

Chapter 241 - 241. Enough

The silhouette of light was an extremely powerful spell that required the accumulation of sunrays to be used.

It was very ductile, useful both in attack and defense.

However, the more its light was used, the faster it would be expended.

The spell had blocked one attack from the rank 4 creature and empowered two attacks of the nobles, a large quantity of light had already been expended.

'Not even that would be enough.'

Noah understood the endurance of a rank 4 magical beast better than anyone in the room.

'Those injuries would have at least hindered its movements if it was a beast with limbs. Yet, it's a worm-type creature, a few deep wounds aren't enough to take it down.'

The leader of the worms was hesitant.

It was trying to find the weak point of the strategy of the nobles to decide its next move but all it could think of was to slowly exhaust the cultivators until some of them committed a mistake.

It was at that moment though that a cry for help resounded in the room.

"They are too many, I can't stop all of them!"

Troy shouted, gasping for air as he swung his sword to kill the beasts that were surrounding him.

Seven of his foxes made of fire had been exhausted and his potions could not keep up with the expenditure of mental energy, all he could do was resort to his martial art to slow the advance of the pack.

The beasts around him were not strong, most of them were in the first or second rank, however, they amounted to more than one thousand, they were slowly overwhelming Troy with their sheer numbers.

That was exactly the situation that Noah was trying to avoid by hunting the weaker beasts before he discovered that Daniel's group was in the dungeon.

A thousand mosquitos could take down a bear, there was no reason why those worms couldn't do the same.

The rank 4 leader found the opportunity that it was waiting for and pounced toward Troy, forcing Daniel to interrupt its charge again with the silhouette of light.

BOOOM!

Another loud crash resounded but, that time, the leader was ready for the impact and held its terrain, continuing to push on the silhouette and enduring the pain caused by the burning light.

"It's trying to reach Troy! Milo, we must take it down!"

Daniel shouted but Milo was a bit hesitant.

He watched as the light of Daniel's spell dimmed every time the leader pushed with more strength, he knew that it wouldn't take much for the spell to fade.

"We should run."

Milo spoke in a soft voice but Daniel heard it clearly and stopped in place.

He gave another look at the battlefield, understanding Milo's point of view.

He had used his strongest spells and had cooperated with Milo but all they managed to obtain were a few deep cuts on the leader's body, they would need at least twenty of them to really hope killing it.

Yet, time was not on their side.

Troy was being overwhelmed by the weaker beasts and more worms kept on coming from the tunnels, the entire underground area would be filled with magical beasts soon.

'If we escape now, we can make a way through the weak worms and aim for the surface, hoping that our speed is faster than the leader. However, if we keep on fighting, our escape routes will be closed and Troy would be endangered. What should we do? I have a spell that I'm sure will allow us to win but it takes a lot to prepare...'

Many thoughts ran through his mind but he couldn't decide which one was the best solution.

'If I let this go, my status will be heavily impacted, two heirs have died because of me after all. What should we do? If only Milo could buy me some time...'

Then, realization dawned on him and he turned his head toward the cultivator that was quietly resting inside a cavity on the wall.

'There was only the rank 4 beast when we arrived, that would mean that his injuries were caused by a fight with it! He has a rank 4 body!'

Daniel stared at Noah in amazement.

'He has finally realized it.'

Noah smiled at that gaze but his thoughts were elsewhere.

'We can't kill it if that's the best they can do. I should better escape now.'

Daniel continued to stare at him and was even more surprised when he found out that he could not clearly feel his presence!

'Is his sea of consciousness on my same level? Is it stronger?'

Daniel couldn't believe what he was seeing but the situation forced him to take action.

"Vance, can you work with Milo and keep the leader occupied for one part of incense?"

The nobles were confused, they didn't understand why Daniel would ask Noah to face a rank 4 creature for one entire minute.

However, Daniel continued to speak.

"I have a spell that I'm sure will sever its body in half but I need sixty breaths of time to prepare it. Will you help me?"

Noah stared at Daniel with uncertainty.

'Is he serious? A spell in the second rank that can kill a beast in the heroic ranks?'

He didn't know if he could believe such a claim.

'It might be possible, one minute of preparation is a long time. Yet, it could be said the same about holding the leader back, I can't do it with just my martial art.'

The leader kept pressing the blockage made of light and Troy did his best to kill the worms around him but he was slowly losing his ground, the clock was ticking.

'How badly do I want the Bloodline inheritance?'

Noah had to decide between an immediate improvement of his mental sphere and revealing his strength.

'This might also be the best situation for that...I guess I've had enough of hiding.'

"I want the head of the rank 4."

Noah spoke, jumping off the cavity and landing on the crystalline ground.

Chapter 242 - 242. Fusion

"What does he mean by that? What is happening?"

Milo was confused by the exchange of words between Daniel and Noah.

The weaker beasts had arrived in his position and he was swinging his knives to fend them off but he still had the time to ask that question.

"Deal."

Daniel didn't bother answering Milo but limited himself to give his approval to Noah.

Noah nodded and jumped toward Troy unleashing the full power of the First form of the Ashura.

A large part of his liquid "Breath" had been expended but his body had completely recovered thanks to that.

Twenty ethereal sabers swept the battlefield, sometimes launching wind slashes, sometimes directly beheading the worms.

In a few seconds, Troy's encirclement was broken, Noah had successfully cleared the area around him.

"Go back there and focus on protecting Daniel, I'll take it from here."

Troy and Milo were stupefied by the speed in which Noah killed all the beasts and Troy instinctively felt that he had to follow his orders.

Daniel nodded at Noah and followed Troy to the back of the underground area, only Noah and Milo remained on the battlefield.

"You go there too."

"What!?"

Milo, Daniel, and Troy asked at the same time.

"I can't really fight with other people but if you really want to stay, you do that at your own risk."

Noah plainly answered and took off his upper clothes, he was ready to go all out!

Echo and Shadow came out of his body and stared fiercely at the rank 4 worm that was still trying to break the blockage of light.

Then, Noah's veins bulged and became black which made them completely visible from over his white skin.

Lastly, black smoke came out of his figure and slowly covered his entire body, spreading itself to his two blood companions.

