

Chapter 51 - 51. Loss

Irvin got up from the ground.

His complexion was pale and a bit of blood was coming out of his mouth, the previous blow had injured him internally.

Kevin didn't waste any time as he charged in his direction, yet his speed was lower than before, apparently, the technique had slowed his movements in exchange for great strength and defense.

Irvin dodged the charge and swung relentlessly the water whip in his hands.

The whip clashed multiple times with Kevin's skin leaving deep marks and some cracks on it.

Kevin didn't seem to care and continued to chase the retreating mage.

Irvin's hit and run tactic seemed to work since cracks kept on accumulating on Kevin's body but then, Kevin threw his hammer toward the mage.

The heavy hammer flew at an insane speed and almost hit Irvin that dodged at the last moment.

However, when the hammer met with the ground, a big tremor was created unbalancing Irvin's posture and halting his escape.

Kevin made use of this chance to get close to Irvin and deliver a massive strike but the mage's whip transformed again in a shield that blocked the hit.

Irvin was once again flung away.

This time it took him longer to get up, the second wave of internal injuries had weakened him thoroughly.

When he managed to stand up he found himself looking at Kevin's giant figure in front of him that had already raised his hand to strike.

"You lost Irvin."

His fist descended and was about to hit the mage when a thunderbolt hit Kevin straight at the center of his chest.

Kevin was sent flying and when he hit the ground his body turned back to its original appearance, his technique had expired!

A black web of burned flesh that was releasing smoke constituted the wound on his chest.

Kevin coughed and tried to stand up but there seemed to be no more strength left in his body as he pointed with his arms on the ground just to fall again on it.

Irvin relaxed and sat casually, then he looked behind him and angrily yelled.

"You took your fucking time! I was almost gone for good!"

A tall man dressed in green large robes appeared from a hole in the mountain.

His skin was pale and some drops of sweat were on his forehead but he was smiling happily in spite of everything.

"I'm sorry Lord Irvin, as you know it still takes me a lot of time to cast this spell."

The tall man went close to Irvin and handed him a bottle with a white liquid.

Irvin took it and directly drank it, a bit of color returned to his pale cheeks.

"Tsk, to think that the family values you so much because your attribute is of the thunder element. It's a pity they only gave you that slow spell."

Irvin shook his head but his attention was on Kevin still struggling to get up.

"Julian, don't bother about him, the technique he used earlier left him exhausted so he is not a threat anymore."

He closed his eyes for a brief moment and then spoke again.

"My injuries are too serious, I can't help in this fight anymore. The next phase of the mission is up to you."

Julian bowed and closed his eyes to focus.

Meanwhile, on the caravan.

The group of cultivators was creating chaos inside the escort's lines of defense.

Noah was moving between the top of the carriage and the fight below him trying to tilt the scales of the battle but he was having poor results.

The soldiers became wary of him when he killed one of them and chose to slow their offensive to limit their losses.

They had a higher number of cultivators after all, so a prolonged fight would benefit them more.

Noah could not find any valid opportunity to increase their chance to win.

Then Kevin transformed and fought on even ground with the water mage lifting the morale of his soldiers that fought with more fervor.

However, Noah's mood became gloomy.

'We might win this battle but we will never reach the mansion. If these are the troops that they can send out in mission how many more there will be defending the treasury?'

In his mind, he understood that they had miscalculated Tobias Lansay's strength.

'I was too rash, I should have never accepted this mission. My power is only equal to that of these cultivators and they are being used as pawns! Now I'm stuck here to hope that Kevin will win his fight and help us'

A bit of frustration was building inside Noah due to the situation he was in and he could not help but blame himself for his recklessness.

'No point in holding back then.'

From his position on the top of the carriage, Noah slashed the air in the direction of the enemy soldiers.

Fourteen wind slashes shot out in the direction of the cultivators, one for each of them.

The cultivators were forced to block or dodge the strikes and could not focus momentarily on the men around them.

Some of Kevin's soldiers managed to take advantage of this situation and wounded the enemies' cultivators making them retreat.

One of them though surpassed Kevin's men and went straight for Basil's carriage.

Noah jumped down the carriage and clashed with the man's sword blocking his advance.

More than ten collisions rang out in the battle as Noah and the soldier didn't hold anything back in their attacks.

Noah's acupoints were refilling his body of "Breath" at a way higher speed than the normal one since in Twilboia Cliff the "Breath" concentration was greater, so he could keep fighting at full force even after his previous display of power.

The swordman and the kid proceeded on fighting making metallic sounds reverberate in the battlefield.

Then a rumble burst out from the sky and a thunderbolt fell on the carriage where Basil was staying.

The thunder was massive and directly blasted the carriage apart.

A shockwave then spread from the area of impact of the spell sending everything from its center away.

Noah was too close to the carriage and was overwhelmed by the shockwave that launched him past the narrow road and over the cliff.

Noah could not stop himself from falling in the gorge.

Chapter 52 - 52. Fall

Noah was falling at high speed toward the foggy bottom of the gorge.

The pressure on his face was becoming impossible to withstand even with a rank 2 body, it was useless to say what would happen if he crashed on the ground with this speed.

Noah cursed in his mind and tried to thrust his sabers on the rocky wall of the canyon but the rocks were incredibly hard and only the tip of his blades managed to pierce their surface.

Two straight trails were left on the wall as Noah kept on falling and held on his weapons.

His speed was slowly lowering but then the rocks along the wall became even harder and his sabers came out from the groove they created.

Noah falling speed increased again and no matter how many times he tried, his sabers couldn't pierce the rocks anymore.

He looked below him and saw a small cavity a few hundred meters downward on his left side.

He steeled his determination and sheathed his sabers, then he pressed his hands and feet on the wall.

