

Chapter 281 - 281. Kindness

Spells of the darkness element were extremely rare and they were hard to copy.

Noah couldn't refuse the chance of obtaining one that could be used till the fourth rank, that offer was simply too appealing!

After all, the spells that he could use at that time were the Demonic form and Warp, all his other spells were too weak or unfit for his combat style.

Simply speaking, he needed to have a larger variety of attacks.

"Hmph, you should accumulate some merit first instead of requesting immediately for the spell."

The girl snorted at Noah's proposal, she couldn't just give away a precious scroll to someone she couldn't trust.

However, Noah wore a shameless smile at that rebuke as he replied.

"You control the formation around the country, right? That means that I can't leave without your approval anyway. Just give me the spell and release me after I've accumulated enough merits."

The girl put a pensive expression at that explanation.

Noah's words made sense, he would have left already if he had the chance, the only thing forcing him to stay was the defensive formation of her ancestor.

Yet, he was just a prisoner at that moment, he would need incentives to become a soldier.

"I don't know if you'll really fight for us, I don't trust you."

Those were the words that came out of her mouth after she thought about the situation.

Noah shrugged his shoulders and spread his arms in an uncaring gesture.

"That's your problem, you need to pay the right price if you want to use me. Also, having another spell would increase my battle prowess, meaning that I would be a stronger soldier under your command."

He had nothing to lose.

He had already threatened those soldiers with his own life, there was nothing that could make him back off.

Silence fell on the hall, even the other cultivators felt that Noah's words were true.

They fought because of their attachment to the country after all, their reward was the peace that they achieved with their blood and sweat.

Noah, however, was an outsider, he had no attachment to their land, he accepted to fight with them only to gain some benefits.

"You outsiders are really impossible... Deal, Logan will go with you and explain our situation."

She then turned to Logan.

"Set the conditions for his release and give him one of the rooms at the borders of the city, I believe that he won't complain about the state of those habitations."

She then waved her hands and dismissed everyone except for her two protectors.

Noah stood up and followed Logan in a relaxed manner, he didn't look like a prisoner at all.

When everyone had left, the girl heaved a long sigh and punched the armchair of her throne in anger.

"Lisa, you can't keep on trusting outsiders."

One of the men next to her spoke in a soft manner.

"And what should I do? He is right! This whole country is a prison and we don't have any chance of escaping it! We need help from outside!"

Lisa angrily replied, Noah's words had unsettled her.

"My lady, you can't expect an outsider to go against the Empire just because of a few cultivation resources."

The other man spoke, they seemed to be more than simply guards for her.

"The constant siege of the Empire keeps on weakening us and there is nothing that we can do about that. Our war can only end in two ways: our country gets conquered and we become slaves or an external force helps us win."

Lisa had both her hands on her forehead, the crown there felt heavier with each passing day.

"Are you willing to deplete all our reserves because of your bets on promising outsiders?"

Lisa sighed again at those words.

"I'm willing to do far more than that if that means saving my people."

Meanwhile, Noah was following Logan toward the borders of the city.

Logan was narrating the story of his country in detail, he wanted to give a clear picture to Noah.

"Our ancestor used his life to empower the formation, preventing any cultivator with a dantian in the heroic ranks or above to enter the country. Yet, that was only the beginning of our problems..."

"The Empire has a seemingly limitless number of cultivators in the human ranks, our little country couldn't match the assault of tens of thousands of soldiers, we were forced to make a further deal with the Empire to ensure our survival."

"We gave up all our cultivation techniques, resources, and Kesier runes with a rank over the third to limit the assault of the Empire. We hindered our own cultivation journey to create a fair battlefield between our two nations."

"However, we had overestimated the loyalty of our stronger soldiers."

"Without the resources to continue cultivating, most of our cultivators in the heroic ranks chose to leave the country to join the Empire, those that chose to stay have slowly died over time. It was only a few decades ago that our last soldier in the heroic ranks died of old age."

Noah listened to the story with an expressionless face, he was beginning to understand why that country didn't have any strong cultivator.

"What about creating techniques?"

Noah couldn't help but ask, that really seemed their only option.

However, Logan shook his head.

"Our knowledge has never been that great in that field. When the ancestor died and the other strong cultivators left, every information we had about inscriptions and formations was lost. We are stuck in the human ranks forever."

Noah nodded in understanding.

The Utra nation had the academy and a central power that had accumulated knowledge for two thousand years, the Royals had invested a lot in the creation of inscription masters.

Yet, even the powerful noble families struggled to create techniques, it was no wonder that the Odra nation suffered from a similar problem.

"Then, why exactly are you giving away scrolls to outsiders?"

Noah could guess that there was something wrong, Lisa had accepted his conditions too quickly.

"Lady Lisa strongly believes that our only hope is in promising outsiders. You are not the first that she has tried to bring on our side and I'm sure won't be the last. She is basically hoping that someone will repay her kindness in the future."

Chapter 282 - 282. Delusional

'Repay her kindness? Is she delusional!?'

Noah understood that their situation was complex.

They were secluded in their country, unable to reach the outside world for help.

The Empire was all around them, preventing any external help.

Also, they didn't have the means to become stronger, they could only watch as their forces slowly decreased in number against the endless assault of the Empire.

Their only hope was in the lone cultivators that crossed their borders by accident.

'What can a single cultivator even do? The Empire has a damned God as its leader!'

Noah understood them but he still thought that their approach was incredibly stupid.

'Lisa is hoping that a lone cultivator would take pity on her and help them from outside the country... This is simply reckless.'

Who would want the enmity of a God?

Who would sacrifice his prospects to save a country with which he had no ties?

The answer was simple: no one!

"She must be really desperate to hope that criminals would become heroes."

Noah couldn't help but say those words out loud.

"The Empire watches attentively anyone that comes out of our borders, we can't ask for outside help nor gather cultivation techniques. We will either slowly vanish under its assault or convert someone to our cause."

Logan explained.

"So what? You give away spells and resources to anyone that seems promising?"

