

## Chapter 451 451. Last step

During his seclusion, Noah had experimented a lot.

The failures with his forgings sometime exploded, ruining Noah's robe in the process.

Noah didn't care about his ragged clothes while he was in seclusion, his mind was completely focused on his training but, now that he had to meet an elder, he had to appear somewhat presentable.

He was the Demon Prince after all, he couldn't reappear after four years in that poor aspect.

"I think I'll call an outer disciple before going out."

Noah said as he sighed under Bruce's approving gaze.

The servants inside Noah's mansion quickly took care of his aspect.

They prepared a hot bath filled with many delicate perfumes to remove four years of accumulated sweat and dirt.

Then, they cut his hair a bit and combed them in a seemingly noble manner, it was pointless to say how bored Noah was through the whole process.

A luxurious robe had also been prepared, it was black and tight just like Noah liked but faint tentacles of a purple color were draped around its sleeves, giving those clothes some aristocratic feeling.

The rank 5 magical beast that had appeared during the war became some sort of worshipped creature in the eyes of the weaker cultivators of the archipelago, many symbols and clothes featuring its images could be seen everywhere in the islands.

'Peace surely make the weaklings lose focus, if only they knew that this creature is being held captive somewhere under the exoskeleton...'

Noah sighed internally as he noticed how the archipelago had changed during his seclusion, he guessed that the low-level cultivators were unaware of the reasons behind the victory of the underground organizations.

However, none of that concerned Noah.

He quickly went for a teleportation matrix after his beauty treatment was completed, the servants and the other guards that saw him walk toward the

shore of his small island wore respectful expressions as they bowed at his passage.

The light of the teleportation engulfed his figure and the scenery in front of his eyes changed, the sky was replaced by a familiar purple ceiling.

He was back inside the exoskeleton, where the headquarters of the Chasing Demon sect once were.

The heroic cultivators of the Hive rarely cultivated on the surface, the "Breath" they needed to advance was found inside the matter of the world and carried the laws that Heaven and Earth had set for its functioning, they couldn't risk destroying the islands that they had conquered after many struggles.

Noah went back inside the exoskeleton precisely to meet a heroic cultivator, namely Elder Iris.

She had handled the human matters of the Chasing Demon sect before and was still doing the same now that all the organizations named themselves as Hive.

Her habitation was also the same, Noah had no trouble going back to the underground cave, hidden under the purple terrain.

"Demon Prince, I wonder what is the reasons behind the request of this meeting."

Elder Iris was seated, as usual, at the center of the cave as she spoke without opening her eyes.

Noah couldn't help but notice that her power seemed to have increased but he wasn't sure by how much, what he felt was mostly a sensation after all.

"I need even more "Breath" blessings, my last requests had been ignored so I decided to ask for them personally."

Noah went right to the point.

He had obtained good results with his experimentations, he could have already created a rank 3 cultivation technique if he wanted.

Yet, he would rather wait until his technique reached the fourth rank before starting to cultivate with it, his current training method was in the fourth rank after all, Noah wouldn't ever purposely slow his cultivation speed.

However, he could only attempt to condense more mass as he tried to push the rank of his cultivation technique upward, meaning that every failure would waste enormous quantities of "Breath" blessings.

"Your expenses already match those of some heroic cultivators, Prince. Please understand that we can't slow the growth of the archipelago because of a single human cultivator."

Noah snorted seeing that Elder Iris had no intention of accepting his requests.

"Hmph, I've also helped more than any heroic cultivator, the archipelago wouldn't be in this state if it wasn't for me."

Noah spoke, he wasn't going to give up now that he was so close.

Elder Iris opened her eyes and stared Noah, she heaved a loud sigh when she looked at his determined expression.

"Prince, you are going to experience your Earth tribulation soon, which is an absurd feat for someone of your age. Are you sure you aren't pushing yourself too much? Creating a cultivation technique takes time, even Chasing Demon was able to do it only after he reached the fifth rank."

Elder Iris was aware of many of Noah's capabilities.

She was a heroic cultivator, her eyes could see right through his centers of power and she could understand what Noah was attempting to create.

Her words made Noah go silent, there was some truth behind them.

"I don't know the specifics behind what you are trying to do but you must remember that the straight path isn't always the shortest one. Maybe the path that you've chosen is wrong and it has a fatal flaw that you are still unable to see, or maybe you lack the experience needed to take a step forward. Remember that there is always a limit to how much one can improve in seclusion."

She spoke again, her pointers were spoken honestly, she seemed to really care about Noah's growth.

Noah stood silently as he reviewed Elder Iris' words.

He knew that she was right, there seemed to be something that he couldn't do no matter how much he deduced or experimented.

That was the forging of an item in the heroic ranks.

'Ivor managed to forge it while being a human cultivator, his love was so strong that he even forgot about cultivation to focus on the Elemental forging method.'

He lowered his head as he continued to think about the matter.

'I'm different. My will carries my ambition which is strictly linked with my centers of power. I can't sacrifice one thing just to obtain another. Maybe, that's what I'm lacking.'

His cultivation technique would enter the perfection phase once he managed to push his creations in the heroic ranks but there seemed to be something stopping him from taking that last step.

"I wish to see the missions available right now."

Noah spoke and his words surprised Elder Iris.

Chapter 452 - 452. Efrana

Noah was sure of one thing: A strong will could only be born and shaped through hardsh.i.p.s!

The will of a cultivator was the most important ingredient in the Elemental forging method which meant that Noah's will was weaker than Ivor's.

He could accept that, Ivor had been willing to throw away his life in exchange for a way to reclaim his lover while Noah wasn't willing to go that far.

He would do anything for power but he wasn't willing to sacrifice his life for it, power was useless if he wasn't alive after all.

'I can either wait for my mind to reach the fourth rank or actively seek more experience. Well, I can do both of them at the same time.'

Those were his thoughts when he asked Elder Iris for the available missions.

Gathering experience and merit point would benefit both him and the Hive, that seemed the best options since he didn't seem to be able to improve his training speed more than that.

It didn't take much for Elder Iris to complete her task, she quickly gathered information through her methods and handed a small shining orb to Noah.

Noah took it and inspected its contents with his mental energy, a series of information appeared in his mind which listed all the available missions that the Hive had issued.

