

Chapter 361 - 361. Sect

Bruce was more than two meters tall, he had short black hair, thick and messy eyebrows, and a large nose.

He appeared extremely wild but Noah could see that his mind endured the weight of his faction, he wasn't a mindless idiot.

'Peak of the third rank, no wonder he is wary about being near weaker disciples.'

Noah had faced two rank 3 cultivators in his life.

The first one was the black robe in the valley in Odra nation while the second one was Alison.

However, the black robe was just in the lower tier of the third rank, Noah with his just obtained rank 3 sea of consciousness was able to fight back his pressure.

As for Alison, she wasn't using her real power or her tattoo would have interfered with her chase.

Yet, Bruce had a dantian in the solid stage and a mental sphere nearing the heroic ranks, coupled with the fact that he found it hard to hold back, it made his sole presence a threat for the weak disciples.

'Not being able to hold back at his level means that even his words are backed with the full power of his cultivation level and mental energy, the suppression was so strong because I was extremely close too.'

Noah analyzed Bruce's power, he would be his captain from that moment onward after all.

The mental sphere applied pressure depending on its width.

Being in the third rank didn't mean having the same power, the larger the sphere the more pressure it could generate.

Noah could be considered a newbie of the third rank while Bruce was at its peak, the difference between their seas of consciousness was simply too vast.

'His words could be considered fully powered attacks due to his peculiarity, I wonder how strong he actually is when he uses spells and techniques.'

"Breath" and mental energy were energies, they could be used in their raw form.

Yet, to express their true power, they had to be channeled in martial arts and spells, Noah couldn't help but be amazed at Bruce's power since just his raw power was enough to suppress him.

"Joining you, what does it imply?"

Noah asked, he was happy that he could stay in the faction while avoiding Alison.

"Let me explain the hierarchy of the faction first."

Bruce answered as he took a blank sheet and a stick from his space-ring.

"Rank 1 and rank 2 cultivators are pawns, they can only be ordered around. They are all assigned to captains that will send them into missions according to their cultivation level."

Bruce drew small dots at the bottom of the sheet, they represented the pawns he was speaking about.

"Rank 3 cultivators are all captains, they can form their own teams and pursue treasures on their own when they find a source that is reliable enough in their eyes. My faction has more than twenty rank 3 cultivators, we are quite powerful in the sect."

'More than twenty? If there is the same number of rank 3 experts even in the other faction, then just the human division of the sect has more than one hundred cultivators at the peak of the human ranks!'

Noah was amazed at those numbers, he felt extremely glad that he had joined the sect.

"Seth is above the captains, his words have the same weight as mine when I'm not around, be sure to trust him and don't let the events of today affect you, he is really reliable."

Bruce vouched for Seth but Noah only nodded, trust was something that had to be earned, especially in his case.

"I'm at the Leader of the faction, we can't have the backing of the monsters in the heroic ranks because it will affect the human matters too much so I'm the biggest power that you will meet while you are here."

Bruce continued to draw small dots on the sheet, some of them were bigger according to the level of the cultivators he was speaking about.

Then he made a big circle around those dots while drawing other circles of the same width around it.

"These are the six factions in the Chasing demon sect but not all its members want to join a faction, many of them only want to cultivate in peace and not aim for the precious resources of the inventory."

Bruce drew many dots outside of the circles, the whole sheet was filled with dots by then.

"What is this?"

Bruce picked the sheet from the ground and pointed at it, Noah understood what he wanted to hear.

"The sect."

He answered and Bruce nodded at his words.

"Exactly, the factions might work in different areas of interest and might have some minor conflict between each other but we are all members of the same sect, the good of the sect will always come before our personal interests."

The sheet then caught fire, blue flames burned in Bruce's hand as he fixed his gaze on Noah.

"Always remember: if the sect falls, you fall with it; if the sect shines, you shine with it. Also, don't ever forget that we are just humans, the elders in the heroic ranks might appear absent but they are always watching us, they hope to see more of us joining their ranks where the real matters between cultivators unfold."

The sheet was completely burned by the blue flames, not even its ashes remained in Bruce's hand.

"As for now, the sect has more than two thousand cultivators between the first and second rank, more than a two hundred in the third rank, and, for what I was able to understand, at least ten in the heroic ranks. I hope to join them soon but I still lack a proper cultivation technique that allows me to continue training after the tribulations, that's why I'm slowing down my improvements."

Bruce sighed when he finished speaking, techniques in the heroic ranks seemed hard to find even for a cultivator in a large sect like him.

"Now, let's talk about your situation."

Chapter 362 - 362. Delusions

Noah listened with interest, Bruce was finally going to speak about him.

"You are quite strange, rank 3 mage while being a cultivator in the second rank, truly strange."

Bruce loudly pondered as he stared Noah, he found it hard to believe that someone like him existed.

"You would be generally used as a pawn until you reach the third rank but you can be considered already halfway in that level, consider that there are rank 3 cultivators that are still rank 2 mages."

Noah nodded.

He was aware that his situation was peculiar, a mental sphere so strong at his age was something unheard of in that world.

"I've decided. You can't be a captain but you can still be the second in command in the team where I send you. How does it sound?"

Bruce smiled but Noah was confused.

"Didn't you say that I was joining your team?"

He replied but Bruce shook his head while suppressing a short laugh.

"No, no. I'm the Leader of the faction, I don't join missions unless they concern resources extremely important for me or the sect. Yet, I have five captains that work directly under me and I consider their teams as if they were mine. I usually send them to raid the places mentioned in the many rumors that I hear on the surface. I won't lie to you, they often come back empty-handed."

'So, not only will I not work with him, but I will also be sent to chase rumors that are most-likely false!'

Noah's irritation began to grow, he had just relaxed knowing that he wouldn't have to work with Alison when he discovered this.

"I will let you choose to which raid take part though, you can see for yourself which reports seem truer."

Three sheets appeared in his hands and he handed them to Noah.