The rocks coupled with his speed rapidly minced his skin but Noah held on waiting for the best moment to act.

When the cavity was at the right distance he pushed against the wall toward his left side.

Noah fell diagonally and crouched mid-air to reduce his surface, putting his head between his legs to protect it.

His body smashed into the inner wall of the cavity and cracking sounds came from it but when he touched the ground he slipped again toward the gorge.

Both his legs and his left arm were unresponsive so he shot his right hand toward the edge of the cavity.

Noah felt an extreme pressure on his right shoulder but he never allowed his hand to lose its grip, he endured the pain he was feeling until the pressure disappeared.

He opened his eyes and found himself hanging on the edge of the hole with his other limbs swinging powerlessly toward the bottom of the gorge.

Noah pulled with his right arm and lifted himself in the hole, then he forcefully bit the ground and moved his arm deeper in the cavity dragging his body in the process.

His teeth did not pierce the rocks but could last as a handhold for the time needed to his hand to find a handle deeper in the hole.

After repeating this process a few times, Noah's body was fully lying on the floor of the cavity.

'I'm alive.'

That was his first thought when he managed to stop his fall.

He used his remaining strength to check a place on his waist under his clothes and smiled a little when he took out a silver ring from it.

He relaxed at the sight of the ring and collapsed after one last thought.

'I can survive.'

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Noah was woken up the next day by a wave of pain coming from his body.

He looked around him and remembered the events of the battle.

'I don't know if it would have been worse to stay there. Basil is probably dead so my fate should have been the same if I remained in the battle.'

He slowly moved his hand toward the silver ring on his side and wore it on his index, a cold sensation hit the scraped skin on his palm.

A piece of dried meat appeared in front of him and Noah hastily ate it.

Since he had obtained the space-ring he started accumulating provisions and useful items inside it as a preparation for his travel toward the academy.

While he was eating he looked around the cavity and checked the condition of his body.

The cavity was barely two meters square large and one high, Noah lying in it occupied almost its entire space.

'Luckily it wasn't any smaller than this or I don't know if I could have centered it at that speed.'

Then he focused on his body.

'My legs are broken, so is my left arm. The skin of both my hands and feet is flayed, my right shoulder is close to being dislocated and I'm quite sure that some of my ribs are cracked.'

He looked outside the hole and saw only a faint fog lingering in the gorge.

'Adding the fact that I'm inside a place that a medium-size noble family could not claim I'd say that I'm probably dead.'

He thought again at the thunder that destroyed Basil's carriage and smiled a little.

'Well, probably dead is better than dead for sure. I wonder why Master allowed me to go in this suicide mission.'

He thought for a bit but then shook his head.

'No, if he knew all about the situation he would have surely stopped me. Yet, who could have the power to purposely keep him in the dark only to send me there?'

The face of his father appeared in his mind but he tossed the thought away.

'I'll think about it later, after all even if it was him I can't do anything about it otherwise my mother wouldn't be still suffering.'

Noah slowly straightened up, supporting himself on the wall and looked at his injuries.

'I need to recover before thinking of how to get out of here. The concentration of "Breath" down here seems even higher than on the surface so I should heal faster but I should still do something to speed the process.'

Three weapons appeared on his side as he tore his clothes apart to make some strings.

He straightened his broken limbs and used the weapons from his space-ring as splints and tied them together.

Then another piece of dried meat appeared and he slowly ate it, then he closed his eyes and focused on the "Breath" inside him to prioritize the healing process rather than the nourishment one.

Days went by with Noah motionlessly lying on the ground waiting for his injuries to heal.

Sometimes he would open his eyes to eat and drink or to change the position of the splints but most of his time was spent directing the "Breath" on his wounds.

It was only two weeks later that he was able to move again.

Chapter 53 - 53. Snakes

Noah undid his splints and put everything back in the space-ring.

He lied on the ground to stretch his limbs and test their recovery and was happy with the results.

'I'm almost back to my peak form. In another week I should be completely healed but like this is fine, I can't waste more time.'

His injuries had mostly healed so he decided to start moving to find a way back to the Balvan mansion.

Noah peeked outside the cavity and looked upward.

Only fog filled his field of view and, apart from some dents in the rocks of the walls, there seemed to be no viable handholds.

'I fell for a few hundred meters. Climbing them back would be doable if it wasn't for these rocks being stupidly hard. From here I can't even see if the handlings would last till I reach the softer part of the wall.'

Noah stared for a long time at the wall above him until he gave up on the idea of climbing it.

'If I don't find a handhold I have to come back here through the fog, what if I can't find my original path? What if I slip once? Climbing the wall is just a bet too risky to be taken.'

He turned around with unwillingness to look at the path below him.

The fog was thicker toward the bottom of the gorge and the number of handholds was the same as the other side.

However, some yellow roots sprouted from small holes in the wall downward.

'It appears that nearing the bottom some vegetation starts to emerge. I can totally cling to them to slow my descent.'

Noah was deep in thought, he continued to look down but he could not find any flaws with the roots, the path toward the bottom of the cliff was definitely easier to tread.

'Do I really have to go there?'

He was reluctant to enter such a dangerous place but there was no other feasible option for him.

'It's either going up and try my luck, which for now has always been awful, or going down and have fun with the magical beasts that destroyed a medium-size noble family. Well, I can always wait here for someone to rescue me.'

He smiled and shook his head at the absurd idea of being saved but then his expression became cold and stern.

'No mistakes allowed from now on.'

He sharpened his mind cutting off every superfluous thought as he crouched on the edge of the cavity.

He slowly pushed his body over the hole, remaining hanged on the edge with his right hand.

When he confirmed his target below him he released the grip and slid on the wall using his body to slow the descent.