The less important ones concerned the hunts on the peripheral islands while the most important ones mostly implied the continent in some way.

Escorting valuable shipments back and forth from the continent, becoming envoys to set favorable trade connections, infiltrating specific nations to set escape paths for their rebels, the most rewarding missions were also the most dangerous ones of course.

It was at that point that Noah noticed a familiar name that he had stopped thinking of for a long time.

'Creating a tribe in Efrana nation to use as a foothold on the continent... Is this a coincidence?'

Efrana nation had been Noah's target after he escaped from the Utra nation.

Then, the matter with Odrea nation forced him to travel to the Coral archipelago where he joined the Chasing Demon sect and ultimately fought with it for the independence of the islands.

He was just a lone rank 2 cultivator back then and he only wanted a safe place where to cultivate, he felt somewhat strange when he realized that he wanted to abandon what he had searched for such a long time.

'To think that peace might be the very reason why I'm unable to take this last step... I guess I won't have anyone else to blame for my troubles this time.'

Noah sighed internally when he thought about those matters.

The truth was that he wasn't willing to sacrifice his life to obtain a stronger will but he was more than willing to risk it for that.

If peace weakened him, he would simply run away from it.

If hardsh.i.p.s were the method to become stronger, he would simply jump toward them.

"I wish to join the mission in Efrana nation, I believe there is no one more fit than me to lead the creation of a tribe."

Noah spoke as he handed the shining orb back to Elder Iris, she, on the other hand, seemed quite conflicted about his request.

"We can't protect you on the continent, not as well as here at least."

She gave voice to her complaints as she stored the orb back in her ring.

"The nobles of the Utra nation would be the strongest cultivators of the continent if power could be born in a prison. Instead, a nation constantly at war takes two big nations to be contained. Protection might be what is slowing me down."

Noah answered her, he uncaringly spoke about putting himself in danger on purpose.

Noah knew that he would become strong even if he decided to stay in the archipelago.

However, he was attempting to create his own path, something that even heroic cultivators found difficult.

He couldn't take the safe path when attempting to do something that difficult, he needed to further forge his will under the hardsh.i.p.s that the world put on his way.

It was when she realized how determined Noah was on pursuing that path that Elder Iris gave up on making him change idea.

"I'll arrange everything then. Remember, the main focus of the mission is to create a stable foothold and not to join the battles on that front. This is a long-term plan that would eventually lead us back to the Papral nation but we can't

hurry these kinds of things too much, we must look quite harmless or the agreements reached when we won the war won't offer much protection. One elder will oversee your group, it will be your connection with the archipelago so you won't lack your usual stream of resources."

"What about my mansion?"

Noah asked after listening to Elder Iris' arrangements.

"We can handle its transport or you can do the same if you have enough space in your storage device. It was built for you after all, you can do whatever you like with it."

Noah nodded, he wasn't willing to abandon such a good training area because of his reckless intentions.

He then left Elder Iris to her matters, she had to organize the group and to choose an elder for the mission, Noah thought that it was better to leave her alone at that point.

A few days had to pass before he was contacted, the group had been formed and the elder appointed to oversee the mission was a heroic cultivator that belonged to the branch of the Hive once called "Resistance".

Apparently, the elder had volunteered when he heard that a heroic cultivator had to be sent to the continent.

The members of the Resistance had ties with the Shandal Empire, this elder wanted to use the mission to recruit more rebels and send them to the archipelago.

Of course, Noah knew about that only because his status was quite peculiar and it could be said that he agreed with that behavior.

The Coral archipelago had become the perfect land where lone cultivators, criminals, and rebels could escape, the only problem was that it was hard to reach, especially in secret.

Setting specific transport areas for those kinds of cultivators would be beneficial for the human assets of the Hive, the idea of the elder was quickly accepted and authorized by the central power of the archipelago.

Like that, a group of less than a hundred cultivators sailed from the peripheral islands of the archipelago, their destination was the continent!

#### Chapter 453 - 453. Expedition

A ship silently moved on the sea between the archipelago and the continent.

The ship was an inscribed item, the formations on its surface offered protection and even some kind of hiding since an eerie fog surrounded its shape.

Noah and his group sat silently on the main deck, they weren't exactly hiding but it was better to reach the continent unnoticed.

Rebellions and claims of independence were happening everywhere on the continent and the three big nations were having a rough time suppressing all those countries unwilling to remain under their areas of influence.

The cause behind those events was the conquest of the Coral archipelago, it was safe to assume that the forces of the three big nations would be more than willing to attack a ship belonging to the Hive.

Of course, that should be prevented by the agreements negotiated four years before but there were many ways to cover the identity of the assailants, one of those was to leave no survivors.

That's why the troops of the Hive would rather stay silent during their voyage and leave the protection of the ship to the elder overseeing them.



Their destination was the border between the area of influence of the Shandal Empire and that of the Papral nation, right next to the mystical fog that divided them.

Noah had access to the records of the Hive, the information about the fog was something that he had studied while he waited for Elder Iris to form the group for the mission.

According to the records, the mystical fog on the border of the area of influence of the Papral nation was a danger zone that seemed to be artificially created by some powerful being in the past.

Yet, just like the mountain range on the border of the area of influence of the Utra nation, it had an area where cultivators in the human ranks could safely cross it.

The mountain range had the city of Slyfall while the mystical fog had the Efrana nation.

No one knew if those two areas were left open for some reason but they eventually became the only connection between the areas of influence of two big nations.

One of them became a corrupted city where everyone could be bribed while the other became a battlefield where mercenary set up tribes in order to prosper.

The ship took a bit more than two months to reach the shores of the continent, the fog around it seemed to match the mystical one that had appeared on the border and that divided the continent into two different areas.

The small gray cloud around the ship fused with the danger zone when it reached the sandy coast, allowing for Noah and his group to jump on the ground completely unnoticed.

The ship then disappeared behind them, the elder hiding in the air had stored it inside his space-ring.

Noah gestured to the group to move, they were going to reach Efrana nation on foot.

The gray fog on their left seemed to affect their senses, it was able to make anyone in the human ranks lost their orientation.

However, the elder in the air would promptly send indications to Noah to make him adjust the direction in which he was marching, it was impossible to take the wrong path with a heroic cultivator guiding his steps.

