

The Shining Star Above The Heaven

#Chapter 101: The Stone Tablet - Read The Shining Star Above The Heaven Chapter 101: The Stone Tablet

Chapter 101: The Stone Tablet

The sunrise illuminated the Demon territory, especially around the Piercing Heaven Sect. The scenery was breathtaking, with glowing diamonds scattered across the land. It was the kind of beauty that could make someone reflect and comprehend on the mysteries of nature. That's exactly what Aldrian was doing right now.

He sat cross-legged atop a cliff overlooking the Piercing Heaven Sect, deep in his comprehension session. He had been in this position for an hour, feeling the flow of energy and sensing its density more clearly, along with each element in the air. What Aldrian sensed was unlike anything others could perceive, allowing him to build a deeper connection with nature and the universe.

Each day that passed, his cultivation became even stronger, and as it did, so did his control over the energy around him. Inside his domain, he could manipulate the surrounding energy effortlessly, using only his will to command it, even stopping its flow entirely when he wished.

It's an incredibly powerful ability. If his enemies were inside his domain, they would need at least the cultivation level of a grand duke to even attempt to forcefully absorb the energy within it, and even then, it would be extremely difficult. As for anyone below the duke stage? They shouldn't even think about replenishing their energy.

He didn't yet know the full extent of his domain's power and could only uncover it gradually. At this time, he had already established his domain here, enjoying the process of comprehending each new stuff within it. Each of his domains wasn't always the same, and it was refreshing for him to encounter something new, whether it was the composition of energy, new elements, or anything related to nature and the universe.

One place that particularly caught his interest was located atop a mountain. It now lay within his domain, but what made it special was the strong karmic thread tied to this location. A red building, with an ancient Eastern style and a sacred aura, stood here. Its presence made even the most formidable demonic cultivators feel humble before it.

"The Temple of the Heavenly Demon."

No one needed to tell him what kind of place this was. He was naturally drawn to it, sensing the karmic string connected to something beyond. Though he had never visited

or seen this temple before, he knew that the karma here linked him to something deeper—something beyond the temple's physical form.

He stopped his comprehension session when he sensed a few presences approaching from behind. Standing up, he turned to see Sylphia in front, followed by the others, including Ryu Dong-Geun. He exhaled softly.

"Let's go," he said.

Together, they walked toward the Temple of the Heavenly Demon, which was perched atop a mountain shaped like a giant pillar with a flat top. This was the most secluded and highest point among the surrounding mountains. They ascended via a circular staircase, as flying to the temple by any means was prohibited.

After a long walk, they finally arrived at the grand temple. In front of it lay a vast open space, large enough to hold thousands of people. Although Aldrian had already observed everything earlier through his domain, standing here in person felt entirely different. For some reason, his heart raced—he had the sense that something here would change him in the future.

Outside the temple, Sect Master Ryu Hyuk-Jae was already waiting with some of the elders, just as Aldrian had seen the previous day. It was clear that very few people knew about the existence of the Heavenly Demon's scripture.

Aldrian approached the sect master, intending to greet him. Although Ryu Hyuk-Jae appeared calm, with a smile on his face, Aldrian could sense the nervousness beneath the surface.

"Aldrian, how are you today? I hope you're ready for today's event. I believe in you," Ryu Hyuk-Jae said, patting Aldrian on the shoulder.

"You believe in the Heavenly Demon's scripture's hints, not in me," Aldrian thought to himself.

He proceeded to greet each of the elders, whom he hadn't had the chance to acknowledge yesterday due to the sect master's enthusiasm, confirming his suspicion that they were indeed the grand elders of the Piercing Heaven Sect.

"Let's not wait any longer. Follow me, and I will show you the true Heavenly Demon's scripture," Ryu Hyuk-Jae said, stepping confidently toward the massive red double doors.

Aldrian noticed the intricate formations etched into the doors. He could say with certainty that this was the most sophisticated formation he had ever encountered. According to his estimation, it would take him at least ten minutes to decipher it.

The door contained various formations from detection, seals and even killing formation. Ryu Hyuk-Jae put his hand on the door and he inserting his energy. The formation lighten up and the sound of the door's mechanism moving creating creaking sound. After the formation dim and the door return to normal the giant door open showing what is inside.

Aldrian was truly amazed by all of this; it was vastly different from the Temple of the Heavenly Demon in Dual Horns Peak City. He had never seen the temple in Thorny Flower Garden because he had never found it, and his domain did not cover that area. Still, he believed this would be the grandest, as it was the place where the Heavenly Demon's scripture located.

Inside the temple was a vast hall with nine giant pillars. There was no excessive furniture, only three engravings on the center ceiling. A light symbol surrounded by an ambigram, representing the Heavenly Demon was at the center, flanked by a dragon and a flower on either side. The thought that came to Aldrian's mind as he looked at those engravings was of the three scriptures of the Heavenly Demon.

At the end of the hall stood the altar, identical to those found throughout the Demon territory. Sect Master Ryu Hyuk-Jae then stood in front of the altar, his expression solemn, devoid of the joking and easygoing demeanor he had displayed earlier. Suddenly, he knelt and kowtowed, followed by the other demonic cultivators.

"We are here to fulfill our role for the destined one," he said softly.

Rising to his feet, he released a wave of energy before slicing his fingertip and allowing a drop of his blood to fall onto the symbol at the center of the altar. The symbol lit up, and the ground in front of the altar trembled before splitting open to reveal a hidden mechanism.

After a few moments, a large stone tablet rose into view, presented before everyone in attendance.

"Aldrian, I present to you the Heavenly Demon's scripture," Sect Master Ryu Hyuk-Jae declared.

Aldrian and the others gazed at the stone tablet in astonishment. To be honest, Aldrian hadn't expected the Heavenly Demon's scripture to be engraved on the surface of a stone tablet. He had thought he would see a scroll or a book, but to find it on a stone tablet was surprising.

"This is the foundation of the Piercing Heaven Sect—no, I dare to say this is the foundation of demonic cultivation, demonic cultivators, and all that is connected to the Heavenly Demon. The Heavenly Demon himself, as the creator of demonic cultivation, inscribed his lifelong cultivation techniques and the teachings of the Way of the

Heavenly Demon on this stone tablet, which his sole disciple later brought back to be comprehended."

Aldrian nodded, studying the stone tablet intently.

"May I try to read it now?" he asked.

"Go ahead. It's already in front of you. What's written here can be read by anyone, but none have ever been able to fully comprehend it. I hope you succeed," Sect Master Ryu Hyuk-Jae replied, stepping back to give Aldrian more space.

Without further ado, Aldrian stood in front of the tablet. It was filled with many sentences rich in hidden meanings and philosophical insights. He read with full concentration when he suddenly became drawn to a few lines above the others:

The way of the universe is the way of the Heavens

The way of nature is the way of the Heavens

The bind of karma is the bond of destiny

The Heavens have their rules, I have my own

If the Heavens leave me, I will leave them

If the Heavens fight me, I will fight them

Destiny is for me to shape

Suddenly he felt something click in his mind.

I'm tied to the universe

I'm tied to nature

All of this is my own karma

Why I am different is also my destiny

As Aldrian repeated these lines, his mind was suddenly transported to an era long before this one. He found himself in an unknown place, filled only with white, like being inside the pure white realm.

He looked down at his attire, it was still the same robe he wore in the temple. Surrounding him was nothingness, so he began to walk, moving without direction, simply following where his feet took him.