The skin on his back and feet was scraped by the attrition with the hard rocks but Noah didn't care, his eyes never left the root below him.

As he went over it, he grabbed in its direction and steadily held on it.

The root was elastic and it stretched when Noah's weight fell on it, yet it didn't break.

Noah was relieved seeing that the root could support his body and hastily looked below him to find a new one.

Nevertheless, the root in his hand moved and a soft hiss sounded from the hole.

'Fuck!'

Noah immediately understood the situation and released the grip to continue his downfall.

He grabbed on the next "root" and started searching for another one before his body even stopped.

As he found a new one he again left his hanging and descended again.

He repeated this process for more than one hundred meters but there still wasn't any sign of the bottom of the cliff.

Meanwhile, the hissing sound behind him became stronger and filled the fog over him.

Noah wasn't thinking about anything other than the next handhold and he continued sliding ignoring the sound.

At some point though, the noise appeared in the fog below him.

When Noah went for the next "root" he found out that it had two eyes and a tongue pointed in his direction.

'Earth snake!'

The "roots" on the wall were, in fact, snake-type magical beasts, specifically Earth snakes.

Before the snake could bite him though, Noah grabbed it by its throat and held on it.

'You are just a rank 1 beast, you are no different from a root in my eyes!'

These were his thoughts as he continued to slow his fall using the same method as before.

More and more snakes came out from the holes in the wall till Noah could see about a hundred of them below him.

He could not stop or retreat so he directly jumped in their pack kicking and punching any beast that attacked him.

The snakes were weak and almost harmless to a rank 2 body in the higher tier but Noah's real threat was the fall, he could not allow himself to gain speed.

Since a slow descent was no longer possible Noah chose to directly walk on the bodies of the snakes, jumping from beast to beast like they were the steps of a stair!

He was walking down the cliff on the heads of a pack of rank 1 magical beasts!

After a few hundred meters treaded in this way, the fog finally began to disperse showing the valley at the bottom of the gorge.

The environment was filled with green grass and a small river ran in the middle of it.

Noah though had no time to enjoy the scenery as a scary view unfolded in the valley below him.

Tens of yellow snakes more than seven meters long were coiled on each other on the ground with one longer than fifteen meters in their center.

Noah stared with wide eyes at the beasts while moving toward them, he could not stop even if he wanted to.

When he was at less than fifty meters from the ground, he unsheathed his sabers and let his body falling freely in the middle of the dreadful pack of snakes.

'About thirty rank 2 and one rank 3 Earth snakes, bring it on!'

Chapter 54 - 54. Snake valley

Noah landed on the pack of magical beasts.

The snakes were already awakened by the noise coming from the wall and immediately attacked Noah.

A two meters large head with the mouth open came in his direction but was instantly cut in two halves by a vertical slash.

The snakes grew restless when one of their pack died and madly pounced at Noah that was forced to block the incoming blows.

He was sent flying on the wall where he came from and brutally crashed on it.

He could not waste any time as the rank 1 snakes were jumping at him from the holes above and the rank 2 ones were encircling him.

Generally speaking, a group of rank 2 magical beasts could not hurt Noah in a normal situation.

However, he had to jump straight in the middle of their pack due to the fall and the snakes were already prepared for his arrival.

There was also the problem with the type of magical beasts they were.

Snake-types magical beasts were usually very resilient and had a strong body with few weak points, they were considered among the most dangerous kind of magical beasts.

In the case of the Earth snakes, their bodies were extremely tough and had immense strength, yet they could not secrete poison from their fangs.

'Killing the rank 2 is quite easy even if troublesome, but the rank 3 is problematic to handle in this mess.'

The rank 3 snake was in the rear of the group keeping its eyes on Noah while the rank 2 attacked him, it seemed to study his movements waiting for the right moment to strike.

Noah pushed back the snakes in front him launching six wind slashes on them, he completely ignored the rank 1 jumping from above.

The slashes hit their bodies leaving deep wounds but they seemed not to care and begun to charge again.

Noah dodged this time and ran toward the right part of the valley madly slashing at anything that came near him.

'They are too many and I'm not even at full strength. I should escape.'

The concentration of "Breath" on his right side was slightly lower than on the left one so he chose that direction.

'Magical beasts will prefer a higher concentration of "Breath", so it's safe to assume that the beasts within the areas with a lower concentration will be weaker.'

Snakes kept on trying to encircle him but he would simply slash forward creating a path through their bodies.

Dark red blood fell on him continuously as he forced his way through the blockage of the beasts.

When he was almost outside the borders of the pack, the rank 3 beast decided to strike.

Its massive body reached Noah's position in an instant and it shot on him with its mouth wide open.

Seeing the four meters large head coming from behind him, Noah jumped in the air and blocked the snake's fangs with his two sabers.

The clash flung Noah at some distance away from the pack and made him crash heavily on the ground.

'Peak rank 3!'

Thought Noah while he stood up inside the hole he created.

He was lightly injured from the previous attack but he had managed to get away from his disadvantageous position.

Noah didn't look back and ran at full speed following the decreasing concentration of "Breath".

The snakes behind him followed but could not catch up with him, their speed was below the average of the beasts on the same rank.

The chase continued for an hour.

Noah had to face the continuous assaults of other snake-type beasts that appeared in front of him while escaping.

'Fire snakes, Horned snakes, Two-headed snakes, why don't they straight up call this place snake valley?!?'

Noah cursed in his mind while relentlessly slashing at any new beast that appeared in his sight.

'If it wasn't for all these magical beasts randomly attacking me I would have shaken off the rank 3 from my back already! Luckily they are all rank 2.'

Corpses kept on accumulating on the path he was treading on and red blood kept on flowing on the river at the center of the valley.

At some point, an imponent figure appeared in front of him.