Noah heaved a sigh of relief at that turn of events, if he had to be sent to chase rumors, he could at least decide those that seemed more accurate.

'A batch of precious magical beasts' body parts is going to be sent to the Utra nation from the archipelago. Rumors says that a rank 5 material will be on the ship but there will be only one rank 3 cultivator escorting it.'

'This seems quite unreal, a rank 5 material protected only by one powerful soldier? Impossible.'

Noah discarded the first report in his mind and began to read the next one.

'Batches of rank 4 potions and pills will be sent by the Papral nation and will arrive in the archipelago in two days. Rumors say that there won't be guards at all.'

'This is even more unreal. First of all, where would someone find a batch of such precious drugs? Second, how could they not put guards to such a precious cargo?'

Another sheet was discarded, leaving Noah with only one.

'Rumors about an Inheritance ground below the Great whirlpool next to the archipelago.'

'What!? This is even more impossible! For how long has the archipelago being inhabited? How many experts have investigated its terrain? It's impossible that an inheritance ground has never been discovered until now!'

Noah placed the third sheet on the ground and raised his head to stare at Bruce.

'Now I understand, he is the Leader of all these idiots!'

He cursed his greed again, the feeling of wanting to change faction returned at those thoughts.

"Why would you even go after these? They are clearly fake rumors!"

He decided to give voice to his thoughts, he really couldn't understand how a mighty existence at the peak of the third rank could be that blind.

"Yes, they are but what if they were real? We would obtain rank 4 drugs, or a rank 5 material, or we could also be the first to enter an inheritance ground!"

Bruce answered, his eyes shone when he thought about all those impossible resources.

'He is not an idiot, he is an optimistic one.'

Noah sighed, his luck has never been too good so he was used to always consider the worst possible outcome in any situation.

Bruce was the opposite, he knew that those rumors were probably fake but he wanted to test them anyway, hoping for one of them to be real.

"Can't I just go after real resources? I work better alone anyway, you just have to point out the places that I have to raid."

Noah didn't want to give up on the resources because he was busy chasing his Leader's dreams, he would rather work alone as he had always done.

"You will gain a thousand merit points together with a bonus for each valuable resource that you bring back if you join one of those missions. I will never force the members of my faction to go after my delusions without giving them a good reward."

At those words, Noah's eyes lit up.

'A thousand merit points for a simple raid? Bonuses according to the resources brought back? It means that I can decide whether keeping anything

interesting or exchanging it for merit points! This doesn't sound too bad with these conditions.'

Noah pondered about the matter.

'I think I can go after more reliable sources if I insist but I would only gain a few merit points and low-level resources, I'm not considering that I would further share those resources between the other members of my team. With these missions, instead, at least the part concerning the merit points is covered, I can just accumulate them and buy something in the inventory afterward, I won't need for the missions to be profitable in that case.'

Noah had to choose between a slow but steady accumulation of resources and a most-likely fruitless mission but that gave an incredible amount of merit points.

'Now I understand why the members of this faction are so extreme, I'm no different from them after all.'

Noah smiled as he thought of that, his gaze went of the sheets on the floor and he picked one of them.

"I think I will go after the rank 5 material. I don't believe that the ship will have it but there should be at least a few rank 4 magical beasts' corpses for it to be guarded by a soldier in the third rank."

Chapter 363 - 363. Clive

The reason why Noah chose to go after the rank 5 material was simple: It was the only report that seemed somewhat believable!

'I don't actually believe that there will be a rank 5 material but maybe there will be enough rank 4 ones to make a good profit.'

Those were his thoughts as he walked back to his cave.

Bruce sent him away after he had decided his mission, Noah had only to await further orders in the meantime.

'The batch of rank 4 medicines is too unreal, not only are they extremely hard to craft, but it is also impossible for such a valuable shipment to be unguarded.'

Noah thought about the second report, in his mind, the rumor was either fake or a trap purposely set by the Papral nation.

'As for the Inheritance ground, that's simply impossible.'

Noah didn't know too much about Inheritance grounds but he had been in two of them.

They were usually created by powerful beings in the heroic ranks, it would be extremely unlikely for them to remain hidden in environments filled with experts.

The archipelago had been inhabited for centuries after all, many cultivators in the heroic rank had already investigated its surface and even its exoskeleton, something so valuable like an Inheritance ground wouldn't have escaped their eyes.

'Bruce said that the ship will sail in two days, I have time for another Dantian's opening, then I will focus on returning to my peak form.'

Noah did exactly what he thought.

Another cultivation session was completed that night and, with the help of the Sea snake's tears and the liquid "Breath" in his circulatory system, he was completely healed in less than twenty-four hours.

A buzzing sound resounded in his mental sphere in the night of the second day, Noah picked his notebook and nodded internally when he heard the message carried by Bruce's mental imprint.

He dressed in his usual tight black robe and his hood was momentarily laying on his shoulder, he didn't need to cover his identity inside the sect after all.

His mental energy swept the contents of his space-rings one last time, his Instabilities and Hidden blasts were there as well as his pairs of black and white sabers, he couldn't have been more ready.

Then, he left his cave and went in the direction of the residential area of the rank 3 cultivators.

When he arrived there, he found that some disciples were gathered around a cave.

Noah recognized some of their faces from the training area used to exile the troublesome members of his faction so he neared them without hesitation.

'All in the second rank and their behavior is quite surprising, it seems that Seth was right.'

The disciples in front of the cave had stern expressions and their gazes revealed their dense battle intent, they were ready to fight to the death if needed!

The disciples noticed Noah and opened a path for him, some of them even bowed at his sight.

It couldn't be helped, not all the members of the sect had seen his battle against Perry but rumors about his strength had already spread around the sect.

Perry had gone all out during that battle but Noah had managed to defeat him with only one spell, that feat alone put him far beyond the normal rank 2 cultivators.

"Is this the captain's cave?"

Noah asked as he turned his gaze toward one of the disciples that had bowed.