He didn't know how long he walked, but with each step, it felt like déjà vu, as if he had traversed this place before. A slight pain throbbed in his head, causing him to grimace, yet he continued onward.

Not long after, he came upon a solitary structure, a small pavilion in the midst of the white expanse. Inside sat a handsome young man with black hair and red eyes. Aldrian recognized him, he had encountered this man before, albeit indirectly.

"That's the man I saw in my vision."

Chapter 102: The Heavenly Demon

The man sitting inside the pavilion was the same one Aldrian had seen in his vision at the Temple of the Heavenly Demon in Dual Peak Horns City. His long black hair was like the night sky, His handsome face was unblemished, and he wore a clean red-and-black robe with the symbol of the Heavenly Demon on his back. His eyes were closed in meditation, seemingly indifferent to Aldrian's arrival.

Aldrian stood at the entrance of the pavilion, patiently waiting for the man to finish his meditation. After a few moments, the man slowly opened his eyes, revealing red eyes that seemed to pierce directly into one's soul.

As Aldrian locked eyes with him, a sudden pain seized his head. Grasping it with one hand, he was overwhelmed by a flood of images, as though unknown memories were resurfacing. The man simply stared at Aldrian, offering no help, but once Aldrian managed to regain control, the man smiled.

"You've finally come. Why don't we have a chat?" the man said. With a wave of his hand, two glasses and a teapot appeared in front of him.

Aldrian observed these with a thoughtful expression before walking into the pavilion and sitting across from the man. He tried to gather information about him, but the man's voice interrupted his thoughts.

"I know you're trying to uncover my name and other details, but you won't find anything," the man said.

Aldrian was shocked. This man knew about his hidden abilities? Did he also know his other secrets, including the true source of his power? He checked the information again—and it was true.

???

Age : ???

Race : ???

Cultivation : ???

Cultivation technique : ???

Attack techniques : ???

Defense technique : ???

Movement technique : ???

Supporting technique : ???

Aldrian didn't know what to make of it. His Eyes of Heaven had never failed him before. Was it because the man in front of him was too strong? Or was there something else?

"I know you have a lot of questions, but I can't tell you everything right now. Maybe I'll answer a few." the man said.

Aldrian was stunned but only sighed. For the first time, he understood what others must feel when he could easily read their thoughts. The man gave a faint smile as he looked at Aldrian, though a brief, sorrowful expression flickered in his eyes, vanishing so quickly that Aldrian barely noticed.

"I really miss those moments,"

the man thought.

The two sat in silence, but it wasn't uncomfortable—it was a serene, calm silence, free from tension or complex emotions, at least on the surface. After a few moments of wordless quiet, Aldrian decided to break the silence.

"Do you know me? Have we met before? I can't explain it, but I feel like I already know you... and yet, I don't. It's confusing." Aldrian asked.

The man, still expressionless, replied calmly, "Do I know you? The answer is yes and no. Have we met? The answer is yes... and no."

Aldrian frowned in confusion. What kind of answer was that? Noticing Aldrian's confused expression, the man's mouth formed a smile, but then Aldrian asked another question.

"Do you know the origin of my power? Do you know what I am?" Aldrian asked. He felt human, but his abilities and capabilities were far beyond anything a human should possess. "Do you know who I really am?" He was sure he was Aldrian Aster, the son of his father, Aldrey, and his mother, Irene. But all those visions had planted seeds of doubt about his own 'real' identity.

The Heavenly Demon remained silent, his expression unreadable. Aldrian couldn't see any change in his eyes and found himself completely unable to read this man at all.

"You will find out for yourself in the future," the man finally said.

Aldrian sighed. It seemed he would have to uncover the truth about himself on his own. He picked up the teacup, gazing at the tea for a moment before taking a sip. His eyes widened the instant the tea touched his tongue.

"This is amazing! I've never tasted a tea with such potent effects and a refreshing feeling like this." He felt his body revitalize, and the problems that had plagued his mind seemed to fade away. His face showed complete contentment as he set down the cup, only to throw out another question.

"Are you really the Heavenly Demon?"

If he couldn't get answers about himself, he could at least ask about the man in front of him. The man continued to stare into Aldrian's eyes before finally speaking.

"I am."

Aldrian had suspected it and almost certain of the man's identity, but hearing the confirmation still made his mind tremble. The figure before him was the creator of demonic cultivation, the God of demonic cultivators, a top expert from the past whose legend continued to be told through generations.

"Now it's my turn to ask questions," the Heavenly Demon said.

"What did you feel when you met me?"

Aldrian didn't understand why the Heavenly Demon was asking such a question, he fell silent, pondering for a moment. What did he feel? He recalled the first time he saw the Heavenly Demon in his vision, battered and wounded. The memory stirred something deep inside him.

"When I saw you battling the unknown, my heart ached, and I felt angry I couldn't describe," Aldrian replied.

The Heavenly Demon smiled, though Aldrian couldn't comprehend its meaning.

"Good," the Heavenly Demon said, taking a sip of his tea.

"What do you think of this place?" he asked again.

Aldrian looked around. Everything was white, the only colors came from their robes and the pavilion. He then glanced at his reflection in the surface of the tea before picking up the cup.

"It feels serene in a way I've never experienced before. But at the same time, there's a strange sense of déjà vu. I don't know how to explain it... It feels like this place is part of my memory, but also not."

The Heavenly Demon nodded at Aldrian's response.

"Good."

They both drank their tea in silence before Aldrian asked again, "Why 'the Heavenly Demon'?"

"What do you mean?" the man replied.

"Why did you choose the name 'Heavenly Demon'?" Aldrian wondered. The name seemed so contradictory. From the hints left on the stone tablet, it looked like the Heavenly Demon had some kind of conflict with the Heavens, yet he also acknowledged the Heavens as the ruler and the force that created the universe's system. Wait... system? Aldrian's mind tried to grasp something, but it felt both near and distant, just out of reach.

The Heavenly Demon noticed Aldrian's puzzled expression but answered nonetheless.

"It wasn't me who gave myself that name. Someone else did." He closed his eyes, his thoughts drifting into past memories of a time when he and that 'person' frequently met each other. Aldrian saw that the Heavenly Demon was in his own world and didn't disturb him, instead processing what he had just heard.

"Someone else gave him that name? He doesn't seem bothered by being called a demon. Could that person have been close to him?" Aldrian thought, pushing the question aside for now. He asked another.

"Who were you fighting? How could someone as strong as you have been hurt?"

The Heavenly Demon smiled.

"I can't tell you, but in the future, you'll discover the answers to all your questions, and I hope that when you do, it brings clarity to what you seek. For now, don't concern yourself with these matters, it's too early for you to know."

Aldrian sighed inwardly and let the topic go. There were so many things he wanted to know, but if no one would tell him, he would have to find the answers himself. He believed that, in the end, he would discover what he had been searching for all along.

The Heavenly Demon suddenly looked off into the distance, his expression becoming solemn.

"They've sensed something. It seems our meeting will have to end here." He then returned his gaze to Aldrian's eyes.

"I don't think I have much time left. I'm not sure if we'll meet again, so listen carefully. From here on, you'll face many obstacles on your way to your 'worthy place.' But with your abilities and capabilities, I believe you'll overcome them without much difficulty. However, remember this—when you come to understand the events of the past, *never* blame yourself. I'll say it again—*never* blame yourself. I hope we can meet again someday."

Without waiting for Aldrian's response, the Heavenly Demon waved his hand, and the surrounding scene began to crack like glass.