Milo's pupils constricted due to the sense of danger that he felt coming from Noah and he instinctively retreated where Troy and Daniel were staying.

The three nobles watched with an incredulous expression as Noah transformed into a fiend.

The Demonic form had been activated.

Daniel was the first to understand what was happening due to the repulsive emotions that he felt watching the execution of that spell.

"It can't be, his aptitude is darkness!"

He couldn't help but give voice to his thoughts.

Troy and Milo's eyes widened even more and finally realized the source of that dangerous feeling.

Vance, the strongest student of the academy of his generation, was a cultivator of the darkness element with centers of power that matched Daniel's ones!

"That, how? He is too young!"

Troy said with unwillingness.

He was one year older than Noah but he had been in his same class for more than two years.

He could accept that Noah was a battle genius and that his talent in the martial arts was unparalleled among his peers.

Yet, he really couldn't understand how he improved so fast!

The centers of power required time and resources, he had plenty of them as a noble!

However, all his efforts and status paled compared to the young man in front of him.

Noah turned toward the three nobles and spoke in the usual guttural voice that he had when he entered the complete Demonic form.

"Sixty breaths, not one more."

Milo and Troy gulped at that scene but Daniel resolutely nodded and sat on the ground, he was going to focus completely on the preparations of his final spell.

More worms rained from the ceiling and tried to attack the four cultivators.

Nevertheless, Milo and Troy were enough to block their assault,

As for those that aimed for Noah, they were consumed as soon as they came in contact with the black smoke.

A screech resounded in the underground area which made Noah focus on his opponent, the leader of the worms had finally destroyed Daniel's spell!

'It's not weakened by its recent injuries, this will be tough.'

Noah judged seeing the leader inspecting him.

'I really hope that Daniel's spell can kill it, I'd hate to have gone to such length only to lose the Bloodline inheritance. I'll have to rely on the shard in the worst-case scenario.'

His mind was set so he didn't hesitate to jump on the beast.

Twenty fuming ethereal sabers were created in the air around him as he charged and his two blood companions followed closely on his sides.

The leader of the worms recognized that technique and used the previous tactic to break it.

The beast shot like a bullet in the air and crashed on Noah's body, uncaring of the blades that landed on its body.

However, this time, Noah's attacks were empowered by his spell and the black smoke that they released was extremely corrosive.

The sabers pierced its skin and stabbed themselves deeply between its muscles where they released even more smoke from inside its body.

Noah was flung away due to the impact but the rank 4 creature was forced to stop its charge to fight back the smoke that was corroding its insides.

Meanwhile, Echo and Shadow assaulted it to prevent it from attacking and recovering.

Echo was unable to inflict any damage and could only increase the quantity of smoke around the leader but Shadow's fangs managed to pierce its skin!

'Fusing the Elemental forging method with the Body-inscription spell was indeed the right choice!'

Noah was satisfied by Shadow's battle prowess and he struggled to stand up.

The last clash had destroyed the protective membrane of his spell and even dislocated his shoulder, the sheer power of the leader was incredible.

CRACK!

Noah adjusted his shoulder and relied on the healing proprieties of his body to fix it, in a few seconds, he was back at full strength and the smoke reformed around the uncovered part.

'I can't endure this kind of damage for one entire minute.'

He thought, slowly approaching the leader that was continuously destroying his blood companions only to see them immediately reform.

Noah waved his sabers.

Those movements seemed slow, they created some slight distortions in the air where they passed.

Then, his weapons began to treble, increasing the distortions around them.

Noah felt an incredible pressure weighing on his arms and shoulders but his body was strong enough to endure it.

The leader was enraged, it turned its attention toward Noah and pounced at him again.

Noah's six arms combined together, joining the six sabers to form a single one.

As the worm was about to clash with him, Noah performed a downward vertical slash that precisely hit the head of the worm.

To the surprise of everyone in the room, Noah and the worm were both sent back by a few meters.

'Second form of the Ashura: Fusion.'

If the First form of the Ashura multiplied Noah's attacks and allowed him to fight when outnumbered, the Second form condensed those ethereal sabers into his six arms, vastly increasing their power.

As for why Noah couldn't use it until that moment, it was because his body simply could not withstand that much power.

There were more than twenty ethereal sabers after all, a rank 3 body could not endure the pressure created when they were concentrated in six arms.

'It still hurts a bit but the liquid "Breath" in my body will keep me going.'

Noah was pushing his body to its limits in order to perform that technique and fight on the same level as the leader.

Also, the physical empowerment of the Demonic form allowed him to match the blows of a rank 4 beast, even if just those of a weak one.

'Even with my full power, I can only match it for a short amount of time. I can't resist that many clashes, my body won't last that much.'

The rank 4 Excavating worm had suffered many injuries by then but it didn't seem to be affected in the slightest.

On the contrary, Noah felt his mental energy and "Breath" depleting at high speed.

'It can't be helped, I'm still too weak.'

Yet, once he had that thought, he charged again at the leader.

Noah's fighting style had always been extremely aggressive, he would rely on defending only if the situation didn't permit any other approach and he would gladly suffer some wounds if that allowed him to hurt his opponent more.

That situation wasn't any different, actually, defending would only make him suffer more injuries.

'I need to force it on the defensive.'

Echo and Shadow never stopped attacking the worm, they bit and scratched to no end, trying to slow for even a second its movements.

Then, Noah arrived, slashing with six weapons that carried so much power that the air around them curved and distorted.

Six attacks landed on the worm, each one from a different angle.

Noah's sabers cut everything in their path, stopping only after they reached the internal organs of the beast.

The leader stood in place, enduring the impact and attacking with its head toward Noah.

'It can even use that technique with only half its body!'

Noah felt a hammer slamming on his head and throwing him back, chasing on a wall behind him.

'Dammit!'

Noah rose from the crystalline debris that fell from his crash on the wall, the protection of the Demonic form in his upper body had been broken, showing the blood that flowed from his mouth and nose.

His breathing was hindered and a whistling noise resounded in his ears but he could not buy time to heal his injuries, the leader of the worms had charged in his direction.

Noah hastily focused to reform the protection of the Demonic form and again used his six sabers to perform a single vertical slash.

He and the leader were again sent back two opposite directions.

