

Chapter 441 - 441. Homework

The troops of the Empire jumped off the sh.i.p.s, safely landing on the parts of the shore covered by the silver shields.

The Empire didn't send troops to probe the situation at that time, the entirety of the reinforcements jumped off the sh.i.p.s at the same time and prepared themselves for the imminent battle.

There were still about fifty rank 3 cultivators on the Empire's side, Noah's group had managed to inflict heavy losses during the last battle, bringing the forces of both sides on a similar number.

Yet, part of Noah's group had been sent to refill the ranks on the other islands, making the accomplishments obtained in the previous battle almost pointless from their perspective.

Sharing the weight of the trials that the world put on their way was one of the reasons why humans gathered together to form organizations, Noah understood the elders' choice.

His gaze was fixed on the shore as the troops of the Empire began to advance.

Some traps soon detonated, fuming spikes filled the area but those aiming for the soldiers were repelled by a series of water domes, the last battle didn't remove the rank 3 mages specialized in defense from the enemy forces.

Also, a seemingly soft breeze blew between the soldiers.

'They did their homework in these two weeks.'

Noah sighed internally when he noticed the breeze, he realized that the soldiers had come up with a way to counter Kate's formation.

The breeze prevented the materials of the formation from accumulating on the bodies of the soldiers, Kate's weakening formation could be almost neglected without that requirement.

It couldn't be helped, formations were powerful and could turn the tides of a battle if they caught someone by surprise.

Yet, they could also be countered, even with simple methods most of the time.

The stronger the formation, the harsher the requirements for its activation will be, everything had a weakness after all.

The soldiers of the Empire soon reached the area where Kate's formation was laid.

Shining lines appeared on the terrain but they didn't seem to affect the soldiers in any way, only the weaker rank 2 cultivators paled a bit when the light swept their bodies but they quickly recovered, the Hive's defenses couldn't hinder their advance.

At that sight, Noah decided to act.

A frontal clash would inevitably cause heavy losses on his side, the Empire could choose to retreat to contain its losses but the forces of the Hive didn't have that choice, they had to hold the control of those islands!

Noah warped in the air above the enemy's troops, his spell was noticed only by the strongest cultivators in the third rank but even they didn't have time to react to what was happening above their heads.

Noah came out of the black flames, Heilong's wings were spread behind his back as they kept him in the air.

He had a hand stretched toward the troops below him, a black ring could be seen on that hand.

Then, many inscribed items began to appear in front of his hand and fall on the troops.

Noah injected his "Breath" in every item that appeared, what he was using was his personal stash of Instabilities and Hidden blasts, he even used those in the second rank that he had kept since his battles in Odrea nation!

Noah would always keep some of his disposable weapons for himself even when they were needed for defending the sect but, at that time, he was releasing all that accumulated firepower on the troops of the Empire!

More than a hundred spiked spheres and needles fell from the sky, the rank 3 cultivators on the ground didn't let that sight scare them, they quickly deployed the defensive spells used before.

Noah flew higher in the sky, he didn't want to be too close to the blast and he also wanted to hide the sight of him drinking a potion from the battlefield.

The contents of the potion quickly entered his body, improving the production of mental energy as he kept his attention focused on the events below him.

He felt as if his mind had been split into a hundred different pieces, each one moving in a different direction.

Those pieces surpassed a dense wall and were weakened but they managed to find their targets anyway.

"Attack!"

Noah ordered when he knew that his plan had succeeded.

The truth was that Noah had hidden a Ghostly claw inside each of his disposable weapons!

He had never created that many Ghostly claws at the same time, his mental energy had been depleted in the process but what had been harder was controlling each different spell!

That's why he had escaped in the sky to use his drugs, he needed a safe place where to refill his mental energy while controlling the ethereal claws.

His targets were the rank 3 cultivators in the army of the Empire, especially those deploying the defensive spells.

The ethereal claws squeezed the hearts of the rank 3 cultivators, they had been unable to notice them between the many explosions that resounded on the other side of their defensive spells.

Their concentration wavered slightly, some spikes and needles managed to pass through the cracks created after that lack of focus.

Also, a torrent of spells crashed on the troops of the Empire at that moment, further worsening the stability of the defensive spells deployed by the soldiers.

Some of Noah's weapons, as well as some attacks, managed to pass the defenses of the soldiers and land on them, cries and explosions could be heard from inside the water domes but the exact effects couldn't be seen yet.

Noah didn't wait for the soldiers to reorganize inside the domes, he directly ordered those under him to charge toward the invaders.

A tide of cultivators wielding brand new inscribed weapons assaulted the water domes, it took only a few series of attacks before the defensive spells were broken, revealing the disorganized state of the troops behind them.

Noah's weapons and the few spells that had managed to breach those defenses had killed many rank 2 cultivators and wounded a few in the third rank but the forces of the Empire were still stronger than those of the Hive.

Noah dove into the battlefield, he couldn't let go of that moment of weakness created by using all his stash of disposable weapons.

However, when he was about to reach a defenseless rank 3 cultivator, a thunderbolt and a fireball flew in his direction.

Noah's body quickly turned ethereal, the spells passed through him but were unable to inflict any damage.

Yet, he couldn't stop his descending momentum while using the Ethereal form spell, his figure returned material only when he was about to land on the ground.

Sand rose in the air as Heilong's wings flapped to make Noah land safely but his focus immediately went on two rank 3 soldiers that neared him wielding their weapons.

#### Chapter 442 - 442. Magical beasts

Two rank 3 cultivators in the gaseous stage neared Noah as soon as he landed in the battlefield, Heilong came out in the open when he felt that incoming threat.

'Do they think numbers are enough to overwhelm me?'

Noah wondered when he saw that those two soldiers had their gazes fixed on him, they had probably been appointed to take care of him after his feats in the last battle.

A sword and a greatsword were in their hands, those cultivators were relying on their martial arts due to the poor level of their mental spheres.

They were rank 3 mages but the level of their seas of consciousness wasn't even close to Noah's one.

It couldn't be helped, reaching the third rank of the mind while being in the gaseous stage was already a great feat, Noah was probably the only exception in that world.

Yet, when facing Noah, the poor level of their minds was a fatal weakness.

Heilong pounced in the direction of the cultivator wielding the greatsword, he was the one who had launched the fireball, his aptitude could be countered by the Blood companion for some time.

