

Chapter 491 - 491. Ring

Noah had initially decided to take the slow approach and to perfect his cultivation technique by forging an inscribed item in the fourth rank that he would then put inside his dantian.

Yet, there were too many problems to solve in that approach, the first of them was that Noah was still unable to forge a rank 4 item.

Also, the items that he had managed to forge grew without restraint, their form absorbed "Breath" that further fueled the vortex that they generated, something that unstable couldn't be put inside a center of power.

It was only after the new continent fell from the sky and he felt the urge to match the other heroic cultivators that he understood that the blueprint for the Black hole cultivation technique was wrong and that he had to modify it.

'If I render the condensed "Breath" blessing able to absorb "Breath", then it will even absorb that in my dantian once I put it inside it, there is no fix to this issue. The "black hole" can't be a sphere, it must be a hole.'

Noah thought as he took out a huge chunk of the "Breath" blessings inside his space-ring and placed it inside the garden of his mansion, the chunk was more than ten meters tall, none of his rooms would be able to contain it.

The liquid "Breath" inside his mind was immersed in the sea only to come out as a black whirlpool that threatened to absorb anything in its reach, Noah's hunger had refined that "Breath" to give it the meaning that he needed.

'The hole must have the dantian as its center so that the absorbed "Breath" can be gathered inside it, the suction force must also be strong enough or the walls of the dantian would simply repel the energy.'

Noah pressed a hand on the big chunk of "Breath" blessing and injected his refined "Breath" inside it, altering its internal composition.

Noah had experimented a lot in that procedure already so he knew that the chunk of "Breath" blessing would only become a peak rank 3 item when the forging was completed.

Yet, that was his goal.

Creating an inscribed item that could make him cultivate both in the human and in the heroic ranks was something too ambitious, it was better to forge different items according to his cultivation level.

That approach was more expensive since he would waste "Breath" blessings only to cultivate till the peak of the human ranks but Noah didn't care, he needed to improve as fast as he could if he wanted to hope to enter the oncoming battle and seize some benefits.

'A ring instead of a sphere, flexible instead of fixed.'

Noah repeated those words inside his mind as he modified the internal composition of the chunk of "Breath" blessing.

The uneven crystal began to compress under Noah's control, the more than ten meters tall azure mineral became smaller and smaller as time passed.

Noah stood still, all his focus was on the restricting mineral.

The azure halo that had filled the garden quickly darkened, the condensing "Breath" blessing began to lose its ability to attract "Breath" of all the elements and only made the one of the darkness element converge, that type of modification was something that Noah had learnt to do even before going in the Efrana nation.

His experience with the Elemental forging method and with the procedure allowed Noah to safely apply some modifications to the condensing process.

Also, since the item was only in the human ranks, Noah had full confidence in completing the forging without making any mistake.

The mineral became smaller, it soon reached the shape of a person only to further compress, Noah was forced to hold it in his hands at some point.

In the end, the huge chunk of "Breath" blessing became a minute black ring that forced "Breath" of the darkness element to converge in its center.

Noah analyzed the ring in his hands, he sensed how "Breath" with the purity of the third rank accumulated at its center without ever stopping.

Then, Noah took a black saber from his space-ring and cut the skin and muscles in the frontal part of his low-waist.

He was used to that practice since he had trained in the Dantian's opening in the past, yet, he had no intention to hurt his dantian at that time.

It took almost all his strength to open a wound that reached his center of power but, in the end, Noah managed to do it without hurting his other internal organs.

Noah inserted the black ring inside his low-waist and placed it around his dantian, he put it away from its center so that it wouldn't hinder the enlargement of the dantian.

Then, Noah retracted his bloodied hand and the wound healed immediately after.

His focus went on his dantian as he analyzed the effect of his creation: "Breath" was attracted by the ring and redirected at its center where one side of his dantian was, the "Breath" passed the walls of his organ and began to accumulate on its own, it was as if Noah was cultivating at that moment.

Of course, there were issues that Noah had already predicted.

The item that he had just forged was at the peak of the third rank, meaning that it absorbed "Breath" suitable for a cultivator at the peak of the solid stage.

Meanwhile, Noah was only in the liquid stage, the dark liquid inside his dantian accumulated at a fast pace, forcing the walls of his center of power to enlarge at a high speed.

Also, he couldn't turn off the suction capabilities of the ring, Noah would have to manually remove it if he wanted to interrupt his cultivation.

'I will keep this prototype on until the breakthrough to the solid stage and until the peak of the third rank, my drugs should reduce the stress caused by the continuous enlargement of the dantian. Now, I should start setting the blueprint for its heroic version and I should also focus on my battle prowess.'

Noah thought as he cleaned the blood from his low-waist and prepared to seclude himself again.

However, it was at that point that a familiar threat was sensed by his consciousness, making him raise his gaze toward the sky.

Thunders cracked as black clouds began to cover the azure sky, Noah was confused when he saw that a Heaven Tribulation was forming over island nineteen.

Chapter 492 - 492. Heaven Tribulation

'It's not aiming for me.'

Noah realized when he sensed the aura of the clouds, their target was somewhere outside of his mansion.

Heilong's wings unfolded behind his back and carried him high in the air, his Blood companion had virtually recovered its peak form, it needed only a few more days under the nourishment of Noah's mental energy to be completely fixed.

Noah's consciousness enveloped his small island and soon found the reason behind the black clouds.

In a certain place next to the shore, a burly cultivator was sitting cross-legged on the sand illuminated by the purple halo of the exoskeleton.

Noah immediately recognized the cultivator, he was Bruce, the rank 3 cultivator that had once been the leader of the thieves' faction of the Chasing demon sect and that had been at the peak of the solid stage for many years.

'He is attempting to become a rank 4 cultivator!'

It wasn't hard for Noah to understand what was going on.

Bruce had been at the peak of the third rank for many years, only the lack of techniques and Sarah's injury had forced him to stop cultivating, it wasn't a surprise that he could approach the Tribulation after those issues had been solved.

'He has probably saved merit points in those years to buy a cultivation technique in the fourth rank, he should have a fire aptitude so that purchase mustn't have been that expensive. I wonder if he has made enough preparations.'

Noah thought as he flew near Bruce, he wanted to see if he could absorb the "Breath" released by the black clouds once they were destroyed.