Its body was eighteen meters long and four meters thick, it had three horns on its head and from its fangs was dripping a violet dense liquid.

'Rank 3 Horned snake!'

Behind it, a handful of rank 2 horned snakes were coiled together looking in his direction.

The rank 3 Horned snake wasn't looking at him but at the rank 3 Earth snake following him, there seemed to be hatred in its eyes.

Realization dawned on Noah looking at the Horned snake's expression.

'They must have fought for the spot with the higher concentration of "Breath" and the Horned snake lost! That's why its pack is smaller. I can make use of it.'

Noah went in the direction of the Horned snake with resolution.

The beast was enraged by the small human trespassing its territory and shot out violet liquid spheres from its mouth.

Noah dodged them and sensed that when they hit the ground they corroded it instantly, leaving deep holes in it.

'To think that at rank 3 it can use its poison as a ranged attack.'

He kept on running and passed the Horned snake jumping straight in its remaining pack.

The rank 2 snakes attacked him but he simply shot out more wind slashes making sure only to wound them, they were his precious helpers after all.

He continued his escape without caring for the events happening behind him.

The rank 3 Earth snake had met with the rank 3 Horned snake and engaged in a furious battle.

Meanwhile, the pack of Earth snakes arrived and were about to overwhelm the one of Horned snakes when Noah got too far away and could not sense their fight anymore.

He ran for another hour to be sure that he was outside of their patrol area.

As he ran, the quantity of rank 2 magical beasts diminished being replaced by rank 1 beasts and the concentration of "Breath" began to resemble the one of the cavity he was in.

The beasts there seemed to be afraid of him as none of them tried to attack.

Noah looked around him for a bit and found a small cave inhabited by a few rank 1 fire snakes.

It was quite hidden and there weren't any holes on its walls so he chose to rest there.

He cleared the beasts inside it and laid on the ground to rest.

Chapter 55 - 55. Golem

Noah rested for half a day.

After he woke up, he ate a light meal and stretched a map in front of him.

The map was pretty simple but it described a large area of the Ultra continent, it was the best one Noah managed to find in the outer circle.

'I'm going in the opposite direction of Balvan mansion but maybe there will be a path to the surface there.'

He had gone where the "Breath"'s concentration was lower during the fight which was on the contrary way of his mansion.

'I should first explore this area. I don't really want to face those beasts packs unless I'm forced to.'

He stood up and exited the cave.

He finally had the time to look carefully at the environment of the valley.

The ground was filled with green grass and light shone brightly from the fog above it.

'Strange, it has been half a day but the night did not come. Maybe the fog has something to do with this.'

The fog was constantly releasing daylight making every detail of the valley vivid and clear.

Noah continued his exploration of the area where the "Breath" was less dense.

Many rank 1 snake-type magical beasts were hiding at his sight, returning to their caves or simply crawling away.

The walls around him were steep and were not suitable for climbing, Noah almost considered to give up on the exploration of this side of the valley when something unusual appeared in his sight.

It was at the end of the valley and there were almost no magical beasts, the walls too were still steep.

However, on the ground, there were remains of a man-made building.

'How is this possible?'

Noah got close to the wrecked structure to inspect it but then a massive figure shot out in his direction.

Noah hastily unsheathed his sabers to block the attack and got flung away for some meters by it.

He raised his guard and waited for another attack to come but nothing happened.

He took a look at the immobile figure standing in front of the building.

It was a three meters tall set of armor with no face appearing on the helmet's hole.

Blue runes emitted a soft light through all its body creating a blue halo around its figure.

There were signs of combat on the armor as it was full of dents and holes.

Seeing that the armor was unmoving, Noah relaxed and thought for a bit.

'Is it defending that area? How do I destroy it?'

He slashed in the air and a blade of wind shot out in the direction of the golem.

The golem raised its arms to block the blow and only a slight mark appeared on them after they clashed with Noah's attack.

'Mh, I should be able to break it if I go all out but that would leave me powerless. I don't know if it is the only one there.'

His attention shifted to the blue runes.

'It should be fueled by those inscriptions, maybe it will stop working if I break them.'

After he set up the plan, he no longer hesitated.

He jumped straight at the golem launching three wind slashes and moved to its side.

The golem had to block the slashes and could not focus on Noah's attack from inside his guard.

The saber cut through a rune on the chest armor turning off its blue light.

'One down, nine remaining.'

Noah and the golem fought for some minutes as he would use a hit and run tactic always going out of its defense perimeter to limit the dangers of the battle.

'Ten down.'

When the last rune was pierced, the golem fell lifelessly on the ground.

Noah examined the armor a little before shaking his head and putting it in the space-ring.

'I really don't understand inscriptions. I should keep it, maybe it's worth something.'

Then he turned his head to the broken building and concentrated.

He moved toward it wary of his surroundings, he didn't know if another golem would appear.

However, everything was silent and no dangers arrived.

Noah relaxed and began to make conjectures.

'This structure was almost as big as the Balvan mansion, it should have belonged to one of the medium-size noble families that came to explore the valley.'

His eyes lit up when he realized that if the family had completely moved here, they must have moved their treasury too!

Noah began to gain speed in his exploration as he could not wait to go deeper into the building.

Sometimes he would find old skulls or bones, sometimes only useless remains.

Meanwhile, a doubt formed in his mind.

'If they were at the same level as my family, how is it possible that they were destroyed in this relatively safe area?'

The signs of struggle indicated that a battle had occurred but Noah did not understand who or what had the strength to defeat them.

'Even the pack of Earth snakes could not do it, so how did they die?'

He arrived at the inner part of the mansion while thinking that.

A big broken door divided the area and three-four meters golems were in pieces on the ground.

Noah examined the dents on their armor and concluded that it was the work of a magical beast.