Noah, instead, turned to face the lightning cultivator, his bloodshot eyes released a mental shockwave aimed for his mind, the spell successfully landed on his enemy and cracks appeared everywhere on the walls of his sphere.

The lightning cultivator dropped his weapon, his hands went on his head as if trying to suppress the pain he was experiencing.

Then, his experience made him reach for a potion inside his space-ring but his connection with the storage device was interrupted since another piercing mental beam hit his mind.

His mental sphere was already on the verge of falling apart after being hit by the Mental tremor spell and couldn't endure another attack, the walls of the sphere shattered and the sea that was the thoughts of the cultivator dispersed in the world.

The lightning cultivator's eyes became devoid of any trace of life as he fell on the ground, one gaseous stage cultivator had been killed so easily!

The Mental tremor spell was incredibly strong, only a mind that matched Noah's one or a defensive method against mental waves could stop it.

Of course, its weakness was that Noah had to see where the enemy's head was to aim the mental beam, but it was easy to catch by surprise unaware cultivators.

The half-destroyed body of his Blood companion fell behind him, Noah turned toward the fire cultivator whose greatsword was surrounded by blue flames.

Heilong quickly reconstructed expending Noah's "Breath" and charged again, Noah followed it performing six slashes with the Third Form of the Ashura.

The fire cultivator was assaulted by two sides, one had a seemingly undying dragon that exuded a corrosive black smoke while the other had a rank 3 cultivator that slashed madly in his direction, the fire radiated by his weapon was barely able to fend off the black smoke that was beginning to surround him, he was pushed back after every clash.

His weapon seemed to work as a catalyst for his spell, the fire cultivator used the blue fire that surrounded his greatsword to create fireballs and dogs made of flames but his methods were useless against Noah and his Blood companion.

Heilong spread its wings every time a spell was aimed for Noah while he focused completely on forcing a flaw in the soldier's defense.

Noah could have used his spells to end that battle quickly but he preferred to preserve his mental energy in case a stronger soldier appeared, he was still in the middle of the battlefield after all.

Also, he was completely confident against that gaseous stage soldier, there was no chance that he would lose with Heilong at his side, with the Demonic swords, and with the higher level of his mental sphere.

Noah's Third Form cut through everything that managed to cross Heilong's wings, the blue flames that made the soldier's spells were completely unable to touch Noah due to the black smoke released by his attacks.

Heilong then stomped its frontal legs on the soldier's lower body, hindering his movements and creating an opening that Noah exploited cutting the soldier's head off.

The death of the other assailant gave Noah time to analyze the battlefield.

Many rank 1 cultivators died in each passing second, the Hive had deployed them to buy more time but they were simply too weak for a battle on that level.

The rank 2 cultivators on his side weren't much better off, the casualties among them mounted after every clash.

The situation of those in the third rank was the same, they didn't die as often as the weaker ones but they were still suppressed due to the higher number of soldiers of the Empire.

Noah decided once again to focus the soldier in the second rank to apply more pressure on the stronger soldiers but a liquid stage cultivator appeared in front of him before he could perform the First Form.

The liquid stage soldier was a woman of the earth element, a thick sandy armor covered almost the entirety of her body, leaving uncovered only her joints.

That spell didn't seem to hinder her movements too much due to the openings on the joints and the abundant mental energy contained in the armor countered Noah's Mental tremor and Ghostly claws, she seemed to have come prepared to fight Noah.

Noah slowly rose in the air, Heilong's wings flapped behind his back as he floated at a short distance from the ground.

He had to use his full power against cultivators in the liquid stage and one of his strongest methods was his flying speed, Noah wouldn't choose to fight on the ground.

However, before he could launch himself in a furious offensive, an earthquake shook the ground below him and put a momentary stop to the battle.



Noah was in the air so his senses weren't affected by the earthquake, he could clearly sense that the tremors weren't limited to that island but spread on the islands nearby.

Then, the tremors abruptly stopped, the cultivators were about to resume their battle after a short moment of silence but their attention was drawn on the shore where a pack of rank 4 magical beasts had suddenly appeared.

#### Chapter 443 - 443. Tentacles

A pack of rank 4 Giant octopuses appeared on the shore where the cultivators of the Hive and the soldiers of the Empire were fighting.

Something was off with those magical beasts though, the level of those beasts seemed to be exactly the same, they were all in the middle tier of the fourth rank.

All the rank 3 cultivators that had been in the separate dimension and that were on the battlefield felt some similarities with the dragons of the trials, the soldiers of the Empire had only read some reports after all.

Yet, everyone knew that such a sight was rare on the Coral archipelago.

The exoskeleton of the Purple corals scared away the magical beasts in the sea, keeping the islands safe from the invasion of those creatures.

However, their eyes weren't lying to them, magical beasts were really coming from the sea and crawling on the purple shore.

'We won.'

Noah was the first to realize that the copying technique had been completed and that there was no point in fighting further.

"Retreat to the back of the island!"

He immediately gave the order and warped away while the other cultivators were still busy staring at the peculiar scene.

His order awakened the cultivators of the Hive who retreated without hesitation, some of them began to understand what was happening and could barely contain the excitement that they felt.

The soldiers of the Empire though were clueless, they stood still on the battlefield, unsure of what to do next.

The pack of Giant octopuses had more than thirty rank 4 creatures in the middle tier, taking care of them would require their full concentration and the Empire couldn't do that while being on the ground controlled by the Hive.

Yet, the magical beasts stood between them and their sh.i.p.s, even retreating wouldn't be easy since they would have to pass between the powerful creatures.

As for chasing the escaping cultivators, that option was gone in that moment of hesitation.

The cultivators of the Hive were already far away, the soldiers could catch up with the slow rank 1 cultivators but they had no interest in them, they were just cannon fodder after all.

"Return to the sh.i.p.s!"

In the end, the soldier in charge gave that order and the army coming from the Empire decided to retreat through the path occupied by magical beasts.

That situation was extremely unusual, they knew that they would suffer some losses along the way but retreating and reorganizing seemed the best option at that moment.

The army of the Empire charged toward their sh.i.p.s, it resembled a tide ready to sweep the octopuses as it moved toward the sea.

However, most of the soldiers were in the second rank, only about fifty of them were rank 3 cultivators, the strength of both sides was more similar than what appeared.