Of course, if the situation needed it, he would destroy the cloud himself.

"Prince, let him be, the Tribulation would only switch target if you were to help him. Also, he needs to pass it by himself or his potential could be threatened."

Elder Iris' voice resounded behind him while he was trying to near Bruce, Noah turned to perform a slight bow toward the elder that had appeared in the air before deciding to limit himself to watch the events.

"Potential?"

Noah asked, he had already experienced a similar event but he didn't understand the meaning behind the elder's words.

Elder Iris didn't move her gaze away from Bruce as she began to explain.

"You can overcome the Heaven Tribulation by destroying the black clouds or by waiting for their power to be depleted. However, in the second approach, your dantian wouldn't receive any nourishment from them, coming out generally weaker than the dantians of the cultivators who have defeated them."

Noah listened to her words and inspected the black clouds again, they covered a larger area compared to what Noah had witnessed when he became a hybrid but the power they contained seemed somewhat lower, they seemed tuned around peak rank 3 cultivators.

'These clouds are different from the ones that I've experienced... Those that have appeared against me only wanted to destroy while these seem to carry a deeper meaning.'

During the breakthrough between ranks, the dantian of a cultivator would be nourished by the impurities released by the boiling "Breath".

Yet, apparently, the dantian needed additional nourishment when reaching the heroic ranks, such nourishment came from the black clouds sent by Heaven.

'I wonder if the reason why the God of the Empire is stuck here is that he has failed during the Heaven Tribulation for the seventh rank.'

Noah found the answer that he was looking for and let his mind wander.

Meanwhile, the first lightning bolts began to be launched toward the shore where Bruce was sitting.

A series of thick lightning bolts fell on the ground, a huge cloud of smoke and sand rose in the air as the attack crashed on Bruce.

However, a wave of blue flames soon filled the area and engulfed the smoke around him.

Bruce's figure reappeared in the open, his body was covered by a layer of blue flames that acted as a form of protection and that could be used to fuel his spells, Noah couldn't help but find some similarities between that form and his Demonic form spell.

More lightning bolts fell toward Bruce, the latter wielded a huge hammer which took fire when it entered his grasp.

Bruce swung the hammer toward the incoming bolts, his muscles bulged as he aimed his heavy inscribed weapon toward Heaven's attack.

The lightning bolts and the hammer clashed, Bruce was flung back due to the impact but his protective layer of flames managed to prevent any injury, leaving him unharmed.

On the other hand, blue flames spread over the bodies of the flashes of lightning, shattering them and reaching for the clouds where they were created.

A blue fire took place in the sky, part of the black clouds' power was consumed as the fire burned before it was extinguished under a series of sparks.

Bruce had stood up in the meantime and a huge ape made of blue flames had appeared next to him.

Noah felt the power behind that spell, he was now certain that Bruce was at the peak of the third rank with both mind and dantian!

The ape launched itself in the air and flew toward the black clouds, Bruce limited himself to create more apes since he couldn't fly and his martial art couldn't reach that place in the sky.

Explosions resounded in the air as lightning bolts pierced the apes which released flames in every direction as they were destroyed, some of the bolts even reached for Bruce on the ground as they destroyed his spells.

Bruce didn't seem surprised, he swung his hammer with incredible dexterity as he intercepted the lightning bolts that were aiming for him, leaving his defense to the layer of fire around him.

More apes appeared next to him and flew in the air, tongues of flames began to accumulate in the air between him and the clouds.

'He is preparing his final attack!'

Noah could clearly understand Bruce's tactic since he was observing the battle from a safe distance and since his mental sphere could sense that Bruce had still some connection with the flames that lingered in the air.

Apes made of flames continued to be destroyed and Bruce continued to fend off the lightning bolts that reached for him, the defensive layer around him thinned every time it endured one of Heaven's attacks.

Then, when the defensive spell was about to be broken, Bruce raised his hands toward the sky and controlled the many tongues of flames in the air to converge on the position of the black clouds.

A loud explosion occurred and the sky above island nineteen was swept by a blinding blue halo.

Chapter 493 - 493. Suffocating

The black clouds dispersed in many directions as the blue flames exploded in their position, a dense "Breath" was left in their place which condensed and reached for Bruce on the ground.

Bruce closed his eyes while the "Breath" of Heaven and Earth nourished his dantian, his pale complexion slowly recovered its color during the process.

Then, he joined his hands over his low-waist and a small blue flame formed between them.

The flames still lingering on the ground and the sky started to tilt in Bruce's direction, their form began to waver and crumble under the suction force of his cultivation technique.

The flame between Bruce's hands became brighter as the "Breath" that carried the laws of the flames was absorbed and, after a while, it entered his body in the spot where his dantian was.

Bruce's skin blushed when the "Breath" in the fourth rank entered his body, he opened his eyes and carefully placed a foot in the air while wearing an expectant expression.

Bruce's foot seemed to have found some sort of foothold in the air, a smile appeared on his face as he pressed forward with his other leg, he soon found himself walking in the air.

Bruce was flying!

The reason why heroic cultivators could fly without the help of a spell was that their rank 4 "Breath" was so dense that they could simply step on it!

'He will probably stabilize his condition and attempt in the Earth Tribulation, the Hive has gained another heroic cultivator. I bet that similar events will happen everywhere on the continent, I can't fall behind.'

Noah thought as he gave one last look at Bruce and turned back to his mansion.

His cultivation technique was only in the third rank but was meant to directly absorb solid "Breath", he knew that his time inside the liquid stage will be short.

Also, it absorbed "Breath" of the darkness element without ever stopping, Noah would have to manually remove the ring around his dantian to stop cultivating.

However, that wasn't his intention.

'I have been in the liquid stage for almost two years, it would take another two of them to reach the solid stage under normal circumstances but nothing is normal about me. My other centers of power will boost the growth of my dantian and my current cultivation technique is something that I've personally created, its suction force should be superior to the rank 4 one that I was using previously. Also, it allows me to cultivate without break, this will put my dantian under enormous stress but I can keep it healthy with Divine Demon's drugs, I'll remove the device only if I see that my dantian can't keep up with its growing speed even with the drugs.'

Noah entered the largest training area inside his mansion, that area was meant for the practice of martial arts and had inscriptions on its walls to reinforce them.