"Yes, captain Clive always waits for all the members of his team to gather before opening the entrance and brief us about the plan."

The disciple politely answered and a slight smile appeared on his face when he saw that Noah nodded to him.

Clive was one of the captains directly under Bruce, he was one of the five unfortunate rank 3 cultivators that chased Bruce's delusions.

He was the one appointed with the raid of the ship belonging to the Utra nation so he would be Noah's captain for that mission.

Minutes passed and more disciples arrived in front of the cave, Noah counted twenty-five rank 2 cultivators when the entrance of Clive's habitation opened.

A slightly fat man appeared in his vision, he had long white hair combed in an intricate ponytail and long gray braids as his beard.

"Come in, the briefing won't take much."

Clive spoke, he waited for all the disciples to enter before closing the entrance.

Yet, as the crowd passed next to him, he stretched his hand to stop Noah from reaching the depth of the cave.

"Captain?"

Noah asked in confusion, he stared at Clive, waiting for an answer.

However, Clive was silent, he simply stared at Noah with a gaze that revealed his steadily increasing surprise.

Noah could feel that the mental energy of his captain was trying to inspect him but he seemed far weaker than the other rank 3 cultivators when it came to the sea of consciousness, Noah could completely protect himself this time.

'Our mental spheres should be on the same level, I can't understand much either.'

Noah thought as he tried to analyze Clive, he seemed in the gaseous stage of the third rank but he couldn't understand anything more.

"Amazing. When the leader told me about you, I thought he was joking. It seems that you really are a rank 3 mage, how did you do it?"

Clive honestly asked, it seemed that the matter was really important to him.

"Hard work and lucky encounters, I think you know that there aren't shortcuts when it comes to cultivation."

Noah lied.

His biggest advantage was that his mind as a transmigrator had been already stable since his youth, leading him to have no restrictions when he trained at that young age.

That advantage, however, was now gone.

He had reached the third rank faster than anyone in history but everyone at his age had a completely formed mind, his hard-work coupled with his mature mind had only allowed him to have a higher starting point.

Chapter 364 - 364. Roles

Noah wanted to keep his identity as a transmigrator a secret.

First of all, he had no way to explain it, he was unaware of the reason why he was granted a second life and was transported in this world.

Second, he didn't know how those around him would react at such information.

He didn't know if they would believe it but he wanted to avoid becoming the guinea pig of some powerful existence, it was better to address his fast improvements to the lucky encounters.

'If he really insists, I will just reveal the matters about the Bloodline Inheritance, that should explain part of my power at least.'

Noah thought as he waited for Clive to answer.

His gaze was lowered and he seemed deep in thought but he soon recovered himself while sighing loudly.

"Good for you, I thought you had some kind of technique that could speed up the process. I've always been slow with the Kesier runes and my cultivation technique occupies a lot of my free time... Well, nothing I can do, I'll just have to work harder."

Clive accepted the outcome of that conversation quite easily, Noah was actually surprised that he didn't probe further.

'Maybe he has a low tolerance when it comes to pain.'

Noah concluded in his mind.

Enlarging the mental sphere was a slow and painful process, it was no wonder that many cultivators would keep its training for last.

"Right, how do I obtain the fourth Kesier rune? I don't feel good when I'm unable to train."

Noah lied as he asked about the next rune.

He was still enlarging his mind thanks to the "Breath" inside his sea of consciousness but that pace was slow, it couldn't compare to the number one training method.

"Mh, you can request for it but its price is quite high. You can find it on the second floor of the missions' building but it's one of the most expensive items. Even though it can only be used in the human ranks it is still considered a resource in the heroic ranks so it will cost you a lot."

Clive explained as he went toward a table where the other disciples were gathered.

'So it was like this, no wonder I couldn't find it on the first floor.'

Noah was a rank 2 cultivator, he had never climbed to the higher floor because the missions for rank 3 cultivators were simply too difficult for him.

His spells powered by his mental sphere allowed him to fight on the same ground with weak rank 3 cultivators but his reserves of energy couldn't sustain that power for a long time, they would always be depleted before his enemies.

'I guess I have to accumulate merit points. Joining a faction was the right choice, this is the fastest way to obtain what I need.'

Noah thought as he followed Clive to the table, a large map was laid on it, it depicted a specific island of the archipelago.

"Our target is on a dock on island eighty-nine, we don't know its route nor the crew on it, we actually aren't even sure about the items that it contains but the Leader heard a rumor about a rank 5 material so he ordered for a raid."

Clive began to explain, he didn't even try to cover Bruce's naïve mindset as he summarized the situation.

"Since we don't know its route, we can only attack it when its docked. We have a teleportation matrix near its position but it's not near enough, we will be discovered for sure."

A series of awkward smiles and helpless sighs unfolded in the cave, the disciples seemed used to those kinds of events.

"We do the usual stuff: We run in the direction of the ship as soon as we teleport, we raid it fast, and then we separate to reach these three escape points. Once you are back in the sect, gather in the training area of our faction to assess the gains. Don't hold back, kill everyone that blocks our way, there aren't many soldiers there but more will definitely come after we create such commotion."

Clive's plan was simple, a normal hit and run situation, the key of the plan was the speed at which it had to be executed.

"Zach, what role do you want?"

Clive then raised his head toward Noah, his team was already used to work together but Noah was a new member, he needed a precise role to blend in.

"I'm awful at fighting together with other persons, I might unconsciously harm them if I'm forced to go all out."

Noah answered honestly, he wanted the mission to succeed and he didn't want to harm his fellow disciples, he was a member of the sect after all.

Clive thought for a while before finding a solution to that problem.

"You will be in the rearguard then, your role is to ensure that all your fellow disciples have enough time to escape after the raid. You could also be a runner but it would be a waste of your battle prowess."

Noah showed a confused expression at Clive's words.

'Rearguard? Does it mean that I won't go near the resources? Also, what kind of role is the "runner"?'

Clive noticed Noah's expression and proceeded to solve his doubts.