The group moved quite fast, there were at least seventy rank 2 cultivators and about twenty in the third rank but each one of them had a rank 4 body, eliminating the need to rest at short intervals.

Their march was virtually uneventful, they were on the borders of a danger zone after all, magical beasts and humans would avoid that area.

It took a few months and a relatively tiring journey but the group successfully managed to reach the center of the continent without encountering any danger.

It must be said that Noah was so used to that kind of travel that he could observe the Kesier rune as he walked, it was enough to use Heilong senses to keep track of where he was going.

That behavior earned even more the respect of the members of his group, some of them had only heard stories about the Demon Prince of the Chasing Demon sect but almost everyone had heard the rumor that he was the one to retrieve Divine Demon's inheritance.

No official news had been released about the matter but everyone was quite sure about that fact, it wouldn't be possible to explain all the privileges that Noah had otherwise.

Noah, on the other hand, didn't care about the respect of those around him, his mind was only focused on the hindrances that stood in front of his path to power.

His Earth Tribulation drew closer with each passing day, his sea of consciousness continuously enlarged due to the liquid "Breath" inside his mind, adding the Kesier rune to his training was just a way to further hasten the breakthrough at that point.

"Proceed east for about an hour and you will enter its borders."

Noah listened to the mental message through his inscribed notebook and gestured to the group to follow him in the pointed direction.

The group followed Noah's orders and, in a bit more than an hour, the gray fog around them dispersed, allowing them to see the environment of their destination.

It seemed a wasteland, grass grew sparsely on the red ground which had dark shades.

No matter how much Noah looked at it, he couldn't help but find similarities with the color of the terrain and that of the human blood.

'This should be a phenomenon similar to that of Arolyac forest, the blood of powerful beings has tainted the terrain, forever changing its color. It should be different though, Arolyac forest became red due to the death of a powerful magical beast but here the color changed due to the death of many human cultivators. This truly is a war zone.'

Noah thought as he moved his gaze in the distance.

A series of small mountains could be seen on the horizon but, apart from some small tree, he couldn't see any trace of life.

The Efrana nation appeared almost completely barren at first sight.

#### Chapter 454 - 454. Encampment

The environment changed a bit as Noah's group entered its borders, leaving the mystical fog behind them.

More trees began to appear, they had barren shapes with sharp branches and they also radiated some kind of threatening aura.

Noah had gathered information about the Efrana nation before joining the mission, he knew that those plants were called Blood trees since their nutrient was the blood inside the terrain.

Every living being in this world fed on "Breath", they simply absorbed it from different sources.

Humans absorbed it from the environment while magical beasts could also absorb it from what they ate.

Plants were in the middle, they mostly absorbed it from the terrain or the air but some rare species could also actively seek prey to hunt.

The Blood trees belonged to the first kind, their nourishment came from the terrain and, since the blood absorbed mostly came from cultivators, they developed a strong and sturdy form.

The wood obtained by the Blood trees was a good material for the creation of inscribed weapons but it wasn't that precious, the entirety of the Efrana nation would be pillaged otherwise.

The group from the archipelago could also notice some poor-looking encampments in the distance, they didn't seem to contain powerful cultivators.

"Let's take a look. The strongest tribes should be at the center of the nation so we should be able to easily annex these."

Noah ordered, the general layout of the Efrana nation was clear in his mind.

Creating a foothold in a nation constantly at war wasn't a problem, the issue was in creating a lasting one.

The battles between the Shandal Empire and the Papral nation had a great impact on the tribes living in Efrana, it could be said that only a few of them could manage to remain in a position of power for many years.

That was because both big nations preferred to hire them before going into battle, the mercenaries of the tribes were used as cannon fodder, leading to a high number of casualties.

Also, those few tribes that managed to grow stronger even in such a disadvantageous environment were ultimately annexed by one of the two big nations, simple mercenaries would never refuse that chance and both big nations wouldn't let go of experienced troops.

That behavior led to a constant exchange of the tribes in power, one battle was enough to make those tribes disappear.

The group quickly moved toward the nearest encampment, the situation of the cultivators there wasn't good, there were many wounded with blood tainting their bandages, it seemed as if a battle had recently happened.

"You are late, the Crow-head tribe has already taken all our food and women, only our lives are left but they aren't worth much either."

An elderly man spoke as he saw Noah's group near the encampment.

He was missing an eye and his right arm had been recently cut off from his shoulders, there was still blood flowing out of the small patch that he had used to cover it.

Noah looked around him, there wasn't any woman just as the old man said and most of the cultivators there were wounded.

The strongest cultivators were in the second rank but there were even mortals wearing poor-looking armors in some areas.

"Why did you choose this place to set an encampment? The mystical fog is still quite close, it might reach this place and affect you all."

Noah asked, he couldn't care less about their situation, he was only interested in the safety of that area.

Only then did the old man realize that Noah's group wasn't a mercenary tribe, their robes were intact and their power was incredible, only the tribes at the center of the nation could have that appearance but they had no reason to be in that place.

"W-we had no choice. Most tribes wouldn't venture here, we thought we would be safe."

The old man answered and Noah nodded, that place seemed the area where they would attract less attention.

He waved his hand and a huge mansion appeared behind him, the cultivators of the encampment released surprised cries when they saw the big structure appearing right in front of them.

"Treat their injuries and gather information about the nearby tribes, I'll speak with the elder to set up our defenses."

Noah ordered to the cultivators behind him, they quickly entered the encampment and used their drugs to heal the cultivators in the poorest state.

"Kate, you will start to work on the teleportation matrixes as soon as the defenses are set. Many mercenaries will be willing to join the Hive as soon as

the rumor about our presence here spreads, we can't risk being discovered before the defenses are ready."

Kate nodded when Noah spoke to her, she had joined the mission since she was the most experienced human cultivator in the formation field, her role was to create a connection between the Efrana nation and the Coral archipelago.

The cultivators in the encampment were surprised but they accepted the help of the group from the archipelago without opposing any resistance, their condition was so bad that they would cling to any hope.

The Hive needed more cultivator, the war from more than four years ago had reduced the population of the archipelago by a lot.

A new wave of human assets was needed as soon as possible, the Hive couldn't just wait for the citizens to naturally procreate.

