the ground and a massive red worm stood proudly at the center of the room, staring at a fixed point on a wall in front of it.

The three cultivators followed the worm's line of sight and saw that, in one of the cavities below them, a cultivator was kneeling with his guard raised.

The tunnels were all transparent in that area, it wasn't hard to discern the cultivator's features from behind a wall.

He had long black hair tied together in a casual manner, he was dressed in a tight black robe with its upper part torn in many spots and wielded firmly two white sabers that he pointed straight at the worm in front of him.

Troy couldn't help but link that figure to his fellow student and he instinctively spoke to him.

"Vance, is that you?"

Noah turned his head and looked at the three cultivators standing in a tunnel above him.

'They have finally arrived, I was about to go all out.'

He didn't speak but simply stared at them for a short moment before turning his attention back on the rank 4 creature.

He didn't want to suffer from a surprise attack of the worm after all.

"Daniel, look there."

However, Milo's attention was caught by something else.

He pointed toward a spear and a sword lying among the corpses of the magical beasts in order for Daniel to see them.

Daniel recognized those weapons and turned abruptly toward Noah.

"What happened here?"

His voice had a tinge of anger in it as he asked that question.

Noah simply shrugged his shoulders and replied in a plain voice.

"Don't know, everything was like this when I arrived."

Chapter 239 - 239. Light

There were a few seconds of silence in the underground room.

The rank 4 worm was in the middle of the room, warily watching the four humans in front of it.

Noah had his eyes on the beast, he was doing his best to recover from the previous injuries, expending the liquid "Breath" in his body to do so.

Daniel, Milo, and Troy alternated their gazes between the worm and the weapons on the ground, they seemed to be struggling internally about what to do next.

"What are you doing here?"

Daniel broke the silence to ask Noah a question.

"I am a hunter, I hunt. What about you all?"

"I have a mission from the academy. Why is it not attacking?"

"It's probably waiting for the whole pack to converge here instead of fighting when outnumbered. This beast is quite smart."

Noah didn't mind revealing some partial pieces of information.

'The less they think about it, the more they will consider it as a smart beast rather than one with a Bloodline inheritance.'

Noah was being as careful as he could about that quality.

However, he was overthinking.

The appearance of a Bloodline inheritance was an event so unusual that most cultivators wouldn't even consider it, many didn't even know about the existence of something like that.

Also, Daniel's group was too focused on their dead companions to evaluate the intelligence of the beast.

Crawling sounds began to resound in the area which made the cultivators turn their heads to find the source of that noise.

Many Excavating worms in the human ranks could be seen nearing their position from every direction, the walls were transparent after all, it wasn't hard to notice hundreds of magical beasts coming to them.

'Will they run away or will they fight?'

Noah was waiting for their reaction to decide his next move.

He wasn't afraid of the swarm of magical beasts, they were weak after all, only a small part of them was in the third rank.

However, the rank 4 worm has revealed itself quite challenging, Noah didn't have the slightest confidence in killing it, and that without adding the hindrance of the weaker beasts.

Noah had chosen to fight it because of its supposedly weak battle prowess but the reality was different.

'I need their help to kill it, I just need to wait for the right opportunity in order to have some claims on its body.'

"Vance, can you fight?"

Daniel spoke again to Noah.

"Yes, but I need some time to recover."

Noah answered as his eyes shone with a cold light, everything seemed to work as he had planned.

Also, due to the situation, it seemed that Daniel's group still hadn't realized that he had clashed with a rank 4 creature and was still alive.

'I will probably be forced to reveal the power of my body though. I don't know Daniel's actual strength but it can't be that far from mine and Troy surely doesn't have a rank 4 body. I guess it will be up to the other noble to make up for the difference in power. Yet, I don't know if that will be enough.'

Noah had seen many rank 4 beasts die thanks to his hunting group.

They were fearsome creatures, having a seemingly endless endurance.

It took careful planning and the joint efforts of six cultivators with a rank 4 body to safely kill one, while they were short both in numbers and strength in that situation.

Daniel nodded to his companions and jumped in the area where the leader was, Milo and Troy followed behind.

"Milo and I will fight the leader. Troy, you take care of the pack until Vance can come in your aid. Our power is not much but the Excavating worms are weak, we might have a chance to avenge our friends if we fight together."

Daniel ordered and wielded his sword, Milo stood at his side and put himself in guard.

Troy gulped and turned himself to face the incoming pack of worms, his seniors needed to focus completely on their battle, he had to prevent any beast from interfering with them.

The leader stood still, its pack was arriving and the superficial wounds that Noah inflicted had healed by then, it was back at full power.

Also, all the intruders had gathered in one place, it was the perfect moment to use the full power of its pack.

Then, the battle began.

Milo slashed the air with his knives, creating fast and precise wind slashes that flew directly on the head of the leader.

'That's the rank 4 Nails of the Kamaitachi!'

Noah recognized the martial art from his safe position, he was staring attentively at the battle to decide if they had any chance of defeating the beast.

Daniel executed some complex forms with his sword which shone with a white light that created sharp lines in the air.

He then stopped and slashed one last time to launch those lines toward the leader.

Transparent wind slashes and white lines crashed on the body of the rank 4 worm, inflicting many superficial wounds through all its body.

The damage they were capable of matched Noah's one.

"I need to use my spells if we really want to kill it."

Daniel said.

Milo was still a rank 1 mage, his spells could only match the might of his martial art or being slightly weaker, it wasn't worth wasting mental energy for them.