The Giant octopuses were a kind of magical beasts that lived in the depths of the sea, generally ten meters tall and with long tentacles, they rarely appeared on the surface.

The sunlight though didn't affect their view, their natural environment was something that matched some of their other qualities.

They had a powerful body that was also particularly soft, that quality was something that allowed them to be virtually unaffected by the heavy pressure in the depths of the sea.

Also, they could swim at an unexpectedly fast speed, that quality though didn't apply on the ground.

The Giant octopuses were extremely slow on the ground, the pack had barely crossed three meters when the army of the Empire reached them.

The soldiers focused their firepower at the center of the pack, they couldn't avoid them since they were still too close to their sh.i.p.s so they simply chose to force the blockage.

The pack of magical beasts was hit by the torrent of attacks launched by the soldiers, the attacks focused the specimens at the center of the pack and directly annihilated them, opening a path where the soldiers could pass.

The Giant octopuses were slow on the ground but their tentacles could only benefit from the absence of the pressure of the sea.

As soon as the army entered the ranks of the beasts to reach for the sh.i.p.s, a series of noises that resembled wh.i.p.s cracking filled the area.

The tentacles of the octopuses shot at an incredible speed and created shockwaves wherever they landed.

The cultivators hit by the tentacles were directly torn in many pieces, even the defensive spells of those in the third rank couldn't endure such powerful attacks for much time.

Yet, the army was in full retreat, no one stopped its escape to care about the soldiers hit by the beasts.

The inscribed sh.i.p.s appeared in the sight of the soldiers as soon as they crossed the pack of magical beasts.

Happy expressions could be seen appearing on their faces, those sh.i.p.s were their headquarters after all and the inscriptions on them offered a great defense, they would be safe once they climbed on their main deck.

Those expressions suddenly froze though since a tentacle six meters large appeared from the sea and coiled itself around the nearest ship.

The inscriptions on the ship lit up, the silver shield was deployed again and opposed the squeeze of the giant tentacle.

However, right in front of the incredulous eyes of everyone on the island, the circular protective layer that surrounded the ship cracked under the squeeze of the tentacle.

The shield then completely broke, allowing the tentacle to coil again on the ship, it took only a few seconds for the ship to be directly torn in two pieces under the attack of that huge magical beast.

Even Noah who was staring at the scene from the distance was amazed.

'That's a rank 5 magical beast! Divine Demon said that the limit of the copying technique was the heroic ranks but I didn't expect Chasing Demon to be able to capture a rank 5 creature!'

His thoughts led him to believe that his patriarch had captured and bound a rank 5 magical beast alive!

He didn't know much about the copying technique but he was aware that the specimen that had to be copied had to be in a specific environment filled by formations and inscriptions.

'The patriarch is indeed a rank 6 existence.'

Noah sighed internally when he realized the amount of power held by such a powerful cultivator, he sat on the ground to enjoy the battle when he accepted that there was nothing else that he needed to do.

#### Chapter 444 - 444. Powerful creature

The soldiers of the Empire saw their hope to escape that dangerous situation vanish in a few instants.

What had appeared in front of them was a rank 5 magical beast, even their powerful sh.i.p.s could do nothing against that entity.

Meanwhile, the Giant octopuses behind them began to catch up, their tentacles cracked in the air as if they were wh.i.p.s as they resumed to attack the soldiers.

Cultivators started to die again, the assault of magical beasts in the middle tier of the fourth rank wasn't something that rank 2 cultivators could handle and those in the third rank were busy defending themselves to mind anyone else.

The truth was that there was still a glimmer of hope in their minds, something that they knew would be able to face the mighty creature in the sea.

"Enough."

A voice filled the island, the air seemed to stop, the Giant octopuses on the ground shook, only the huge tentacle wrapped in the remains of the ship was unaffected.

A middle-aged man wearing a plain expression appeared in the air and walked toward the pack of magical beasts.

He had short black hair, no beard, and a pair of dark eyes, he slowly waved his hand in a horizontal motion and, all of sudden, the ground shook again.

The terrain under the Giant octopuses began to tremble, a series of snakes made of sand rose from the ground and tangled themselves around the creatures.

The octopuses tried to use the soft capabilities of their bodies to escape the bindings but more and more snakes rose from the ground as time passed, at least one hundred of them were created in less than a minute.

Then, the snakes began to retreat in the ground, carrying the bound magical beasts with them, the pack of Giant octopuses was slowly buried alive, leaving no traces of the beasts.

The soldiers of the Empire began to cheer while unsightly expressions appeared on the faces of the cultivators of the Hive, only Noah remained calm at the sight of a heroic cultivator defeating the pack of rank 4 creatures.

He had seen the power of a rank 5 magical beast and he knew that even a patriarch of a medium-size noble family hadn't been able to defeat it, he didn't know the specifics about their power but he was sure that it wouldn't be easy to defeat the mighty creature on the sea.

The huge tentacle didn't seem bothered by the appearance of the heroic cultivator and simply went for another ship, coiling itself around it.

"Know your place, beast."

The heroic cultivator appeared in the trajectory of the tentacle and stretched a hand to block it.

The tentacle was huge, it didn't seem possible for someone that small to be able to block it.

Yet, when his hand touched the limb of the rank 5 creature, the tentacle stopped.

A proud expression appeared on the face of the heroic cultivator and the cheers of the soldiers on the shore further improved his mood.

However, his expression suddenly froze when he heard a deep cry coming from the bottom of the sea.

Waves rose at a short distance from the shore, it seemed as if the sea had resonated with the cry of the rank 5 creature and was conveying its anger!

The soldiers retreated when they saw the tall waves reaching for the shore, their expressions became worried when they raised their heads to the sky and saw that their savior was slowly being pushed back by the tentacle of the beast!

The man in the heroic ranks stopped playing around and decided to become serious.

Hundreds of snakes made of sand rose from the shore and reached for the tentacle that was pushing him back.

The snakes coiled themselves around the tentacle, some of them directly broke under the pressure that it applied but the man simply created more of them.

Little by little, more than a hundred snakes bound the tentacle and stopped its advance, the heroic soldier heaved a sigh of relief when he saw that he had completely blocked the limb of the powerful creature.

Just as he was about to retract his hand though, two more huge tentacles rose at high speed from the sea and directly slammed on him!