Logan nodded at Noah's question.

"It's still better than doing nothing."

Their conversation ended with that line, Noah limited himself to follow Logan after that.

They reached the borders of the city, the amount of "Breath" in the air was so little that Noah wondered how could someone still reach the third rank of the dantian there.

"This is your habitation, you will be staying here for the time being. There is a battle every month, we will summon you in two weeks to explain how our battles are fought."

Logan spoke, pointing his hand toward a small and smelly flat.

"No, I will join the battle after that, I need time to prepare and to learn that new spell."

Noah immediately refused Logan's order, two weeks were simply too short for what he had in mind.

"As you wish. This token contains some basic information about the city and you can use it to contact me. We will review the conditions for your release in a month and a half then."

Logan sighed and handed a token to Noah before leaving.

Noah was finally alone again.

'What would I do if I was in their situation?'

Noah absentmindedly entered the flat, it was dirty and there was no sign of inscriptions, it was just a simple room.

'Surrounded by enemies led by a God, without any resource or technique to become stronger, watching my people continuously dying in an endless war.'

He could understand how desperate Lisa was, he could imagine why she ultimately chose to hope in outsiders.

'She simply had no choice. Well, I would probably try to escape but I don't have any attachment to this country or to any of these people. I also don't have any confidence in escaping their interrogation after I go out of here. What a messy situation.'

He didn't mind fighting for resources, his plan was to become a mercenary all along.

What he was worried about were the consequences that his fights in that country would produce once he left it.

'Well, it's still too early to think about that, I should focus on increasing my battle prowess right now.'

The prospect of a war had changed Noah's priorities.

He wanted to wait for his sea of consciousness to reach the third rank before attempting in some of his experiments but he needed to increase his battle capabilities as much as he could before the battle began.

The only thing he could think of was the creation of the Demonic sword.

'My previous experiments ended with a shard with the power in the middle tier of the second rank. I have now liquid "Breath" in my dantian and my mind has also improved, considering that I would add more rank 4 materials to the forging, I should be able to create something in the peak of the second rank.'

Noah accurately analyzed the material in his possession, he knew that a finished and stable product created in that way could match the power of a peak rank 2 cultivator.

'I won't be able to fight cultivators in the third rank but, with that weapon and my spells, I should have no problem against those in the solid stage of the second rank.'

Noah didn't waste time, he sat on the dirty floor and took out one of the sealed buckets from his space-ring, together with other materials.

'Undead chameleon bone to prevent the smoke of my spell from destroying the other materials; scales of the Blind pangolin for the sturdiness; spikes of the Rabid hedgehog for further sharpness and to fix the empty spots. Three rank 4 materials coming from magical beasts of the darkness element and I have enough of them for about thirty attempts. I had decided the basic layout of the sword long ago, now I just have to become used to the interactions between these materials.'

Noah had spent a long time training in the Elemental forging method and had accumulated a large number of materials during his year with Kurt's hunting group.

'Using these materials before I become a rank 3 mage is a pity but I don't have any choice, I can't go to a war unprepared.'

Noah sighed at the sight of his precious materials but resolved himself to use them, he could just buy more of them at some point in the future, his life was far more important.

Then, a loud knock resounded from the door of his room.

Noah opened it and found a soldier with an old scroll in his hands.

"You better be worth the Lord's trust."

The soldier handed the scroll to Noah and left the area.

'They really don't like me.'

Noah shook his head internally and took a glance at the scroll in his hands.

The words "Mental tremor" were clearly written at its top.

#### Chapter 283 - 283. Room

'Mental tremor spell, up to rank 4, limited to the darkness element. Focus your mental energy into a shockwave to destabilize or destroy the opponent's mind. The shockwave shoots from the eyes so an excessive use will stress that organ.'

'This can be extremely useful in battles against humans, I don't know its effectiveness against magical beasts though.'

As soon as he read the effects of the spell, Noah could already identify its strong points and weaknesses.

'It should be pretty effective against cultivators with a weaker sea of consciousness than mine while it should at least disorient those that are on my level. Its strongest quality is that it's hard to defend against mental attacks while its weakness it's the necessity of looking at my enemy's head. Overall, it should be a pretty reliable spell.'

Noah was satisfied with the spell, he wasn't expecting less from something limited to the darkness element.

'I should learn this first before resuming my forging, I don't know how much damage I will cause after all.'

Noah looked at the frail-looking room that was his habitation in apprehension.

'It's a miracle if it will last one explosion.'

He knew the consequences of a failure in the forging process and, at that time, the energy infused in his items would be far greater compared to his previous experiments.

'I guess they will give me a reinforced room after this one blows up.'

Noah put those thoughts in the back of his mind and focused on learning the new spell.

He had only one month and a half of time to prepare for the war, he couldn't waste time thinking about the consequences of his inscriptions.

A week passed before he was able to completely memorize the diagram of the Mental tremor spell, his mental sphere had greatly enlarged after all, that diagram didn't pose that much of a challenge.

Noah tested the spell immediately, a large quantity of mental energy was expended as the diagram was formed in his mind.

Then, the walls of his mental sphere began to tremble and emitted a humming sound that was redirected toward Noah's eyes.

There was a simple-looking vase in front of him which Noah had put there as a target.

His vision blurred for an instant before it returned to its normal state, Noah felt his eyes burning for a few seconds before the regenerative properties of his body acted to heal any damage.

'That hurt! The aftermath on my eyes is strong too! Well, my body should be able to negate any negative effect in its empowered form.'

The empowered form was simply the moment when the liquid "Breath" around his heart was injected in his circulatory system.

His injuries would heal much faster in that state, it was obvious to think that the negative effects of the spell would be greatly reduced in that form.

Noah massaged his temples before inspecting the vase that had endured his mental attack.

There were slight cracks all over its figure, Noah couldn't help but nod in satisfaction at that sight.

'An attack with mental energy was able to affect the material world to this extent, I can't wait to test its power to a real cultivator.'

He was really excited about that new attack which seemed not to hinder in the slightest his fighting style.