"If you are worried about the resources, don't. Every team has strict rules, all the items stolen will be taken out when we reach the training area so to better divide them. We can also trade our belongings to take more of them if we are

really interested but I'll explain better later. You just have to swear on your horned face that you won't keep stolen items hidden from your team for now, every raiding team does that before a mission."

Noah looked at the other disciples and they nodded to him, he was glad that his role didn't influence the number of resources that he would obtain.

"As for the roles, I'm the vanguard, I'll charge ahead and probe the situation since I'm the strongest in the team. The runners are the fastest among us, their role is to sweep the ship clean and then run away with the loot. The others are soldiers, they have to keep the guards busy until the runners have stolen everything. Is everything clear?"

Chapter 365 - 365. Raid

Noah accepted.

His role was quite dangerous but it allowed him to avoid the raiding and join the battle only when everything was over.

The ship belonged to the Utra nation after all, Noah was afraid that something unexpected might reveal his identity.

The matter about the oath was solved easily, the disciples had just to stretch their hands with the horned tattoo on them and form a circle while swearing not to steal anything from the gains of the mission.

The tattoos resonated between each other and an agreement was formed, Noah couldn't help but feel amazed at how useful they were.

The cultivation world was harsh and merciless, one couldn't trust anyone.

Yet, with the help of the seal of the sect, its members could freely trust each other and focus everything they had on their missions.

"Everyone has been assigned with a role, there won't be any break once we teleport. If you have something to add before the mission, do it now."

Clive spoke but no one in the cave seemed to have anything to say.

"Perfect, see you later on in the training area and good luck!"

Clive didn't waste time in inspirational speeches and directly moved to exit his cave.

Twenty-six cultivators followed him, some of them had already covered their faces with hoods or masks.

Noah was one of them, his hood though couldn't cover the cold aura that he naturally radiated due to his sharp focus.

However, that didn't seem to affect the other disciples.

Their minds were completely focused on the incoming mission, their dense battle intent showed their incredible concentration.

The group followed Clive toward the matrixes next to the residential area, twenty-seven people stepped on one of the biggest diagrams and waited for Clive to act.

He took out many Credits, dozens of crystals with the value of more than ten thousand Credits were placed on the formation, powering the teleportation.

The scenery changed right in front of their eyes, the purple underground area was replaced by tall buildings illuminated by the bright halo radiated from the coastline.

Clive and Noah were the first to recover from the pressure of the teleportation, Clive swept the area with his eyes before identifying the target and pointing toward its direction.

The other disciples had recovered by then, they immediately went after Clive who had already jumped toward the ship that he had pointed before.

Noah waited for everyone to surpass him before chasing after them, his job was to make sure that nothing interfered with their escape, it would be better if the guards didn't see him at all.

Twenty-seven figures with their facial features hidden ran at full speed toward one of the many ships that occupied the dock.

"Identify yourselves!"

A couple of guards appeared when they reached the dock, they wore the golden colors proper of the Elbas family but they were only rank 2 cultivators, they could only retreat when they saw that the group from the Chasing demon sect had no intention to stop.

Clive sprinted, his superior cultivation level was revealed as he reached the two guards in an instant, they didn't even have the time to scream since an extremely thin line severed their bodies in two, killing them on the spot.

'Weaponless martial art, peculiar.'

Noah judged in his mind as he analyzed Clive's attack.

Clive didn't use mental energy but only "Breath", being in the third rank allowed him to kill two rank 2 cultivators with just one form of his martial art.

'They are just ants in his eyes... The peak of the human ranks seems amazing!'

Noah couldn't wait to reach that level, only being in the gaseous stage of the third rank made any cultivator virtually unbeatable by those in the second rank, the difference in power was far greater than the one between the first and the second rank.

Yet, he was forced to repress his thoughts since Clive made a turn and directed himself toward the ship that matched his report.

The other disciples followed, they jumped on the ship when they saw that Clive had done that.

Noah waited below it, his mental energy was fixed on the ship but he didn't sense any strong presence, Clive seemed the strongest aboard.

The sound of battles filled the night, the soldiers stationed on the ship tried to fight back the assault of the Chasing demon sect but they had been caught by surprise and they were outnumbered, even without directly looking at it, Noah could predict the outcome of the battle.

Minutes passed, the noise caused by the battles on the ship never stopped.

Explosions would resonate from time to time, they were the sign that spells were being used to fight.

Then, a hooded figure jumped off the ship and nodded at Noah before running in a seemingly random direction.

After that, more hooded cultivators jumped off the ship, they all went in different directions without even taking a look at Noah.

Noah counted the cultivators in his mind, he focused on the main deck when the number reached twenty-six.

He waited calmly, it didn't take much for a soldier to appear in his sight.

'Mental tremor!'

A shockwave shot from his eyes and pierced the unfortunate soldier's mind.

He was only a rank 2 mage and not even that strong, his sea of consciousness broke immediately after Noah's spell.

He fell lifelessly from the ship, his hands were severed by a neat slash before he landed next to Noah, there was no trace of life in his surprised eyes.

Noah stored the white sabers just used in his space-ring and kept the severed hands inside his robe, there was no point in leaving the soldier's space-rings there after all.

Another guard became visible on the main deck, he stared with an astonished expression at the corpse of his colleague and he wanted to retreat when he noticed Noah.

However, he was too slow!

Another mental attack was cast by Noah which successfully hit the second soldier, killing him on the spot.

Its corpse though remained on the ship, Noah couldn't pillage it.

Chapter 366 - 366. Disappointment

'This should be enough.'

Noah could sense that other soldiers were still alive on the ship but none of them seemed willing to show their face.

'My last attack should have scared them, time to go.'

About a minute had passed since the last member of his raiding team had left, there was no reason to wait any further.

Noah turned and began to run in the direction of one of the escape points.

"The dock is under attack!"

"It's the Hive!"

"Converge on the coast!"

The shouts of the reinforcements of the legal organizations could be heard in the area, they increased Noah's determination in leaving as soon as he could.