'One year for the solid stage, three to four years for the peak of the third rank. In four years, I need to create a rank 4 cultivation technique, an offensive martial art that suits my level and skills, and find a secret art that can be used by hybrids, I would need to create that too otherwise. I need to also train with the fifth Kesier rune, eat to nourish my body, and improve the power of my flames... It's time to stop playing around with human cultivators and join the world of the entities.'

As soon as he set his schedule, Noah began to start working on it, his eagerness to explore the new world forced him to begin another period of seclusion.

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While the Hive chose to remain temporary passive to the fall of a piece of the Immortal Lands, the other big nations didn't.

They were the rulers of the continent after all, no other organization had the power to start the exploration of the new land.

Preparations were quickly made, small groups of cultivators were assembled and equipped with the necessary inscribed items needed for the quest, even the Papral nation, which was the most distant big nation from the new land, began to form teams to send in the new continent.

Suppressing the revolts on their areas of influence became a secondary goal, exploring and colonizing the piece of Immortal Lands became their priority!

Sh.i.p.s sailed from the western coast of the continent, the Utra nation even employed some of their flying sh.i.p.s to reach the new land faster.

The cultivators sent were all elites in the third rank, the number of heroic cultivators sent by each powerful force was unclear but their presence was obvious.

The new continent came from a plane inhabited by deities, there was a high chance that rank 5 and 6 lifeforms had survived the fall to the Mortal Lands and were still walking on its terrain.

The first nation to reach the new land was the Utra nation, the speed its air-sh.i.p.s couldn't be matched by simple inscribed sh.i.p.s, fifty soldiers at the peak of the third rank landed on the azure terrain that stood over the layer of ice.

The environment there was filled with "Breath" directly radiated by the ground, it was as if the terrain was made of a mineral similar to the Obsidian Crystals

but had abilities akin to the "Breath" blessings: The ground contained and released "Breath" that was then confined in the area above it, it didn't disperse in the world outside the piece of Immortal Lands.

Also, such density of "Breath" felt almost suffocating for those troops in the human ranks, they felt as if their bodies were weighed down by some sort of invisible pressure that affected their correct functioning.

Their minds felt heavier and even breathing was harder there, it was clear that they were simply too weak to explore that place.

The layer of ice under the ground had many magical beasts' corpses inside it, the God's spell had used the water of the sea as fuel after all, many lifeforms had died as the sea turned into pillars of ice that crashed on the meteorite.

Yet, even in that unknown and hostile environment, the soldiers of the Utra nation began to work to set up the first encampment on the new continent.

Chapter 494 - 494. Exploration

Rank 3 cultivators hadn't been sent to explore the new continent, their role was to set up and protect the encampments from the forces of the other big nations.

The environment of the piece of Immortal Lands was simply too hostile toward human cultivator, only those in the heroic rank could hope to explore it.

The soldiers of the Utra nation quickly set up a series of tents and a protective formation around their perimeter, they soon discovered that formations didn't need Credits to fuel them because they could directly use the "Breath" in the terrain to work.

That discovery accelerated the plans of the Elbas family, establishing formations without the need for Credits would facilitate the creation of teleportation matrixes which would greatly improve the stability of their camps.

While the rank 3 soldiers were busy creating the needed formation and finishing their tasks, the heroic cultivators that had accompanied those troops began to explore the new land.

The forces of the other big nations were still on their way in the sea, the Utra nation couldn't waste the advantage obtained thanks to their air-sh.i.p.s.

Three cultivators flew in the air above the azure ground, their gazes were on the horizon where mountains and plains were filled by strange and powerful plants.

Those three cultivators were the heroic assets that the Elbas family had sent with the first batch of soldiers and were specialized in fields that would be useful for the exploration.

Of course, all three of them were complete heroic cultivators.

"Every plant here is at least a rank 3 material, I won't be surprised if we were to find extinct species or even hostile magical plants."

A tall bald man wearing a loose golden robe spoke, his face didn't have any trace of hair, even his eyebrows were missing.

That man was Lord Delbert, he was one of the researchers of the academy and was specialized in magical plants.

"I can't sense any magical beast here, it seems that the fall has killed most of the creatures that inhabited the coastline. What a pity, such a waste..."

Another man spoke as he swept the area where their troops had landed with his consciousness.

If Noah was there, he would recognize him: He was Professor Roy, the professor of the magical beasts' course in the academy.

Professor Roy was a short man with curly black hair and a long white beard, his eyebrows were gray and so long that they were able to hide his dark eyes.

"Caution first, gods have walked on this land, we can't expect it to be too simple."

The other heroic cultivator spoke, trying to suppress the excitement of its companions.

Her name was Lady Eth, she, just like Thaddeus, had studied the space-runes of the Elbas family and had become quite skillful in using them.

She had long golden hair and blue eyes, she also looked quite young and her role was pretty obvious: She had to create an escape route in case the exploration became too dangerous.

Those three powerful entities were rank 4 cultivators after all, losing even one of them would greatly affect the power of the Royals and endanger their position as overlords of the southern side of the continent.

"Lady Eth, as the only one among us who has the Elbas bloodline, you should be the one to guide us."

Lord Delbert spoke, his manners were polite as he gestured to Lady Eth to take the lead.

Lady Eth turned toward Roy with a questioning gaze, she wanted to understand if he approved that decision.

"I'm fine with anything as long as we take the needed time to analyze the fauna of this land."

Professor Roy answered without moving his gaze from the terrain, he seemed worried that some magical beasts would escape his search if he didn't pay attention.

"Let's move on then."

Lady Eth nodded as she took the vanguard position and flew deeper into the continent, the other two heroic cultivators followed closely behind her.

Their journey was quite uneventful, no flying creatures could be seen there, Professor Roy loudly guessed that they had flown away before the land fell into the Mortal Lands, managing to remain in the Immortal ones.

The "Breath" radiated from the ground though became even thicker as they went deeper into the continent, it seemed that the azure ground created some sort of greenhouse effect that incremented the density of the "Breath" toward the center of the new land.

However, that density couldn't affect those heroic cultivators.

They absorbed the "Breath" inside the matter which contained the laws of Heaven and Earth, the "Breath" in the air wasn't able to apply any pressure on those existences.