'The matter with the spell is set, now it's time to forge.'

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One day after Noah memorized his new spell, Logan was hurriedly walking toward the outskirts of the city.

He had received a report not long ago from one of the soldiers stationed there, the report spoke about some kind of explosion.

'That's the area where the new guy was placed, I hope he didn't cause some trouble already.'

Logan thought, picturing the young-looking man with cold eyes in his mind.

However, Logan's hopes were soon shattered.

Soldiers encircled the area around Noah's habitation with a stern expression, they were warily looking toward the man sitting cross-legged at the center of the floor of his room.

As for why they could watch him from their position, it was because there wasn't any wall blocking their line of sight.

"What the fuck has happened!?"

Logan shouted toward one of the soldiers.

"S-sir, we are not really sure. We heard an explosion so we came here immediately but all we could see was a black cloud that consumed everything in its path. Luckily, it has dispersed now, I don't think that the other buildings would still be standing otherwise."

The soldier's gaze didn't leave Noah for even one instant, he was afraid that he would cause another mess if he was left unwatched.

"Adam, right? Care to explain?"

Logan moved his attention toward Noah and addressed him with angry words.

"Oh, good morning to you too. Well, simply speaking, it seems that I've misjudged the sturdiness of my room. I believe that a reinforced one would fit me better."

Noah couldn't hide his excitement as he spoke.

He had clearly failed a forging but the energy released by the explosion even surpassed his prediction!

The explosion directly blew up the walls of the room and it took all his concentration to control the black cloud that was created after that.

'I can't wait to concentrate all this power in a sword! My power would increase by an entire stage!'

Logan watched incredulously the young man requesting for a better room with a smile on his face.

'Is he crazy? He has just destroyed a house!'

Then, his attention moved toward Noah's clothes.

They were torn in many parts and there was some red stain on his burned sleeves, the explosion wasn't completely harmless to him.

"Are you sure you won't kill yourself? A reinforced room would contain the explosion, you would have to endure most of its power."

Noah immediately stood up and bowed, he was aware of the dangers involved with the Elemental forging method, there wasn't any reason to refuse the offer.

"Very well, we have some empty chambers for you, I just have to notify the Lord about it."

Logan spoke and was about to turn when Noah interrupted him.

"Ehm, I suggest you give me something that can handle rank 3 cultivators, I believe that those made for rank 2 cultivators won't last an entire month."

Chapter 284 - 284. Blades

A month slowly passed.

Noah was successfully moved to a reinforced room, the cultivators in the Odrea country couldn't perform inscriptions so their inscribed rooms were mostly empty.

The only occupied rooms were the ones with a higher density of "Breath" but Noah had no use for them.

Explosions rang out continuously in Noah's new habitation, the people there became used to that noise after some time.

Yet, the explosions suddenly stopped right a week before the next battle with the Empire.

Logan had placed a few soldiers next to Noah's room to keep an eye on him and they promptly reported that change of behavior, he couldn't help but worry at that silent conduct.

However, more days passed in silence, the date of the battle was nearing and Noah had still to exit the room.

'I should take a look.'

Logan thought two days before the battle.

He had seen Noah's state after he blew up his previous flat, there was the possibility that he had died in his experiments.

Yet, the scene that welcomed him as soon as he entered Noah's room was quite far from his expectations.

Logan directly opened the door, he didn't knock nor did he announce himself, he was Noah's captain after all, he could act freely there.

What he saw was Noah seriously staring at a black saber.

Its shape was uneven and it was quite thick, it didn't even have a handle.

Nevertheless, it had a sharp side and the amount of danger that it radiated made even Logan hesitate at that moment.

"Tell me, do you have the confidence of blocking an attack with this?"

Noah spoke without moving his gaze from the sword, he was fervently inspecting every detail of his creation.

"No."

Logan honestly answered.

He was a cultivator in the solid stage of the second rank of the dantian, his sheer power was one step above Noah.

However, at the sight of that weapon, even his confidence wavered.

It couldn't be helped, the sword radiated an ominous aura, its thick body exuded a sharp feeling that was completely inconsistent with its form.

'What is that thing?'

Together with that sharpness, Logan also felt an innate destructiveness, that weapon seemed created with the sole purpose of destroying everything in its path!

"Good."

Noah plainly answered and stored the sword in his space-ring.

He didn't move though, he stood still with his mind focused on the device that was keeping the blade.

'It doesn't affect the ring, I can store it.'

Noah heaved a sigh of relief when he saw that the floor of the separate dimension was unaffected by the destructiveness of the sword.

"What is it?"

He asked, he could finally focus on the soldier.

"The battle is in two days, we need to prepare."

Logan replied and Noah nodded at those words.

"I need another day and then I'll join you."

Noah was emitting a sharp aura as he spoke, his mind was still affected by the recent forging.

"Alright, meet me in the central building."

Logan gulped before saying those words, the atmosphere in that room was too tense for him to act normally.

He immediately exited the room after that, he didn't want to stay in that situation for even a second more.

'Well, that was an honest judgment,'

Noah smiled, his recent creation put him in a good mood, he was extremely happy to have finally created something that powerful.

'Twenty-five of my Undead chameleon bones have been wasted but the twenty-sixth has granted me a battle prowess in the peak of the second rank of the dantian. Let's make it twenty-seven and I'm ready.'

Noah resumed his forging.

He had always fought with a saber in each hand, he couldn't create just one Demonic sword.

The second blade was created in half a day and it was a more perfected product than the first one.

Its body was less thick than the other sword and its shape seemed more fit for battle.

Noah wielded the other sword and took a deep breath before exercising with his new weapons.

The inscribed blades were heavier than his previous sabers and each of their attacks released a destructive aura that made the inscriptions in the room flicker to no end.

Then, Noah directly performed the Second Form of the Ashura while entering the partial Demonic form.

Six fuming sabers became one as he slashed vertically on the wall of the room.

The inscriptions of the room shone with blinding light to prevent any damage on the wall and they ultimately won against Noah's destructive blow.