The heroic cultivator couldn't react in time, the newly arrived tentacles were too fast, it seemed impossible to reach that speed due to their size.

Nevertheless, the heroic cultivator was hit by both limbs and was sent flying in the distance, the sand snakes around the third tentacle broke after that.

The soldiers on the shore felt as if their legs had lost all their strength, most of them fell powerlessly on the ground when they saw their last hope vanish in the distance.

The three tentacles then went for a ship each, the silver shields slowly crumbled as the beast focused the inscribed sh.i.p.s.

'As expected, he wasn't enough to deal with the creature, he must have been just in the fourth rank.'

Noah judged from his safe position on the other side of the island.

The power of those in the heroic ranks was a mystery to him but he knew that beasts in the fifth rank weren't something that could be faced easily.

'Maybe one needs to be at the peak of the fourth rank to beat them... I don't really know the difference though.'

The reason why he was so focused on trying to understand the cultivation level of the heroic soldier was linked to his personal vengeance.

The Balvan family had one heroic cultivator that he was sure of but he still didn't know his actual level.

Noah was set on avenging his mother but he wouldn't do so by sacrificing his life, he wanted to be sure that he could deal with the entirety of his family before planning an assault to Balvan mansion.

Then, his thoughts were interrupted since another figure appeared in the air.



It was another man with long gray hair and a short gray beard, the heroic cultivator from before was unconscious in his grasp, he simply let him hang from his hand as he carried him by his robe.

His gaze wasn't on the rank 5 creature nor the soldiers below him, he seemed to stare at some place in the distance with a stern expression.

Then, he spoke and his voice filled the archipelago.

"The Empire is ready to talk."

Chapter 445 - 445. Negotiation

The attacks of the rank 5 creature stopped after the newly appeared heroic cultivator spoke, its tentacles vanished in the air in a few seconds.

"The Council is ready to talk!"

Another voice filled the archipelago, it belonged to a woman and seemed to come from the direction where the sh.i.p.s of the Papral nation were docked.

'They are trying to preserve troops, the war has reached the point where human cultivators can't affect it anymore.'

Noah sighed internally as he realized what was happening.

The cultivators in the heroic ranks from each faction had tasted the power of the copying spell and were expressing their willingness to negotiate, it was useless to waste all their human assets against those magical beasts.

"The Elbas family is ready to talk."

At last, even the heroic cultivator from the Utra nation gave up on fighting the powerful tentacles coming from the sea and decided to resort to negotiation.

Silence filled the archipelago, all the battles on the peripheral islands had long stopped since the appearance of the magical beasts, all the cultivators on them were waiting for the answer of the powerful beings ruling the underground organizations.

Then, a tall cultivator with a burly body filled with scars, red eyes, and brown eyes appeared in the air above the battlefields.

Noah could recognize him, he was the Chasing Demon!

"Let's talk then."

A faint smile was on his face as he answered the heroic cultivators from the other factions and gestured to follow him, four figures disappeared in a few seconds.

In a purple underground area, on the horizontal peak that was the mountain where Chasing Demon trained, four cultivators sat on a table outside the formation on the ground.

If Noah was there, he would notice that the area around the underground mountain was now filled by the shining lines of a huge formation, Chasing Demon had used his training area as part of the core of the copying technique.

Chasing Demon sat on one side of the table, he seemed completely relaxed as he took long sips from the cup in front of him, the piercing gazes of his three guests didn't bother him at all.

The three guests were the heroic cultivators sent by the three big nations to escort the sh.i.p.s, there were actually more of them with the sh.i.p.s but only the strongest of each faction had joined that negotiation.

They were one man and two women, all three of them in the fifth rank of the dantian, their gazes tried to probe the power of Chasing Demon but, to their surprise, they weren't able to understand his level.

The two women from the Papral and Utra nation seemed somewhat anxious but the cultivator from the Empire was managing to keep his calm, realizing

that the man in front of him was in the sixth rank didn't seem to affect him in the slightest.

It was due to that mental tranquility that he was the first to speak and to open the negotiations.

"I've already notified the continent that the Coral archipelago has a rank 6 existence defending it now, I, Gray Fury, have been granted the permission to seal an accord. The Shandal Empire is willing to offer five hundred years of peace and favorable exchanges of resources for the technique used to restrain and put to use rank 5 magical beasts."

His words were spoken proudly, he seemed completely sure that his offer would be accepted.

Chasing Demon acted as if he didn't speak and simply continued to drink his wine as he stared at a vague point in the distance.

"I've also notified the Council and been granted permission to represent the Papral nation in this negotiation. The Council is willing to reinstate the Chasing Demon sect as an orthodox sect and help it in its control over the archipelago. All your benefits can be further discussed once the exact value of the archipelago is decided."

The woman from the Papral nation spoke, she had long brown hair and shining green eyes, she didn't look more than forty years old since not even a wrinkle could be seen in her beautiful face.

"Anthea, you were only a mortal when the demon sects were chased out of the continent, don't speak about things that you can't understand."

Chasing Demon answered the woman from the Papral nation without looking at her, his stance clearly expressed that he wasn't interested in her offer.

It was then time for the heroic cultivator from the Utra nation to make her proposal.

"I'm Lady Edna, the Elbas family congratulates the Chasing Demon for reaching the sixth rank and hopes to seal a deal that can benefit both organizations. The Royal dynasty is willing to recognize the Coral archipelago as an independent nation as long as the stream of resources for the researches of the Royal academy isn't interrupted."

Lady Edna spoke slowly, there seemed to be something bothering her mind but she ultimately chose to leave that matter for later.

She was the heroic cultivator that had helped Thaddeus and Cecil in opening Eccentric Thunder's Inheritance ground, she had the usual golden hair of the Elbas bloodline and green eyes, her position in the Royal family was also quite high.

The offers of the three big nations of the continent had been presented, it was up to Chasing Demon now to speak.

Chasing Demon moved his gaze on the table, his eyes lingered on the almost empty cup in his hand for a while before he decided himself to speak.

"You can stop pretending, we all know that you won't pursue a full offensive on the archipelago, you simply fear each other too much."

Unsightly expressions appeared on the representatives of the continent when they heard his words.

"The Empire alone is enough to deplete all your reserves of energy and reclaim the archipelago under its banner."