'I can only fight like this, this form makes me too slow.'

The weakness of the Second form of the Ashura was the pressure imposed on the cultivator.

Having so much power concentrated on him made Noah's body stiff and clunky.

That weakness would be fixed once his body became stronger but, at that moment, he could only endure powerlessly the counterattacks of the beast.

Also, that form was the only attack that could restrain the worm, Noah really didn't have any other choice in that situation.

The two blood companions never left the beast's side and assaulted it to no end while Noah charged at it every time he was flung away, seemingly uncaring of the injuries that kept accumulating on his body.

From the perspective of the two nobles, Noah's fighting style was simply too reckless!

Milo and Troy watched as Noah jumped on the beast, dealt a few blows, and was sent back by its attack, only to stop the next charge of the worm with his stronger slash.

That course of actions repeated itself more than ten times right in front of their eyes, they couldn't even imagine the kind of pain he was enduring to stand up after every clash.

They were busy killing the endless wave of weak worms that were coming at them but they could still watch Noah's battle.

Milo had a rank 4 body and Troy was strong for his age, they had no problem handling a few hundred beasts in the first and second rank.

"Amazing."

Troy couldn't help but praise as he watched Noah standing up for the fifteenth time after the leader's attack.

"Focus!"

Milo ordered, they were protecting Daniel that was sitting behind them with his eyes closed, they couldn't allow his concentration to be broken.

Noah's battle prowess was amazing but he alone wasn't enough to kill a rank 4 creature, Daniel's spell was needed to get them out of that situation as winners.

'Five more seconds!'

Noah shouted in his mind as he charged again toward the worm.

His body was screaming in pain, his arms hurt, his ribs were cracked, and his nose had been broken at least twice, but he pressed on.

Even the leader of the worms had begun to suffer from the continuous clashes, its body was filled with deep cuts and vivid red blood flowed incessantly from them, its offensive had also slowed.

As it saw the fiend attacking, it pounced only to be stopped by a sharp slash.

Noah had finally managed to hold his ground against the leader!

His sabers slid against the rows of teeth, incapable of inflicting any damage.

However, the black smoke consumed the leader's skin, allowing his blood companions to stab their fangs on its uncovered flesh.

'Soon I'll be able to take you down all by myself.'

Noah said in his mind.

Then, the minute passed and Noah retreated by a few large steps.

It was at that moment that Daniel opened his eyes and pointed his hand toward the leader of the beasts.

Daniel's hand shone with a blinding light, it created colorful wonders inside that crystalline area.

The light then converged in his forefinger, gathering its might in one single point.

Next, it shot out.

A beam of white light was launched, it was fast, so fast that the leader of the beasts couldn't even understand that Daniel was attacking it.

The beam pierced the rank 4 creature's body and came out from its backside, burning the wall at the end of the underground room.

The leader screeched, it tried to curl up to defend from that powerful spell but to no avail, Daniel's spell severed everything in its path.

Then, Daniel moved his hand, it manipulated the beam to slowly trace a line on the beast's body.

Noah was astonished as he watched the leader of the worms slowly being cut in two.

'This spell is way stronger than my Demonic form, no wonder it took a whole minute to cast it.'

The rank 4 Excavating worm was powerless, it couldn't avoid the spell nor protect itself, it cried to no end as his body was divided horizontally.

'Amazing.'

Noah was the nearest person to the beast, he praised in his mind as the effect of the spell unfolded.

A straight line was drawn on the body of the leader, its long form was cut in half, making it fall powerlessly on the ground.

The leader struggled to stand up but half of its body was gone, its efforts only made it lose more blood.

The weaker beasts cried, they stopped their assault on the nobles and returned to the tunnels, they wouldn't dare to fight humans that were able to kill their leader.

'Is it over?'

Noah neared the upper body of the worm, he wanted to inspect its head to look for the Bloodline inheritance.

However, at that moment, the worm jumped from its lying position, it bit on Noah's shoulder and rolled its remaining body around him to prevent his escape.

'This fucking bastard! Just die already!'

Noah was still in his Demonic form but his movements were hindered, he could not perform his martial art.

Also, the leader seemed set on eating him, it didn't care about the damage that it was suffering due to the black smoke.

Noah felt his blood being sucked by the beast's bite, he understood that the leader was using its remaining strength in a desperate attempt for survival.

'Dammit!'

Noah didn't hesitate, a black shard appeared in his free hand and he injected "Breath" in it.

Then, he launched the shard toward an opening of the worm's mouth.

That shard was his strongest attack, the inscribed item that he created after many attempts and tens of wasted materials, it was the first success in the creation of the Demonic sword.

The shard entered the beast's body and exploded, it wasn't used in the execution of a martial art so it didn't have the power to cut the beast's flesh.

Yet, the power that it held was incredible.

The explosion destroyed the leader's internal organs and created a cloud of black smoke right inside it.

That smoke was different from the one created with Noah's spell, it wasn't as wild and untamed, it focused all its destructiveness in a single spot, inflicting way more damage.

The leader tried to endure the internal pain but it had suffered too many injuries.

Its body was severed in two, its skin was consumed and scorched, and its internal organs were wounded due to the constant damage that they suffered.

It was with unwillingness that life abandoned its body, making it release its grip on Noah's shoulder and fall on the terrain.

The leader of the worms had finally died!

'Damned worm, you better have what I need.'

Noah dispersed his spell and cut the worm's head from the rest of its body.

Once the beast was dead, most of its defenses were lowered, allowing Noah to easily cut it.

Then, he inspected the head with his mental energy and stabbed his hand on the bleeding side to better analyze its insides.

It was only when he found a small solid crystal that he heaved a sigh of relief and put the head in his space-ring.

'It was indeed a Bloodline inheritance, I was not wrong.'

Until that moment, he still held some doubts about the existence of that miraculous item.

It couldn't be helped, the sea of consciousness of a magical beast was too rare and it was really hard to discover, Noah could only be certain of its existence after he saw it.

'Now, I should tell a good story.'

Noah turned toward the nobles.

Daniel seemed exhausted, his complexion was pale and large eyebags had appeared under his eyes, he seemed completely drained.

Troy was in a similar situation, he had fought magical beasts nonstop with his weak body, he had reached his limit long ago and was only supporting himself with the help of his pills.