Shockwaves were created under his feet, he used the Shadow sprint many times to reach the farther escape point marked on Clive's map.

The soldiers were able to follow Noah's tracks due to the noise that he caused with the activation of his martial art but he was fast and had started to escape at the right moment, he reached the matrix before they could point out his exact position.

The teleportation matrix was in a dark alley behind a seemingly luxurious building, Noah didn't hesitate in placing a few hundred Credits on the ground to activate it.

In a few seconds, he was back in the familiar underground area.

'It's over, that went extremely well.'

Noah heaved a sigh of relief at the sight of the purple walls, he could relax now that he was back in the sect.

He lowered his hood and picked a direction, the rendezvous point was in the training area where the problematic disciples of his faction were forced to stay.

It didn't take long before he reached that area, most disciples were sleeping in corners near the walls but a small group could be seen in the distance, forming a circle as they sat on the ground.

Noah recognized the members of his team and neared them, there was an empty spot next to Clive that Noah guessed he had purposely kept for him.

'I guess hierarchy is really valued here.'

Noah was the second in command in Clive's group so he could sit next to him.

Clive opened his eyes when Noah sat, he smiled when he saw him taking two bloody hands from his robe and throwing them at the center of the group.

"What now?"

Noah asked, he didn't know how they intended to share their profits nor what they actually gained from the mission.

"We place all the loot at the center and divide it. You can request an item as long as it doesn't surpass the value of your share. Yet, if you want it even if it surpasses your share, you can add Credits or other items to the center to make up for it."

Clive answered, he seemed used to that kind of practice.

"What if two of us want the same item?"

Noah questioned, it wasn't unusual for something valuable to be desired by more people.

"You find an agreement, those not interested won't interfere."

Noah nodded at Clive's words and stood up to take back the bloody hands from the center of the group.

Then, he took the rings on their fingers and inspected their contents before emptying them and placing everything back at the center.

The soldier didn't have much, only about twenty thousand Credits, a few potions, and a scroll containing the third Kesier rune.

"We can cover the expenses for the matrixes with this, great!"

Clive exclaimed when he saw the rune, the third one was quite widespread but its value was still high.

The Kesier runes were the most common and effective training method for the sea of consciousness after all, every organization needed as many copies as it could.

Also, the missions of the factions didn't count as proper services for the sect, the missions' building would refund the Credits expended for the matrixes only if the sect greatly benefitted from those missions.

Clive then took a few rings from his robe, he had fought on the ship and managed to loot some of his victims too, the contents of the storage devices were soon exposed to the rest of the team.

'More Credits and potions, one inscribed weapon in the first rank, one in the second one, and a rank 1 cultivation technique, not bad.'

Noah thought as he watched the loot.

Clive seemed to have killed more soldiers but his loot had the same value of Noah's one.

Then, it was the turn of the other disciples, Credits and potions piled in the center of their group as the rings of the dead soldiers were emptied, scrolls containing runes or low-level technique rarely appeared.

Lastly, the runners emptied their rings.

They were the ones appointed to steal the contents of the ship, ideally, most of the gains of the mission would come from them.

Yet, everyone was soon disappointed when they saw that their loot consisted mostly of rank 3 magical beasts' corpses, with only a couple of body parts belonging to rank 4 creatures.

"Rumors are only rumors after all, there wasn't even the rank 3 cultivator mentioned in the report..."

Clive sighed as he said those words, if they subtracted the cost for the activation of the matrixes, the share for each disciple would barely reach a thousand Credits of value.

"Anyone interested in anything?"

Clive asked but no one seemed interested in those items.

'The body parts of the rank 4 creatures aren't bad but there are too few of them and not even one complete body, I'd rather have merits points at this point.'

Noah analyzed the loot and decided that it was better to begin to save for the fourth Kesier rune instead of having materials that were only vaguely useful to him.

"Good, I will send everything to Marcia's faction except for the Credits. We will first subtract those expended in the teleportation and then equally divide the remaining sum."

No one objected to Clive's conclusion, in a few minutes, the Credits were equally divided between the group.

"We are done for now, go back to your caves. I will notify you when the Leader hears another unreal rumor."

Small laughs resounded in the training area, the raiding group divided itself and its members returned to their respective habitations to rest.

Chapter 367 - 367. Sarah

Noah's life became peaceful for a while.

There weren't other missions that required his presence and he would rather wait for Bruce's ones rather than pick those in the missions' building.

The number of merit points awarded by doing services for his faction surpassed by a large margin those given by the sect in the normal mission, Noah thought that it was better to wait for another unrealistic rumor to reach Bruce's ears rather than threaten soldiers for an entire day.

Yet, the Dantian's opening occupied only two days per week and his mental sphere enlarged autonomously so Noah found himself with far more free time than needed.

He wasn't used to that, he would always try to make the most out of his days but his centers of power were already improving and there was a limit to how much he could improve in imbuing his meaning inside the "Breath", he would need to forge to see if the effects reflected his intended meaning.

However, he had no materials nor did he want to purchase them, he was saving for the fourth Kesier rune and he would rather use his merit points to purchase spells or martial arts rather than use them to accumulate resources that he could hunt by himself.

That's why he started to join the gambling sessions of the disciples of his faction in the training area.

He was a rank 3 mage, his advantage against the other disciples was simply too great so he would often win.

"Even."

Noah spoke for last when the dice under a cup placed upside-down on the ground stopped rolling.

"Damn, I bet odd! Zach, I hate this rule that you have to be the last to speak."

"Shut up, it is impossible to play otherwise, everyone would just pick what he has chosen!"

One of the disciples that had picked even rebuked the other cultivator.

Since Noah's mental sphere was so powerful, he could predict with almost certainty the outcome of the dice by the sounds it made while rolling.

It only took Noah a few games to become used to that practice, he had become almost unbeatable after that.

'These guys, it's not so hard, they could easily learn how to do it too.'

Noah sighed in his mind when he saw that the disciples around him had started another discussion.