"This is a forest of rank 4 magical plants. They are Silver-yellow woods which are a carnivorous species of trees, it seems that all the forest has died during the fall though."

Lord Delbert spoke as he pointed at a series of leafless trees on the ground.

Their trunks were silver and their branches resembled sharp shining fangs, they were supposed to have yellow leaves but it seemed that the fall from the Immortal Lands had destroyed all of them, killing the trees in the process.

"Are you sure there are dead?"

Lady Eth asked.

Lord Delbert put a pensive expression and nodded after sweeping the forest a few times with his consciousness before adding a few details.

"Their trunks are dead but their roots are still absorbing nourishment from the ground. This species is extinct on the continent but some specimens can still be found in some small islands ruled by magical beasts. However, their vitality

has never been tested in-depth, especially when paired with such an extraordinary terrain. We can seize a few trunks and see what happens."

Lady Eth nodded at his explanation and gestured to her two companions to follow her on the ground.

The forest of Silver-yellow woods was made of more than three hundred rank 4 magical plants, their value was extremely high and the heroic cultivator of the Ultra nation would rather be the ones to seize them instead of leaving them to other nations.

Lord Delbert wielded a sharp sickle that he carefully swung toward the base of each branch before moving to the trunk of the tree.

Professor Roy and Lady Eth guarded him as he focused on the plants, he was the only one among them who knew how to precisely store that material without ruining it after all.

However, just as Lord Delbert had predicted, the Silver-yellow woods reacted in an unusual way.

The azure terrain began to crack as the roots of the magical trees rose from the ground and tried to stab the three cultivators that were plundering the forest.

More than one hundred sharp roots converged in the position of the heroic cultivators, that was the attack of more than thirty magical plants in the fourth rank!

Yet, a torrent of red flames scorched the terrain from where the roots were coming out, annihilating that attack with one spell.

Chapter 495 - 495. Hostile

"Thank you, Professor Roy."

Lady Eth spoke as she gazed at the short man who had waved his hand to cast the spell.

The attack of those magical plants was fended off with a single spell, they didn't even have a chance to reach the three heroic cultivators.

"Lord Delbert, it would be nice if you quickened your pace."

Roy spoke toward the cultivator wielding the sickle, he didn't want to remain in the attack range of those plants.

"Plants aren't like beasts, they need precise motions to be handled and seized, I won't risk ruining this precious material."

However, Lord Delbert didn't change his pace and continued to slowly sever the branches and trunks of the Silver-yellow wood.

Roy snorted as he stood side to side with Lady Eth to protect him, he didn't care about magical plants at all but he would have the same behavior if he was studying magical beasts so he simply shut up and focused on the azure terrain.

The Silver-yellow woods were a carnivorous magical plant, they defended themselves when they saw their trunks being seized.

More roots rose from the ground and tried to reach the cultivators but another wave of flames incinerated the terrain from which they were coming out, there was nothing that those plants could do to defend themselves against those mighty entities.

Lord Delbert continued to seize the materials and store them inside his space-ring, more than fifty trees had already been severed from their roots by that time.

It was at that point that an earthquake swept the area and created a fissure that divided the forest into two.

Lord Delbert stopped cutting the trees and focused on the depths of the fissure, a blinding silver radiance was radiated from the azure halo below him.

It took him less than an instant to understand what was going on, he quickly warned his companions as that realization hit him.

"Lady Eth, we must escape, now!"

Delbert didn't use words to communicate but he used his consciousness instead which was a quicker method to transmit information.

Lady Eth didn't hesitate and threw a series of runes toward the two cultivators before the golden runes on her white robe shone, the three of them disappeared from their position and reappeared somewhere high in the sky.

Right after they teleported away, a thick root thirty meters wide rose at high speed from the fissure and cut the air where the cultivators once were.

An ominous aura was radiated by the root which continued to rise in the sky, becoming something similar to the silver trunks of the Silver-yellow woods.

"What is happening?"

Lady Eth asked as she watched the scene, the aura radiated by that root made even her tremble.

Lord Delbert sighed before he explained the matter to his companions.

"I thought the trunks and branches of the trees had died due to the fall, I was wrong. The Silver-yellow woods in this forest have gathered all their "Breath" in their roots and joined it together to create a seed from which they could live again. We are witnessing the birth of a rank 5 Silver-yellow wood."

Silver branches came out of the thick root which seemed to have become the trunk of the newborn magical plant, the "Breath" in the terrain was absorbed by the plant to fuel its growth.

The branches continued to grow for hundreds of meters until sharp twigs came out of them and the first yellow leaves began to appear.

It took about twenty minutes for the process to be completed, a giant tree stood where there once was the forest of Silver-yellow woods, its yellow leaves filled its upper body with a blinding radiance.

The three heroic cultivators patiently watched the scene and Lord Delbert even drew the event happening in front of him on a small notebook that he had taken from his space-ring, it didn't happen often to see the birth of a rank 5 magical plants after all.

"It seems that this path is blocked, should we explore the northern side?"

Lady Eth asked her two companions, their power could allow them to surpass the rank 5 magical plant but they could simply continue exploring the new land somewhere else, they were only the first batch of cultivators from the Utra nation.

The other two cultivators nodded, continuing in that direction wasn't worth the risk, there had to be other paths toward the deeper parts of the new continent.

Also, their job was to secure as many resources as they could before the other forces of the continent arrived, dealing with a rank 5 existence wasn't the best use of their time.

As for why Lady Eth had chosen the northern side, it was because the other big nations would most likely land there, meaning that they would be negating them some resources if they were to explore those areas first.

Unluckily for them, similar events happened whenever they went.

The three heroic cultivators found a pack of Silent hyenas, the pack was made by more than forty specimens in the fourth rank.

Professor Roy immediately went to analyze those magical beasts, he wanted to understand which kind of mutation that species had experienced after living on the Immortal Lands, but, while he was dissecting one of their specimens, a shockwave filled the area where the heroic cultivators were.

A rank 5 Silent hyena shot toward them at high speed, it was only thanks to Lady Eth that they managed to escape the assault of that magical beast unharmed.

Then, they found a large swamp that spread for many kilometers.

At that time, they didn't even have the chance to near the smelly area of the swamp before toxic fumes shot in their direction.

The environment of the swamp seemed filled by so many poisonous beings that even the fumes released by the magical plants and beasts in the fourth rank were enough to make the three heroic cultivators hesitate.