Milo was far better compared to those two.

He had fought for a long time too but he had never suffered any injury and he had only used his martial art, his centers of power were relatively full.

Then, Noah inspected himself.

He was full of wounds and his insides needed some time to recover.

Also, his centers of power were almost empty.

The liquid "Breath" inside his body was depleted, his dantian was empty, and only a sliver of mental energy remained inside his sea of consciousness.

'I need to recover before going out of here.'

He was exhausted and beaten but the situation forced him to act.

Noah took an item from his space-rings.

It was his "Breath" blessing, it instantly increased the concentration of "Breath" inside the underground room and it surprised the three nobles.

"You are indeed full of surprises."

Daniel commented as he gulped some potions.

Noah sat right over the big mineral and drank a potion to aid his recovery before opening his mouth to speak.

"Let's talk."

Chapter 245 - 245. Leash

Inside the deeper part of the lair below the Bare Dungeon.

Three nobles sat on the crystalline ground, staring at a young man that was silently cultivating on top of a "Breath" blessing.

The room had been swept clean by the three nobles, the corpses of the worms had been gathered in Daniel's rings and the weapons of the other two nobles had been retrieved and carefully stored.

Then, the three of them sat in front of Noah, waiting for him to speak.

However, Noah didn't seem to really care, he was doing his best to refill his centers of power and heal his injuries, the nobles were losing their patience.

"How did you manage to grow up so fast? You don't have any noble background so you couldn't have that many resources."

Troy was the first to break the silence, he was the most unwilling of the three to accept Noah's strength.

It couldn't be helped though, Troy had been in his same class in the academy and, in just a few short years, the gap between them had enlarged by a lot.

Noah's centers of power were on Daniel's level after all, such a feat was unbelievable for a man that wasn't even twenty years old.

Noah opened his eyes and replied to him without interrupting his cultivation.

"The Royals have discovered my aptitude in the entrance test in Shelfan Mountain, I've been working with them since then."

He didn't hide his cooperation with the Elbas family but he didn't explain further, secrets like the Royal inheritance or Samuel's assassination had to remain hidden.

The black vortex between his hands constantly absorbed "Breath", refilling his dantian which slowly nurtured his body and added liquid "Breath" in the membrane around his heart.

"Were you here because of the Royals' orders?"

Milo joined the conversation.

"No, I just wanted to test my strength. Yet, these beasts had laid many traps in their lair, I ended up falling for one which directly brought me here."

Noah continued to answer, creating a story that could satisfy the nobles.

"Why did you injure Manuel's sea of consciousness back then?"

At that time, Daniel asked his question.

"Manuel had already lost the battle when he resorted to a spell aimed to kill me. Thaddeus purposely waited on interrupting the match to test my real strength so I acted. He should consider himself lucky, if it wasn't for the rules of the academy, I would have killed him already."

Killing intent was radiated from Noah's figure as he spoke those words.

Those events had really angered him, they were one of the main reasons why he was hastening the preparations for his big escape.

"That's a lie! Manuel was strong and upright while you only used your puppet during that fight. I know that something strange had happened inside the thunderstorm!"

Troy replied to him.

He was a bit scared by the thick coldness that Noah was exuding but the presence of his companions gave him enough confidence to speak openly.

"My mental sphere was already in the second rank by that time, do you really think that I needed to cheat in order to win?"

Noah's statement made the three nobles gasp in surprise.

The battle had happened almost two years before, which meant that Noah had become a rank 2 mage by the age of eighteen!

A monster!

An unparalleled genius!

Their thoughts couldn't be calmed in a short amount of time, Noah was the youngest rank 2 mage that had ever existed in the cultivation history!

Noah didn't mind waiting for them to accept the situation, he was cultivating after all, his real intentions were to buy enough time for him to recover.

"You must have gained a lot from your cooperation with the Royals, their missions aren't always that ethical though."

Daniel spoke, seemingly hiding a different meaning behind his words.

"I did some bad stuff if that's what you're asking, I'm not really ashamed of my actions. I needed resources and they were willing to pay, that's it."

"So, would you sell yourself to them just to continue cultivating?"

Troy was still heated.

Noah's last revelation had surprised him even more, he had finally understood that he had never been Noah's equal.

"Yes."

Noah didn't explain further but his eyes seemed to be enveloped by a dark light.

The nobles watched as his aura became colder, he resembled a beast encircled by enemies.

'Does he see the entire world as his enemy?'

Daniel had that thought seeing Noah's reaction.

'Alone. He is completely alone in a world that wants to make use of him. He hid his element for so long and secretly worked with the Royal family through all this time only to reach my level. Admirable.'

Daniel praised in his mind.

He had realized long ago his privileged position.

Not only his family was one of the most powerful among the noble families, but he had also been nurtured as the main heir since his aptitude was discovered.

The reason why he had so many spells of the light element was that his family had spent an exorbitant sum of money to purchase them, sometimes they have had to deal with other countries to purchase them.

Yet, a man younger than him who had no support whatsoever managed to reach his level.

'I wonder to what length he had to push his moral compass to obtain such strength.'

Talent had only a small influence on the improvements of a cultivator.

Resources and hard work were the means by which someone could become strong.

"So, what do you want to talk about?"

Daniel had internally recognized him as his equal, it was time to hear his intentions.

Noah turned his gaze toward him before speaking.

"The Royals speak quite openly about some of their political struggles. I know about the Cause and how the noble families want to use you as a flag for their revolution."

"And?"

Daniel's eyebrow arched as Noah compared him to a flag.

"The Royals have been trying to tighten their leash on me for quite some time already and I don't have the strength to escape their control. Yet, there is a power that is planning to depose them and that could give me the freedom that I want. I want to join the Cause."

Chapter 246 - 246. Time

"What!?"

Troy and Milo expressed their surprise at the same time but Daniel simply continued to stare at Noah in the eyes.

"Why would we even accept you? We know nothing about you and I'm sure that your record isn't clean either! Why would the noble families even accept you?"

Troy continued to express his enmity toward Noah.

"My aptitude and, well, I'm the most promising cultivator that has ever existed."

Noah answered plainly.