He didn't know when, but he had become quite used to that sight.

A few weeks had already passed after his mission with Clive's team and he had spent most of that time in the training area.

After all, the disciples were betting Credits, Noah didn't mind taking them.

The disciples had initially been happy that he had joined their gambling group but they soon discovered that their finances could only diminish when Noah was around, complaints began to accumulate and specific rules for Noah were created because of that.

"I think we need to add another disadvantage to Zach, making him pay more doesn't really affect him."

One of the disciples suggested that and the others immediately agreed with him.

"You know that you can just hear the sound of the dice? You are all rank 2 mages, you can do something this simple."

Noah complained, he didn't mind the additional rules for his presence but he couldn't help but worry about the stupidity of his fellow disciples.

"We know, we know. Yet, if we ever learn to do that, we would find ourselves unable to enjoy gambling anymore, we would have to find another game."

One of the disciples answered and Noah could only shrug his shoulders at those words.

They were spending time in that way only to ease their stress, the few hundred Credits that they lost couldn't compare with the loss of their hobby.

Noah didn't complain anymore, he was happy as long as his Credits increased.

"I think I found it! Zach, turn around and cover your ears, let's see if this works."

The other disciples seemed to agree with that idea so Noah simply turned and put the palm of his hands over his ears.

That made basically no difference in his mind, his mental waves were enough to make him understand everything that was going on behind his back.

'They are either too drunk to realize that this won't make any difference or they simply don't care. Oh well, their loss.'

The sound of a dice hitting the surface of the cup as it rolled could be clearly heard by him, Noah deduced the result of that round already.

'The batch of rank 4 pills and potions was found to be a false rumor too, David's group came back empty-handed.'

Noah thought as he waited for the dice to stop rolling.

David was another rank 3 cultivator that, like Clive, worked directly under Bruce.

Everyone in the faction seemed to know about Bruce's character, they would always compare the rumors that they were sent to investigate with the truth of the matter.

'Right now, David's team has been the most unfortunate, they have only found a bunch of food and low-quality wine, there wasn't a single resource on that ship.'

One rumor led to supplies while another led to a few rank 4 materials, the member of the thieves' faction had, of course, placed a bet on whoever had the best gains.

However, the last team had yet to return so a winner hadn't been decided.

"Odd."

Noah spoke when he heard that everyone behind him had placed their bets.

"Oh, come on!"

"Zach, why did you even learn to do something like that, it ruins all the fun!"

"I think I'm done for today, I've lost too much."

The Credits at stake were divided between the winners and Noah filled a few cups with his stash of Ivor's vine before the disciples could stand up.

"Ohhh! Zach's wine is back! It has been five days since I tasted it."

"I don't have much of it left, enjoy this few cups for now."

Noah answered to the excited praises of the others around him before his attention was attracted by the sudden appearance of a bloodied figure at the entrance of the training area.

The other cultivators turned in the direction of his gaze and were surprised to see the figure covered in blood that was limping toward them.

"That's Sarah!"

One of the disciples exclaimed and Noah identified the woman covered in blood as the captain of the team sent to investigate the Inheritance ground.

Chapter 368 - 368. Control

Sarah seemed gravely injured.

She was barely able to walk but she kept going, keeping her gaze fixed toward the depth of the training area.

"Bru..ce. Need... Bruce."

Her soft words could only be heard by Noah as she continued to limp in his direction.

Noah acted almost instinctively, he activated the warp spell and teleported right next to her where he supported her with his body.

He was the cultivator with the highest status in the training area at that moment, it was normal for him to be the first to react at that scene.

Sarah fell on him, her strength left her as soon as she had Noah's support but she managed to make one last plead before fainting.

"Bring me to Bruce."

Silence reigned in the training area, Noah inspected her body only to discover that her injuries were quite severe, even her dantian seemed to be wounded.

A notebook appeared in his hands, he quickly found Seth's mental imprint and sent a message before lifting Sarah with both his hands.

"Inform Roy, I'll bring her to the Leader."

Noah ordered before walking toward the end of the training area, he didn't even look at the other disciples as he sped toward Bruce's cave.

It took him only a few minutes to arrive in the area where drops of "Breath" accumulated on the surface of the purple walls, he could have arrived faster but he was worried that his speed would worsen Sarah's injuries.

He kicked on the entrance of Bruce's cave a few times, interrupting a cultivator during its training could be dangerous but that seemed an emergency.

"Who-!"

A loud shout resounded from the cave, Bruce interrupted it in time when his mental energy swept the two people outside.

The entrance opened, Bruce saw how Noah had his eyes closed and his brows knitted, he had protected Sarah from the Leader's shout but that left his mental sphere unguarded, his sea of consciousness was still trembling when Bruce came out of his cave.

"You really need to learn how to control yourself, she would have never been able to withstand your pressure in her condition."

Noah complained as he slowly opened his eyes, Bruce's words alone weren't enough to wound him but they still generated waves of pain when he didn't protect his mind.

Bruce, however, was speechless.

His gaze was fixed on Sarah and a conflicted expression appeared on his face.

He raised his hand toward her but then he retracted it and pointed toward his bed inside the cave, he seemed scared even to talk in that situation.

'Is he scared that he would hurt her due to his lack of control?'

Noah saw that Bruce was doing his best to control himself, his eyes couldn't leave Sarah but his mind forced his body to stay away.

Noah hurriedly brought Sarah inside the cave, he laid her on the bed and inspected her condition again.

Her body seemed on the verge of falling apart, most of her bones were broken and many of her organs were injured, even her dantian seemed damaged.

"What happened?"

Bruce spoke, his words were softer than water, Noah was surprised to discover that no pressure at all was exuded by them.

"I don't know, she appeared in the training area like this, she was only able to say your name before fainting."

Noah summarized the previous events.

Bruce nodded and neared her, he stretched his left hand toward her face while his right one clenched itself on his left arm, the grip was so tight that almost no blood was able to reach the extremities of the left hand.