Yet, a small dent still appeared on the wall, the defensive inscriptions couldn't completely block that attack.

'This room was meant for rank 3 cultivators and my most powerful attack can barely scratch its surface. My battle prowess is at the peak of the second rank, that's the best I can obtain for now.'

Noah had decided to forge the Demonic swords before reaching the third rank of the sea of consciousness because he wanted to have some kind of insurance during the war.

He was simply too weak, he would just be stomped by rank 3 cultivators.

However, having finally created his weapons put him at the peak of the second rank, giving him some confidence in the imminent battle.

'The conditions for my release will most likely concern the number of killings that I do in the battles, these weapons should catch a few cultivators by surprise.'

He had finally used the Elemental forging method to improve his strength, he felt as if his constant effort had ultimately been repaid.

'These are prototypes, there is large room for improvements but I should still wait to become a rank 3 mage before attempting in other forgings. Right now, I should be happy that I finally have weapons unaffected by my Demonic form.'

The black smoke from before didn't affect the blades at all, they actually resonated with his spell, increasing the amount of smoke.

'I actually can't wait to test them in battle, I wonder what Ivor would say at their sight.'

It was in that mood that he went to rest, he wanted to be at his peak condition before the war.

#### Chapter 285 - 285. Valley

Noah went to the central building of the city at dawn.

Logan was waiting for him with a small troop of soldiers, their expressions were stern and focused, even the atmosphere predicted a bloody day.

"Follow me."

Logan spoke as soon as he arrived and led him toward the borders of the country.

They crossed what seemed a main road toward the eastern border, Noah guessed that it was once used to link the Empire and the Odrea nation.

Then, the road ended in a gorge sided by two tall mountains.

There was no grass nor vegetation on the terrain of the valley, just a lifeless brown ground with shades of red in its color.

"This is where we fought for the last hundreds of years, it is the weakest point of the formation and also the battlefield decided in our agreement with the Empire."

Logan explained.

Noah looked at the environment with apprehension, the valley allowed only frontal attacks, it wasn't a place where one could perform intricate battle plans.

'Hundreds of years of battles have started to change the color of the terrain. The battle will be messier than I thought.'

"How does it work?"

Noah asked after he had a general idea of the battlefield.

"We gather here every month, one thousand soldiers for each side. The rules limit the number of rank 3 cultivators to fifty and rank 2 cultivators in the solid stage to two hundred, the other spots are freely occupied by anyone below that level."

'So, I'm basically cannon fodder, forging the Demonic swords was a good idea.'

Noah nodded at Logan's explanation and continued with his questions.

"When does the battle start?"

"Midday and continues till the sun sets. Then we stop fighting and reorganize for the next month."

"What are the conditions for my release?"

"Kill one hundred cultivators in the solid stage of the second rank and you are free."

Noah halted his questions at those words and turned his gaze to Logan.

His expression was firm, it was clear that there wasn't room for negotiations.

'For how much do they want to keep me here? Do they expect that living here for some years will eventually make me sympathize with their cause?'

Noah could guess their intentions.

He was simply a cultivator in the liquid stage of the second rank and furthermore he had had his breakthrough only recently.

Using cultivators in the solid stage as a requirement would force him to stay in that nation for three years at least!

That was because he would need to have another breakthrough before he could confidently face those strong enemies, he would be forced to fight against soldiers with power similar to his before he could effectively target the stronger ones.

'They are underestimating me.'

However, his actual battle prowess was far higher than their calculation.

Noah had the Demonic form spell as well as the Mental tremor spell, those two attacks relied on the power of his sea of consciousness that was highly atypical for his level.

'I can't directly charge in the ranks of the cultivators in the solid stage but I should be able to sneak out some kill from now and then.'

He wasn't expecting to complete the task directly in one battle but he could guess that it would take him far less than they expected.

"Alright."

Noah ultimately answered.

"You will recognize the level of the enemies by the colors of their robes. Black is for cultivators in the third rank, red for those in the solid stage of the second rank, and blue for everyone else. We have prepared a blue outfit for you, wear it before the battle."

A soldier took out a blue robe from a space-ring and handed it to Noah.

Noah directly undressed in front of the soldiers and donned the new clothes, they were tight, exactly as he liked.

'They must have chosen them after my usual outfit, they are really trying to please me.'

He sighed as he stored his black robe in his space-ring but then he noticed that Logan's troop was staring at him.

"What?"

Logan coughed lightly before pointing to one small boulder in the distance.

"You could have changed there, there are women here."

Noah then noticed that the female soldiers had their heads lowered and some signs of blushing could be recognized on their cheeks.

'Aren't we about to fight a war? How can they think about anything else?'

Noah didn't understand them but he was a special case.

Not only the topic of romance was always outclassed by his training, but he also had never been careful about those gestures.

He had simply chosen to change there because it was the fastest action, he couldn't bother with the feelings of those that were watching.

Truth to be said, his body was extremely fit and his white skin coupled with his cold aura gave him a harmonious but untouchable figure, the women there couldn't help but be attracted by him.

"Can I cover my face, right? I have my enemies too after all."

Yet, Noah's mind was completely focused on the imminent battle.

He had never had a second of peace in his second life, everything had always been about life or death, his eyes could only see the path to power.

"Yes, you can."

Logan answered and Noah took out a black hood from his space-ring.

After wearing it so that his facial features were covered, he sat cross-legged on the ground to meditate.

Logan sighed and set a battle plan with his troop as he waited for the other soldiers to arrive.

Little by little, more people arrived in the valley.

Most of them wore blue clothes while a few of them had red robes, only every now and then a cultivator dressing black would appear.

On the other side of the valley, a similar scene was unfolding.

Soldiers from the Empire were amassing on that part, it didn't take much for them to create a troop made of one thousand soldiers.

The battle was about to begin.

#### Chapter 286 - 286. Training ground

One thousand soldiers for each side, they were staring at each other with animosity and stern expressions.

Yet, there were differences in their attitudes.