'This place has more dangers than simply rank 3 magical beasts.'

A sense of restlessness grew inside him as he became determined to get out of the valley as soon as possible.

He passed the big door and entered the inner part of the mansion.

The insides were slightly more intact than the outsides and from some of the remains, you could imagine how luxurious it should have been before.

Noah moved quickly and stopped only after he found a small metal door still closed in one of the rooms.

He became excited and pushed the door open still holding his sabers.

The door was heavy and scraping sounds came from the ground as it opened.

Noah took a look at the other side and saw a small room almost empty except for a skeleton sitting on a throne with his limbs crossed.

Chapter 56 - 56. Blood companion

Noah focused all his mental energy on the skeleton but he found nothing wrong with it, so he decided to examine the room.

The room was clean and completely empty, its walls seemed more resistant than the others of the building.

'This should have been some kind of vault, which means that the treasures are with the skeleton.'

He neared the throne and inspected it.

The throne had nothing special with it and the skeleton was the same except for a box in his hands.

Noah took the box and opened it, inside there was a book with some runes on it.

Expectation was mounting in Noah's mind as he sat on the floor a started reading.

'The beasts tide broke through the outer ring, they will be here at any moments. My Assea family is doomed but our will must go on so I decided to write this book and seal it with some inscription to make it last the passage of time.'

At these words, Noah became completely focused as one thing came to his mind.

'Inheritance!'

'My family is famous for our inscriptions and animated puppets, its a noble art passed down by my ancestors but its power in combat is lower than the average martial art. That's why we came here, we wanted to nurture our descendants in this environment and study more application of our art.'

'Everything went well for a period, we were making progress and our descendants were growing strong but then we have awoken the King of this place.'

Noah was surprised for a moment before he resumed his reading.

'The King was sleeping below the area with the highest density of "Breath" and was extremely angry when it realized that there were trespassers in its territory. It sent hordes of magical beasts to attack us and the previous patriarch, my father, died in the process of defending us.'

'We were forced to hide in this place but the King only wanted snake-type creatures in its domain and so we arrived in this situation.'

Noah imagined something stronger than the dragon in his childhood and shivered at that thought.

If a patriarch of a medium-size family could not win against this King how could he hope to survive?

'We can't fly like my father and the passage to the surface is on the other side of the valley so this will be the end of my family. I will pass to you the pinnacle of our art that we managed to create, I hope that it will help you to survive this place and, one day, to avenge us by killing that King. My name is Uriah Assea, and this is my lifelong achievement.'

Noah's eyes kept going on the next pages without blinking once and a smile began to appear on his face.

'I can use it! I can use this spell!'

The spell read:

'Body-inscription spell, rank depending on the strength of the companion, no elemental requirements as the spell will be stronger if paired with a magical beast of the user's same element. The spell consists of engraving the figure of the chosen magical beasts on the user body to create a blood companion. The blood companion will have the same strength of the actual beast if its element matches with the user since it's fueled by the "Breath" in the user's body. The process to create the blood companion is complex and must be followed strictly otherwise the inscription will fail.'

'To create the inscription on the body, the user must dip a sharp stick or a weapon on the blood of the magical beast that he decided and draw its image on his body. The drawing must be done below the skin so the user must cut through it in order to reach the specific depth. After the drawing is complete, the user needs to eat the center of power of the beast to give life to its image. The center of power is generally the heart of the beast. When the drawing becomes alive, the user must subdue it with his mental energy and then he will have completed the procedure.'

There were examples of drawings that reached the standard required for the spell and many of them were of snake-like beasts, the Assea family had probably experimented a lot on them.

Noah meanwhile had a bright smile on his face.

'It is totally doable! My first spell! I wonder if I'll get the right element on the first try.'

The description of the spell continued listing its advantages and disadvantages.

'The blood companion can attack on its own or be controlled by the user so its efficiency vastly surpasses normal puppets. The user will share his "Breath" and mental energy with the companion and will need to use a part of them to feed it or to make it recover. The pressure on the sea of consciousness of the user will grow as the companion sensations will be shared with the user. The beast needs to be recently killed or the "Breath" in its heart will not suffice for giving life on the inscription. It is better if the user killed it as it will be easier to subdue on the last part of the process.

The blood of the beast must be filled with the "Breath" of the user in order to have a better control over the body of the companion, that's why the valley,

with its high density of "Breath", is the perfect place to create these types of inscriptions. To remove the companion, just kill it.'

Noah's hands trembled from the excitement he was feeling and he hastily stored the book in the space-ring.

'Hahaha! It is perfect for me right now! Yet, which beast should I choose? The Fire snakes are the weaker but I didn't find any rank 3 till now and the Earth snakes have a pack too big for me to go there and kill their boss quietly.'

He thought for a bit before doing an evil smirk and looking in the direction where he came from.

'That horned snake should have survived right?'

Chapter 57 - 57. Preparations

Noah walked slowly toward the other side of the valley.

He would stop frequently to train in the writing showed in Uriah's diary and to review the details of the spell.

'Since the body of the companion is made with its blood mixed with my "Breath" its rank is fixed. Well, theoretically it is possible to upgrade it but you would need a different technique and the risks of the companion dying will be high. It is simply safer to switch to a stronger one once you have the necessary strength to tame it.'

He was drawing on the ground the shape of a snake with his saber while holding the book in his other hand.

'I wonder if I'm being too greedy going for a rank 3 right away. If I kill it I should have some advantages in taming it, yet can I sustain it? Well, having a rank 2 companion at my level is useless anyway.'

His prey was a peak rank 3 Horned snake while he was only a rank 1 mage, it was natural for him to have some doubts.

'It doesn't say anything about making more than one companion either, I guess it depends on the pressure I can withstand with my sea of consciousness.'