Gray Fury complained when he felt the honor of his country being attacked.

"Yes, but doing that will pave the path for a collaboration between the other two big nations. Your three areas of influence are bound to clash at some

point, are you really sure that your country wants to be weakened so much before that?"

As he said those words, Chasing Demon raised his eyes and stared at Gray Fury who had lowered his head to hide his expression in front of that mighty existence.

A tense atmosphere was created as soon as the patriarch of the Chasing demon sect decided to express his thoughts.

Chapter 446 - 446. Cheers

Chasing Demon's words were on point.

It was clear that the copying technique was extremely powerful but that it also expended large quantities of Credits or other items containing "Breath" to work.

Reproducing the might of a rank 5 magical beasts wasn't a cheap task, it was clear that the reserves of the underground organizations would be drained in a prolonged war.

Yet, as long as those reserves existed, the Coral archipelago was virtually unbreachable.

Also, the only way to deplete those reserves was to force the activation of the copying technique, meaning that the armies from the continent would have to fight a seemingly endless tide of magical beasts in the meantime.

The underground organizations wouldn't have a chance to defend the islands for much time if the three big countries decided to keep working together but the archipelago wasn't exactly their main focus.

The situation on the continent was tense, the Empire continued to expand while the Papral and Utra nation did their best to secure the borders of their areas of influence, a battle between them was bound to happen at some point

and the trigger for that war might as well be the losses suffered while they fought against the beasts created with the copying technique.

After all, the Coral archipelago wasn't as valuable as the entirety of a big nation, the resources accumulated in thousands of years during their domain were simply too many to be neglected.

Conquering the archipelago wasn't worth exposing a flaw in their defense, the generous offers from before were just a way to quickly stop the battles and save as many assets as possible without losing the connection with the islands.

Yet, Chasing Demon knew the power of the underground organizations too well.

Without considering the copying technique, the assets that the continent would have to sacrifice to take the archipelago back would still be too many.

He was a rank 6 existence after all, how many heroic cultivators would die by his hands before the threat of the Hive would be extinguished?

When adding the other heroic assets and the copying technique, the war for the archipelago became simply not worth its cost in the eyes of the three big nations of the continent.

"What does Chasing Demon propose as a solution then?"

Gray Fury asked, he was representing the strongest nation in the continent, his status didn't allow him to appear weak in front of the other envoys.

"Leave. Get out and don't come back."

Chasing Demon's words resounded in the silence of the underground area, it took a while for the heroic cultivators from the continent to fully accept the meaning behind his words.

Angry and irritated expressions appeared on their faces but they didn't dare to be disrespectful in front of him, even their joint power wouldn't be able to stop the offensive of a rank 6 existence.

"C-could you explain yourself better?"

It took all of Anthea's concentration to suppress her anger and speak politely, that wasn't the right time to let her emotions take over her.

Chasing Demon seemed not to care at all about the situation, it was as if he was playing a game where he had nothing to lose.

He took his time, a jug appeared which floated in the air and autonomously filled the cup in his hands.

Then he took a few sips before putting the jug away and finally deign his guests of an answer.

"You have two choices."

He stretched the index and middle finger of his hand to give more importance to his words.

"You can abandon the archipelago. I can guarantee that all the cultivators belonging to your countries will be able to safely leave the internal islands, I will keep some of the resources in those islands of course and even become your trading partner for the exchange of valuable resources. Yet, the Coral archipelago would become an independent nation ruled by the Hive from that moment on."

Chasing Demon lowered one of his fingers, leaving only his index stretched in front of the other heroic cultivators.

"Or we can keep fighting. The war will continue until one of you betrays the others and starts a battle on the continent. You will then put a hold on the

campaign on the islands and focus on the continent to stabilize the situation there, leaving the control of the archipelago still in my hands."

He lowered his index when he finished explaining those options, then, he stretched his hand in a welcoming gesture before speaking again.

"The choice is yours, I know that the Hive will keep the archipelago either way, it's just a matter of how many resources will be wasted at this point."

His speech ended, leaving the three heroic cultivators from the continent speechless.

The choices that Chasing Demon had given them were simply outside of what they could decide, they had to contact the continent before answering.

Chasing Demon was aware of that, he waved his hand as a sign that they could go and contact their superiors, he kept drinking his wine as his guests stood up and went in separate areas to use their communication methods.

Chasing Demon knew that as soon as one big nation decided to abandon the archipelago, the other two would be forced to follow its example.

After all, they couldn't endure the expenses of a war while one of their enemies continued to grow, they couldn't expose such a fatal flaw.

It took almost an entire day before the meeting ended.

Noah and the other cultivators on what had been the battlefields were silently waiting for the orders of their heroic assets.

The soldiers from the continent didn't dare to go back on their sh.i.p.s, they warily waited on the shore, hoping to never see those giant tentacles again.

Then, Chasing Demon with the three envoys appeared in the air at the center of the archipelago.



"All the citizens of the Empire must pack their things and near the peripheral islands, the Shandal Empire is officially abandoning any claim over the archipelago."

"Cultivators of the Papral nation, leave for the peripheral islands, you are going home."

"The section of the Royal academy on the Coral archipelago will be dismantled today. Gather all the valuable researches and materials and go on the peripheral islands, you have been relocated."

The words spoken by the three heroic cultivators from the continent resounded throughout the entirety of the archipelago.

What could be heard after them were the cheers of the cultivators belonging to the underground organizations.

#### Chapter 447 - 447. Request

Noah stood up as the cheers of the cultivators of the Hive filled the archipelago.

The war was over, the continent was retrieving its assets from the islands, there was nothing else to do.

'I guess fighting a technique that can copy rank 5 magical beasts and rank 6 existence is too much even for the continent. Well, things would be different if the continent had a united front.'

Noah could understand the frail balance between the three big nations of the continent, he had traveled a lot after all, it wasn't hard to guess the complications that would occur once the continent decided to press on with its invasion.

His gaze went on the sky, where Chasing Demon stood proudly behind the three heroic cultivators that were overseeing their respective factions.

Then, Lady Edna moved her gaze away from the ground and turned to face Chasing Demon.

Chasing Demon was slightly surprised by her behavior, they had already reached an agreement concerning the trades of resources and other areas, he didn't think that there would be other aspects to discuss.