Also, it was clear that stronger beings hid in the depths of the swamp.

Of course, they managed to seize some resources every time but their gains didn't amount to much.

Then, the forces of the Empire reached the new continent, followed by those of the Papral nation.

Chapter 496 - 496. Stele

The newly arrived forces didn't clash with those of the Utra nation, the other big nations had sent explorative parties too, only a few heroic cultivators had accompanied the human assets.

Also, since even cultivators at the peak of the third rank were restricted by the environment of the new continent, the human assets could only manage the construction of the encampments and their formations, only heroic cultivators had the power to survive the exploration.

The piece of Immortal Lands was inhabited by extremely powerful beings, the heroic cultivators sent by the Elbas family had confirmed two rank 5 beings and hundreds of rank 4 in just a few days of exploration.

The heroic cultivators of the Shandal Empire and Papral nation experienced the same events, the new continent seemed a massive danger zone where rank 5 beings could be found everywhere.

And that was only the external part of the continent.

The "Breath" released by the azure ground became denser the more one reached for the center of the new land, those heroic cultivators were almost sure that rank 6 beings would be found once they ventured for its depths.

Yet, that was to be expected.

The Immortal Lands were the place where gods lived, the almost complete absence of beings in the human ranks had been predicted even before forming the exploration parties.

However, the simple resources obtainable from powerful beasts or plants wasn't enough to push the three big nations to deploy their strongest forces to colonize the new continent, those materials could be found in any danger zone even if in less quantity after all, they needed far more than that.

The environment of the new continent was amazing for heroic cultivators, its foundation was sturdy and filled with "Breath" which made it the perfect place where they could absorb "Breath" that carried laws concerning their elements, the matter of the new land wouldn't crumble as easily as that of the other territories of the Mortal Lands.

Nevertheless, even that wasn't enough to start a colonization.

Heroic cultivators could simply choose specific places in the piece of Immortal Lands where to set up caves or training areas, leaving the remaining parts of the continent untouched.

What they were looking for was something connected to the divine realms!

The exploration continued, the forces of the three big nations silently decided to divide the areas to explore, there was no need to fight over them since they had yet to find something worth fighting for.

Only ten cultivators had been sent by the three big nations, the Empire had sent four of them while both the Utra nation and the Papral nation limited themselves to three, the higher number of heroic assets was a clear power move to show who really ruled over the Mortal Lands.

Danger zones filled the surface of the new continent, the poisonous swamp, the rank 5 Silver-yellow wood, the bushland ruled by the Silent hyenas were only those discovered by the forces of the Utra nation.

Similar areas were discovered as the exploration continued, there was a thick forest filled with rank 4 Giant apes where the existence of two rank 5 beasts had been confirmed, there was a large area filled with small rivers where thousands of rank 4 Swarming piranha lived, their sheer number was enough to scare away most cultivators in the heroic ranks.

There was a wasteland where rank 4 Steeled tumbleweeds hunted for any living being that contained blood, a huge mountain where packs of rank 4 wolves of different species each lead by a rank 5 creature continuously fought each other for more land.

It was as if the new continent was a system of danger zones where rank 5 beings thrived!

The exploration though didn't cause any victims.

Heroic cultivators had the innate ability to fly while the flying beings of the piece of Immortal Lands had remained in the higher plane when the continent fell, there was virtually no entity that could threaten the lives of the heroic assets of the three big nations.

Yet, even though weeks passed, no signs of traces left by divine beings were found.

Then, something peculiar happened.

Void Hand was flying alone above the wasteland filled by Steeled tumbleweeds, that area seemed one of the few spots where rank 5 beings were absent.

He was one of the heroic cultivators sent by the Empire, it was custom in that nation to give battle titles to their heroic cultivators according to their abilities, Void Hand was named after his weaponless martial art which made him able to stop spells with his bare hands.

He had an average stature, short black hair and thick eyebrows of the same shade, the absence of beard revealed his pointy chin.

The truth was that his martial art was something that he had personally created after entering the heroic ranks, his water aptitude made him well versed in defensive measures and he had managed to fuse some of his old spells with the forms of the martial arts that he was studying.

However, there was a problem that afflicted him.

He had become a heroic cultivator when he was already quite old and cultivating with a technique created by someone else didn't increase his power fast enough to compensate for the passage of time.

Simply speaking, his lifespan was about to reach its end.

Void Hand had chosen to explore the new continent hoping to find something that would increase his level or prolong his life and he was the most eager of his group to find traces of divinities.

That was the reason why he was flying alone while his three companions had decided to return to the encampment to rest, finding anything useful for his cultivation was literally vital for him.

He flew past the wasteland only to find a large lake next to a barren mountain.

No magical beasts or plants inhabited that place, Void Hand took a mental note of that place since it seemed to be the perfect area where heroic cultivators could safely cultivate.

Yet, it was at that point that he noticed a stele in the distance that radiated some kind of ancient aura.

Void Hand neared it with caution but his attention was soon captivated by the signs graven on the monument.

The signs seemed a form of writing that he couldn't read, yet, there seemed to be a profound meaning contained in them.

Void Hand stared at the stele and slowly landed on the ground, he didn't blink his eyes even once as he sat cross-legged on the azure terrain and kept his gaze on the signs as if it was glued to them.

Chapter 497 - 497. Water

Void Hand didn't return to the encampment of the Shandal Empire for many days, the other three heroic cultivators of his faction began to worry about his safety until they ultimately chose to look for him.

They knew in which direction he had gone after all, it was normal to be equipped with tracking devices when exploring an unknown and dangerous land.

Three figures flew in the air above the wasteland in the direction of the barren mountain in the distance, they were aware that Void Hand was somewhere near the lake that they could see past that area.

They found him sitting cross-legged on the ground in front of a tall stele which had signs orderly written on its surface, an ancient aura was radiated by the monument but they couldn't sense anything else.

However, when they saw Void Hand's face, they realized that something was wrong.

Void Hand was utterly pale, his hair and eyebrows, which had once been black, had become of a gray shade, it seemed as if his lifespan was being consumed as he stared at the stele.

Also, lines of blood fell from his bloodshot eyes, it was as if he was crying red tears.

It was clear that whatever he was experiencing had gone out of his control.