That's why many missions aimed to set up teleportation matrixes in specific points of the continent.

There were many neutral nations like Efrana scattered throughout the continent, the Hive intended to create small footholds in each one of them.

The Hive was protected by the agreement reached by Chasing Demon, the three big nations wouldn't decide to destroy those footholds unless some of them were inside their area of influence.

Yet, some form of defense was still needed to scare away cultivators that were secretly under their command, the elder accompanying Noah had such a role.

'It will take a while for Kate to create a link with the archipelago but I can leave the recruitment part to the other captains, there is no reason for me to appear in public.'

The elder was going to take care of the defenses, Kate of the teleportation matrixes, and the captains of the recruitment of more manpower, only time would tell if that foothold would give the expected advantages.

'I guess I can seclude myself for now.'

It was after he was sure that nothing was left uncovered that Noah entered his mansion, something was telling him that his Earth Tribulation would arrive soon.

#### Chapter 455 - 455. Meeting Earth

Time passed slowly in the encampment near the borders of the Efrana nation.

The elder overseeing the situation had used the inscriptions on the ship to create a gray cloud that covered Noah's mansion and some of the tents set up around it, it seemed as if that area was still part of the mystical fog from the distance.

Kate and some of the cultivators that studied formations worked to set up the teleportation matrixes in a room inside Noah's mansion, his quarters already had some sort of defensive measures which made them the safest place where to set a connection with the archipelago.

The other cultivators from the Hive were busy patrolling the area or investigating its surroundings, they had to come in contact with the other tribes and probe their power, the mission of the group was to recruit more manpower after all.

Meanwhile, Noah was in seclusion, focusing on his centers of power.

Leaving the safety of the Coral archipelago had already affected his mental state, Noah knew that he could be targeted for many reasons even with the defenses around him.

The news that an armed envoy had been set on Efrana nation would eventually reach the three big nations which could either decide to act or not.



The independence of the Coral archipelago had ignited many revolts across the continent, the big nations could very well think to attack the cause of the issue rather than its repercussions.

The Utra nation could decide to attack them because of Noah, the Shandal Empire because it was the closest to them, and the Papral nation because of its ties with the Chasing Demon sect, many reasons could justify an assault.

That outcome was unlikely to happen due to the agreements sealed between the big nations and the Hive but that situation was still able to bring Noah back to the mental state that he had when he was just a lone cultivator.

Noah had always been driven by his pure ambition but there was another feeling that forced him to improve: The need to become stronger in order to survive!

The world was dangerous and only strong cultivators could claim to have their fate in their hands, luck couldn't affect those that held inhumane power.

Noah was still at some distance from that goal and the peaceful environment of the archipelago made him train only due to his ambition and not because he needed to.

As soon as he entered his quarters inside Efrana nation, that need returned and his training speed improved.

He had decided to put a hold to the creation of his cultivation technique until he obtained some sort of inspiration concerning the item that he was going to forge, the "Breath" blessings continued to be sent to him through the elder though.

Teleporting inanimate items was easy, Noah knew that the Hive wouldn't stop providing him with the resources needed for his experiments so he just needed to find the proper place where to store them.

The solution was quickly found, Noah had just to ask the spirit automaton of his space-ring which confirmed that he could store the "Breath" blessings inside the formation that was once filled by inscribed weapons.

The formation wouldn't slow their aging since they were a different kind of items but the minerals didn't need that feature, Noah wasn't going to keep them there for centuries after all!

What he really needed was to isolate their ability to attract "Breath" since it could affect the other items inside the ring, that problem had never occurred with his previous piece of mineral since it was too small but the quantity that he had now had started to worry him.

However, all four formations inside the rank 6 ring had that feature so Noah could safely store the blue minerals in the almost empty one.

The matters inside his ring were taken care of and all the cultivators in his group had a specific role to follow, Noah could focus on his centers of power and, in particular, on his mind while everyone was busy with something.

His eyes seemed glued to the fourth Kesier rune during his seclusion, no trace of fear for the incoming Tribulation could be seen on his expression, his gaze only radiated the endless expectations that he had toward the fourth rank of the sea of consciousness.

The Pain Tribulation made him able to fight rank 4 magical beasts and had sharply increased his power, allowing his dantian to grow till the third rank.

Noah expected far more than that from the breakthrough of his mind, his superior battle prowess had always been linked to that center of power after all.

It was during a seemingly normal night that the fourth rune inside his mental sphere neared completion.

Noah abruptly stopped looking at the sheet inside his hands and folded it, there were a few things that he needed to prepare before taking the last step toward the Earth Tribulation.

First of all, Noah drank one of his potions, the walls of his mental sphere were enveloped in a series of dark layers from its insides due to the effects of the drugs.

A battle inside his mind was bound to happen, Noah wanted to take all the precautions needed before approaching it.

Then, he filled his mind with as much refined "Breath" as possible, a black lake with the form of a saber floated over the sea that was his thoughts.

Noah had already fought with a copy of himself, he knew that everything that expressed his individuality was the key to win in the incoming trial.

At last, he waited for his mental energy to be refilled before unfolding the sheet containing the fourth Kesier rune and looking at it again.

Not even ten minutes had to pass before the walls of his sphere began to tremble, releasing a humming sound in the process.

Noah had already closed his eyes, he suppressed the pain caused by the tremors of his mind and focused on his half-transparent figure that floated at the center of his sphere.

The sea below it churned, a whirlpool formed right below Noah's ethereal figure.

Then, from the crystalline water that was his thoughts, a figure rose in the air which kept its eyes fixed on Noah.

The figure was identical to Noah, its only difference was that it was completely azure like the water that had formed it.

Noah stood up and floated in the space above his sea as he prepared himself to fight but the following events put a stop to his battle intent.

The figure opened its mouth after Noah stood up and an androgynous voice resounded inside his sphere.

"Hello, my child, son of another world."

Chapter 456 - 456. Lives

The androgynous voice resounded inside the mental sphere.

At once Noah knew that Heaven and Earth were aware of his transmigration.

"Don't be surprised, my child. We are the world itself, we were there when you reached us as just a powerless soul, waiting to be dismantled."

The figure made by Noah's sea continued to speak, revealing the secrets behind his birth.