Aldrian could only watch as the world around him shattered like glass. But before everything crumbled entirely, he saw it—a giant eye staring at the Heavenly Demon. In that split second, the aura and pressure made him feel a feeling that he had sometimes already forgotten...fear.

Although it lasted only a split second, he felt a terrifying existence that was beyond comprehension. His body almost trembled in response to his racing heart, but then it stopped. He gritted his teeth, he felt humiliated, he felt belittled. His face shifted from cold sweat to an expression he had never worn before...absolute rage.

"HOW DARE YOU DISTURB ME!"

Chapter 103: His First Rage

Today is a typical day for the Piercing Heaven Sect, but something special is happening at this part of the sect. Outside the Temple of the Heavenly Demon, people from the Thorny Flower Garden and Black Dragon Pavilion have gathered. Among them are Baek Ji-Min and a young man of robust build, radiating a powerful aura.

They have all come to the Piercing Heaven Sect to observe Aldrian's progress. It has been a year since he began comprehending the Heavenly Demon's scripture. Indeed, a year has passed since Aldrian entered the 'white realm,' highlighting that time flows more quickly in the outside world.

When Aldrian unexpectedly entered a state of deep comprehension, the sect master and others witnessed the stone tablet emit a light, and for a brief moment, Aldrian's

energy and aura flared before returning to a calm state. None of them knew what to do, but suddenly, demonic energy began to envelop Aldrian.

Sect master Ryu Hyuk-Jae and the other elders were shocked by the demonic energy because it was purer and stronger than any they had felt before, making them want to worship Aldrian. Despite the strangeness of the situation, they decided to leave Aldrian there until he was finished. Shortly after, the other two sects of the three great sects informed Ryu Hyuk-Jae that their scriptures were showing strange signs as well.

Ryu Hyuk-Jae connected the dots and concluded that this must be related to Aldrian's state of comprehension in the temple. The other two sects decided to seek out Aldrian themselves, bringing the successors of their respective scriptures with them.

Hours, days, and even weeks passed, until now a year had gone by, and Aldrian still stood there without moving an inch. Members from all the sects continued to return, checking for any signs of progress, but today seemed no different from the others.

"I really don't understand what sect master Ryu Hyuk-Jae is thinking. Does he truly believe an outsider can comprehend it? I doubt it. No one has ever succeeded, and I don't believe he will either," said the robust young man, his voice laced with skepticism.

He wore a short-sleeved black robe that revealed his muscular arms. His tanned skin and bulging muscles radiated power, as if ready to unleash it at any moment. With short hair and a rather handsome face, his expression exuded confidence, bordering on arrogance.

"Kang Yong-Jin, you better watch your mouth. Are you doubting sect master Ryu Hyuk-Jae's judgment and suggesting he is incompetent?" Baek Ji-Min said coldly, her face impassive. Her voice and demeanor were icy, a sharp contrast to the warmth she displayed when in front of Aldrian. She wore red and black robes that accentuated her curves and ample bosom.

"Don't misinterpret my words so carelessly," Kang Yong-Jin retorted. "I just don't see how that man could comprehend it. Don't you see? He's been in that position for a year without moving an inch. Even if he is in a state of comprehension, taking this long makes me doubt he'll comprehend anything."

He looked at Baek Ji-Min with desire but suppressed it, knowing better than to cause trouble for her. He never stood a chance in the Thorny Flower Garden, especially with her mother, the sect master, watching over her.

She had always kept men away from Baek Ji-Min, but a year ago, he heard rumors that an unknown male had managed to get close to her. Even sect master Baek Ha-Yoon, her mother, had silently approved of her daughter becoming closer to him. He didn't know who the man was at first, but later discovered that he was the one chosen by sect master Ryu Hyuk-Jae to comprehend the Heavenly Demon's scripture.

Kang Yong-Jin could only try, but if Baek Ji-Min wasn't interested in him, there was little he could do. After all, cultivation was his priority. His primary goal was to unlock the full potential of the Black Dragon Scripture. As for women, he considered them a secondary concern, he could always pursue relationships later.

As someone who respected strength, Kang Yong-Jin was curious about the man chosen by Ryu Hyuk-Jae. Upon learning that this individual was from outside the demon territory and of unknown origin, he became skeptical, and his doubts only grew as time passed.

"You and I both comprehended our scriptures in just over a month," he continued. "He's been standing there like that for a year. What makes you think he'll succeed in comprehending it?"

"The fact that he's the first person to make the Heavenly Demon's scripture react, and that he's still in his comprehension state without breaking it, don't you see the demonic energy he's emitting? We've never seen demonic energy like that before! And we're talking about the Heavenly Demon's scripture, after all. There are many unexplored aspects that take time to fully comprehend," Baek Ji-Min replied.

Despite her confident words, she was quietly worried about Aldrian's condition. He seemed to be in a state of deep comprehension, even ignoring the strain of standing in the same position for an entire year. She didn't know what Aldrian was experiencing within his mind, but all she could do was hope that he would succeed.

Xin Haotian and the others stood not far from them, also sensing that it was unusual for Aldrian to take this long to comprehend something. It seemed the Heavenly Demon's scripture was on another level, requiring an extended amount of time for Aldrian to process.

As they pondered, the atmosphere suddenly grew tense. The energy of the entire area surged toward a single point—the temple itself. The sky darkened as storm clouds gathered above, and lightning crackled between the clouds, powerful enough to injure even someone at the grand duke stage. The deafening sound of thunder echoed throughout the entire Piercing Heaven Sect and far beyond.

Evergreen City, Ivory empire

At this moment, the citizens of the city were staring up at the sky, shocked by the sudden appearance of black clouds. The darkened sky, combined with the oppressive atmosphere, added to the sense of terror they felt.

The imperial palace was equally tense as Emperor Ladwin and the imperial teacher, Elthar, gazed solemnly at the sky.

"What do you think it is?" Emperor Ladwin asked.

"I don't know. It doesn't seem like a heavenly tribulation, but I have an ominous feeling about it," the imperial teacher replied.

Suddenly, an imperial guard rushed toward them, kneeling before the emperor.

"Your Majesty, we've received reports that this phenomenon can be seen across the empire and south into the Demon territory. However, the Doria Empire does not seem to be affected."

Upon hearing the guard's report, Emperor Ladwin nodded and dismissed him. Meanwhile, in the shrine of the Heavenly Tree, Alice, the spirit of the World Tree of Evergreen City, gazed toward the Demon Territory. With her sharp sensitivity to energy, she sensed the surrounding energy being drawn to a single point in the Demon Territory.

Because her area of blessing had also become Aldrian's domain, she could sense the overwhelming feeling of rage emanating from the ominous dark sky.

"Young master, what happened to you?"

She didn't know why, but she could only hope that whatever happened in the demon territory wouldn't bring forward the prophecy.

On the western side of the continent, where people seek enlightenment and the wisdom of the Buddha, a lone monastery stands in the middle of a bamboo forest.

The tranquil atmosphere calmed the mind, and the sacred chants of the Buddhist monks could be heard. Inside the small monastery an old monk sat cross-legged, facing a statue of the Buddha. He closed his eyes, chanting a Buddhist mantra with a voice full of concentration.

Suddenly, he stopped his chant and slowly opened his eyes. With wisdom reflected in his gaze, he looked in the direction of the Demon Territory. After a moment, he turned his focus forward again and pressed his hands together in prayer.

"Amithaba, the Heavens have already given a sign, its karma has grown much stronger."