The others of his faction didn't hesitate, they used their joint consciousnesses to restrain Void Hand's mental energy to a small area and used their restrictive spells to immobilize him.

A whip made of flames coiled around his body, six small snakes rose from the terrain and blocked his limbs, a large sphere made of compressed air surrounded his body and lifted him in the air, Void Hand found himself bound and transported away from the stele.

However, he only realized what was happening after his eyes could no longer see the signs on the stele.

Void Hand entered a frenzied state when he couldn't see the signs anymore, he tried to break free from his bindings with his physical strength but his body couldn't oppose the power of those spells.

Then, he redirected his anger toward the three cultivators that were carrying him away, he tried to cast spells but his consciousness had been limited to a small area around him, he couldn't make his attack reach them.

"Void Hand, it's us, wake up!"

One of the heroic cultivators spoke, hoping that his companion would recover his mental state without the need for stronger measures.

Void Hand gave the cultivator an angry look until, eventually, he seemed to recognize his companion and he slowly calmed down.

Confusion was clearly shown in his gaze as he inspected his surroundings, it was as if he had no memories of the moments spent in front of the stele.

"What happened?"

The same cultivator spoke when he saw that his companion had returned to reality.

He was the man who had created the sphere around Void Hand, his name was Spirit Stride due to his signature movement spell and he was also the leader of the group of heroic cultivators that the Empire had sent.

"Water... water can be anything but it can't be void. Haha! I was wrong! So wrong! The path of the void hand leads to a dead-end, water must be something to grow stronger!"

Void Hand exclaimed after recognizing Spirit Stride, he looked ecstatic as he moved his gaze to his palms.

The other three heroic cultivators remained silent as they watched the scene, they weren't sure if their companion had had some kind of breakthrough or if he had just gone mad.

His next words only increased their confusion.

"Spirit Stride, please, attack me with your wind blades, I must test something."

Void Hand tried to perform a bow as he spoke but he was still bound by the spells so he could only make a goofy gesture.

Another moment of silence followed his request, Spirit Stride didn't know what to do.

Yet, he trusted his companion and he was a citizen of the Empire, he would never reject the request of a fellow cultivator, especially if it concerned his power.

Also, attacking Void Hand was the perfect way to test his mental state.

Spirit Stride nodded to his companions who dispersed their spells after he did the same, Void Hand was freed and he straightened his posture in the air as he waited for the leader to attack.

Spirit Stride stretched his index and middle finger and swung his hand many times as if he was wielding a blade.

Dozens of sharp blades were created in the air and shot at a high speed toward Void Hand who still had an ecstatic expression.

The latter raised his hand which shone with a blue light before a dark glow sparkled at the center of his palm.

That move was his Void hand, the martial art from which his name had come from.

The wind blades crashed on his hand but their forms dissipated when they came in contact with the dark glow, Void Hand's defensive technique was indeed amazing.

However, after all the wind blades had been absorbed by the palm, a series of identical blue slashes shot out of it, aiming for the amazed Spirit Stride.

That attack was basically identical to his, the only difference was the "Breath" of the water element that had been used to create the blades.

Spirit Stride easily dodged the attack, he had used only a fraction of his power to attack his companion after all, and shot a confused gaze toward Void Hand before turning to look at the stele.

"Did you gain enlightenment from those signs? I can feel that they radiate an ancient aura but I don't sense anything else."

Spirit Stride asked and looked at the other two heroic cultivators to be sure that he wasn't the only one that could only sense that.

Void Hand kept on smiling as he answered according to what he had understood about the monument.

"I think a powerful being of the water element has taken notes there a long time in the past. I felt part of his understanding of that element being passed down to me, I fear that the price to pay for such gains is your lifespan though."

It was after those words that the four cultivators from the Empire silently understood that they had finally found traces of divine beings.

Chapter 498 - 498. Divine

The matter about the stele was kept a secret by the forces of the Empire but their behavior clearly showed that they had found something valuable.

Another two heroic cultivators were sent by the Empire to the new continent, the forces of the Utra nation and Papral nation were immediately able to guess that something interesting was happening when they saw the reinforcements reach the enemy camp.

Of course, all three forces were keeping an eye on each other, the arrival of two heroic cultivators wasn't something that could be missed.

Yet, there was something that the forces of the Utra nation and Papral nation couldn't possibly discover at that time: The two new heroic cultivators that had reached the new nation both had a water aptitude!

The Shandal Empire wanted to test if the stele could enlighten every cultivator with a water aptitude or if there were other conditions for that!

The only thing that the heroic cultivators from the other forces could see though was that both cultivators had ventured somewhere after the wasteland containing Steeled tumbleweeds and came back visibly aged but with fervent gazes.

Making a heroic cultivator age wasn't a simple matter, those entities could live for centuries after all, it was clear that what was happening beyond the wasteland definitely wasn't simple.

The other two forces set up a secret meeting, the Utra nation and the Papral nation had to know what the Empire had found, they couldn't let it become stronger than it already was.

However, the forces of the Papral nation backed from the secret meeting just one day before it was meant to happen without providing any explanation to the heroic cultivators sent by the Elbas family.

Elder Eve was one of the three heroic cultivators sent by the Council of the Papral nation, she was exploring the areas past the huge mountain where the packs of wolves continuously fought each other a few days before the appointed meeting with the forces of the Utra nation when she found something peculiar.

The huge mountain was connected to a series of other smaller peaks, creating a mountain chain that expanded diagonally on the continent and that occupied part of its northern side.

Elder Eve was simply exploring those mountain peaks as her two companions negotiated with the heroic cultivators sent by the Elbas family, her dark eyes swept the area below her, trying to find a place where there weren't that many magical beasts.

It was at that moment that she noticed a deep fissure on one of the shorter mountains.

Her white hair fluttered in the wind as she neared the fissure, the form of the crack on the rocky side of the mountain was simply too even to be something that had formed naturally.

An ancient aura was radiated from the fissure, Elder Eve felt as if thousands of sharp blades were piercing her consciousness as she continued to analyze it.

It was only when her mental energy was almost depleted that she moved her gaze away from the mountain and contacted her companions.

The other two elders from the Council took less than a day to reach her and were equally amazed by her discovery.