'It keeps referring to itself as "we", does it mean that Heaven and Earth are two different entities? Is it even safe to call them entities? Also, why does it speak? I've never read about an Earth Tribulation where the copy speaks.'

Noah reviewed the information he knew about the Tribulations when that unusual situation happened.

It must be said that he had studied a lot of records concerning such crucial points of the cultivation journey, the academy and the records of the Hive made him completely prepared for them.

The Pain Tribulation tested the will of a cultivator, the reconstruction of the body was some sort of reward that Heaven and Earth gave to those able to pass it but it was generally considered the easiest one.

The Earth Tribulation tested the mind and its individuality, a cultivator had to be able to surpass its copy to claim the right to continue walking in the cultivation journey.

The Heaven Tribulation tested the entirety of the cultivator, be its strength or defense.

All three of them were an expression of Heaven and Earth's will, they were referred by past cultivators as the limits that the world set for the humans and that only truly exceptional existences could cross those thresholds to fully enter the heroic ranks.

Yet, what interested Noah more than the reason why Heaven and Earth were speaking to him during his Tribulation was another thing.

"Why did I keep my memories?"

Noah asked through his half-transparent figure.

From what he had understood, his soul was meant to be dismantled, possibly meaning that his consciousness was meant to disappear.

However, that didn't happen, leading Noah to keep his memories and his personality, which ultimately made him become a cultivation addict since he was still a kid.

"Because you were empty."

The figure answered before explaining further.

"You had no valuable skills, no valuable knowledge, not even the will to live, there was no reason to dismantle you to create a different soul. You lacked the qualities that a cultivator must have so we simply placed you next to a loving mother in a wealthy family. We didn't expect you to abandon a peaceful life and sacrifice everything for the vain search for power, that was our miscalculation."

After those words, Noah seemed to freeze.

The memories of his childhood surged as if they were an unstoppable tide.

He had always been aware that he had sacrificed Lily to pursue power, or rather, he didn't want to escape with her before he reached a certain level but he simply hadn't been fast enough.

Yet, his situation now seemed to be part of the arrangements of Heaven and Earth.

Rhys wouldn't have paid Lily too much attention if Noah didn't begin to cultivate.

Rhys wouldn't have started beating her if Noah didn't progress faster than his son and daughter.

Rhys wouldn't have killed her if Noah wasn't of the darkness element.

All those events were linked to Noah's cultivation but he had always thought that it was just bad luck to have a father like Rhys, he had no reason to suspect anything else after all!

However, now it appeared that everything was linked to his transmigration and the memories of his first life.

"In our plans, you would have had a happy life as a mortal. You were going to become a counselor, your mother would have accompanied you for half of your life and she would have been able to see your descendants become accepted as true heirs of the Balvan family. Instead, you became an abomination that actively opposes our will and that brings death wherever it passes."

Small spheres made of Noah's mental energy rose from the sea as the figure spoke.

They depicted the events that it was describing, Noah was able to see the life imagined by Heaven and Earth through those images.

He saw his mother's face showing a proud expression as he held a scroll in his hands, Li Neregues, his old teacher, stood next to him as he patted his shoulder.

Then, he saw his mother again.

She seemed older as she held the hand of a pregnant woman that was going through labor, Noah was in a corner of the room in the image showed by the azure sphere.

Then, there was a funeral.

In the image, Noah cried as he looked at a tomb while a beautiful woman held his hand and two children clung to his robe, the sphere seemed to depict Lily's funeral.

The last one depicted an old Noah wearing a proud smile as he looked toward two women that strongly resembled Lily in their features.

Thomas Balvan was giving them some sort of reward and, according to their expressions, it didn't seem worthless.

More spheres rose from the sea, they depicted Noah's second life and his struggles during his journey.

They floated next to the spheres with the images of the life that Heaven and Earth had planned for him, the contrast between those two lives could make anyone think twice about choosing which path take.

The mental energy expended to create those spheres escaped Noah's control and go on the figure's side, it was clear that those events were part of the Earth Tribulation.

Noah appeared stunned but, in reality, he looked at those images with deep interest.

He wanted to memorize what he had sacrificed to forge his determination before his anger exploded.

When he had enough of that imaginary life, he raised a hand toward the Kesier runes at the center of his sphere.

The runes released a humming sound at his command but the snort from the figure, followed by its loud words, stopped that noise from echoing further.

"I am Earth! I have given birth to the Kesier species before you were even born! Did you really think that they would affect me?"

It was at that point that Noah decided to reclaim control of his mental energy, the anger that he had suppressed to fully listen to Earth's words burst out, making the spheres depicting Noah's lives explode.

#### Chapter 457 - 457. Wills

Noah didn't care about many things, it could be said that there were only a few things that mattered in his mind.

Cultivation was in the first place, there was nothing that he valued more than his personal power.

Yet, through his life in search of methods to cultivate, he started to care about a few people.

The most important one was his mother, Lily, the woman that had given up on everything just to give him more time to grow, sacrificing herself to free him from the bindings of the Balvan family.

Now, after his conversation with Earth, it seemed as if Lily's suffering and Noah's hardships had been part of Heaven and Earth's arrangements.

Noah's anger exploded, the feelings that he kept sealed as he waited to become strong enough to take his revenge on his father came out at that moment.



Earth had been slowly taking control of Noah's mental energy before but now the entirety of the mental sphere resonated with him.

Heilong's ethereal figure shot toward Earth, its maws opened as it roared toward the azure figure.

"Pointless."

Earth spoke as it stretched a hand toward the head of the beast, Heilong's charge was stopped by that simple gesture!

"I gave birth to every living being of this world, did you think that modifying it a bit would make it escape my control?"

The mental energy that had accumulated on the spheres and that had dispersed back on the sea rose once again and circled the azure figure after it spoke.

Then, it enveloped Heilong, the mental energy under Earth's control began to enter the dragon's body as if trying to seize control over the ethereal form of the beast.

It was at that moment that Noah's will inside Heilong began to fight back, waves of pain reached Noah due to the shared senses with his blood companion as Heaven and Earth's will and his fought inside the dragon.

Second of silence passed inside the sphere as both wills fought without being able to overcome the other.

The figure's brows knitted when it saw that it couldn't take control of the creature, the hand that was holding the dragon arched, stabbing its fingers inside its head and pouring more mental energy inside its form.