Returning to the Temple of the Heavenly Demon, Sect Master Ryu Hyuk-Jae appeared like a ghost, his expression solemn as he surveyed the phenomenon. The grand elders

followed closely behind him, their gazes fixed on the sky before attempting to peer inside the temple.

Just before they could see Aldrian, the demonic energy surrounding him was suddenly absorbed by a surge of golden energy emanating from his body. He floated a meter above the ground, and his aura was terrifying, sending shivers down Ryu Hyuk-Jae's spine.

Xin Haotian created a barrier of light laws to shield Eleine and Sylphia, but he, too, felt a terrifying aura from Aldrian that he had never encountered before.

Everyone present could sense it, even those with the lowest cultivation levels, a singular intent—Rage.

They didn't know why, but they could distinctly feel Aldrian's rage.

Inside Aldrian's mind, he felt an overwhelming rage directed at that being, that 'thing' which instilled fear within him. He snapped at the sight of it, and his inner essence surged forth—a profound pride deep within his soul. He felt humiliated by that unknown entity, even though he knew it was impossible for him to confront it, at least he would fight this feeling of fear.

As if the surrounding broken scenery could sense his rage, it gradually halted its disintegration. The Heavenly Demon glanced at this for a split second and with a swift movement he waved his hand.

"You are truly terrifying, but not yet," he thought, smiling at Aldrian.

Before Aldrian could do anything, he watched as the Heavenly Demon waved his hand, and the scenery shattered instantly, plunging his vision into darkness.

Chapter 104: Return to Reality

It's Dark.

Only darkness.

Aldrian saw nothing but darkness—darker than a night sky. The last thing he remembered was the Heavenly Demon waving his hand, and then the scene around him shattered. After that, there was nothing. He felt like he was floating in the void, directionless. Yet, the rage inside him lingered, like a volcano on the verge of eruption, because he hadn't had the chance to release it.

He needed to know what that "thing" was, but the Heavenly Demon had sent him back before he could do anything.

"Hold on, Aldrian. Don't let anger control you," he told himself, trying to calm down with those self-reflective words. But the rage still simmered within. He couldn't believe how petty he felt—angry just because he had experienced fear. He knew he was prideful, but feeling this much rage over mere fear was something new for him.

Aldrian closed his eyes, attempting to calm his mind once more. He tried to set aside the events he had just witnessed. Slowly, he adjusted his breathing and energy circulation.

Inhale.

Exhale.

He kept the negative thoughts in check, working to suppress them.

Inhale.

Exhale.

Gradually, Aldrian began regaining his composure. He controlled the raging energy within, and eventually, it returned to normal. When he finally felt like himself again, he opened his eyes. But the darkness remained, making him feel as though his eyes were still shut.

"Where is this place?"

Now that he had time to inspect his surroundings, Aldrian felt confused by the overwhelming darkness and emptiness around him. He couldn't sense anything—it was as though he were trapped in an endless void. He didn't know what kind of place this was, but at least he could control his floating body. Adjusting himself, he decided to fly in a random direction, relying purely on intuition to guide him.

He flew aimlessly, unconcerned about where he might end up. He couldn't tell if he was moving straight, up, or down, but he kept going. He wasn't sure how much time had passed until, finally, he saw something far in the distance: a faint glow hovering high above on the horizon, like a lone star in the night sky.

Without hesitation, he flew in that direction. He kept flying and flying, and with each moment he got closer to the 'star,' he felt as though something inside him was unlocking. At times, memories of lives he didn't recognize appeared and embedded themselves in his mind.

These weren't like the visions he'd experienced since childhood. This time, it felt as though these were his true own memories—he knew what he had done, what he had lived through, and what he had truly felt.

In one of the memories, he lived like a mortal, full of struggle and humiliation. In another, he lived like a wealthy young master, indifferent to the world. Aldrian could feel that these memories were real, not fabricated—because *he* was the one who had lived them. He couldn't quite explain it, but he was certain these visions were his own memories. It was a strange sensation, especially since he was only 13 years old, yet in those memories, he was already an adult.

As he became absorbed in these visions, the lone star suddenly shone brightly. Before Aldrian knew what was happening, he found himself back in the temple of the Heavenly Demon in the Piercing Heaven Sect. He stood there, stunned, still trying to process what had just occurred, but the stone tablet of the Heavenly Demon's scripture made him realize that he had finally returned.

"I'm finally back, huh."

He wanted to take in his surroundings, but he was stunned to find the temple in disarray. The walls were cracked, and a large hole in the ceiling made him wonder what had happened while he had been immersed in his comprehension.

As he turned, he noticed many people staring at him as if he were a terrifying, high-order monster. Confused, Aldrian saw Sylphia, Eleine, and Xin Haotian approaching him.

"What's going on here? Did something happen while I was cultivating?" Aldrian asked.

"You didn't feel anything? I mean, were you not aware of what happened?" Sylphia's voice was filled with worry.

"I wasn't. So can you tell me what's going on? Why is everyone looking at me like I'm some kind of freak?"

"You did all this," she answered.

Aldrian was stunned. Instinctively, he spread his senses, intending to scan the domain he had created inside the Piercing Heaven Sect. But to his shock, his awareness extended far beyond the sect—even beyond Vermilion City.

"This... my domain already covers the entire Demon territory! How—?" His thoughts halted as his gaze fell on the Heavenly Demon's scripture and the temple around him. The answer was clear.

"This place is the center of faith gathering. The karmic connections here are the strongest throughout the entire territory."

He exhaled, a deep breath of realization. As his senses continued to stretch beyond the Demon territory, reaching as far as the Ivory Empire, he knew his domain had expanded. It had merged, and now encompassed both major territories. He had claimed the entire southeastern side of the continent as his domain, along with half of the eastern side and most of the southern region.

He was satisfied with the unexpected gains from comprehending the Heavenly Demon's scripture, but he would check the details later. Right now, he needed to understand what had happened.

"So, care to tell me what I missed?" he asked Sylphia.

Sylphia began recounting the events after he entered his state of comprehension. She explained how he hadn't moved for an entire year, and then the phenomenon that had just terrified them all. The dark clouds that had formed, and their sudden disappearance, all happened in the span of ten minutes—but that brief moment was enough to make them feel like the end of the continent was near.

Aldrian was shocked by what had occurred. Did he unknowingly affect his domain with his emotions? Could his rage have caused such changes across his entire domain? If that was the case, he needed to control his feelings better in the future!

"Aish, this is really troublesome! Can I just separate my emotions from my domain?" he thought to himself, though he knew he would have to think about that later.

He then noticed a few people approaching—some were unfamiliar, but among them were faces he recognized, including Baek Ji-Min.

"Aldrian—no, young master Aldrian, how do you feel?" Sect Master Ryu Hyuk-Jae suddenly asked, smiling, though his smile seemed rigid. His mouth even twitched slightly as he spoke. As for Aldrian he felt goosebumps at the way this man suddenly addressed him with such respectful intonation, but he still responded.

"I'm good, Sect Master. I have to thank you for the opportunity you gave me. I must say, I've gained a lot from this experience. The Heavenly Demon's scripture is truly marvelous and mysterious. It's the first time I've encountered something like this," he replied, cupping his hands in respect.

Sect Master Ryu Hyuk-Jae glanced briefly at the other sect leaders before turning his gaze back to Aldrian.

"Then, young master, could you tell us what happened to you? What did you experience during your comprehension? Did you really succeed in comprehending it?" Sect Master Ryu Hyuk-Jae asked, his eyes filled with hope.