"It seems as if a mighty expert was practicing its swordplay as it flew through these mountains. We might understand the true meaning behind its forms if we meditate here... Forget the meeting with the Utra nation, we must inform the mainland of this discovery."

Elder Lorna spoke, she was the leader of the heroic assets sent by the Papral nation and it was her role to decide regarding the matters of the new continent.

The forces of the Utra nation saw how, some weeks after the secret meeting was canceled, reinforcements coming from the Papral nation landed on the shores of the new continent, carrying three heroic cultivators with them.

Both the Shandal Empire and the Papral nation now had six rank 4 cultivators flying on the new land, only the Utra nation had still three of them who were trying to figure out the reason behind the behavior of the other two big nations. However, they soon discovered something too.

Lord Delbert was exploring the lands on the southern side of the continent since the northern ones had been occupied by the forces of the other two big nations.

Professor Roy was analyzing the Silent hyenas, kidnapping a rank 4 specimen every time he dove in the bushland that they occupied, while Lady Eth was trying to set up meetings with the heroic cultivators of the other nations without any success, Lord Delbert simply decided to look for peculiar plants that didn't exist on the Mortal Lands.

As he flew past the rank 5 Silver-yellow wood though, he found a dark gorge hidden under many rank 4 Spiked roots.

The gorge radiated an ancient aura and the density of the "Breath" in the area increased the deeper one went in the gorge.

Yet, soft growls could be heard coming from the darkness of the canyon, Lord Delbert felt a chill running down his spine every time one of those sounds reached his ears.

It was clear that the canyon was inhabited by powerful beasts!

Lord Delbert quickly notified his two companions who reached him in less than a day.

Professor Roy had a heated gaze as he stared at the depths of the gorge, his hands trembled when he heard the growls of the beasts hidden in the darkness but his excitement was clearly shown by his expression.

"What do you think, Professor Roy?"

Lady Eth asked after a while, she was more interested in the utility of that place rather than to the living beings that inhabited it.

Roy scratched the side of his head as he sorted his thoughts, he soon formulated a hypothesis that he explained to his companions.

"This place is surely inhabited by rank 6 creatures but I don't understand why they won't come out in the open, they can basically rule the coast after all. I think this is either a dungeon or a training area created by a divine being a long time ago and it should be worth exploring it."

Professor Roy finished his explanation and turned toward Lady Eth to see her reaction but he was surprised to find her communicating through an inscribed item.

The truth was that she had decided to contact the mainland when she understood that they had probably found traces of divine entities.

Chapter 499

All three big nations found traces of divine entities which made one thing clear: It was worth investing resources to colonize the new continent!

Yet, that matter was troublesome and had to be handled carefully .

The new continent was filled with beings in the heroic ranks while creating cities or even simple living areas required periodic cleaning operations to control the population of the threats around them .

Also, the first operation would be the most difficult one since it would require a complete cleanse of certain areas, meaning facing the magical plants or beasts inhabiting it when they were at their strongest .

There were other matters to consider .

The new continent had once been part of the Immortal Lands, even the experts exploring it didn't know if the reproduction of the powerful beings inhabiting it would follow normal patterns .

There was the issue of the "Breath" in the environment too, cultivators at the peak of the human ranks were barely able to breathe there, it would be impossible to create footholds where the human assets of the nations of the continent could live unless something was done about it .

However, none of those issues would be solved unless the three big nations started to send enough heroic cultivators for the task .

The three big nations began to plan their next moves, even rank 5 cultivators were sent to better explore the new land and to assess how valuable those traces of divine beings were .

The gorge found by the Utra nation, the cut on the mountain chain found by the Papral nation, the stele found by the Shandal Empire, those three spots became the focus of the heroic assets of the rulers of the continent .

Soon, more traces left by divine beings were found as the exploration continued .

The Utra nation found a giant footprint on an area with muddy terrain, soft tremors were released by it which created some sort of defensive field around it .

It was soon hypothesized that a divine magical beast had walked on that terrain and left traces of its innate understanding of the earth element in that footprint, cultivators with the same aptitude were sent from the continent to meditate there and test if they could gain some enlightenment .

The Shandal Empire found a forest where shining fruits grew, their brilliance was able to momentarily improve the mental capabilities of the heroic

cultivators that had found them, it was unclear how effective they would be once eaten .

The Papral nation found a stele similar to that found by the Empire, the signs on it concerned the water element again but it seemed that the divine being that had written them was focusing on a different aspect at that time .

Of course, all these events happened over time and took even more heroic cultivators away from the continent .

The nations that had started rebelling after the independence of the Coral archipelago could finally feel the pressure applied on them being slightly lifted .

That chance wasn't ignored by the Hive which was constantly looking for more manpower: The encampments on the continent had all been disbanded long ago but the matters concerning the new continent gave it the chance to gather troops again .

After all, the only way that an organization had to increase the power of its heroic assets was to nurture promising human cultivators .

The Hive had less than forty complete heroic cultivators in total, its power was extremely lacking in that aspect compared to the three big nations .

Yet, they had some sort of advantage .

Except for the Empire which had a central power able to control the entirety of its cultivators, the Utra nation and the Papral nation could only gain access to a percentage of the entirety of their heroic assets .

That was caused by their political system, the noble families held a large percentage of the heroic assets in the Utra nation and the same went for the sects in the Papral nation, the Royals and the Council couldn't deploy

powerful cultivators as easily as the Empire, not without giving away part of their profits at least .

That inevitably led the Council and the Elbas family to give up to part of their control over their areas of influence to match the Empire in its exploration of the new continent, opening many paths were the Hive could infiltrate .

New encampments were created, the Hive decided to directly affect the nations under the control of the Utra nation and Papral nation that time without even trying to hide its operations that much .

Of course, the Hive could move so freely on the old continent because it was completely forsaking any claim on the new land, at least for the time being .

Like that, time passed .

The Hive continued to recruit human cultivators from the nations that sought freedom while the three big nations kept exploring and investing resources on the new land to find other leftovers of divine beings and to make some areas livable by their human assets .

Also, their heroic assets were making incredible gains there, many cultivators were enlightened or found the resources that they needed to continue in their respective experiments .

Simply speaking, the human assets of the Hive became stronger while the three big nations increased the power of their heroic ones .

The latter was obviously benefiting more but there wasn't much that the Hive could do, it could only wait until it was strong enough to claim a piece of the new land .