He was the only one that really knew his own strength and he knew that his achievements were unmatched.

"Such gall! The most promising cultivator is right in front of you an-"

Milo began to speak but Daniel raised his hand to interrupt him.

"Enough, he is right. His centers of power are on my same level even though he is way younger than me. Don't let your status blind your judgment."

Daniel had a broader point of view compared to his fellow nobles.

His family had pressed him to study the art of politics since his aptitude was discovered, he knew the value that a cultivator like Noah could have in the Cause.

Also, if he really managed to bring on his side such a promising man, his status would rise by a lot and more families would be willing to join the Cause.

'A cultivator of the light element and one of the darkness element fighting side by side against the domain of the Royal family. I bet that most of those undecided families will immediately join our ranks if this news was spread.'

He could see the bigger picture and project it in the years to come, Noah was a valuable asset that could convince the public opinion to side with him.

"I believe that you want something though, you clearly know your value."

Daniel's words surprised the other two nobles but they didn't dare to complain.

If Daniel wasn't against it, there was nothing that they could do about it.

"Resources, techniques, spells, and time."

Noah didn't hide his intentions and basically asked for everything he could think about.

"Spells are off the table. My family has already indebted itself to nurture me, it can't support another cultivator with a rare element. Resources are not a problem and techniques can be purchased with the joint support of the other nobles. What did you mean by time?"

Noah nodded and fell silent for a bit, pretending to be struggling to find an answer.

"The Royals control me, they would rather kill me than seeing me join their enemies. I need time to prepare and I want to set a meeting with the one leading the Cause. I believe that would be your patriarch, right?"

Daniel nodded and waited for Noah to continue speaking.

"I need two months of time in which my aptitude must remain hidden, the Royals will apprehend me as soon as I'm discovered. Also, I need a safe place where to meet your patriarch. The Royals have cultivators in the heroic ranks making plans for me, I need the protection of someone with a similar strength to effectively switch side."

Daniel put a hand under his chin and fell deep in thought.

Noah's requests were reasonable, he knew the spying network that the Royals had throughout the country, he was sure that they would act as soon as they heard rumors about treason.

'Yet, Dad will be hesitant to openly accept him, he will probably think of this as a trap that the Royals have set to catch him. I have my doubts too.'

"I... don't trust you."

Daniel hesitated a bit before saying those words.

His position forced him to be careful, his status couldn't be affected by his poor judgment.

Yet, two heirs had died in his mission, no matter how pained he was about that loss, he had to think of a way to make up in front of the other nobles.

Also, Noah was right, his cultivation speed was unmatched, bringing him on his side would be an incredible feat.

"You can set the time and place. Honestly, I don't really care who comes at the meeting as long as he has the strength to protect me. I just need those two months to handle some personal stuff."

Noah took a step back in the negotiation.

The truth was that he really couldn't care less about the meeting, he only needed two months of anonymity.

Daniel thought for a long time before nodding to him.

"Deal. Let's meet two months from now on the mountain path near Vonduhr. The nobles have claimed that place after a certain event so the Royals can't really control it."

Noah smiled and closed his eyes again to focus on his recovery.

The three nobles did the same, they were exhausted too and Noah's mineral allowed them to spare their precious potions.

It took an entire day for Noah to recover.

He hadn't moved from his position for the whole time and his veins would become black from time to time to aid the healing of his body.

"I will go first, I believe that you should be fine."

Daniel nodded.

He had completely exhausted his mental energy and was in need of sleep, he needed more time to heal.

"See you in two months."

Noah smiled at those words and took back the "Breath" blessing in his space-ring before climbing out of the room.

"Do you trust him?"

Milo asked as soon as Noah went away, he wanted to understand Daniel's true intentions.

"Not really but we know his secret, he has to keep our mouths shut in some ways. Anyway, we will decide what to do after the meeting."

Meanwhile, Noah was running as fast as he could toward the exit of the dungeon.

His wings were unfolded and helped him in the vertical tunnels and, in less than one hour, he managed to return to where the floor had crumbled.

'Two months of time! I need to use every second!'

Noah didn't stop and continued to climb until he reached the exit leading to the surface.

The light of the sun illuminated his features and he stopped in place as he crossed the exit.

His gaze turned south.

He knew that in that direction, after many forests, mountain ranges, and plains, there was a mansion in the middle of a grassland.

He clearly remembered its features, the defensive wall, the buildings of the outer circle, his old lodgings.

Then, a smug face appeared in his vision.

It had a blindfold on its left eye and looked at him with disgust and arrogance.

'My hatred will bring me back there eventually but I'm still too weak and the leash around my neck is becoming too tight.'

He sighed, suppressing his killing intent and turning his gaze north.

Then, black flames enveloped his figure, making him disappear in less than a second.

Chapter 247 - 247. Meeting

Two months passed quietly in the Utra country.

The events in the Bare Dungeon weren't a rare sight in that world, cultivators would often test their luck or skills in danger zones only to die because of some unexpected situation.

Also, three nobles had witnessed the weapons of their companions laid among hundreds of magical beasts' corpses, their testimony was enough to prevent any investigation.

The lives of Manuel Gousho and Phoebe Ramgett had been lost in a fight against a rank 4 creature, their families could only blame their recklessness.

Yet, another piece of information had reached the ears of a few large-size noble families.

These families were among the wealthiest ones in the entire nation and were also the ones leading the movement called Cause.

It was due to their lofty position that they could think about opposing the rulers of the nation, planning a long-term revolution by using the bright star that was Daniel.

This piece of information was about another bright star, possibly even brighter than Daniel, but that was in the grasp of the Royal family.

"Young Master, are you sure that this Vance won't use you to improve his position with the Royals?"

A female cultivator with her face hidden by a veil asked Daniel that was right next to her.

They were near Vonduhr, on the mountain path where the battle between the Muwlos family and the criminals hired by the Royals had been.

"He is alone, Octavia, a lone cultivator forced to accept any kind of offer to obtain resources. The Royals might treat him well because of his aptitude but there is a limit to how much they can give without forcing him to join their ranks. Instead, father is willing to offer him a noble status once the revolution is over. He will be able to set his own family and be one of the closest allies to the next rulers of the country."

Daniel answered with confidence.