Yet, he was able to safely caress her face like this, Noah understood by the affection radiated by that gesture that their relationship wasn't a simple Leader-captain one.

"Do you want me to leave?"

Noah asked, he wondered if Bruce wanted to stay alone with her.

"No, I need to push myself to the limit to control myself, if something happens, I'm afraid that I won't be able to touch her."

Bruce said while shaking his head and retracting his hand.

Sarah's condition wasn't stable, if anything happened, Bruce would only harm her with his scarce control.

"You did good, it seems that you aren't as bad as the reports say."

Bruce spoke as he took a notebook from his space-ring, messages were sent to many mental imprints as he browsed through its pages.

Noah didn't answer.

He knew that he wasn't a good person, he had realized that long ago.

Yet, that didn't mean that he couldn't feel affection for someone or that he didn't know which was the "good" action.

His life had always been on the edge of a knife, one mistake and he would have lost everything, he was used to destroying everything that opposed him.

Also, every organization in the past had always tried to exploit him, it was only in the Odrea country with Nina's affection that he was able to relax a little.

However, he was still an outsider in the Odrea country, he had never blended in too much.

The situation with the Chasing demon sect, though, was entirely different.

He was a proper disciple and most of its members were cultivators with an attitude similar to his.

Noah was still far away from feeling that he belonged to the sect but he had a clear image of his role in his mind.

He knew that he was going to be a captain sooner or later, even though he was a lone wolf, he had to do his best not to isolate himself.

"I just did what seemed right."

In the end, Noah's answered truthfully.

Bruce nodded and didn't speak again, the two of them stood silently with their gazes fixed on the wounded woman on the bed.

Then, Bruce opened the door of his room, Noah turned to see that Seth and Byron were hurriedly running toward the cave.

"Damn, where did you send her? It seems that a mountain has fallen on her!"

Byron yelled before taking a piece of glass from his space-ring, he carefully inspected her body through it, he kept on shaking his head as he did so.

Chapter 369 - 369. Awake

Minutes passed.

Byron would mumble at times when he reached a particularly wounded part of Sarah's body and he lingered a lot when he arrived at her low-waist.

Bruce's gaze never left Sarah, his concern could be seen from his anxious expression.

Seth and Noah stood motionless, Seth had his eyes on Byron, he inspected his movements as if trying to learn something while Noah would often take a peek to the expressions of those in the cave.

Then, Byron stored the lens in his space-ring and heaved a sigh as he lifted his head toward Bruce.

"How bad is she?"

Bruce's worry immediately increased when he saw that gesture, his words carried all the pressure that his mental sphere was capable of, he had completely forgotten to contain himself in that situation.

Luckily for Sarah, Seth was ready to act.

Layers of mental energy were condensed around her body, Seth managed to protect her from Bruce's involuntary attack.

"Calm down, she will survive."

Byron snorted before saying those words, it seemed that Bruce's incapability of controlling himself irritated him.

"Her body can be easily healed now that she is in the sect, the only problem is her dantian."

Byron continued with his diagnosis, he looked again at her low-waist before speaking again.

"She has stressed her center of power too much and she was probably already injured when she did so. There isn't much that I can do about that, only time will tell us if the injury is permanent."

Noah listened to his words and understood, Sarah's cultivation journey was probably over!

Cultivators had a long life but the injuries on the centers of power took a long time to heal.

Also, the older someone was, the harder it was to improve.

An elderly man would find it hard to even reach the second rank of the dantian, Noah didn't know Sarah's actual age but he guessed that if her injury was severe, it might even take decades for it to heal.

"I understand, thanks, Byron. Leave the dantian part to me, just focus on stabilizing her condition."

Bruce remembered to hold back that time.

"I need to undress her to apply the potion."

Byron spoke and Bruce turned his gaze toward Seth and Noah, the meaning behind that gesture was quite obvious.

Seth and Noah bowed before turning to leave, the entrance of the cave opened and closed in a few seconds.

Seth heaved a sigh when they were outside, he started to massage his temples as he fell deep in thought.

Noah, on the other hand, was interested in what had happened to Sarah.

'What did they find under the Great whirlpool? Sarah is a rank 3 cultivator, normal magical beasts wouldn't be able to hurt her that badly.'

The Great whirlpool was a location drawn on his map of the Coral archipelago but Noah had never taken interest in it.

The whirlpool was a danger zone where many magical beasts were gathered but that wasn't its most dangerous feature.

The sea in that zone was rough, there were marine currents so strong that even cultivators with a rank 4 body would have trouble to oppose, only marine magical beasts with their innate swimming ability could inhabit that place.

'Yet, she must have been prepared for the exploration, it's hard to believe that she wasn't ready for the marine currents.'

Sarah was a captain, she had a team.

Noah didn't mention it because, seeing the situation in which she ended up, he was already guessing the worst possible outcome.

'If it wasn't the magical beasts nor the naturally dangerous environment, then what caused her injuries?'

The rumor she was sent to investigate spoke of an Inheritance ground but Noah was still doubtful about that.

Too many experts had lived in the archipelago through the years, the Great whirlpool had already been explored long ago and had been labeled as a simple danger zone.

'Was it a trap? Rumors must come from somewhere after all, maybe some enemy of the sect was aware of Bruce's personality and decided to leak a false rumor on purpose.'

Noah reached that conclusion in his mind, that seemed the most plausible explanation.

"Is it that bad?"

A familiar voice reached Noah's ears, he raised his head only to see that Roy had arrived at the end of the training area.

Noah didn't answer but Seth nodded, he briefly explained the situation to him, without omitting the part about the contents of the rumor.

"So it was like this..."

Roy sighed when Seth finished explaining.

"Holly said that her sources knew nothing about a trap, this matter is unrelated to the legal factions."

Seth continued to explain, his statement denied Noah's hypothesis, only one option remained in his mind.

"Was it really an Inheritance ground? How is that possible?"