Aldrian paused to think for a moment. Strangely, new techniques had already embedded themselves in his mind, each one tailored for demonic cultivators. Even the Heavenly Demon's method of cultivation was there, though it was unfortunately useless to him. However, the techniques he had obtained from the scripture intrigued him the most.

"Did i succeed?"

Aldrian stretched his hand forward and opened his palm. Without any difficulty, he summoned his energy. As it emerged, everyone recognized it as the same energy he had released during his comprehension state. Yet, they were still amazed by how effortlessly he now seemed to control it. Even Xin Haotian, Eleine, and Sylphia felt their hearts tremble in response.

The energy swirling in his hand wasn't his usual golden energy—it was a black-crimson energy, radiating an ominous aura. The demonic cultivators present felt their own energies resonate with it.

Sect Master Ryu Hyuk-Jae knew that Aldrian possessed golden energy with the absurd property to suppress others' energy, but it was this black crimson energy that truly resonated with him, making him feel a deep connection to it, as though his entire being was compelled to submit.

"The Demonic energy of the Heavenly Demon." He whispered softly.

They finally saw it with their own eyes—the Heavenly Demon's energy, the purest form of demonic energy. This purity referred to the level of refinement, where negative energy was seamlessly merged with their own energy. The more a cultivator could refine the negative energy of the world and harmonize it with their own, the purer it became.

It was said that the Heavenly Demon had reached a level where he could refine negative energy to such an extent that he controlled it effortlessly, balancing it with the natural energy of the world like yin and yang—without the slightest imbalance.

To witness this energy manifest in front of them now left everyone in awe. If not for the presence of others, some of the demonic cultivators would have instantly knelt before Aldrian.

"So, are you a demonic cultivator now? Did you abandon your original cultivation technique and that strange golden energy?" Xin Haotian suddenly asked, voicing the question that lingered in his mind.

Aldrian merely smiled, his gaze fixed on the new energy he had comprehended. After a few moments, he extended his other hand in the same motion. The others watched, curious about what he was going to do—until their eyes widened in shock.

"No way!"

Chapter 105: The Old Man in the Shadows

When cultivators begin to cultivate Heaven and Earth energy, their dantian and meridians adapt to the cultivation method they practice. If a cultivator follows the orthodox path, their energy will be shaped accordingly. If they practice demonic cultivation, their energy will be molded into demonic energy, and so on.

This is fundamental knowledge and an absolute rule in the world of cultivation. What if you want to switch from orthodox to demonic cultivation? You would need to completely rebuild your dantian and meridians to accommodate the new energy.

Such an endeavor requires immense resources and an iron will because destroying your own cultivation means erasing a lifetime of hard work. Moreover, losing your cultivation can lead to death, as without it, your body's natural lifespan will quickly catch up, slowly deteriorating without the energy to sustain its functions.

And what about wielding two types of energy at once, for example, both orthodox and demonic? The answer is simple: it's impossible. The two opposing energies would turn your body into a battlefield, resulting either in crippling injuries or death before you even realize your mistake.

If someone somehow managed to wield both types of energy, it would overturn everything known about cultivation, the very principles passed down since ancient times. And that's exactly what they witnessed in Aldrian as he demonstrated two different energies in each of his hands.

His left hand held the Heavenly Demon's energy, while his right radiated his usual golden energy. The sight shattered their understanding of cultivation, leaving them on the brink of madness. How in the world had Aldrian accomplished such a feat?!

Sect Master Ryu Hyuk-Jae's eyes nearly bulged from their sockets as he witnessed the absurdity of the situation. He couldn't begin to explain how Aldrian was able to wield two different energies. After seeing Aldrian comprehend the Heavenly Demon's scripture and unleash demonic energy, Ryu had assumed that Aldrian had fully embraced the path of a demonic cultivator.

Following their meeting in the Thorny Flower Garden, Ryu was convinced that Aldrian would forsake his orthodox cultivation, as he'd agreed to his "plea."

"This man is willing to abandon his cultivation to fulfill the destiny of the Heavenly Demon's scripture. What an honorable man!" Ryu had thought at the time. He was prepared to wholeheartedly support Aldrian, a man seemingly ready to give his all to the Heavenly Demon.

But when the golden energy suddenly manifested alongside the demonic energy, Ryu's mind went blank. For a moment, he wondered if it had something to do with the Heavenly Demon's scripture—but quickly dismissed the thought. After all, the Heavenly Demon's energy was still demonic in nature. Nowhere in the historical records was there mention of the Heavenly Demon wielding two types of energy.

"So he already knew about it and just decided to go along with comprehending the scripture? I feel stupid for getting sentimental over his supposed determination," he thought, feeling scammed by the young man, but all he could do was sigh.

"Whatever, at least the Heavenly Demon's scripture has found a successor." For now, all he could do was continue to observe the situation and see how things unfolded.

"The Heavenly Demon's energy... it feels almost identical to mine. I can even sense a similarity to my golden energy, but the Heavenly Demon added negative energy to his own, creating the Heavenly Demon's energy," Aldrian mused.

"My golden energy... how should I describe it? It feels more original?" he thought, dispersing the energies before glancing at Sect Master Ryu Hyuk-Jae.

"Sect Master, may I be excused? I'd like to rest after being in a state of comprehension for so long." He still couldn't believe that a whole year had passed outside while he was cultivating—he was now 14 years old.

"Sect master may I excuse for this time? I want to rest after I in comprehension state all this time." He really can't believe the time outside already a year pass, now he is 14 years old.

"Ah, yes, of course. You must be tired—please, take a rest," he replied awkwardly.

As Aldrian walked past them, he sent Baek Ji-Min a voice transmission.

"Let's talk again later—if you'd like that."

Baek Ji-Min's eyes widened, but a smile still formed on her lips as she watched him leave. Xin Haotian, Eleine, and Sylphia followed closely behind him.

While those in the Heavenly Demon Temple of the Piercing Heaven Sect realized that a monster had been born, the world outside remained in disarray, still trying to grasp the magnitude of what had just happened.

In Vermilion City, an old man with a hunched back shuffled through the crowd, leaning on his cane. He ignored the chatter around him regarding the recent strange events, though he too had felt the terrifying phenomenon—a force so powerful it made even his heart tremble. The pressure was akin to that of a Heavenly Tribulation, yet he also sensed the fury of the dark clouds, as if Heaven itself was enraged at someone.

He didn't fully understand what had happened, but he thought it was good news for him. This was the moment he had been waiting for, the moment to finally make his move. After so long of hiding, he had come out of the shadows because he had found an intriguing target. The old man, an assassin from the Thunderous Shadow Pavilion, had arrived in Vermilion City months ago, tracing Aldrian's trail.

He moved with extreme caution and precision. As an emperor-stage assassin, his abilities ensured that no one below his level could detect him, and even those above him would struggle to locate his presence. Now, as he deliberately masked his aura and blended into the crowd, he was confident no one would realize he was there. His very presence in the city, undetected by the likes of the Thorny Flower Garden and the Piercing Heaven Sect, was proof of his skill.

Still, he knew better than to underestimate the three great sects of the Demon Territory. After tracking Aldrian's movements in the city for months, he had deduced that his target's last known location was within the Piercing Heaven Sect. It was a dangerous place, even for someone of his caliber, and one misstep could cost him his life without a chance to reconsider his actions.