There was another reason he was moving slowly and it was the "Breath"'s density.

The density was so high that the effects on his body resembled those of the "Breath" blessing he found during the events with the Ironclad spiders.

Noah was having the faint sensation of getting close to a sort of limit.

'If I stay here for a couple of months I should reach the end of the sixth cycle, and that based on the density in this area. If I go further in the valley it will take even less.'

He was purposely slowing his trip back to the mansion to make use of the quality of this place.

'There is also that King's problem, but I'm really powerless about anything related to it.'

The drawing was done and Noah nodded looking at it, he was satisfied with the result.

'Now where that snake can be?'

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The rank 3 Horned snake was lying on the river to let the water filled with "Breath" enter its body.

There were many wounds on its body, probably due to its battle with the pack of Earth snakes, and no rank 2 snakes of its pack were present.

The snake was sleeping but it was right in the open, there was no way to take it by surprise.

Noah was hiding behind a rock looking at it, the saber in his hand was drawing the snake's figure on the terrain.

'Mh it looks injured, this is good, but there is no way to take it by surprise.'

The drawing was over, the snake's figure this time had three little horns on his head.

'Time to get the main ingredient.'

Noah smiled unconsciously, the prospect of having his first spell was making him elated.

He charged with his two sabers unsheathed and crossed in front of him.

The snake woke up sensing something coming in its direction and was enraged to see again the little human that caused the incident with the Earth snakes.

It immediately spewed a poisonous ball in his direction and then punched with its head where he was dodging to.

Noah jumped and rotated horizontally, continuously sending wind slashes on the body of the snake.

The slashes cut through its skin but only light wounds appeared.

'It is indeed powerful.'

Noah admitted and then assaulted it again.

Clashes kept on happening and the Horned snake fought fiercely, but new wounds appeared on its body on every clash and, added to the old ones, they were starting to affect the massive beast.

The Horned snake tried a desperate attack launching a poisonous projectile at melee range but Noah used this chance to jump over its head and pierce it with both his sabers.

The sabers stabbed deeply into the snake's skull as it started to thrash its body around the valley to remove the human from above its head.

However, Noah held strongly on the sabers and pushed them deeper into the beast's brain.

After a minute of struggles, the snake finally fell dead on the ground.

Noah jumped off its body and could not help but feel surprised.

'What an incredible vitality! Even with my blades in its brain it still resisted for so much.'

He could not put its body in the space-ring as it was too big so he hastily made a deep cut along its body.

He took out a cask from his ring and threw the water inside it away, then he put the cask below the cut to accumulate the dripping blood.

Then, he entered the cut and explored the insides of the snake's body until he found its heart.

After he came out of its body, he took off his upper clothes and washed in the river, he didn't want any form of contamination to happen during the creation of the blood companion.

Noah waited patiently for the cask to be filled and then he put everything back in his space-ring and went to hide in a cave nearby.

There were some rank 2 snakes inside but they were immediately cleared and he had to go back to the river to wash again.

When he was clean and in a safe place, he took out the cask and placed his hands on it.

"Breath" flowed from his body into the snake's blood inside the cask while his acupoints were absorbing madly the one around him.

It took him an entire day to make the blood reach the standards described in the diary and when the process was over, the blood had become a dark dense liquid.

Noah waited some more time for his body to be filled again with "Breath" and after making sure that everything was set he unsheathed a saber and dipped its tip in the liquid.

His eyes were shining in excitement as he looked at the black blade dripping the dark blood.

'Time to begin!'

Chapter 58 - 58. Not earth

Noah took the saber with two hands and pointed its tip to his chest.

He pushed firmly and the blade stabbed his skin.

The dark blood poured in the wound and mixed with Noah's body leaving a black mark.

'Again!'

He took out the saber and dipped it in the cask and then he stabbed his chest again.

As he repeated the process, a figure began to appear on his body.

Noah took two hours to complete the drawing and when it was over it covered his entire right chest area and a half of his shoulder, as for the pain he felt during the process, it didn't even make him tremble.

Noah had, by then, survived six treatments of the Forging of Seven Hells, some cuts on his skin were nothing to endure.

Next, he used the remaining dark liquid in the cask to add details to the snake figure which took him another hour.

When the blood was over, the drawing on his body began to feel heavy, like some sort of burden was added there.

Noah stared at his shoulder and nodded in satisfaction.

'The first part is complete, now the heart.'

The heart of the snake appeared in his hand and Noah closed his eyes to concentrate on refilling the "Breath" in his body and sharpening his mental energy.

After half an hour, he was ready.

The heart was three times bigger than his hand, there was no way that he could eat it in one bite.

Noah decisively took the first bite and gulped immediately, an awful taste invaded his mouth and a strong heat began to spread from the piece of foreign flesh in his body but was suddenly absorbed by the drawing.

Noah took another bite and the same thing happened.

When he took the last one and the heart had completely vanished the temperature of the drawing began to rise until Noah thought that his shoulder was on fire.

The snake figure started to move and a tremendous pressure hit Noah's sea of consciousness.

Inside his mental sphere, the half-transparent image of a Horned snake appeared and went berserk!

The snake directly head-butted on the sphere making it tremble, it seemed that it wanted to break out at any cost from that confinement.

Noah felt an incredible pain in his head and focused on his sea of consciousness ignoring the pain on his shoulder.

His figure inside the sphere opened his eyes and flew straight at the snake, two balls of water from the sea below him rose in the air and transformed in sabers that were caught firmly by his half-transparent hands.

Noah cut directly on the snake image making it hiss in pain, but it didn't care about him and continued to hit the sphere with all its body.

Another wave of pain came from his mind that forced Noah to slow his assault.