Milo understood the meaning behind his words and went in the vanguard position, launching even more wind slashes toward the leader.

However, the rank 4 worm was done waiting.

Once it tested the power of its opponents, he compressed its body like a metal spring and shot toward them at an incredible speed.

Milo's eyes widened seeing his attacks being destroyed by the worm's assault as it jumped in his direction.

Yet, as the two were about to clash, a ball made of white light appeared between them.

The ball then exploded, releasing a shockwave that sent back the worm for a few meters and created many deep but small wounds all over its body.

Milo, on the contrary, was unharmed and turned himself to look at the cultivator behind him.

Daniel smiled at him as he ate a pill to hasten the production of his mental energy.

## Chapter 240 - 240. Silhouette

The effects of the spell Daniel had just used were amazing.

Not only was it able to stop the leader's charge, but it was also able to inflict some real damage to it.

'Not as destructive as my Demonic form but it is able to distinguish allies from foes and it doesn't seem to consume nearly as much mental energy, really a spell worthy of the light element. Also, Daniel has become a rank 2 mage, he sure is the leader of his generation.'

Noah judged from his position inside the wall.

'Yet, not even ten of them are enough to take down the leader.'

The rank 4 worm recovered immediately from the impact and pounced again the two nobles.

That time though, it aimed for Daniel.

Daniel didn't hesitate and launched another white ball which stopped again the charge of the leader with its explosion.

"I'll refill my mental energy with my pills, let's attack it while it's busy recovering from the blasts!"

Daniel ordered, creating many white lines that crashed on the rank 4 worm.

Milo did the same, launching more wind slashes on the beast.

The leader of the Excavating worms suffered more injuries and tried again to charge toward the cultivators but another ball of light sent it back, unable to react to the other series of attacks that crashed on its body.

The morale of the two nobles rose as they continued to use that tactic, yet, after more than six spells were used, the weakness of that strategy was shown to them.

The leader was covered in injuries but they were mostly superficial and shallow, not one of those created with their martial arts had ever surpassed the layer of muscles under its skin.

Only Daniel's spell was somewhat able to leave some lasting wounds but even those were simply small cuts compared to the surface of the beast's body.

It was clear that they had to change strategy.

Daniel had traces of sweat on his forehead but he didn't hesitate to use a different spell after the eighth ball of light exploded.

He closed his eyes and a pale light enveloped his figure.

The light became denser, hiding his features and almost blinding everyone in the room.

Then, the light separated from his body, creating a shining silhouette that stood still in front of him.

"I can only use this one after accumulating the sunrays for an entire day. I'm afraid we might consider escaping if even this spell doesn't work."

"What should I do?"

Milo asked after launching another series of attack toward the leader.

"Stab your weapons in the light, it will empower your knives but you'll be forced to fight in close combat to see its effects. I'll handle the rest."

Milo nodded and immersed his knives in the silhouette of light before shooting toward the recovering worm.

The leader had understood that something had changed so it used that time to focus on healing.

It didn't need to personally deal with the two cultivators, it only had to use the superiority of its body to slowly exhaust them.

Also, its pack had arrived by then.

Hundreds of Excavating worms in the human ranks came out of the various tunnels of the room.

They directly pounced at every human they saw, their orders were clear.

Worms began to rain in the underground room, momentarily halting Milo and Daniel's assault.

Troy knew that it was his time to act.

He created two foxes made of fire that ran on the ceiling of the room, spreading their destructiveness on the exit of each tunnel.

Tens of worms died in one instant, the spells of a rank 1 mage were more than enough to handle those weak beasts.

However, more worms kept coming, and the fire-foxes were slowly consumed to handle them.

Troy had already a potion in his hands which he gulped before creating two more foxes.

'This spell is strong! The foxes can be moved at will and they will keep burning everything in their path until they exhaust the fire. I believe that's one of the strongest spells of the fire element!'

Noah's judgment wasn't that far off from the truth.

Troy's spell was powerful, his family had expended a large sum of money to purchase it from the academy.

The only problem was that Troy's sea of consciousness was still in the first rank: not only couldn't it handle a protracted usage of that spell but even the effects of the spell itself were limited to the human ranks.

However, Daniel and Milo were reassured seeing their companion taking care of the pack and resumed their assault on the leader.

The shallow injuries that they had previously inflicted on it had already healed in that short break, only the small ones caused by Daniel's spells were still visible on its body.

Milo jumped on the leader, his knives shone with a white light.

The rank 4 creature compressed itself and pounced Daniel, uncaring of the other human that was coming at him.

However, Milo's attack revealed itself quite more dangerous than it had expected.

Milo performed fast movements, his weapons almost disappeared as he slashed the body of the leader.

His martial art emphasized speed and precision after all, his attacks were extremely fast!

The knives stabbed the worm's skin and pierced its muscles, stopping only when they touched its bones.

Also, the light on the knives dispersed inside its body, burning everything in its path before being consumed.

The leader released a loud screech but it could not stop its momentum, clashing with the white silhouette that Daniel had promptly moved in front of him.

Daniel's spell held on, it blocked the worm's charge and burned the flesh that touched it, making the worm release another loud cry.

Then, Daniel slashed with his sword.

His weapon passed through the silhouette and covered itself in the light before inflicting a deep cut on the leader.

The rank 4 creature was forced to retreat, the power of Daniel's new spell had surpassed all its expectations and it needed to plan another approach.

It was at that moment that it noticed that the light inside the silhouette had dimmed greatly.