After much deliberation, he had decided to bide his time. And now, with the sudden appearance of the black clouds, he knew he could take advantage of the chaos they caused. It was the perfect opportunity to slip into the Piercing Heaven Sect unnoticed. Even with the sun still shining in the sky, he was undeterred from his mission. Without anyone noticing, he vanished from the crowd, leaving no trace behind.

The events that had shaken several regions of the continent were still the topic of conversation well into the night. By now, the sky was dark, adorned with stars and the moon, casting their light as celestial ornaments.

Inside the Piercing Heaven Sect, in his personal chamber, Aldrian rested with his eyes closed. He wasn't cultivating at the moment—just allowing his body and mind to recover after spending a year in a state of comprehension. He was still baffled by the difference in the flow of time between the 'white realm' and the outside world.

Not long after returning to his room, without realizing it, Aldrian drifted off to sleep—a testament to how deeply fatigued his body and mind were. The last time he had fallen asleep so unknowingly was back in Balin, after exhausting himself with countless tasks.

Now, though he was awake, he kept his eyes closed, savoring the moment of relaxation. He hadn't yet taken the time to thoroughly assess what he had gained from his comprehension, but that could wait. As he lay there, moments later, he sensed a faint disturbance in the vicinity of the Piercing Heaven Sect.

The old man moved through the shadows as if he were one with them. The hunched figure who had relied on a cane while mingling in the crowd was gone, replaced by a strong, muscular figure cloaked in black. His face was hidden behind a mask, ready to carry out his mission.

His movements were swift and silent, not even the faintest sound betraying his presence. When he reached the outer wall of the Piercing Heaven Sect, he stopped atop a tall tree, its leaves and branches illuminated by the pale moonlight. Hidden within the shadows of the branches, he began calculating his next move, carefully planning his entry and exit.

Just as he was about to proceed, he suddenly sensed a presence—someone had appeared above him, floating in the air.

"Well, well, looks like a rat trying to sneak in." A voice came from above.

Chapter 106: Everlasting Demonic Follower

The man floated in the air, wearing a black-and-white robe. His amethyst eyes glared menacingly at the old man, and his smile was like a harbinger of death. Although the floating man exuded no aura, the old man knew he was one of the most powerful figures on the continent, a name already known throughout the world. The old man was certain that he would die if he became his adversary.

"Sect Master of the Piercing Heaven Sect, Ryu Hyuk-Jae." His heart trembled at the unexpected appearance of this man. He had no idea how the Sect Master had learned of his presence here, but there was no time to dwell on it.

Without hesitation, the old man tried to create distance and break his escape talisman. He knew that his mission had already failed. With the Sect Master personally showing up, continuing the mission was impossible.

Shadows of the Lightning

The shadows surrounding him suddenly took the form of black lightning, which then shot toward Ryu Hyuk-Jae with incredible speed. The old man didn't wait to see if his technique hit the target, instead, he activated his movement technique to escape.

Without looking back, he had already created a wide distance and broke the escape talisman, intending to teleport elsewhere. But a chill ran down his spine as Ryu Hyuk-Jae's voice echoed behind him.

"You're truly bold to try infiltrating my sect and then attempt to escape?"

Ryu Hyuk-Jae clasped his hands, and the surrounding wind transformed into sharp, invisible blades. Before the old man could successfully teleport, the blades sliced through the space with precision, disrupting the escape talisman. The space he tried to pass through for teleportation was blocked by the strike, rendering the talisman useless.

He reappeared nearby, making no difference in his escape attempt. Sect Master Ryu Hyuk-Jae wasted no time, pointing his index and middle fingers at the old man.

Fingers of Hell

A small speck of black shot toward the old man with such speed that even the eye couldn't follow it. Before it reached him, the black speck expanded, revealing a giant maw of black flames. The intense heat emanated from the flames, and he was certain he would be consumed by this inferno, dying in a hellish blaze if caught by the monstrous maw.

He drew out his dagger, forged from thunder iron, and unleashed the full power of his lightning laws. Strands of lightning surged into a powerful strike that connected with the fiery maw, but to his dismay, the flames remained unaffected.

Without hesitation, he prepared to use his movement technique again, but before he could act, the space around him grew heavy. The wind pressed down on him, and the space itself felt like a prison. In that moment, the old man realized the terrifying extent of Ryu Hyuk-Jae's abilities.

"He controls the laws of wind, fire, and space! He's even combined wind and space, turning the air into a suppressive force."

He struggled to move, knowing that even a fraction of a second was crucial in a battle at the emperor stage. As he lamented his failure, his eyes caught sight of a palm closing in, aimed directly at his middle dantian.

"Wait, Sect Master!"

Suddenly, a young man's voice rang out, causing the Sect Master to halt his attack. Ryu Hyuk-Jae's technique wavered for a moment. The old man didn't miss this slight opening and prepared to make his escape.

He dashed forward, taking advantage of the small gap in Ryu Hyuk-Jae's technique, moving at his fastest speed for an emperor stage cultivator. But before he could cover more than three meters, the space in front of him felt as if it had turned into a heavy object, causing his movements to become sluggish and his body to feel unbearably heavy. He collapsed to the ground, as if crushed by an immense weight.

Ryu Hyuk-Jae, momentarily shocked by Aldrian's sudden appearance, was stunned by the sheer power radiating from him, capable of suppressing even an emperor stage cultivator. He wasn't particularly concerned about the old man's attempt to escape—at such close proximity, it was impossible to get away from him, no matter how hard he tried.

"No wonder he was able to kill an emperor stage Black Rock Snake and destroy an entire mountain," Ryu Hyuk-Jae thought to himself.

Aldrian, with a calm demeanor, spoke, "Apologies, but after sensing the disturbance, I came to check. I didn't expect to catch something this big. Sect Master, he's here because of me and my group's presence. Could you hand him over to me for my use?"

Ryu Hyuk-Jae, still smiling, responded to Aldrian.

"Of course, young master. I'll leave him to you. I detected an unknown presence approaching the sect, and when I saw him trying to infiltrate, I assumed it had something to do with you, given your history with assassination attempts. I had intended to interrogate him."

Ryu Hyuk-Jae glanced at the old man and said, "He's still too naïve, trying to infiltrate this sect with that kind of technique, especially when the entire wind and air in these mountains are my playground." His ability had reached the point where he could turn the elements of an area into his domain, able to detect any unwelcome presence simply through the flow of wind and air.

"Thank you, Sect Master. With this man, I can now try something new," Aldrian said as he approached the helpless man. With no strength left to resist, the man could only watch as Aldrian placed his hand on his forehead.

"You... will... not... gain... anything... from me," he managed to say with great difficulty. Did this young man intend to search his memories? If so, he would be disappointed. The man almost welcomed the challenge, hoping Aldrian would trigger the failsafe and cause his death—it would be a better outcome.

But after a few moments, he felt something inside his mind snap, and shock surged through him as he realized what had happened.

"Impossible! He broke the seal!"

He wanted to scream, but his voice failed him while Aldrian's hand remained on his forehead. At this moment, Aldrian intended to try something new and test the extent of his recently acquired knowledge.

"I've acquired a technique from a scripture, called 'Everlasting Demonic Follower', It's a method to enslave others by placing a slave seal on their soul."

The soul resides in the upper dantian, near the forehead. This is a place where the essence of a cultivator's life is located. It is the most vulnerable part of the body for any cultivator, and only techniques specifically designed to protect the soul, which are exceedingly rare, can strengthen it. Such techniques are typically only found within powerful families and ancient clans.