Noah expressed his amazement, he really couldn't understand how something like that had remained hidden for so long.

"We don't know for sure, it's better to wait for Sarah to wake up and listen to her report."

Seth's words were on point, it was useless to make conjectures when they had a living witness with them.

Noah nodded and sat on the ground, he didn't know how long it would take for Sarah to wake up but he wanted to hear her report.

After all, a possible Inheritance ground was an amazing chance!

Noah had been in two of them but he had never been able to obtain the complete inheritance of those separate dimensions.

Eccentric Thunder wanted an heir with a thunder aptitude, even if Noah had gained a lot from him, that still couldn't compare to the complete inheritance!

As for the Royal Inheritance, his power had been too low back then and most of his gains would have gone to the Elbas family anyway.

'I bet that June is extremely rich now... Damn, I'm so envious.'

Just when he was about to fall deep in his memories, the entrance of the cave opened.

Inside, Bruce could be seen laid on the bed next to Sarah.

She smiled bitterly as she allowed the big man to keep her in his embrace.

Byron stood up, he was sweating and was a bit pale but he still gestured to those outside to near him.

"Come in, I bet that you want to listen to her story."

Chapter 370 - 370. Separate dimension

Roy, Seth, and Noah entered the cave, its entrance closed behind their backs as they reached the bed where Sarah and Bruce were laying.

"You must be the new member of our faction, thank you for bringing me to Bruce and for defending me from his recklessness."

Sarah thanked Noah, her voice was soft and weak but her condition seemed somewhat stable at least.

Noah performed a slight bow, he didn't feel like he had done anything special.

"What happened under the Great whirlpool? Where are the other members of your team?"

Roy asked, Sarah's expression turned sour when her team was mentioned.

"They are dead, I was the only one able to survive in that mess."

Seth sighed while Bruce softly caressed her hair, they knew how many disciples her team had, they couldn't help but feel bad about their losses.

"Tell us everything, I'll directly report the matter to my mother afterward."

Roy spoke again, his status as the son of an elder in the heroic ranks was the highest in the cave.

Also, many rank 2 cultivators had been lost, that matter concerned the entirety of the Chasing demon sect, it wasn't the time to care about the different factions.

"Yes, give me one moment to sort my thoughts."

Sarah answered before falling deep in thought, Noah took out one jar of Ivor's wine and handed it to her.

She smiled when she saw that and her smile only increased after she took a slight sip.

Ivor's wine had great numbing properties, it helped Sarah in calming her messy mind.

"Thank you."

She thanked Noah again after handing back the jar, Noah carefully stored it back in his space-ring as he waited for her report.

"We reached the Great whirlpool two weeks ago, it was nighttime but we still decided to traverse its currents. The route we followed was the safest one, many of the cultivators in my team had a water aptitude so it was quite easy to reach its depth."

Sarah began to explain the events in the whirlpool, everyone in the cave was silent, focused on her story.

"The information about the direction of the currents is renown, I even had a map that depicted their behavior according to the time, it was impossible for us to lose ourselves inside them."

Sarah took out a small scroll as proof of her words, Seth picked it and nodded when he saw its contents.

The scroll was then passed to the other in the cave, Noah could see that the intricate patterns of the marine currents were clearly reported on the map when the scroll arrived at him.

'This map even states the strength of each current, it is as I suspected, the archipelago has been investigated deeply throughout the years.'

The scroll only confirmed Noah's suspicion, too many experts had explored the contents of the archipelago, something unexpected couldn't happen.

Yet, something unexpected had happened which made him even more confused.

"The depths of the whirlpool are often its calmest part, we had expected to find a large number of magical beasts there but we only found another marine current."

"That's impossible, the behavior of the whirlpool has been studied for generations, those that hunt magical beasts in that area have never reported of a marine current there."

Roy spoke but Sarah could only reveal a bitter expression before continuing to speak.

"That's what I thought too, I've informed myself before going inside it and that sight surprised me. Yet, this marine current was soft, it wasn't dangerous at all so I chose to explore it."

Sarah's speech was reaching its crucial point, no one dared to speak at that moment.

"The water in the current was warm, we even thought about dispersing the protective layer around our team and swim through it, we would have never expected for the situation to become so dangerous."

Sarah gave voice to her memories, her expression could only become more bitter when she remembered the thoughts that she had back then.

"We continued to walk on the warm current, the water was so dense that we didn't even need additional spells to help us in the process. However, at some random point, we began to fall."

She stopped speaking to cough a few times, Bruce promptly gave her some water so that she could continue her story.

"There wasn't any indication nor change in the "Breath" around us, we simply lost our foothold when we reached a certain depth. The water disappeared as we fell and a large underwater structure appeared in our sight, it seemed a maze of some sort but I can't say more because we never entered it."

'Is she telling us that the water suddenly disappeared as they went deeper? This is impossible, unless...'

Noah's mind sorted Sarah's words at full speed, there seemed to be only one explanation to those events.

'Separate dimension!'

That thought hit all the cultivators in the room, their eyes widened when they reached that conclusion but they didn't dare to give voice to their surprise since Sarah's story wasn't over.

"We found ourselves on a dark-brown passage, it was forty meters large and it was connected directly the structure at its end. There was only the dark sea on the other side and even the ceiling depicted the current that we were traversing before. At once, I knew that I was in a separate dimension."

Sarah raised her hand when she saw that Roy was going to ask something.

"I have no idea why no one was able to find it before, it is as if it has appeared out of nowhere."

Roy suppressed his question after hearing Sarah's words, he knew that she wasn't aware of the reason behind the changes in the whirlpool but he found himself unable to contain his curiosity.

"There didn't seem to be a way out of that place so we decided to walk toward the structure at the end of the passage. Everything seemed quite ordinary for

a while, with the exception that the space seemed stretched. It took us one week to near the structure but it was at that moment that we were attacked."

"Attacked by who?"

Bruce couldn't suppress himself anymore when he heard of an attacker and asked the woman in his embrace that question.

"By dragons."