"Mighty Chasing Demon, the Elbas family would like to discuss something else in private."

Lady Edna bowed politely as she issued that request, Chasing Demon simply waved his hand to isolate the area with his "Breath", the other two heroic cultivators at a short distance weren't able to hear nor sense anything even though they could clearly see them.

Lady Edna decided to speak since Chasing Demon didn't seem willing to do so.

"You must know that a criminal of the Utra nation is among the ranks of your sect. The Royal dynasty is willing to pay a hefty sum and promise a long-lasting peaceful relationship as long as this individual is handed to them."

It wasn't hard to understand the identity behind the criminal that she had spoken of, Noah was quite famous after all.

Fear!

Lady Edna had just finished speaking but she suddenly felt a wave of fear enveloping her body.

She hadn't felt in that way since she reached the fifth rank of the dantian, there weren't many beings in the world able to able to threaten her, especially considering her position as part of the Royal family.

She raised her head only to see a pair of red eyes fixed on her, the pressure they radiated was so suffocating that she felt the air being drained from her lungs.

"Are you threatening the Demon Prince of my sect?"

Chasing Demon spoke slowly and softly but his words caused tremors in Lady Edna's sphere as they reached her.

She, on the other hand, was completely surprised.

Noah Balvan was only a rank 3 cultivator in her eyes, he was a troublemaker and a cunning individual but she had never valued him that much.

She wouldn't even mind such a small character if he didn't know about the Royal inheritance and the secret army, after all, how could a mighty existence like her bother about a single human cultivator?

Yet, removing Noah was something that had to be done as a form of insurance, he was too reckless and wasn't bound to any rule to be left free to wander carrying valuable secrets.

Lady Edna thought to use the newly sealed agreement to deal with the matter but she had underestimated the importance that Noah had in the Chasing Demon sect and, specifically, to the Chasing Demon.

He was the reason behind that war, the reason behind the victory of the underground organizations, how could Lady Edna know that everything had started when he retrieved the Inheritance?

Also, Chasing Demon would at least hear the price that the Royals were willing to offer under normal circumstances.

However, the Inheritance belonged to Divine Demon, his divine master.

Chasing Demon had been able to hear his master's pointers again thanks to Noah, which was something that he valued immensely, and Noah had also received his praises.

The acknowledgment of his master meant too much in his mind, that was the reason why he had immediately shown his irritation at Lady Edna's request.

"Forgive me for my impudence, I'll immediately take my leave!"

Lady Edna bowed when she understood that she had made a mistake, Chasing Demon maintained his pressure for a while before retracting it and dispersing the "Breath" that surrounded the two of them.

Lady Edna breathed roughly as she bowed again and left in the direction of her faction, she wanted to go back to the continent as soon as possible!

The other two heroic cultivators had been a bit suspicious when the barrier of "Breath" had been deployed but they heaved sighs of relief when they saw the poor state in which Lady Edna left, they were sure that the secret negotiation had failed.

Chasing Demon remained in the air, his gaze went on the ground toward one particular cultivator that was looking in his direction.

Noah saw that his patriarch seemed to look in his direction but he couldn't be sure due to the long distance, he also didn't feel any kind of pressure coming from it.

'His feet can barely leave the ground but he still keeps his eyes on the sky.'

A smirk appeared on Chasing Demon's face as he thought about Noah.

Even after such a battle, he was still observing the beings in the heroic ranks instead of resting, there seemed to be nothing more interesting in his mind.

Chasing Demon then moved his gaze, he knew that it would take a while for the underground organizations to return to their previous heights but the

survivors to those battles would become the foundation from which new generations of strong cultivators will grow.

The Hive now had a vast assortment of cultivation techniques, nourishing methods, and spells.

Valuable resources were bound to reach the archipelago due to the monopoly that the Hive had over specific resources, the agreements previously reached with the other heroic cultivators ensured that the Coral archipelago would benefit from each trade.

The heroic assets had also been untouched, limiting the losses to the cultivators in the human ranks.

The copying technique had to be laid even in the internal islands but the perimeter of the archipelago was secured, Chasing Demon had all the time needed to complete its defensive measures.

All in all, the Coral archipelago was bound to see its power grow now that it was an independent nation, it simply needed time to solidify its foundation.

#### Chapter 448 - 448. Mansion

It was only a matter of days before the legal forces of the archipelago completely abandoned the islands, carrying their belongings and part of their resources with them.

The reinforcements from the continent had suffered many losses, the sh.i.p.s on the peripheral islands that had survived the attacks of the rank 5 creature were enough to carry all the cultivators to their respective nations.

As a place mostly filled by cultivators, the archipelago had many rank 1 cultivators who had been born on those islands and didn't join any organization during their lives, they remained in their birthplace since the sh.i.p.s from the continent didn't have enough room for them.

The underground organizations gladly took them in, what they needed the most other than time was to refill their human assets, they couldn't waste all those citizens now that they could rule out in the open.

A long meeting also happened between the heroic cultivators of the various branches of the Hive, there was the need to choose a political system that satisfied all the organizations left in the archipelago, or that could at least appease the strongest ones.

In the end, it was agreed to set up something that used features of both Papral nation and Utra nation.

The Chasing Demon sect would be the overall ruler of the Coral archipelago, the other organization couldn't even begin to argue on that point since the sect had a rank 6 existence at its disposal and the control over the copying technique.

Also, the sect had been the one to start the war and to lead the Hive to victory, it had even used the contents of the Inheritance retrieved by Noah to limit the casualties.

The victory was indeed its merit, the other organizations simply couldn't argue on that point and willingly accepted the Chasing Demon sect as their ruler.

The remaining branches of the Hive were then appointed to certain economic aspects of the archipelago: The stronger organizations obtained the more remunerative jobs while the weaker were left to take care of the hunts in the sea nearby.

The strong would obtain ways to become stronger while the weak could only eat the scraps, that was an iron rule of the world.

Agreements were also sealed to ensure a swift collaboration between the many branches, matters like the defense of the islands and the negotiations with the continent couldn't be handled only by the Chasing Demon sect.

A group formed by the strongest heroic cultivators of each organization was created, its purpose was similar to the Council of the Papral nation, the group had to handle all the problems that concerned the Coral archipelago as a whole.