As Aldrian began to plant the slave seal on the man's soul, he saw it in detail for the first time. In the past, when accessing memories, he had always bypassed this part of the upper dantian, not dwelling on it because of the soul's delicate nature and his lack of knowledge on how to handle it properly.

Once, he had encountered the soul of a captured devil prisoner. While in the midst of his research, the soul had begun trembling uncontrollably before shattering like broken glass, killing the prisoner instantly. Every subsequent attempt had ended the same way.

It was only after studying the Heavenly Demon's scripture that Aldrian finally understood the fragility of the soul. He realized he couldn't simply insert his energy and manipulate the soul at will. First, he had to insert only a minimal amount of energy into the area where the soul resided, known as the *soul space*. Then, he had to carefully adjust the energy so it wasn't excessive when making contact with the soul.

After making contact with the soul, Aldrian placed the slave seal marked with his own unique symbol, upon it, and the man's soul instantly fell under his control. With the task complete, he retracted his finger and watched as the man's head fell to the ground. Although Aldrian couldn't see it with his eyes, the man was attempting suicide using the poison he had prepared in his mouth.

As he tried to crush the poison, an excruciating pain suddenly pierced his head, as if thousands of knives were stabbing into his mind. The unbearable agony forced him to abandon his plan for suicide. The moment he stopped thinking about ending his life, the pain vanished, leaving him gasping for breath.

He glanced up at Aldrian, who observed him with amused eyes.

"Tsk, tsk, tsk... You can't do that. You'll only die when I say so. But you're far more useful alive, so why not enjoy life a little longer?"

Sect Master Ryu Hyuk-Jae watched the scene unfold with astonishment. To turn a middle Emperor-stage cultivator into a slave while being only at the middle Earl stage himself—his experience of the world expanded in that moment. Typically, if someone attempted to place a slave seal on someone with higher cultivation, there was always a risk the seal could be broken due to the difference in cultivation power.

Yet here, it seemed even an Emperor-stage cultivator was not safe from this young man. Ryu Hyuk-Jae shifted his gaze to Aldrian, who stood over the man still gasping for breath. With a swift motion, Aldrian pulled off the man's mask, revealing the weathered face of an old man.

"Who are you? And what position do you hold in the Thunderous Shadow Pavilion?"

Chapter 107: Aldrian's Private Assassin Group

The old man didn't want to answer, but suddenly, his mouth moved on its own. He tried to fight it, but pain began to creep into his brain. Finally, he gave up and answered the question.

"My name is Arson Vuran, the head of the Thunderous Shadow Pavilion."

Hearing the old man's answer, both Aldrian and Sect Master Ryu Hyuk-Jae were shocked by his identity. Aldrian already knew the man's name because of his Eyes of Heaven, but discovering he was the head of the Thunderous Shadow Pavilion made this capture even more significant!

But something about the situation felt unusual. Why would the head of an assassin group carry out the assassination personally? Did he consider Aldrian and his group a top-priority target? Sect Master Ryu Hyuk-Jae, however, was shocked for a different reason.

"You're the head of the Thunderous Shadow Pavilion? Why are you so weak?" he remarked. The old man's mouth twitched in response. He was a specialist in assassination techniques and relied heavily on the element of surprise. Against someone as powerful as the sect master of the Piercing Heaven Sect, he would have no choice but to flee.

The style of his combat, which excelled in direct confrontations, was the perfect counter to an assassin like Arson Vuran, who had already lost the element of surprise. He wasn't offended by the sect master's comment—after all, it was the truth—but hearing it still left him exasperated.

"Why did you come here yourself? Did the Golden Swan Commerce pay you to take this job personally?"

Arson Vuran's eyes widened. Did Aldrian already know who their client was for this mission?

"No, I just wanted to exercise my body. I haven't taken action in so long, and when I found an interesting target, I thought I could kill a few. While at it, I could learn why the leader of the Golden Swan Commerce wants you dead so badly."

Aldrian wasn't surprised, but Sect Master Ryu Hyuk-Jae hearing this new information, spoke up.

"The leader of the Golden Swan Commerce wants him dead? Is this also connected to the incident in Dual Horns Peak City?" he asked.

Arson Vuran remained silent.

"Answer his question," Aldrian ordered.

"We don't know the exact reason," Arson Vuran replied, "but in my opinion, this is definitely related to the incident at Dual Horns Peak. The sequence of events is too coincidental to be mere chance. That's also why I took on this mission personally—to see if my other theory holds true."

"Your theory?" Sect Master Ryu Hyuk-Jae asked, puzzled, while Aldrian smiled, already understanding what Arson Vuran meant.

"You suspect that the Golden Swan Commerce is in league with the devils, don't you?"

Arson Vuran was stunned, and Ryu Hyuk-Jae was equally shocked. Bewildered, the old man looked at Aldrian and asked, "How did you know?"

All this time, it had been nothing more than a hunch, with no solid proof. He hadn't shared his suspicions with anyone except the First Finger.

"How did I know?" Aldrian replied, smiling. "Well, because I know what they've done."

"Wait, wait, hold on—are you saying you've known all along that the Golden Swan Commerce is in cahoots with the devils?" Ryu Hyuk-Jae asked, his confusion plain on his face.

"What do you think, Sect Master? The source of all the problems in Dual Horns Peak City stems from the city lord's manor. You must have already heard from the matriarch of the Yu family about the massacre and the devils. You know some of her story, and I'm sure you've had your own doubts." Aldrian replied.

Aldrian wasn't wrong. The matriarch had already told the three great sects the series of events leading up to that tragic night. One suspicious point was the involvement of the Golden Swan Commerce in the escort mission. She had shared what Aldrian had told her.

The real issue, however, was that the Golden Swan Commerce was a giant in the orthodox faction, with its own rules. The three great sects couldn't just barge into the Golden Swan Commerce or one of their branches without solid justification. Doing so would lead to condemnation from the entire orthodox faction.

Their relationship with the Orthodox faction was never too harmonious to begin with, and the last thing they wanted was to add more trouble during such turbulent times—especially with the prophecy of the Heavenly Direction and all the signs pointing to significant changes across the continent. They needed solid evidence before making any bold moves.

Although they couldn't make a move, that didn't mean they weren't keeping a close eye on the Golden Swan Commerce. Ever since they began their investigation, the movements of the Golden Swan Commerce had indeed appeared suspicious. They were actively looking for any connections to the devils. All they needed was an opening to prosecute this group of merchants.

"We've already infiltrated some of their operations to gather evidence, but so far, we've found nothing concrete," Ryu Hyuk-Jae admitted. "Their activities are suspicious, but since last year, they seem to have stopped some of their more questionable ventures. Even their profits have dropped because of it. That particular business we flagged as the most likely link to the devils has gone quiet."

Aldrian pondered for a moment. The Golden Swan Commerce's movements would be more restrained now, especially with their operations in two major territories being placed under scrutiny by the sovereigns. The devils would also likely lay low and avoid rushing their plans. For now, it was enough. At least he could postpone whatever the devils were trying to achieve.

Aldrian looked at Arson Vuran and smiled. This man might be a key factor in uncovering the Golden Swan Commerce's treason against the continent.

"If we can't find any evidence, we can use him," Aldrian said, pointing to Arson Vuran. "You share our suspicions, and you have direct connections with them. You can be our eyes and ears in the Atria Empire—and my sword if needed."