He had discussed the situation with his father, the patriarch of the Udye family, and they had reached that conclusion.

They would offer Noah resources and techniques as long as he fought with them and they would promise not to hinder his personal freedom.

The last part was a point that Daniel strongly insisted on.

He had understood some of Noah's character, he was a lone wolf, completely focused on his personal power.

People like him would just stab you in the back if you tried to control them, it was better to give them a generous offer and refrain from forcing his hand.

"What if he has no interest in being a noble?"

Octavia raised another doubt.

She was Daniel's personal guard for the meeting and also the cultivator in the heroic ranks that Noah had requested.

"Being a noble means having the resources to gather spells and techniques. That is exactly what he wants and becoming a noble is the option that will preserve his independence without becoming anyone's servant. He will accept."

Octavia became silent after those words and moved her gaze on his surroundings.

The mountain path had been reconstructed and a two-story tall pagoda had been built on its side.

The Muwlos family wanted to remember their fallen soldiers and their promising heir so they built that monument in their honor.

Also, some soldiers had been stationed there, it could be said the influence of the nobles on the city of Vorduhr had largely increased after that battle.

However, Octavia didn't see anything worthy of praise.

In her mind, those soldiers had died under the assault of criminals and lone cultivators, the same status of Daniel's guest, she really couldn't bring herself to trust such a character.

"You could have let us doing some investigations at least, I don't like not knowing my opponent."

She complained, interrupting her silence.

"He is not your opponent and you know that the network of the Royals is incredible, they would become suspicious if my family suddenly looked for records about a cultivator of the darkness element."

Octavia sighed, she knew Daniel's character, he was set on bringing Noah to his side.

"Young Master, you are a good person, you always try to see the best in people. Yet, you must understand that there are monsters out there, beings without any care for rules and ethics, beings that will never be subjected to any society. The world is big and our political system is just one of the many of this continent, you won't be able to see the bigger picture if our customs blind your eyes."

Daniel lowered his head before raising it wearing a determined expression.

"If he tries something funny, we'll just kill him. It is better to remove him than leave him to grow with the Royals, I'm honestly a bit scared of his potential."

Octavia nodded hearing that, she felt glad that Daniel was slowly abandoning his righteous character when it came to matters involving his family.

Hours passed and the morning became afternoon, yet there was still no trace of Noah.

"He's late."

Octavia was running out of patience but Daniel was still confident.

"We didn't set a specific hour, I'll wait till dawn if needed."

Yet, the afternoon became night and Noah had yet to appear.

"I don't think he will come."

"Then why would he set this meeting? Trust me, he will come."

Then, the night became morning, the appointed day had passed but Noah didn't deign them of his presence.

"Why? I was sure he was telling the truth about the Royals so why didn't he come to our side?"

Daniel had lost hope by then and was clueless about what to do next.

His position had been endangered due to the loss of two heirs in his recent mission but, if he managed to recruit Noah, those losses would be forgotten.

"Maybe he was discovered by the Royals and killed."

Octavia gave him another idea.

"That's unlikely, he doesn't seem the type of person that would just get caught. Well, I don't know what his intentions were but I know what our next move will be."

Daniel sighed as he continued to speak.

"Let's reveal his aptitude, I really want to know where the Royals found such a genius."

Chapter 248 - 248. Rumors

A rumor began to spread in the nation.

Vance, the strongest student of the academy of his generation, was secretly a cultivator of the darkness element.

Also, he had kept his aptitude a secret thanks to the help of the Royal family with whom he worked to obtain resources and techniques.

The rumor spread in every direction, surprising everyone that had met him and the Udye family even provided a drawing of his facial features, they were basically aiming to destroy his anonymity.

As for why they did such a thing, there were many reasons.

The first one was to uncover his actual identity, the Utra nation was built using the noble families as its foundation, it was almost impossible to become a cultivator without the approval of a noble family.

That meant that there had to be some records about the birth of a cultivator of the darkness element somewhere, he couldn't have just appeared out of nowhere and have the strength to pass the entrance test of the academy.

Another reason was to uncover some of his businesses with the Royals, if they kept his aptitude as a secret, it meant that the missions in which he was involved had to be socially unacceptable.

The last one was to remove that pawn from the clutches of the Royals, a simple rumor could hinder the plans that they had for such a cultivator.

It didn't take much for this rumor to reach the ears of Evan Balvan, the second son of the patriarch of the Balvan family.

He was in charge of the economic aspect of the family, it was in his duties to be informed of the changes inside the nation that could affect his investments so he was the first to obtain that information.

Of course, he immediately suspected something and activated his network to gather more information.

The rumors piled up, as more people spoke about Noah, his stories would be distorted and modified, making him appear like an unfathomable character.

However, Evan couldn't care less about the rumors, his attention was completely focused on a large sheet with a male face drawn on it.

This man was young, he had long black hair and icy-blue eyes.

His facial features were delicate but they didn't exude any warmth, there was only coldness radiated from his expression.

'It's him!'

Evan was surprised beyond reason.

The investigation in the Shosti's inheritance ground had brought no results for almost five years, he was beginning to lose any hope in finding his daughter and son.

'Noah Balvan is alive! He must know what has happened there!'

Those were his first thoughts as he hurriedly stood up from his desk and ran toward the lodgings of his big brother.

"Adrian! Big brother! Look at this!"

Evan was quite fat but he ran faster than he had ever done in his life at that moment.

A door opened, revealing a burly cultivator with black hair and a stern expression.

"What is it?"

That man was Adrian Balvan, Thomas' firstborn, he was in charge of the personal army of the Balvan family and handled all the missions outside the mansion.

"Look at this!"

Evan couldn't mask his excitement as he handed Noah's picture to him.

"Who is this? A cultivator of the darkness element? Wait, do you think that the bastard survived the events in the separate dimension?"

Adrian had never seen Noah's face so he could only make that connection due to his element.

"I don't know but this man is definitely him! He will surely know what has happened there!"

Adrian fell deep in thought for a few seconds before speaking with a dark expression.

"We can't be sure. Let's confirm his identity with little brother first."

Evan's expression became dark too but he nodded immediately.

A few minutes later, they arrived in front of a luxurious room, the stench of booze could be sniffed even outside it.