What followed that gesture was an explosion.

Heilong's ethereal figure exploded only to reform back at the center of the mental sphere.

Countless cracks could be seen on its body, Noah knew from the pain that he was experiencing that his blood companion's injuries were severe, it would take a while to heal them.

Yet, its sacrifice wasn't in vain, he had now confirmed that his will could be used to fight Earth!

"Such a determination in defying our will, everything you touch seems to become our enemy."

Earth spoke again as it watched the hand that it had used to fend off Heilong.

The azure color radiated from that limb had become softer after part of the mental energy that made the figure was used, it was clear that there was a set limit to its power.

Noah stretched a hand, the refined liquid "Breath" inside his mind shot toward him and took the shape of two black sabers.

An intense sharpness was radiated by those ethereal weapons, Noah's meaning was completely exuded by their auras.

Earth did the same, part of the remaining mental energy under its control gathered in its hands and took the form of two azure sabers, it was time for a frontal clash!

Noah and Heaven and Earth's wills fought to take control of the sea under their feet but there wasn't a clear winner: Heaven and Earth's will was stronger but Noah decisively detonated the mental energy that started to escape his control every time, leaving no fuel for Earth to use.

Then, Noah flew at high speed in the direction of the azure figure.

Many slashes were launched in less than a second, Noah expressed the complete mastery of the Three Forms of the Ashura as he attacked Earth.

The other, though, didn't show any flaw as it attacked Noah's back using his same martial art.

Black and azure sabers clashed against each other as the series of attacks continued, shockwaves were created after each clash which propagated toward the walls of the mental sphere.

Yet, they were unable to do any damage since the dark protective layers negated any form of attack from reaching the walls.

Noah had prepared himself and was even quite experienced in fights inside the mental sphere, he knew that his mind could suffer severe injuries if he didn't take any precautions.

The light radiated by the azure figure became less intense as more mental energy was expended to match Noah's attacks.

On the other hand, Noah's sabers managed to maintain their glow even after more than fifty exchanges had happened!

It wasn't a difference in the power of their wills, Noah's sabers were formed by "Breath" under his control, they were more durable than Earth's ones since they weren't made only by mental energy.

Noah pressed in his offensive without a break, Earth was slowly put into a passive position as more of the mental energy under its control was expended.

Then, one of Noah's weapons managed to pierce the azure saber that had appeared to block it and landed on the azure figure, directly stabbing the center of its forehead.

The sharpness contained in the black saber spread, creating cracks in the now pale figure that simply stopped its attacks and watched Noah with a gaze full of arrogance and contempt.

"We will meet again if you manage to survive Heaven and the heroic ranks, we will see then if your soul can reach godhood."

Earth spoke one last time before its body shattered in many pieces and those shards of mental energy returned to the sea which was now devoid of Heaven and Earth's will.

A rumble filled the insides of the mental sphere after Earth was defeated, the dark layers protecting the walls were torn apart as Noah's sea of consciousness enlarged by many sizes.

The mental sphere seemed to cross some sort of barrier as it expanded, only to stop a few seconds after that invisible layer pierced.

It was at that moment that Noah opened his material eyes and the room around him trembled.

The pressure applied on his mind by the room seemed to retract as Noah's consciousness expanded, he was soon able to sense the entirety of the mansion and even the areas inside the mystical fog behind him.

Also, faint traces of the "Breath" inside the matter could be sensed by his mind, Noah saw how that "Breath" contained some sort of purer will than what he normally found in the "Breath".

Then, while he was still in the process of becoming used to his new power, he was enlightened.

The enlightenment though wasn't about the creation of his cultivation technique, it concerned the other center of power that had been stuck for so many years.

Noah finally knew what he had to do to improve his body.

The enlightenment didn't come from the world around him or from the new power that his mind held, it had actually arrived when he reviewed Earth's words.

A smile appeared on his face as the idea took form, his mental energy was quickly expended to fuel the Divine deduction technique but more brilliant water was created from the bottom of his sphere after that expenditure.

Noah was now a rank 4 mage, his sea of consciousness would produce a better and stronger mental energy.

Noah controlled the new mental energy and made it enter the inscriptions on the walls of his sphere, his thoughts ran at an unimaginable speed as he analyzed the specifics of his idea.

'You called me an abomination, you will have no words for me after my body-nourishing method is complete.'

His consciousness reached for a place above the mansion as he thought that.

There, he found another strong consciousness that seemed to pay attention to the area, Noah felt its surprise when his thoughts connected with it.

"Who!? Wait. Is that you, Prince? How is this possible?"

The thoughts of the consciousness were clearly heard by Noah while he was still inside the mansion.

"Elder, you were once a citizen of the central part of the continent, right?"

Noah spoke through his mind, he knew that the elder sent to accompany his group was somewhere above his mansion so it was easy for him to find him.

"Yes, but that was a long time ago. Most importantly, how did you manage to find me?"

The elder's thoughts resounded inside Noah's sphere but Noah completely ignored his question as he spoke again.

"Elder, I have a request."

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It took some time before Noah became used to his new power.

The walls of his room trembled every time Noah's gaze swept them, the pressure radiated by his new mental energy was able to affect the material world, Noah feared that he would inadvertently kill some of the cultivators of his group if he came out of the mansion before learning to control himself.

Meanwhile, he was amazed by the new world that he was able to see: Every material that made his mansion exuded "Breath" but their internal composition contained a different kind of energy.

The "Breath" inside the matter wasn't only purer and denser, it also carried a thick will that gave it specific roles.

Noah wasn't able to understand the meaning behind that will, he could only pick some random details but he was sure of one thing: That will carried the laws that Heaven and Earth had set!

Noah knew that to affect such a "Breath" he had to use a stronger will, meaning that his hope to create a rank 4 cultivation technique while he was only a human mage was simply a vain dream or a project that would have taken him decades to complete.

Now he was a rank 4 mage, he could decide to resume his experimentations for his cultivation technique but the enlightenment birthed after his Earth Tribulation was a matter too pressing to postpone.

That was because it concerned a body-nourishing method!

The body of a cultivator was its foundation, the growth of both mind and dantian would be hindered if the body wasn't able to contain them.