The snake attacked again and this time a small crack appeared on the sphere.

Noah felt his consciousness fading for an instant before he focused again.

'If I let it continue like this I will surely die!'

He focused on the Kesier rune at the center of the sea which released a loud hum as an answer to Noah's calling.

The snake this time shook in pain, it could not focus again on the wall as it trembled and fell in the sea.

Noah rapidly followed and dove in its direction.

The sea was a representation of its thoughts and mental energy, it could not hurt him at all.

With the rune humming continuously and Noah's relentless assault, the snake figure became less and less corporeal until it completely shattered and was absorbed by the sea.

The shards of the snake's previous image recomposed and appeared next to the space-ring projection, Noah relaxed when he felt the connection with it.

The Horned snake was coiled lazily over the sea and it was smaller than the previous one that Noah fought.

Noah went close to it and inspected it carefully.

The snake sensed his presence and opened its eyes, raising its head to stare at Noah's figure.

After a few seconds of them exchanging stares, the snake lowered its head and Noah felt that it had surrendered.

He patted its head satisfied and came out of his sea of consciousness.

Meanwhile, the snake drawing had stopped burning but was now moving freely along his body.

Noah felt his companion moving and tried to control it with his mental energy.

The snake followed his order and moved to the chest area but some of the "Breath" inside his body was expended and the crack in his sphere released a wave of pain due to the usage of mental energy.

'I'll experiment later with this guy, now I have to heal from the injuries. Luckily, I thought of using the rune at the last moment otherwise...'

Another wave of pain came from his mind, it seemed that the crack was pressuring his sphere.

Noah decided to stay in the cave as he consumed the sea in his mind to fill the crack and close it.

In this period, he would consume all the mental energy he had to secure the wound and then go to sleep to refill it.

It took him one week to completely heal his sphere.

'Wounds on the sea of consciousness sure are troublesome, I had to focus on the crack for the whole time incapable of doing anything else. Well, at least now I have succeeded.'

"Breath" from his body and mental energy were expended as a half-transparent snake twelve meters long appeared in front of him.

The snake seemed ethereal, with just its edges completely material, the insides were filled by black smoke.

Its tail was connected to Noah's body from his left foot.

'Attack me.'

Noah ordered as more mental energy was expended.

The snake raised its head and shot at Noah that unsheathed his saber and blocked the blow, he was pushed for a few meters before stopping.

A disappointed expression was on his face when he focused again on the snake.

'Rank 3 strength but of the initial stage, while that Horned snake was definitely a peak stage. Horned snakes belong to the earth element, so now I can be sure that I'm not of that one.'

Chapter 59 - 59. Testing

'Well, nothing I can do about it, I should just be happy to have a rank 3 blood companion. Also, the pressure in my mind seems to work like an inferior version of the Kesier rune.'

The pressure on Noah's sea of consciousness with the addition of the snake's figure had increased greatly.

The snake's image would release a constant weight on his mental sphere steadily enlarging it.

'The effects are not as noticeable as the training in the rune, yet it's still the first increase of mental energy I had since I became a rank 1 mage.'

Since William had yet to give him the second rune, his training had halted in that field.

However, with the new burden in his mind, his sphere was finally enlarging again.

'It's a pity that I can't create another companion. I feel that my mind has reached the limits of what it can withstand.'

He controlled his companion for a bit to get used to the new ability and to familiarize himself with its peculiarities.

The snake shared all its senses with Noah, it was like having a mind inside his mind and that was what caused the constant pressure.

Noah had to get used to looking in two different directions at the same time, deciding twice the actions to make, needless to say that the expenditure of mental energy was high.

Nevertheless, he could sustain it, he was after all a rank 1 mage.

The only problem was, as always, the "Breath" expenditure.

After a whole hour of training, he had to stop to refill the "Breath" in his body which was almost completely consumed.

A bit of irritation struck him as he patted his low waist looking at it angrily.

'Fucking dantian form already! I'm sick of having this stupid limit.'

He sat on the ground to calm himself and decide on his next move, the companion had retreated in his body in the meantime.

'First, I have to get used to my new combat strength and I can do it by fighting some beasts during my trip to the other side of the valley. Second, I should

take things slowly to raise the level of my body as much as possible, I don't know what dangers are lying in wait for me on the road. Lastly, I have to get out of here and go back to the mansion, I bet that Lily and Master are worried about me.'

He set his priorities and rested, in order to escape the valley he had to be at his peak form every time he decided to move.

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A week passed, as a young man with his upper body naked walked cautiously in the valley.

Sometimes he would jump in some cave and come out covered in blood, sometimes rank 2 magical beasts would attack him to be devoured by a huge black shadow.

'The density of "Breath" is increasing so much that if I release my companion for only a few attacks I can refill the "Breath" expended immediately. The only problem is that my clothes get torn in the process.'

Since the companion was mostly wandering in his chest area, the upper part of his dark gym suit had been ripped during the recent fights.

'It seems that I have to store clothes in the space-ring from now on.'

He reached the middle part of the valley, in the area where he first had fallen and a familiar scene presented to him.

A large pack of rank 2 Earth snakes was coiled around a rank 3 one.

The rank 3 snake was sleeping and some violet spots were present on his yellow body, the fight with the Horned snake had left some injuries on its body.

'I guess it is time to test my real strength now. I wonder if it will be happy to meet its old friend.'

The blood companion came out from his body and covered him, Noah was inside its gaseous interiors being carried by the snake.

This was one of the applications of the spell that Noah managed to discover, not only the body of the snake would act as a form of protection but it could also hide him pretending that he was some kind of magical beast.

This was also the best option he could think about in the unfortunate event that the King found him.

The companion moved toward the pack alerting its rank 2 members.