"Rhys, we need to talk."

Adrian spoke but no answers came from the room.

"It's about Noah, your son. We believe that he is alive."

Evan added.

Some noise could immediately be heard from the other side of the room and, in a few seconds, the door opened to reveal a shabby middle-aged man with a patch on his left eye.

"What did you say?"

Adrian and Evan ignored the stench coming from the room and handed him Noah's picture.

Rhys watched incredulously at the sheet, even if Noah had grown since the last time that he saw it, his features were extremely similar to Lily, he recognized him immediately.

"It's him! He is alive! Where is he? What has happened to Fabian?"

Rhys seemed revitalized once some clues about his lost son appeared.

"We don't know. Apparently, he had been in the Royal academy all this time, he is considered one of the strongest youths of his generation."

Evan spoke but Rhys had already started moving toward his father's lodgings.

"I don't care! If that bastard has something to do with my son disappearance, I will personally tear his limbs one by one."

Adrian shook his head but Evan's eyes became cold at that thought.

He still hadn't considered that possibility, thinking that his son and daughter might have died because of Noah made him even more determined in finding him.

The three arrived in the main hall of the inner circle and reached for a door at the end of that room.

"Father, Noah has reappeared, the Elbas family had him."

"Let me see."

Thomas materialized himself right next to Evan and took Noah's picture from his hands.

Evan seemed used to that behavior and wasn't surprised by Thomas' sudden appearance.

"It is indeed him. Tell me everything you know."

Evan didn't hesitate and began to report all the rumors that he heard about him.

Adrian's eyes widened as he listened to that while Rhys gritted his teeth with more strength every time another heroic deed was told.

Noah had broken the record of the entrance test of the academy, he had been the strongest student of his generation, he had secretly worked with the Royal family, and these stories were only the official ones.

"I understand, it seems that I have to make a trip to the Royal city."

Thomas spoke once Evan had ended his explanation.

"Wait, father, let me come!"

Rhys begged Thomas but the latter answered with a cold gaze.

"This genius could have been part of our family if you could have handled your lust! Go back in your quarters until I return. Adrian, you are in charge while I'm gone."

Adrian bowed and Thomas disappeared right in front of their eyes.

Chapter 249 - 249. Vultures

A man shot through the sky of the Utra continent, dividing the clouds that he encountered.

That man was Thomas Balvan, Noah's grandfather, who was flying on top of a transparent circular platform made of air at high speed in the direction of the Capital.

That platform was a spell of the wind element, even though Thomas could naturally fly, he preferred to arrive at the Royal city as fast as he could.

The matter concerning the concealment of his grandson had great importance in his mind, it could be said that the future of his family depended on it.

After all, a noble family was founded on strong cultivators and resources and the Balvan family has lost both of them in the separate dimension.

They lost three heirs, twenty among the most promising soldiers of the new generation, and the resources that they carried.

Also, if they really were dead, all the resources invested in them would have been for naught, gravely endangering the future prospects of the family.

Yet, since Noah was alive, there was a chance that the other cultivators were alive too.

'That kid has the answers, I must find him!'

Those were Thomas' thoughts as he hurried toward the Capital.

He surpassed large forests and vast plains until he could finally see the shape of the huge defensive wall of the Capital.

That travel took him less than two weeks, crossing the country for a cultivator in the heroic ranks was not a big issue.

Thomas reached the top of the defensive walls and spoke in a soft voice, seemingly to no one.

"I am Thomas Balvan, patriarch of the Balvan family, I request an audience with the Royal dynasty."

His manners were polite and he even bowed as he spoke those words.

However, nothing happened no matter how much Thomas waited.

'Do they want to wait until the storm quiets down? Hmph!'

Thomas retreated slightly and focused his "Breath" on his vocal cords.

"Noah Balvan! I know that you are disguised as Vance of the academy! Come here and greet your patriarch!"

His voice reverberated from his position mid-air through all the Royal city.

The defensive walls trembled and a transparent membrane that enveloped the skies of the city did the same.

Apparently, the walls were only one of the defensive formations of the Capital, there was another one that covered the entire upper part of it.

However, Thomas' voice was not an attack, it wasn't blocked by the membrane, and his voice was able to spread throughout the city.

Gasps and surprised shouts could be heard among the citizen, many of them were cultivators after all, the news of a cultivator of the darkness element was known even there along with all the rumors that it carried.

"Vance is a noble? But I believed that he was a commoner!"

"Balvan family? I've never heard of it."

"It's a medium-size noble family. They were quite wealthy for their status until a tragedy hit them a few years ago. I don't know the specifics though."

"Wait! If Vance belongs to a noble family, does that mean that he escaped? The first cultivator of the darkness element to appear after such a long time is a criminal?"

Voices rang everywhere inside the streets of the city as the cultivators began to wonder how many secrets a twenty years old man could hold.

Another rumor was added to the pile: Vance, the student of the academy, was secretly Noah Balvan, a noble.

That realization inevitably led to a conclusion: The Royal family had helped his concealment!

It wasn't a secret that the Royals worked to bring promising heirs on their side but purposely hiding a possible criminal was a completely different matter!

Once the citizen understood that the Royals could use criminals for their means, their image of them was greatly affected.

As for the voice that spread through the city, they didn't bother thinking too much about it.

The patriarch of a medium-size noble family was generally a cultivator of the heroic ranks, they knew that his power had to be unfathomable.

Thomas waited with a complacent smile right over the defensive walls, he didn't dare to take a step inside the formation without the permission of the Elbas family.

Nevertheless, the transparent membrane soon opened, showing Thaddeus' father standing in the air behind it.

"Thomas, there was no need to create such a mess."

His expression was dark and his brows were furrowed, they stressed his displeasure toward Thomas' actions.

"Thomas Balvan greets His Majesty Cecil!"

Thomas performed a formal greeting and waited for a reaction from Cecil.

"You can't just come here and do whatever you want, your family has no special privileges, you must use the official ways to get in contact with us."

Cecil didn't give him permission to stand so Thomas remained in his bowing position.

"I beg to disagree Cecil. This matter involves the future of his family, you will surely forgive his lack of manners."

A voice sounded behind Thomas as a cultivator with long silver hair and a loose white robe appeared in the air.