The sea of consciousness pressed less on the body than the dantian but Noah was already in the liquid stage of the third rank, some sort of limitation was bound to appear before his Heaven Tribulation.

That's why he decided to work on his nourishing method first.

Also, the idea that he had was simply so amazing that couldn't contain himself.

In a seemingly desolate area near the mystical fog but far away from the Hive's encampment, a hooded Noah calmly waited in front of a huge caravan.

Runes could be seen on the sides of the many carriages that made the caravan, he knew that they were meant to restrain whoever was inside them.

A fat man exited from the first carriage and neared Noah with a wide smile on his face.

"My lord, this is the first time that I've traveled so far to complete a sale! Our common friend said that you were willing to purchase slaves in large numbers, I hope he was speaking the truth."

The fat man immediately went to the core of the matter when he spoke.

The man was a cultivator in the third rank and also a slave trader that Noah had contacted through the elder of his group.

"I need cultivators with a rank 3 body, at least a hundred of them."

Noah gave voice to his needs without caring for the merchant's words.

The man's eyes lit up when he heard the number of slaves requested by Noah, he joined his hands on his waist as he bent toward him to whisper something.

"You have come to the right person. I have the best women in the continent, all trained to serve their masters without complaints and with a body strong enough to serve even the most powerful cultivators without breaking."

The merchant spoke wearing a lecherous expression, Noah moved his eyes back on the caravan as he expressed his requirements more clearly.

"Gender doesn't matter. All I ask is for cultivators with a rank 3 body that have a high tolerance to pain."

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Near the Hive's encampment, a few kilometers deeper in the mystical fog.

Noah oversaw the cultivators of his group as they dug an underground structure.

One hundred cultivators stood behind him, they had inscribed chains around their neck and wrists and all of them had a rank 3 body, they were the slaves that Noah had purchased from the merchant.

"I've gathered the magical beasts that you have requested, Prince. They are all in the third rank but their elements aren't that various since the mystical fog doesn't offer that variety of creatures."

The elder spoke through his consciousness to Noah, the latter had tasked him to capture as many rank 3 creatures as he could while he was busy purchasing the slaves.



"Thank you, Elder, you can cage them inside my underground quarters when the work is completed. Also, I have to ask you to make this entire area soundproof, I don't want my experiments to attract unwanted attention."

Noah's answered through his mind, his eyes radiated a chilling coldness as he prepared himself to forge an abomination.

#### Chapter 459 - 459. Ingredients

The construction of Noah's underground facility didn't take much, the workers were cultivators in the second and third rank after all, digging and soundproofing the structure was easy for beings of such power.

The structure had four separate areas, one for the slaves, one for the magical beasts, a reinforced one for the experiments, and one where Noah could rest or cultivate.

Noah entered the structure followed by the slaves that he had recently purchased and ordered to everyone else to leave, there had to be no witnesses to his experiments.

"I've gathered the "Breath" that you asked for, Prince. The cultivators in the liquid stage of the third rank here are only of the fire, water, and wind element but there should be a larger variety once the link between your mansion and the archipelago is completed."

Kate spoke as she handed a space-ring to Noah, she bowed before leaving him alone in the just built facility.

Noah inspected the contents of the ring, he could see that its insides were filled shining crystals similar to the Obsidian Credits but that had three different colors.

'I have all the ingredients now, I can finally start.'

Noah thought as he wore the ring and led the slaves toward the deepest part of the underground structure.

The cries of the magical beasts chained in another area filled the structure but Noah completely ignored them, his mind reviewed the idea behind his body-nourishing method one last time before he started to work on its creation.

The humans of that world had a mortal enemy, or, to say it better, a constant threat, namely the magical beasts.

Those creatures were powerful beings that seemed able to form packs in no time and that were always driven by their endless hunger, cultivators had to constantly clear the areas around their cities and domains to prevent the commoners and the weaker cultivators from being attacked.

What was worse was that magical beasts had a clear path toward power, they didn't have any requirement for element or source to increase their level, they could just absorb "Breath" from anything containing it and make it theirs.

The reason for that was unknown.

Cultivators had studied magical beasts since they first came in contact with them, they tried to learn how they could grow stronger without any limitation for their element, they researched how they could just eat anything that contained "Breath" to raise their level.

Yet, no one could ever recreate that quality.

Many techniques, methods, and drugs were inspired by the training method of the magical beasts but they were only imitations that couldn't match the original, no one till this day had ever been successful in that feat.

Noah wasn't an exception.

He could be considered an expert when it came to magical beasts, his interest in those creatures had been born when the dragon attacked his mansion when he was just a child and it had never faded.

However, even with the teaching of the academy and after absorbing the Bloodline inheritance, he was clueless about the peculiar training process of those creatures.

He knew what magical beasts felt, the Bloodline inheritance made him experience the lives of the Excavating worms and even left him part of their instincts but he was still unable to find the answer to the question that had afflicted cultivators through all their history.

Yet, he didn't need to understand how magical beasts worked to create his nourishing method.

"Whoever survives will be set free and provided with cultivation resources, just do your best."

Noah lied as he spoke to the slaves chained on the area that was reserved for them, he wanted to be sure that they would do anything in their power to keep themselves alive but he had yet to decide on the fate of the survivors.

His experiments would be affected if the slaves decided to give up on life due to the pain that they were going to suffer, Noah gave them hope to make sure that they would try their best to endure the procedure before starting.

A sheet appeared in his hands, it described the aptitude of the slaves as well as the level of their centers of power and training, everything had been listed in an orderly way by the slave trader.

'I should start with someone of the fire aptitude, I have more "Breath" and magical beasts of that element after all.'

Noah decided and randomly picked a slave of the fire element from the ones that he had purchased.

He was a man wearing ragged clothes and with a body filled with scars, it was clear that he had suffered a lot before becoming a slave and being sold to Noah.

Noah led him to the central room of the underground structure where he tied him to the wall.

Then, he picked one of the red crystals from the ring that Kate gave him, the liquid "Breath" contained inside it was of the fire element and came from one of the rank 3 cultivators of his group.

Noah neared the crystal to his head, his half-transparent figure inside his sea of consciousness reached for the walls of the sphere and stretched its ethereal hands to the outside world to create a connection where the liquid "Breath" could pass.