Also, the organizations wouldn't be considered anymore as separate entities but would unite themselves under the name "Hive", it was just like the Royals who had branches of their family taking care of different matters concerning nation but without a bloodline linking them.

The organizations had different ideals and customs but a united front was stronger than many separate ones, the continent had peacefully negotiated the terms of its loss but that didn't prevent the creation of grudges, the archipelago needed a strong front against such a powerful enemy.

Yet, only time would eventually truly transform those different organizations and fuse them into one, those arrangements were just a way to increase the merging speed.

Everyone seemed busy in those days.

Be it the various dispositions of the Hive after the meeting of the heroic cultivators ended, the laying of the copying technique in the internal island, the creation of better defenses on the peripheral islands, the recruitment and allocation of new cultivators, the creation of a joint merit system with missions and rewards, and the relocation of some important faculties from the hiding spots previously used during the rule of the legal organizations, everyone, no matter its rank, had something to do.

Everyone except Noah.

He had retrieved the Inheritance that had given hope to the underground organizations to conquer the archipelago, shared his gains with his sect, and

led the human assets in the harshest battlefields, all of that while being only a rank 3 cultivator in the gaseous stage!

Everywhere he went, cultivators in the human ranks would perform polite bows and respectful smiles, it must be said that his status as Demon Prince hadn't been removed even though the Chasing Demon sect didn't officially exist anymore.

His habitation had been moved again, his lofty status gave him access to the luxurious internal islands where the central powers of the legal organizations had once ruled.

Most of the resources held in those islands had been brought back to the continent when the sh.i.p.s left the archipelago but the relocation of the resources inside the exoskeleton of the Purple corals allowed the construction of a large quarter containing many useful features and that belonged only to him.

Noah had mostly wandered aimlessly in the islands, overseeing the works of the other cultivators as he waited for the construction of his quarters to be over.

Then, when the construction was over, he had simply used the teleportation matrixes to reach island nineteen, where his new habitation was.

He intended to finally go in seclusion and focus on his cultivation, the matters of the war had forced him to focus mostly on improving his battle prowess in the shortest period possible after all, he had just begun the experimentations on the procedures that required more time.

The pressure of the teleportation vanished and Noah found himself on a small purple island where a large mansion could be seen at its center.

The mansion was about a quarter of Balvan mansion but, knowing that it belonged exclusively to him, Noah felt incredibly amazed.



"Do you like it? It initially belonged to a noble of some sort but it has now been renovated and improved to meet your standards, Prince."

A familiar voice entered Noah's ears, those words carried heavy mental waves as they reached for Noah's sea of consciousness.

However, they were unable to affect the walls of his sphere, Noah had improved too much since the first meeting with the leader of the thieves' faction.

Bruce had waited for him at the exit of the teleportation matrix, a wide smile was on his face as he performed a bow.

#### Chapter 449 - 449. Seclusion

Noah was aware of many small details concerning the cultivators under him, especially those from the Chasing Demon sect, he was the Demon Prince after all.

Bruce had given up to reaching the heroic ranks when he discovered that Sarah would probably be unable to keep cultivating, he didn't want to see the woman he loved die of old age as he strived for power.

Yet, a solution to her condition had appeared when Noah divided the potions retrieved in the Inheritance with the sect.

Divine Demon had left resources till the fifth rank, fixing the dantian of a rank 3 cultivator was easy once gained access to one of those powerful drugs.

The drugs were, of course, purchasable only through merit points, the underground organizations were at war, the sect had to spur its cultivators to accumulate battle merits to obtain them.

Bruce didn't let go of that chance, he wanted to heal Sarah and he also didn't want to give up to the heroic ranks, he fought like a madman in the first line of defense against the Papral nation and successfully accumulated enough merit points to purchase a rank 4 curative drug.

In the end, Sarah was healed and they could continue their cultivation journey together.

That outcome left Bruce with a deep feeling of gratitude toward Noah, he didn't hesitate to apply for the position of guard of island nineteen when he became aware that Noah was being stationed there, he felt the need to repay him in some way.

Noah was aware that Bruce was now part of his personal guards, there were some small buildings all around the mansion where the guards could cultivate and rest so they wouldn't need to live where Noah was.

"Show me around."

Noah nodded as he said that, he didn't understand the need for guards when the copying formation protected the archipelago but he guessed that those kinds of traditions were hard to forget.

Bruce wasn't exactly polite and well-mannered but he smiled for the whole tour as he accompanied Noah inside his quarters.

The mansion featured a large garden that surrounded the entirety of the central building, precious fruits and flowers could be seen growing there, their scent was useful to appease the mind of a cultivator.

The central building featured many rooms with different purposes: There was a reinforced room where Noah could continue his experiments, one with a high density of "Breath", one that radiated a pressure useful to train the mental sphere, and many others.

Noah couldn't find anything wrong with the internal layout of the mansion, there seemed to be an area useful for each of his needs.

A series of rank 1 cultivators could also be seen in certain areas working as servants.

They were the citizens of the archipelago who didn't join any faction before the war and who had now been enrolled as outer disciples by the Hive.

Everything seemed so perfect that Noah felt eager to seclude himself as soon as he entered the mansion.

He had still too much of the Inheritance to assimilate and he had many doubts about which path he will take after the human ranks, the deductions concerning cultivation techniques and body-nourishing methods took a long time and were unable to give immediate results.

Also, his centers of power needed to improve, especially his dantian which was still in the gaseous stage.

A notebook appeared in his hands, Noah sent a series of messages toward Roy and whoever was put in charge of the inventory after the underground organizations were fused.

His request was simple, he needed pieces of "Breath" blessing to experiment with, he hadn't given up to the idea of creating a cultivation technique by forging an item.

'I need some kind of inspiration before attempting to create a nourishing method, I can't just blindly deduce, I would be just wasting mental energy in that way. My focus right now must be on my centers of power and my cultivation technique, I know that I'm on the right path.'

Noah had analyzed his capabilities in depth before choosing to experiment with the "Breath" blessings, he was almost certain that he would be able to create a cultivation technique with enough experimentation.

As for his body, he would just wait until his mind reached the fourth rank, it would be useless to spend time and mental energy in deducing from nothing.

Having a mind in the heroic ranks would also give him some insurance in forging items in the fourth rank, Ivor had managed to do it while being a human cultivator but he wasn't sure that he could do the same.