The soldiers from the Odrea nation were solemn and focused, they were fighting for their country after all, they were the line of defense that protected their loved ones.

Those from the Empire, instead, had a more relaxed attitude.

They were worried about the imminent battle but they didn't seem that interested in its outcome, also, they seemed far more inexperienced.

'These are just new troops of the Empire while we have experienced soldiers on this side, what a joke.'

Noah understood the meaning behind that battle.

"So, you exchanged your future to become a training ground?"

He couldn't help but ask that question to Logan.

"We do what we must to survive."

His answer was cold, he didn't appreciate Noah's mocking.

'They are just using your determination to train new soldiers though, I bet that they give away rewards based on their performance.'

Noah had seen a similar situation both in his mansion and in the academy.

'The battle in this country is just a mission for them, they will receive rewards based on their performance and some privilege for their participation. The determination of the two sides is on a completely different level.'

One fought for their country, the other fought for benefits, it was obvious who would prevail.

Yet, the objective of the Empire wasn't to win but to train new soldiers while slowly weakening the Odrea nation.

'No wonder they survived for such a long time, the Empire hasn't a better use for them.'

They had given away their techniques, forever sealing their path toward higher levels, and they were also providing a training ground for new soldiers, what would the Empire gain more from conquering them?

'They are no different from the slaves mining Vostum, they are simply used in a different way.'

Noah sighed, he was beginning to understand the amount of desperation that they had felt through the years.

"Adam, you will join the blue troops on the left side. We usually fight according to our colors so you should only face cultivators on your level."

Logan reassured Noah while explaining his battle tactic.

"You know, I don't fight well when I'm surrounded by allies, my strength will be affected."

Noah complained but Logan simply snorted at those words.

"That's your problem, you are part of our country now. Kill as many as you can while protecting those around you, these are your orders."

Then, he pointed toward the left side of the valley, he was ordering Noah to take his position.

He didn't waste time and went where Logan had pointed, he was soon surrounded by soldiers wearing blue robes, the army was slowly taking the position.

Meanwhile, at the top of one of the mountain peaks.

Lisa followed by her two protectors was coldly looking at a man on the other side of the formation.

"Lady Lisa, you are becoming more beautiful with each passing day."

The man bowed toward her as he spoke those words.

"Hmph, keep your crap for yourself, Seth, I'm here just to watch the battle."

One of her protectors took a chair from his space-ring and placed it on the ground.

Lisa calmly sat on it and focused her gaze on the valley below, her eyes seemed to linger on a blue figure with a black hood that covered his face.

That sight saddened her for a second before she wore again a cold expression.

"I see that you have a new outsider in your ranks. What did you give him to make him fight? A martial art? A spell? Or, maybe, yourself?"

Seth mocked from the other side of the formation, causing the anger of the two protectors.

"Watch your mouth trash of the Empire! Lady Lisa is as pure as the day she was born."

That answer made Seth smile, he enjoyed those kinds of interactions.

"And what can you even do? The moment you step outside the formation, you will die."

There was only the defensive formation protecting the Odrea nation from the unmatched power of the Empire, the protector couldn't cross it just to teach a lesson to Seth.

Ultimately, the protector snorted and shut his mouth.

"Lisa, you are losing about fifty soldiers each month, I believe that it won't even take a decade before you'll run out of them."

Seth continued speaking, uncaring of the cold gazes of the protectors.

"You know, I'm the appointed captain for the missions on the Odrea country, I might purposely select weak soldiers if you manage to please me."

Seth had a lecherous smile on his face, he was basically offering easier battles in exchange for Lisa's body.

"You lose far more soldiers every time."

Lisa didn't move her gaze from the valley as she answered, it was almost midday, the battle was about to begin.

"And the Empire is thankful for that. Your help in taking away the trash from our ranks is really appreciated."

Seth bowed again, there was some truth behind his mocking words.

The battles against the Odra country were used as a form of training for their new troops.

The Empire was able to skim the ranks of the soldiers, reducing their numbers and obtaining experienced cultivators under their domain.

Weak soldiers were a burden after all, even for a big country like the Empire.

However, by skimming them in a war, they managed to keep a high standard for their cultivators.

Strength was everything, the Empire had no need for cultivators with a weak battle prowess.

Seth then raised his head and looked toward the sun before quickly lowering it again.

"It's beginning."

Down in the valley, Noah was in the vanguard position among other soldiers.

The red and black troops were behind them, they were the first line of attack.

A cultivator with a black robe was in front of them, carefully inspecting the position of the sun.

He then raised his hand, the atmosphere in the army immediately became tenser.

Then, he lowered it in a fast motion, loudly shouting to the soldiers behind him.

"To battle!"

Chapter 287 - 287. First wave

The battle began.

One thousand soldiers charged against one thousand soldiers, both sides neared each other at high speed.

The side from the Empire had robes with an emblem depicting a winged tiger on their chest area, it wasn't hard to recognize them.

However, Noah didn't focus on the wave of blue soldiers that was about to crash on him, his attention was on the red troops right behind them.

'First wave of spells.'

Noah warily thought.

Spells were the strongest weapons of cultivators, it was obvious that they would be used in that battle.

However, spells usually had a wide range of destruction, they would most likely hurt your allies in that situation.

That's why the moment before the clash of the two armies was the only moment when they could be freely used.

Multicolored lights shone from both sides, the cultivators of both armies cast their long-range magical attacks against the nearing soldiers.

Water bullets, fireballs, beasts of any form and color, icy shards, flashes of lightning, golems, and much more, were created and launched from both sides.

The troops from the Odra nation were organized, they efficiently divided defensive and offensive spells between themselves.

Those from the Empire, instead, cared more about their personal safety, casting far more defensive spells than needed.

An earth-shaking explosion resounded in the valley due to the impact of that uncountable number of spells.

The earth shook and the terrain shattered under that amount of energy, the joint attacks of two thousand cultivators were too much for that valley to handle.

However, the runes of the formation aided the terrain, making it barely able to withstand the tremors.