Little by little, the "Breath" of the fire element entered Noah's mental sphere through his half-transparent figure and was attacked by his mental sphere.

Noah was a rank 4 mage, removing the will of Heaven and Earth from that "Breath" was an easy task, he was simply too strong for it.

In a matter of minutes, Noah successfully stored "Breath" of a different element inside his mental sphere!

In that way, he could potentially forge items for cultivators of another element but his intentions were different at that moment.

Refining it was even easier, Noah casually filled the "Breath" with a will that carried his ambition, the red "Breath" became a formless lake that seemed ready to explode after that.

'This definitely isn't the right meaning with which fill the "Breath" but I'll fix this issue later on.'

Noah thought as he stood up and went to pick a magical beast of the fire element from the area nearby.

The creature was a Fire wolf in the third rank, the cage containing it was an inscribed item that the elder had specifically requested from the archipelago, the lines on its surface were created after Divine Demon's copying technique.

Noah's powerful consciousness focused on the mind of the beast, the wolf felt as if an earthquake was happening inside its mind before its eyes lost any trace of life, it took only a thought for Noah to kill the beast!

Noah carried the corpse of the beast back where the slave was chained and laid it right next to the man.

"Endure now."

He spoke one last time before he put one hand on both the man and the corpse.

Then, he controlled the red "Breath" inside his mind to fill the corpse, the corpse of the beast seemed to liquefy as it entered the man's body.

#### Chapter 460 - 460. Solution

Humans generally envied the easy path to power that magical beasts had.

It couldn't be helped, magical beasts didn't need techniques nor needed to pay attention to their element, that was one of the reasons why it was impossible to completely exterminate them, they seemed to be privileged beings in the cultivation journey.

Noah wasn't an exception, he envied those creatures like every other human did.

Cultivating without the need of a technique was the dream of every cultivator, they wouldn't need the support of organizations to increase their power if something like that was possible.

Yet, no one had ever managed to completely imitate the cultivation method of the magical beasts.

Noah had never thought of himself as someone with an incredible talent of far smarter than anyone else, his power came from hard work, amazing determination, and sacrifice, he was only able to make those decisions at a young age.

However, there was something that he had suspected since he heard about the attempts to imitate those creatures.

This world had beings able to fly, gods, Immortal lands, it wasn't bound to mortal limits like his previous one.

Also, cultivators had appeared a long time ago so it was safe to assume that experimentations on the magical beasts had been attempted for a long period.

If those mighty cultivators of the past hadn't been able to find a solution to the issue, then there simply wasn't a solution.

Humans couldn't imitate magical beasts, that path led to a dead-end, that cultivation method was limited to those creatures.

That's why Noah thought that, if imitating a magical beast was impossible, the only option left was to become a magical beast.

The Elemental forging method could fuse two material into one, modifying it and giving it a meaning through the refined "Breath" of the cultivator performing the inscription.

Noah used the Divine deduction technique to better analyze his inspiration, he then chose to use the body of a human as the core material and the body of the magical beasts as the material that had to be fused.

There were many issues with his idea though.

First of all, he needed a large number of cultivators and magical beasts to proceed with his experiments, he needed humans willingly to endure the pain of the procedure to obtain reliable data.

Then, there was a problem that concerned his element.

Darkness cultivators were hard to find and so were magical beasts of the same element, the Elemental forging method used a "Breath" that matched the cultivator performing it, meaning that Noah would have been forced to experiment only on beings of the darkness element.

Also, his mansion couldn't hold that many beasts and slaves, he needed a place where he could experiment without being interrupted and without judging eyes, what he was going to do wasn't exactly ethical after all.

Yet, with the backing of the Hive, all those issues had been solved in a short amount of time.

The underground facility had been quickly built, it was quite bare but Noah didn't need any luxurious furniture in there.

The slaves had been obtained with the help of the elder, Noah was filthy rich right now, his wealth had been barely affected by that purchase.

The magical beasts had been captured by the elder in his group, the mystical fog was a danger zone, its insides were filled by those creatures.

Then, for what concerned the "Breath" of a different element, he had asked the cultivators in the liquid stage of the third rank in his group to fill almost empty versions of Obsidian Credits with it.

According to Noah's idea, succeeding in fusing the body of a magical beast with that of a human wouldn't increase its level, it would just completely change the nature of that body.

That's why he needed for their level to be the same, every little difference could create a destructive chain reaction that would ultimately make the experiment fail.

As for why he asked only for the "Breath" of the cultivators in the liquid stage, it was because they were on his same cultivation level.

The purpose of the experiments was to create a reliable procedure that Noah would eventually apply to himself.

When that time came, Noah would still be a liquid stage cultivator in the third rank since he had decided to not approach the solid stage until he created a cultivation technique.

Noah couldn't risk miscalculating something due to a difference in the power of the "Breath" so he limited his request to those in the liquid stage.

Capturing the magical beasts alive was also another form of precaution, Noah could kill them with his mind right before the experiment started so that he could be sure that the quality of the corpse wasn't affected in any way.

There was only one big detail that Noah wasn't sure of.

Fusing the bodies of a human and of a magical beast would surely create a powerful finished product but he couldn't be certain that the cultivator would then have access to the cultivation method of the magical beasts.

However, the only way to solve that doubt was to succeed in his experiments.

Screams resounded in the underground area.

Noah kept his hands sealed on the screaming slave and the liquefying corpse of the beast.

His piercing gaze memorized all the events that happened since he began to fuse those two bodies.



'Skin with skin, muscles with muscles, organs with organs, I'll focus on the containment later.'

Noah decided as the skin of the beast slowly entered the man's body.

The man screamed to no end as that external material fused with his skin, forever changing its capabilities.

Gray fur started to grow on the slave, the first signs of mutation had appeared but Noah didn't seem to mind them.

He was focused on seeing if the procedure was doable, he had time to perfect it later on.

After the skin, it was time for the muscles.

The man shook when the muscles of the Fire wolf liquefied and entered his muscles, his temperature also rose due to the peculiar body of the magical beast.

'Its abilities are being passed down!'

Noah exclaimed in his mind when he saw that the man's muscles were gaining some of the abilities of the Fire wolf.

Yet, before all the muscular system of the man was filled with that of the magical beast, a gray smoke started to come out of the slave.