It had to be said that such an item would require even some sort of testing, meaning that there was the possibility that he had to forge more of them.

Then, there was the issue with the restraint that the body applied to the growth of the dantian.

Noah's body had been stuck at the lower tier of the fourth rank, it was able to contain a dantian in the liquid stage of the third rank and even in the solid stage but some sort of limitations were bound to appear through the last part of his journey in the human ranks.

"I'll enter a long period of seclusion, I won't come out for social events or anything similar, make sure to disturb me only if it's something that you can't handle by yourself."

Noah gave those orders before entering in the area with a high density of "Breath" and sealing the door behind him, Bruce simply nodded in approval when he heard that.

The matters of the Coral archipelago spread through the entirety of the continent, it didn't happen often that a nation was able to escape the control of the three big nations and claim its independence.

Those events clearly showed that the three big nations had a fatal weakness: Themselves!

The continent was too big while they were too weak, they couldn't maintain control over all the nations in their areas of influence with the threat of the other big nations.

The period of peace that had filled the continent until that moment was broken, many conquered or sieged countries decided to rebel themselves and attempt to claim independence just as the Coral archipelago did.

Meanwhile, the newly born nation belonging to the Hive grew far away from the struggles of the mainland, making the best out of the years of peace that followed the conquest of the islands.

#### Chapter 450 - 450. Four years

Years passed in which the Coral archipelago developed at a high speed.

The biggest issue in the cultivation journey was the lack of resources and the Hive had now the merged inventory of all its branches at its disposal, spells, nourishing methods, and cultivation techniques were more than abundant.

That, coupled with a relatively lax merit system, allowed the newly enrolled cultivators and the previous members of the underground organizations to improve at a high speed, there were enough missions to satisfy the demand of merit points of the small population left on the archipelago.

The number of cultivators couldn't grow in such a short period but their quality increased sharply, even heroic cultivators saw their power grow thanks to the resources retrieved in the Inheritance.

Noah had never exited his quarters during that period of development.

The position of Demon Prince wasn't linked to any specific task, it became more similar to an honorable status after the underground organizations merged, leaving Noah free from any duty but able to ask for every kind of resource from the inventory.

His mansion featured training areas specific for each center of power and he didn't lack resources, it was impossible for his power to remain the same in that prolonged period of seclusion.

Four years had to pass before he felt forced to come out of his mansion, there was an issue that couldn't be solved by Roy or anyone else handling the human matters.

The issue didn't concern his cultivation, the training of his centers of power had never been so smooth.

In those four years, his sea of consciousness had neared the peak of the third rank, Noah guessed that it wouldn't take much before he underwent the Earth Tribulation.

After all, Noah had become a rank 3 mage when he was only twenty-three, it wasn't a surprise that he managed to near the fourth rank now that he was thirty-two.

Noah had never slacked off, his relentless training allowed him to shorten the amount of time needed to reach the breakthroughs and the backing of the Hive further benefitted him, that training speed was definitely expected.

His dantian had also improved.

Noah was using a rank 4 cultivation technique to cultivate and an area that would be envied even by the wealthiest rank 3 cultivators, his dantian easily entered the liquid stage during his seclusion.

Yet, it was at that point that the issue appeared.

Noah didn't want to use the rank 4 cultivation technique to cultivate until the peak of the third rank, he wanted to avoid using it even in the solid stage.

That's why he dedicated a lot of time of his seclusion to the deduction of his cultivation technique.

He had a general idea about how it was supposed to work but the task seemed far harder than what he had predicted.

It wasn't that he didn't achieve some initial success, he had managed to modify pieces of "Breath" blessing to make them attract only "Breath" of the darkness element and he had even been able to add a suction force through his will.

However, the quantity of "Breath" blessing lost in the process was enormous, the mineral obtained from the Royal family was long gone and he had relied on his sect to have a constant stream of that resource for his experiments.

Also, as his successes increased, he had attempted to raise the level of the modified pieces of "Breath" blessing by increasing the mass of the mineral that he was going to condense, he needed for the item to be in the fourth rank after all.

That led to an even higher expenditure of resources which ultimately couldn't be supported anymore by the sect alone and needed the collaboration of the entirety of the Hive.

Of course, Noah didn't immediately attempt to forge an item in the heroic ranks by using "Breath" blessing, he had first experimented with the Demonic swords since he was more practiced with their blueprints.

Yet, even with his improved centers of power and the precious resources from both his ring and the inventory, his creations weren't able to overcome the human ranks.

He had created another pair of Demonic swords which were nearing the peak of the third rank but that was his limit, nothing he did seemed to push their level higher.

At that point, he had simply resumed with his forging of the "Breath" blessings since they had a clearer path to the heroic ranks in his opinion, they simply needed more mass to be compressed.

Noah exited his quarters and appeared in the garden that surrounded his mansion, Bruce had obviously been notified by him and was waiting for his arrival outside the garden.

Bruce was slightly surprised when he saw Noah for the first time after the events during the war.

Noah was over thirty years old but his appearance was still the same youthful one, his features didn't change at all during his seclusion.

That meant that his level had improved so fast that his lifespan wasn't affected, cultivators would simply stop aging if they constantly improved.

The only thing that changed was his hair which now reached the ground, Noah didn't bother to cut it during his seclusion.

Yet, Bruce's surprise wasn't caused by his appearance but by the aura that surrounded him.

Mages would radiate a peculiar aura as the level of their mind increased, their thoughts carried power after all, the world around them was bound to be affected by their mental state.

Noah wasn't an exception, he radiated a cold aura that matched his aloof personality but it seemed that some kind of sharpness had been added to it.

After sensing that aura, Bruce knew that Noah's mind had reached his level.

'I've halted my cultivation to wait for Sarah to catch up with my level but this is simply unreal.'

Those were Bruce's thoughts as he tried to probe Noah's level, his heavy mental waves weren't able to pass the sharp halo that surrounded the youthful man in front of him.

"Set a meeting with Elder Iris, I have some matters that I need to discuss with an elder."



Bruce nodded when he heard Noah's orders but an awkward smile appeared on his face as he took an inscribed notebook from his space-ring.

"Prince, I think you want to dress up a bit before that."

It was only after Bruce spoke that Noah realized the ragged state in which his clothes were, he was basically n.a.k.e.d with only a few pieces of burned pants still on his waist.