The rank 3 also woke up but looked confusedly in its direction, it seemed that it found some similarities with its old enemy but, at the same time, it was different.

It hissed an order to the rank 2 snakes and they moved in the companion's direction.

Before they could encircle it though, the companion raised his huge body in the air and sibilated at them.

A rank 3 beast was a leader among rank 2 beasts, and even with its initial stage strength, it was still a threat to their pack.

The group halted their advancement for a moment and, in that instant of hesitation, a small figure shot out from the body of the companion severing immediately two snakes heads.

A small gaseous line connected the small figure to the one of the ethereal snake.

The pack moved their attention to Noah but at that moment the blood companion attacked and bit the head on one of the snakes crushing it one blow!

In only one move three rank 2 snakes had died.

The rank 3 Earth snake got enraged and shot in their direction but, in the meantime, Noah had already pierced another snake's head and the companion was chewing on another beast.

When the big Earth snake arrived, it directly head-butted toward the blood companion which was forced some meters back from the clash.

A wave of pain hit Noah as more "Breath" was expended to heal the injuries just suffered by his snake but he was prepared for that.

He slashed promptly at the rank 3 beast leaving a deep wound slightly below its head.

Chapter 60 - 60. Assea

The rank 3 Earth snake retreated once the wound was inflicted but was met by the fangs of the blood companion that appeared behind it.

Noah had made it retreat inside his body and released it toward the beast to speed its attack.

The companion stabbed its fangs into the rank 3 beast's body and held firmly onto it and Noah followed shooting a dozen wind slashes.

The Earth snake could not avoid the assault since Noah's snake was keeping it still and was hit by the river of flying slashes.

Wounds appeared on its body as it hissed in pain, meanwhile, the rank 2 snakes left behind in its retreat had reached them and were jumping on the two enemies.

Noah once again absorbed the companion and launched it at the pack while he jumped at the rank 3 beast.

The blood companion thrashed out its body on the tens of rank 2 beasts and madly attacked without caring for the injuries it was experiencing.

Every time its body was bitten or hit, some of Noah's "Breath" would be expended to heal it.

In the few minutes since the battle had begun, Noah's storage of "Breath" was halved.

While the blood companion was keeping the pack away, Noah engaged in a solitary fight with the rank 3 snake assaulting it relentlessly.

He managed to heavily injure the beast in the initial clashes and was pressing in his attacks to slowly drain away the strength of the snake.

The Earth snake was a rank 3 beast, its intelligence was superior to the one of weaker magical beasts.

It understood that with the initial advantage taken by the invaders its situation was turning grim so it continued to defend its head waiting for the pack to come in rescue.

Noah though, could not waste time as his storage of "Breath" diminished rapidly with every second that he spent fighting and the absorption from his acupoints was barely enough to sustain the blood companion's battle.

He violently stabbed in the snake's skin accumulating wounds on its body as blood rained down from its figure.

When more than forty deep cuts were on the beast's body, it finally slowed down in its movements and Noah managed to deliver a firm lunge in one of its eyes.

The rank 3 Earth snake convulsed like crazy when the saber stabbed in its head but was stopped by a huge mouth clenching on its throat, the blood companion had appeared below it and immediately attacked.

The pack of rank 2 snakes could not keep up with the speed of Noah's snake retreating in his body and were left behind watching their leader's last moments.

The Earth snake collapsed on the ground and Noah stabbed once again his saber in its head while his companion ripped off a big part of its throat leaving their enemy's head hanging on a small piece of skin.

The rank 3 Earth snake was dead!

Its pack stared at the two figures near its body for a moment and then dispersed in fear.

Noah looked at the retreating snakes and heaved a sigh of relief, he was almost exhausted and there were still around twenty rank 2 snakes in the pack.

If they had attacked, he would probably have had to hide in the companion's body and retreat.

He plucked out the fangs of every Earth snake's corpse he found on the ground and hastily retreated in the first cave he managed to find after putting them inside the space-ring.

He didn't dare to do that with the corpse of the rank 3 Horned snake because of the strong poison on its fangs.

When he was in a safe space he relaxed and let the fatigue from the combat assault him.

'This battle was so dangerous! If my "Breath" had exhausted during the fight I would have been doomed. Yet, having this guy assaulting from any direction I want is really useful, I wonder how stronger it would be if it was of my element.'

The head of the companion came out of Noah's body and stared at him.

Noah simply patted its head while continuing in his thoughts.

'The capacity to enter and exit my body at will with that speed is definitely one of the stronger aspects of the spell. Another one is the healing ability of the companion that is almost limitless if I have enough "Breath" to keep it going, only a really strong attack might force the companion to hibernate to recover.'

Noah took some meat from his space-ring and ate till he was full, then he neared the end of the cave and laid himself on the ground to sleep.

The ethereal snake had its head outside Noah's body staring carefully at its surroundings.

'The expenditure is not even that much since the blood companion is mostly autonomous, only one order will keep it working for hours. I guess that is balanced by the requirements for the activation of the spell and the constant pressure that is forced on the user due to the sharing of their senses.'

He remembered some of the words in Uriah's diary and nodded internally.

'No wonder Uriah called it "the pinnacle of their art", only by fighting as two instead of alone its power resemble the magic that Orson used and this without considering the other aspects of the blood companion and the fact that our elements are not even the same.'

Noah was extremely satisfied with the power of the spell and knew that the one showed in the previous battle wasn't its full potential.

'When I get the dantian and find out my element I would have to change companion otherwise I would be wasting the real strength of the spell.'

He turned to look at the snake's head that was guarding him and smiled a little.

'I guess I should give it a name while I keep it. Let's go with Assea in honor of those that created the technique.'

Then, Noah closed his eyes and slept, with his companion now named Assea rigorously guarding him.