Screams and shouts could be heard from both sides, no matter how trained soldiers could be, there were always flaws in their defenses.

Some soldiers directly died, unable to defend from the incoming spells, others were injured due to the shockwaves created after their defenses clashed with the offensive blows, casualties were already mounting.

"Your side always wins in this exchange, my men care too much about their safety to accurately react to those kinds of attacks."

Seth loudly judged from his position at the top of the mountain, he shook his head at his soldiers' performance.

Lisa, though, was used to that scene and was paying attention to the only unusual person in her army.

She clearly saw that whenever a spell came close to the cultivator with a black hood on his head, a black light would shine which completely destroyed the attack.

'He is not using spells to defend against spells... Bold.'

Noah was running toward the incoming soldiers while judging carefully the might of the spells shooting in his direction.

'They are mostly created by rank 1 mages, only a few of them are from rank 2 ones. My swords are enough to destroy them.'

The power of his new inscribed items could be already seen.

Noah had only expended a small quantity of "Breath" because his sabers were able to completely consume the enemy's attacks.

When Noah injected "Breath" in the Demonic swords, their true power would be revealed.

A threatening sharpness coupled by the destructiveness of the black smoke was radiated as soon as "Breath" circulated in those weapons, the incoming spells were swiftly divided in two only to be devoured by the toxic smoke that was automatically released.

Simply speaking, Noah came out untouched from the first wave of attacks!

He would always store his sabers after he had used them to defend, they were simply too dangerous to be in the open among his allies, he had to limit their usage in that situation.

The opposing army became closer.

Both sides were running toward each other, an earth-shaking clash at the center of the valley was inevitable.

The soldiers from both nations had formations and battle plans to perform but Noah couldn't care less about them.

He was weakened when he was among his allies, his real power could only be shown when he was surrounded by enemies.

Just as the two sides were about to clash, Noah activated his new spell.

His mental sphere hummed and redirected those vibrations toward his eyes.

His vision blurred for an instant but Noah forced his gaze to stay on the soldier right in front of him.

It was a man in a blue robe, he had a rank 4 body and a dantian that matched Noah's one.

Yet, his mental sphere was only in the first rank, it was simply too weak compared to Noah's level.

The shockwave hit him.

It wasn't something material or visible, just an inaudible tremor that hit his mental sphere.

That tremor though was dense, it ran through the air like a beam made of mental energy that directly pierced the cultivator's mind, creating a hole in the frontal part of his mental sphere.

However, the power of the shockwave didn't disperse, it continued unhindered its march across the mind of the cultivator, creating another hole on the sphere and exiting from its back.

The shockwave then hit the soldier behind him and destabilized his balance, forcing him to halt his march.

As for the first soldier, his eyes lost their light as life abandoned him, he fell lifelessly on the ground without even being able to react.

One spell to kill a soldier and destabilize the one right behind him!

'Amazing!'

Noah was elated by the power of the Mental tremor spell, its effects completely matched his expectations.

'Simple mental waves can crack a mental sphere but it takes time and a great amount of concentration to do so, I had to endure the thunderstorm when I fought Manuel because of that. This kind of condensed beam, however, is far more effective and takes way less time to prepare.'

The death of the soldier left an opening in the vanguard line of the Empire.

Noah suppressed the burning sensation on his eyes and shot at full speed right in that opening, he wanted to cut through the enemy's ranks all by himself!

#### Chapter 288 - 288. Red

Noah jumped right between the enemy's army.

The soldiers behind him crashed on the opposing side, attacking with their strongest blows or defending against the enemy's offensive.

The second clash produced more casualties, many soldiers of the Empire were caught unprepared by the momentum of the battle, they were simply too inexperienced to efficiently use their power in that situation.

After the first clash, though, the situation stabilized.

The soldiers formed small groups where personal or group battles were fought, killing a cultivator was hard, victory couldn't be achieved unless there was a big difference in numbers or strength.

The survival instinct of the soldiers from the Empire kicked in, the second line of their army did better than the second one, they managed to block the offensive of the Odra army, stalling the advance of the army.

The battles in the vanguard position were messy and merciless, one mistake could cause death or a fatal injury.

The soldiers of the Odra nation were relentless in their assault, they had been in that situation too many times, their cooperation and experience slowly made them win the small battles on the first line of the battlefield, the cultivators of the Empire were slowly pushed back.

Noah, however, was already among the enemy's ranks.

He had immediately killed the soldier previously destabilized with his spell and then continued to swing his black sabers inside the army of the Empire.

The First Form of the Ashura coupled with the Demonic swords showed its full potential in that situation.

The fuming ethereal sabers fend off any enemy that tried to approach him from his sides while his two real weapons cut unhindered anything that stood on their path.

Those soldiers weren't wealthy, their cultivation level came from the generosity of the Empire toward its citizens.

So, they weren't equipped with defensive items or inscribed weapons, only a small part of them had inscribed items in the second rank.

Yet, Noah's weapons were at the peak of the second rank!

They had been created with the sole purpose of cutting everything in their path, Noah's mind was imagining a saber dividing the sky when he imbued his will on the "Breath".

Their sharpness coupled with the destructiveness of the Demonic form spell made them able to easily sever anything weaker than them!

Swords, spears, shields, knives, all kinds of weapons were used by the soldiers to block his offensive and all of them were cleanly cut without any exclusion.

Noah's blades destroyed common and inscribed items as if they were cutting through butter, always ending on the astonished soldiers afterward.

A war was a messy place.

The soldiers didn't have time to actively change their fighting method, especially considering their inexperience.

That's why Noah's offensive continued to take lives without anyone able to stop him.

Those soldiers were either in the gaseous or liquid stage of the second rank of the dantian, their power was already barely enough to match Noah.

Considering the confused situation in the battle and their inexperience, they were completely unable to stop Noah.

Yet, not everyone was unaware of his actions.

Seth, Lisa, and her two protectors could clearly see how the hooded man ran in a straight line among the army of the Empire, disturbing their formation from the inside.

"What is that? Did you hide a cultivator in the solid stage below a blue robe?"