The cultivator then slightly bowed, performing a simple greeting.

"Ian Udye greets His Majesty."

That man was Daniel's father, the patriarch of the Udye family, one of the wealthiest men in the entire country.

"What are you doing here Ian?"

Cecil was surprised by his presence, that event was too coincidental.

"He is looking for answers, Your Majesty. All of us are."

A female cultivator appeared right next to Ian, her facial features resembled Phoebe's ones, she was clearly her mother.

"I would like to know if my daughter met a criminal in her mission, a criminal that you disguised as a student."

"Meredith is right, I also would like to know if this so-called student had something to do with the events near Vonduhr."

A third cultivator appeared mid-air, he had long golden hair and he very much resembled Samuel.

'Fred Muwlos is here too. I bet that these vultures have waited all this time nearby, they knew that someone like Thomas would appear.'

Cecil's eyes became cold at that thought but he still smiled on the surface, signaling to the four cultivators to follow him inside the city.

"My son is in the Capital, follow me if you want to hear what he has to say."

Chapter 250 - 250. Disappeared

Turning time back a little.

Thaddeus was in a dark underground room which had inscriptions that deflected the probing of external mental energy.

He was standing in the middle of the room and a woman kneeled in front of him.

"So, what's the matter, Hazel? Why did you want to see me so suddenly?"

Thaddeus spoke to her in an annoyed tone.

The woman in front of him was Hazel, the huntress in Kurt's group!

"Vance has gone to the Bare Dungeon all by himself. I didn't know what to do so I came here looking for your orders."

She replied with her head lowered.

"He is probably looking to increase even more the boost of the Blood drain spell, that kid really can't contain himself. I think his body must be near the Pain Tribulation."

Hazel listened to his words and her mind was filled with shock, she couldn't help but raise her head to ask more questions.

"Is he reaching a rank 4 body already? But he isn't even twenty! He would be on my level after that breakthrough, I don't know if I'll be able to handle him if he tries to rebel then."

Apparently, Thaddeus had ordered her to keep an eye on Noah and, if the situation required it, to suppress him.

"Don't worry, I'm not certain about that either. I'll involve Newton in the operation too just to be safe. You can go now, remember to inform me as soon as he comes back."

Hazel lowered her head again before standing up and leaving the room, leaving Thaddeus there deep in thought.

'He is growing even faster than I imagined. It seems that I'll have to have another talk with him about the Royal Inheritance as soon as he is back in the city.'

His eyes shone with greed as a golden rune appeared in front of him and made him disappear in an instant.

The events inside the Bare Dungeon unfolded themselves and became public knowledge, Thaddeus had a more detailed version of them of course.

'The surviving rank 4 creature from the last cleaning operation is dead, Daniel and Vance sure make a fearsome duo. However, Noah has yet to return to the Capital, he is probably undergoing the Pain Tribulation. Such talent, such will, the Royal family has to bring him on its side.'

However, weeks passed but there still was no trace of Noah.

'Is he dead? Impossible! He survived the Forging of the Seven Hells nourishing method in his youth, passing the Pain Tribulation should be easy to him.'

Worries kept accumulating in Thaddeus' mind, he was considering sending an investigative troop in the dungeon to discover more about his position.

'No, two heirs have died there, our soldiers would be too eye-catching. He is probably taking it slow to become accustomed to his new body.'

Like that, more weeks passed, inevitably reaching the day after the scheduled meeting between Noah and Daniel.

Thaddeus was a bit anxious, his control over Noah was strong inside the Capital and when he was with Kurt's hunting group.

However, there was only so much he could do when he went hunting alone, he couldn't just place a cultivator in the heroic ranks as a personal guard of a man with a rank 2 dantian.

Also, if discovered, it would only worsen the already precarious relationship that he had with Noah, he had to give him some space.

"Your Majesty, Your Majesty! You have to see this!"

A servant hurriedly ran in the room where he was resting, holding a sheet in her hands.

"What?"

Thaddeus felt annoyed but still took the sheet, his servants were well trained, they wouldn't dare to enter unannounced in the room where he was staying if the situation wasn't serious.

The sheet depicted Noah and there were some lines of text below it that described the known information about him.

Thaddeus stared at the sheet with wide eyes and hurriedly took out a token from his space-ring.

"Father, we have a problem."

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Back to the present, Cecil escorted the four nobles toward the Royal Mansion.

Thaddeus was waiting for them right in front of the main entrance and he bowed at the sight of so many powerful cultivators.

"Thaddeus Elbas greets the nobles."

Thaddeus' position was lower than his father, he was only a professor in the academy on the surface after all.

"Cecil, why did you bring us here?"

Ian spoke with a tinge of arrogance in his voice.

He knew that those events were the perfect opportunity to bring more noble families on the Cause's side so he didn't hesitate to openly show his aversion toward the Royals.

"My son is the one in charge of the matter of the academy, he can explain the events linked to Vance better than me."

"His name is Noah Balvan, son of Rhys Balvan and a concubine."

Thomas spoke.

The three nobles next to him were slightly surprised by that information but hid their reactions.

They were using Thomas to discredit the Royal family after all, they needed to appear as stern as possible.

"Vance, no, Noah has hidden his identity well, not even our network could discover such a thing. I believe he has fooled everyone."

Thaddeus spoke with sincerity, his acting abilities were surely incredible.

"Do you really want us to believe that you didn't know his true identity? Would you rather pass as incompetent than speak the truth?"

Fred spoke, his words were filled with a subtle killing intent.

He had lost his son in the battle near Vonduhr, he was aware that the Royals were using criminals for their needs and he couldn't help but wonder if Noah had something to do with it.

"Fred, remember that you are speaking to the rulers of the nation and that you are next to our Mansion, I would watch my words if I was you."

Killing intent began to radiate from Cecil, he couldn't allow being openly offended by those nobles.

"Cecil, we came here for the truth. Please, tell us where this Vance is."

Meredith spoke, trying to pacify the situation.

Cecil's expression became ugly and he turned toward Thaddeus.

The other cultivators did the same and they expectantly waited for him to speak.

It was with hesitation that Thaddeus opened his mouth to say three words.

"He has disappeared."