Every organization seemed to have entered a frenzied state and each one of them was managing to avoid useless battles, it was pointless to fight in front

of such an abundance of resources, the war for the most resourceful territories would come after the entire continent had been explored .

Signs of trouble though appeared on island nineteen of the Coral archipelago .

Almost four years had passed since the piece of Immortal Lands had fallen in the Mortal ones .

The exploration and colonization of the new continent were continuing and its deepest parts had yet to be reached but some information began to leak outside of the three factions studying it .

The environment of the archipelago had also changed, more defenses had been built and even the structures on its poorest islands had been completely improved .

Also, its population had doubled since the war with the continent, cultivators filled the streets of the cities on each island .

Yet, a peculiar and scary event attracted the gazes of all the human and heroic cultivators of the archipelago .

Black clouds gathered in the air above island nineteen, thick sparks filled their surface which spanned for hundreds of meters, they obscured the entirety of the island with their shape .

The island that had suffered from a Heaven Tribulation just a few years ago saw the same event happening again .

Chapter 500: 500

The black clouds of the Heaven Tribulation loomed once again over island nineteen, the target of their ominous aura was a big mansion placed at the center of the island .

The human cultivators guarding the mansion felt the power contained in the clouds and trembled, some of them were rank 3 cultivators but even they didn't feel confident against that threat .

"I anticipated something dangerous but this even surpasses my expectations, I wonder if the Prince will need our help . "

Elder Iris spoke while flying under the layer of black clouds that had obscured the sun, two men stood in the air next to her, their gazes continuously moved between the sky and Noah's mansion .

"This is completely above the human ranks . Their power seems tuned for cultivators that are only one step away from the heroic ranks but they are still too large even in that case . "

Roy spoke to continue his mother's words .

Thanks to his privileged position, Roy had quickly obtained a rank 4 cultivation technique and survived his Heaven Tribulation while Noah was in seclusion .

Also, his mother had even provided him with many inscribed items at the peak of the third rank to help him pass the trial, his battle prowess couldn't be compared to Bruce's one since he had spent most of his time inside the Chasing demon sect handling the human matters and avoiding the battlefield .

However, he wasn't a complete heroic cultivator since his mind was still in the third rank and he had yet to face the Earth Tribulation .

Elder Iris knew her son, she had advised him that it was better to slow down the growth of his sea of consciousness to improve its sturdiness, Roy would have surely failed the Earth Tribulation as he was now .

"Hmph, the Prince has obtained Divine Demon's recognition when he was only a rank 3 cultivator in the gaseous stage and has been attacked by Heaven and Earth's clouds already when he was in Efrana nation . I bet we are in for a show . "

Bruce snorted as he replied to the words of the mother and son's pair next to him .

The three of them had flown in the air as soon as the cloud began to form and had no doubt that they were aiming for the Demon Prince who had been in seclusion since the piece of Immortal Lands had fallen .

Tales about his achievements had spread long ago, especially among the ranks of the elders .

They knew that Noah had caused Heaven's reaction with his experiments and that he had defeated a cultivator with a rank 4 dantian already .

Yet, they couldn't help but worry when they saw the size of his Heaven Tribulation, it was simply too big even for someone who was a rank 4 mage while still being a human cultivator!

"Why isn't he coming out?"

Roy asked when he saw that Noah wasn't exiting his mansion to face the Tribulation, he began to worry about Noah's state, he hadn't seen him for four years after all .

Elder Iris' eyes sharpened too at that sight, only Bruce remained completely confident in him .

Bruce had seen him joining his faction when he was only a rank 2 cultivator and had witnessed his rise to power inside the sect, even his lover had been healed thanks to him, there was nothing that could make his faith in him waver .

The black clouds stopped forming, only the purple light of the exoskeleton illuminated the environment of the island .

The human cultivators had run away by then, the lights of the teleportation matrixes on the island had continuously lit the shores as they escaped from the imminent danger .

Then, a thick lightning bolt fell from the clouds and aimed for Noah's mansion .

The bolt though couldn't hit the mansion since a black line came out of its roof and cut through Heaven's attack, reaching for the black clouds where it opened a long fissure in their gaseous bodies .

The sunlight came out of the fissure and illuminated the mansion, its roof was falling apart since the attack had been launched from inside it, a winged human figure could be seen flying in the air past the falling rubbles .

'Dammit, I totally forgot that I had my cultivation technique still active . Well, the forging was successful at least . '

Noah thought as he carefully held a minute ring inside the palm of his right hand, his peak rank 3 Demonic sword was steadily wielded in his left one .

His gaze went on the sky, the size of the black clouds didn't surprise him but his consciousness analyzed them as if he was looking for something specific .

'They are mostly made of the same "Breath" that has tried to kill me during my fusion but there is the nourishing one that I must absorb after passing the

Tribulation too . Heaven and Earth didn't play any trick or maybe they simply couldn't . '

He was worried that Heaven and Earth would simply negate him access to the "Breath" needed to nourish the dantian after it entered the fourth rank, limiting the potential of Noah's center of power in that way .

However, Noah could feel the same deep meaning that he had sensed during Bruce's Tribulation, meaning that the "Breath" that he needed to absorb was somewhere among the destructive one .

'It seems that even the omniscient Heaven and Earth must play by the rules, they can only bend them a little . They are almost pitiful . '

Noah laughed inside his mind when he realized that .

The way he saw it, it was pointless to be as powerful as Heaven and Earth if then he couldn't directly take the life of an ant because of his own restrictions .

His dragon's instincts screamed as he saw the sparks gathering inside the black clouds, an even stronger lightning bolt was about to be launched in his direction .

Noah closed his eyes as he pointed the clouds with his saber, he slowly exhaled as he focused on his body .

His circulatory system began to accelerate its working speed, his metabolism reached a monstrous speed as the nourishments contained inside his body were consumed .

Even his muscles seemed affected by that process, Noah's skin caved in as his muscles condensed due to the pressure that they were under .

The "Breath" absorbed by the ring around his dantian was directly redirected on his left arm, black smoke began to come out of his saber as Noah gathered the energy needed for the execution of his martial art .

Then, just when a massive lightning bolt was about to fall on him, Noah swung his arm and cracks appeared in the air where his weapon passed .