Seth angrily asked, he was ready to suffer some losses but the number of dead soldiers was increasing at an incredible ratio, a situation like that had never happened before.

"You know that I can't do that. Our agreement is clear, I can't use this kind of tricks or my dantian would explode."

Lisa coldly answered.

The agreement with the Empire was strict, the battles had to be fair and straightforward, both sides couldn't use any kind of ploy or trick.

Seth's eyes sharpened, Noah's figure was continuing in his killing spree, no one among the blue soldiers was able to stop him.

A token appeared in his hands and he softly spoke at it, he was communicating some special order to the troops below.

"The outsider you trapped this time has some talent, it's a pity that your nation managed to rope him in before the Empire could."

He loudly announced as his eyes shone with a cold light.

On the battlefield, Noah was still running in a straight line.

The First Form was used to defend from the attacks coming at him from other directions while his two sabers continued to claim many victims.

That kind of fighting style allowed him to fight for a long time without expending that much energy.

He was only using his martial art and the partial Demonic form after all, he could totally bear that expenditure of mental energy and "Breath" at his level.

That was also due to the fact that he was using those means only to defend, his real offensive power came from his blades that consumed virtually no energy.

Then, something changed around him.

The blue soldiers began to back off and a red figure could be seen running at full speed through their ranks.

'There you are.'

Noah smiled behind his hood at that sight.

'They have finally sent a cultivator in the solid stage to stop me.'

He knew that he was creating far too damage in the army of the Empire, they had to stop him.

Contrary to everyone's expectations, Noah didn't run away at the sight of that red robe but, instead, he jumped right at it!

A loud snort could be heard from the red cultivator, he felt that he was being underestimated by that simple blue soldier.

A difference in stage meant more powerful attacks and the ability to fight for a longer time, it was hard to overcome that hurdle.

However, Noah jumped at him without hesitation!

'Mental tremor!'

His vision blurred for less than an instant and a mental beam shot toward the red cultivator.

His opponent had a rank 2 mental sphere and an inscribed weapon, he was clearly stronger than him.

Yet, Noah's spell was able to destabilize him for a few seconds, making him unable to infuse his "Breath" in the weapon.

Noah's vein bulged and turned black, he had activated the power of his body and converged all his ethereal sabers in a single slash.

Under the incredulous gaze of the soldiers of the Empire, Noah's attack cut right in the middle of the red cultivator's weapon before it severed his head.

#### Chapter 289 - 289. Escalation

Gasps, astonished expressions, surprised shouts, those were the reactions of the soldiers of the Empire after witnessing Noah's actions.

They have seen how a cultivator in the liquid stage had successfully barged into the enemy lines and killed tens of blue cultivators before beheading the red one that had come to stop him.

Defeating a cultivator in a higher stage but in the same rank was not an impossible feat, many geniuses in the past had succeeded in such an act.

However, Noah's actions were smooth and fast, the red cultivator wasn't even able to attack before he was killed.

They had no doubt that Noah was in the liquid stage, they knew about the terms of the agreement between the Odrea nation and the Empire after all.

That meant that his amount of "Breath" was limited, they could surely overwhelm him with their sheer number.

Yet, Noah's actions made one thing clear: taking him down would come at a heavy price!

That's why no one wanted to make the first move.

The soldiers of the Empire simply stared at Noah collecting the corpse of the red cultivator as they encircled him.

They were waiting for the moment in which he resumed his offensive, their focus was reaching the peak as they stared at the hooded figure.

Nevertheless, Noah didn't charge at them.

Instead, he began to run in the direction of the Odrea army.

His Demonic swords were unsheathed and the First Form of the Ashura was performed as he made his way back to the allies' ranks.

'Is he running away?'

That was the first thought of the soldiers around him, they couldn't help but be slightly relieved by that course of events.

"What are you doing!? Chase him!"

A loud shout resounded right behind them.

Two cultivators with red robes were running at full speed toward the escaping Noah, their eyes were filled with anger as they crossed undisturbed the crowd of blue soldiers.

Everything became clear in the soldiers' mind, the Empire had decided to double its efforts in taking down the hooded cultivator.

The soldiers began to chase Noah but he was already far away in the distance, no one dared to stand in front of him after seeing his battle prowess, they simply limited themselves to attack his sides.

Yet, the smartest of them had realized something from that turn of events.

'He has escaped before we could perceive the arrival of the red soldiers, what exactly is the level of his sea of consciousness?'

Noah was in the liquid stage after all, it was normal to think that his mental sphere must have just crossed the threshold for the second rank.

The reality though was different, Noah had begun to escape right before the reinforcement came, his timing was too perfect to consider it a coincidence.

Meanwhile, Noah was returning at high speed toward his allies.

The soldiers of the Empire didn't dare to block his path, he basically never used his inscribed sabers while returning to the Odra army.

The area where the battle was held came into his field of view, the valley didn't allow for all those soldiers to fight each other at the same time, the battles were limited to where the two armies clashed.

'It should involve red and black cultivators as the night approaches.'

Noah knew that blue cultivators were only cannon fodder, just those few cultivators in the third rank were enough to vanquish all of them.

'I should just lay low till the end of the battle, I don't believe that the Empire would leave another red soldier unguarded.'

He had done enough in that battle, he didn't want to expose himself too much for a nation that had basically imprisoned him.

'Let them fight their war, I only need to collect red cultivators.'

Noah saw an opening in one of the battles in the front line and hastily jumped toward it.

One of the soldiers of the Empire had his head severed from behind his back as Noah passed him and returned inside the allied army.

That small battle was then won by the soldiers of the Odra country, they were more experienced after all, that small advantage given by Noah had allowed them to inflict fatal damages on all their opponents.

The soldiers that watched his retreat looked at him in disdain, they weren't aware of his feats behind the enemy lines so they simply thought that he wanted to find a safe position where to hide.

Yet, they were focused on the war, they didn't have time to care about one deserting soldier.

From his safe position, Noah could calmly recover his mental energy and pay attention to the continuation of the battle.

The soldiers of the Odrea nation had the advantage from the beginning, they slowly pushed back the army of the Empire.

Time passed and the number of battles won by their side rose, the casualties on the side of the Empire increased at a fast pace.

The Odrea army would substitute the wounded and exhausted soldiers even during their battles, they were doing their best to limit the deaths as much as they could.

The Empire, however, was using that situation to skim their ranks, they would simply let the soldiers in the front die before sending reinforcements.

"The numbers are completely on your favor this time. You lost only around twenty soldiers while we have suffered losses for more than one hundred and fifty cultivators. I think it's time for the red ones to join the battle."

Seth spoke and whispered some words on his token.

The one hundred and ninety-nine red soldiers of the Empire immediately joined the front lines, their actions were fast, they were ready to move a long time ago.

However, before they could reach the defenseless blue cultivators of the Odrea nation, the red cultivators of that side had already moved to intercept them, Lisa wasn't taken by surprise by Seth's quick decision.

The battles escalated, every fight had blue and red cultivators fighting together from that moment on, the waves of energy released in each of those fights made even Noah wary.

Chapter 290 - 290. Brother

Everything became messier.

The battles began to spread through the entirety of the two armies.

They were slowly crashing on each other, the front line had fallen as soon as the red cultivators joined the war.

Cultivators in the liquid stage weren't much of a threat for those in the solid one but they could still overwhelm them with their numbers.

The first clash had left the Empire outnumbered after all, even with the help of those in the solid stage, its army was still forced on the defensive.

Yet, the casualties had stopped increasing so rapidly.

The red cultivators had become the main power in each battle while the blue ones were just providing support, the difference in strength between the two sides wasn't that overwhelming.

Noah could run freely on the battlefield in that situation.

The soldiers were engaged in their personal or group battles, their focus was on the opponents in front of them, they couldn't be distracted for even a second.

That's why Noah resumed in his killing.

He would reach for the most one-sided battles and help to deliver the finishing blow on the blue soldiers of the Empire.

The layers of mental energy around his figure allowed him to appear behind their backs almost unnoticed, most cultivators wouldn't even understand what had hit them even as they died.

'This is similar to the battle against Orson. I'm surrounded by cultivators stronger than me and the energy released from their battles is enough to blow me away. Yet, if I plan it carefully, I can decide the outcome of some of them.'

Killing one blue cultivator could break the balance in each battle and create the chance for a fast victory.

It wouldn't cause the death of the red soldiers but it would surely increase the casualties among the blue robes.

Also, due to that diminished obstruction, the red soldiers on his side would have an easier time defeating their opponents.

Ants were small and inoffensive but a million of them could take down a tiger.

The same went for the cultivators in the liquid stage joining the battles of the red ones.

Their power was not a match for those in the solid stage but their attacks could still wound their bodies.

One attack from a red cultivator could kill anyone with a blue robe but they were still forced to defend against the joint offensive of those in the liquid stage, especially if they were backed by red cultivators too.

Eliminating the pawns to leave the knights unguarded, that was a really common battle tactic.

"Found you!"

However, Noah's actions couldn't remain unnoticed for too long.

Noah turned toward the voice that had just shouted those words only to find a red cultivator sending icy shards at him.

'Fuck!'

The chaos inside the battlefield had covered the tracks of that enemy even from a careful person like Noah.

Yet, he wasn't that close, Noah was able to promptly react to that spell.

Twenty fuming slashes shot from his inscribed weapons, the slashes multiplied mid-air and the black smoke resonated with the sabers, tracing black lines in the air as they reached for the crystalline shards.

An explosion rang out, the shards were destroyed and exploded in every direction, stabbing themselves on the soldiers around the area of impact.

Also, a black cloud formed there, creating a dead zone that consumed any unfortunate cultivator that came in contact with the smoke.

'This madman actually used a spell in such a crowded area!'

Noah didn't care about the damages that his attack caused on his allies, he had to defend himself after all, he had no other way to block that spell.

However, the determination of the red cultivator had surprised him.

'Is he tasked to take me down?'

Noah couldn't help but think that he had become some sort of target in the eyes of the Empire.

"Typical of the Empire, you don't care about your soldiers at all!"

Another voice sounded in the area and a red cultivator from the Odrea nation jumped right in front of Noah in a protective manner.

"You have no honor, you actually chased down a weaker cultivator! Let me teach you a lesson!"

The cultivator that came in Noah's defense was one of the female cultivators in Logan's troop, Noah vaguely remembered her face.

"Hmph! Weak my ass. That devil has unleashed mayhem in our ranks and even killed my brother who was a fellow red robe! Heaven itself wants me to take revenge!"

The woman was surprised by the man's words and turned to look at the outsider behind her.

Noah's actions weren't seen by many, he was behind the enemy lines after all, there weren't any witnesses from the Odrea nation.

However, when she turned, she noticed that the hooded figure had disappeared.

"AHGH!"

A pained cry came out from the red cultivator in front of her which forced her to turn again.

Then, she saw a scene that she would never forget.

The man in the solid stage was holding his head with a pained expression, his brows were knitted as if he was suffering from a powerful headache.

A blue figure immediately appeared behind him.

His hood flapped due to the fast movements of the young man, revealing his cold bloodshot eyes firmly staring at the man's neck.

A black light flashed and the man's head was severed, everything had happened so fast that she almost didn't realize that a cultivator in the solid stage had just died in front of her.

Noah stored the corpse in the space-ring and nodded at the woman that had come in his help, she was able to see how the black veins filling his face slowly faded as he put his hood back on his head.

She then understood what had happened.

Noah had used the moment of distraction that she had created to kill the red cultivator.

There was no hesitation in Noah's actions, he had recognized that chance and grasped it, obtaining the best possible outcome.

His cold eyes resembled those of a magical beast pouncing at its prey, there wasn't any superfluous emotion in them, only a sharp determination was exuded.

She felt a chilling sensation on her back as she looked at his lonely figure going back on the battlefield to look for more prey.