Sect Master Ryu Hyuk-Jae nodded in agreement. With the head of the Thunderous Shadow Pavilion under their control, they would have credible eyes and ears not just in the northwestern part of the continent, but even in the northern regions. And with Arson Vuran now bound to Aldrian, it meant the entire Thunderous Shadow Pavilion would follow their leader. Aldrian would effectively have his own personal assassin group.

Arson Vuran could only grit his teeth in frustration. He had no choice now but to follow this young man's orders—the very man who had originally been his target was now his master. This turn of events was utterly baffling to him. As an assassin, he had never feared death; he had been ready to take his own life if necessary. But now, even the decision over how he would die was no longer his to make.

The pain Arson Vuran experienced when the seal on his soul reacted to his master's will was truly terrifying. He had never feared physical torture, but the agony of soul torture was on an entirely different level—far more excruciating than any physical pain he had ever known.

"The leader of the Golden Swan Commerce is a calculative man with many connections, he will undoubtedly ask me about my mission. How should I explain my failure to kill you? He'll surely cut ties with us, thinking we're incompetent for failing the assassination." Arson Vuran said.

Aldrian paused, considering the situation before giving his instructions.

"Tell him I'm still in the Piercing Heaven Sect. I know you have to update your men on the mission's progress so they can relay it to the Golden Swan Commerce. With me here, he'll understand why it's taking so long."

Aldrian's eyes narrowed as he continued, "I want you to withhold information about my presence inside the demon territory for as long as possible. I know he'll become suspicious of your reports eventually, but by then, I'll already be out of the Demon Territory. As for the Yu family, I've already seen a part of your memories, and you're fortunate you haven't made a move against them yet. If you had, I would have tortured you until you broke."

Cold sweat rolled down Arson Vuran's aged face, but he remained silent. The Thunderous Shadow Pavilion had been eager to make a move on the Yu family to complete their mission, but the problem was they couldn't. The three great sects were taking the matter of the devils and the Yu family very seriously, and their tight surveillance had even almost found their assassins.

He had already sent one of their Fingers to carry out the mission a few months ago, but the grand elders of the three great sects were constantly present in Dual Horns Peak City. To make matters worse, they kept a close watch on the Yu family manor. There had been no opportunity to act without risking exposure.

"You can continue reporting on the Yu family as usual, they're under heavy surveillance by the three great sects, so there's no need to rush. As for other matters, I'll inform you when the time comes. For now, return to where you came from—and remember this: your life is in my hands. You can't die without my permission, and from now on, you are an extension of my will. Is that clear?" Aldrian said calmly

Arson Vuran could only suppress his displeasure, but he still answered, "Yes, master."

"Good, now go," Aldrian commanded. Arson Vuran disappeared without a trace—or at least, he should have. He had already left many traces behind after all.

Aldrian then turned to Sect Master Ryu Hyuk-Jae, cupping his hands in respect.

"Thank you for your hard work, Sect Master. This encounter has been truly fruitful. I owe you one."

"What? No, no," Ryu Hyuk-Jae waved his hand dismissively.

"I just happened to come across him while passing the time. If you hadn't arrived, I would've had him under torture and killed him already. You're the one who has him under your control now. With your abilities, you could have subdued him without my help."

His tone was now filled with praise, none of the awkwardness from earlier in the temple lingering in his voice.

"You don't have to be so modest, Sect Master. I truly acknowledge your efforts," Aldrian said with a smile. "Anyway, I'll return to my room for now. I need to rest. See you soon." And with that, he instantly teleported to his quarters.

Although he mentioned resting, the truth was that Aldrian wanted to assess all the gains he had accumulated from these recent events!

Chapter 108: Aldrian's Gains

Aldrian sat cross-legged on his bed after returning to his room. After he had met with the head of the Thunderous Shadow Pavilion, he felt it was time to review what he had gained from recent events. He first examined his own information.

Aldrian Aster

Domain : The secret realm, The Ivory empire, The Demon Territory of Barisan continent

Age : 14 years

Cultivation : Middle Earl

Current energy : 422,497 (+3 /15m)

Energy needed for the next stage : 520.001

After his comprehension session, during which he made the entire Demon Territory part of his domain, his cultivation speed accelerated, and he even broke through to the Middle Earl stage. This breakthrough meant that it took him just under a year to advance from the Low Earl stage to the Middle Earl stage—an astonishing speed that would surely make others seethe with jealousy. With his cultivation rate now even faster, he estimated that he could make another breakthrough in less than a year!

Aldrian was truly satisfied. With the Demon Territory under his control, his movements within that region would be much more flexible, giving him a significant advantage if any problems arose. He would be able to catch those devils much more easily.

The only downside was that his cultivation level was still too low to fully manage his vast domain. He couldn't search for or monitor every individual in his domain simultaneously. Instead, he would have to search place by place, which would take time. But this was something he could handle later, it wasn't something that could be done all at once with his current cultivation level.

After checking his own information, Aldrian turned his attention to what he had gained from the Heavenly Demon's Scripture. New knowledge about demonic cultivation and techniques had already embedded itself in his mind. He had tested one of these techniques on Arson Vuran, and the results were evident. The other techniques from the Heavenly Demon also piqued his interest.

Besides the Everlasting Demonic Follower, there was a technique that hypnotized its target, compelling them to follow his bidding without even realizing they were under his control. It was a terrifying ability, making the target believe that all their actions were of their own volition, when in fact, everything had been predetermined by him. This technique would prove incredibly useful in certain situations, and it also gave Aldrian insight into how he could further develop it in the future.

There was also the Heavenly Demon's Eyes of Truth, similar to what Baek Ji-Min possessed, which he could use if he wished. What puzzled him, however, was why techniques from the Heavenly Demon's Flower Scripture were also included in the Heavenly Demon's Scripture. He hadn't had the chance to ask more questions due to the appearance of that 'being.'

The memory of that 'being' stirred anger in Aldrian's heart once again, but he quickly suppressed it. He still wondered what it was and why the Heavenly Demon had fought with that creature. The sheer presence of that entity—its colossal eyes covering the entire ceiling of the 'White Realm' and the overwhelming pressure it exuded—had left him with a lingering sense of urgency.

"Whatever that thing is, it's still far beyond my reach. I need to get stronger—quickly." Aldrian clenched his fist, but suddenly, a thought emerged in his mind.

"So, the Heavenly Demon is still alive? Then how could the Heavenly Demon's Scripture be comprehended by his disciple? Didn't Sect Master Ryu Hyuk-Jae say that this technique could only be understood by one person?" Aldrian sensed that something was missing. If what Sect Master Ryu Hyuk-Jae had said was true, then there must be some information he wasn't aware of.

He didn't know yet why the Heavenly Demon had created the other two scriptures, but his main scripture, the Heavenly Demon's Scripture, was the ultimate proof of his legendary status. It symbolized the Heavenly Demon the most, as it encapsulated his lifetime of effort and experience and immortalized it in scripture.

"It seems like I can only find out more if I meet him again." Aldrian sighed.

He then opened his palm and released the Heavenly Demon's demonic energy. A black-crimson energy that looked wicked but actually it's not, because the negative energy that he had already refined with ease, as written in the scripture. The properties of this demonic energy were almost the same as his golden energy, which made him wonder where the Heavenly Demon had gotten his inspiration to create his cultivation technique.

The Heavenly Demon seemed to know about his mysterious power, like the Eyes of the Heaven. he felt that the Heavenly Demon knew more about him and the origin of this power but was refusing to reveal anything. The fact that his Eyes of the Heaven didn't work on the Heavenly Demon disturbed him even more.

Lastly, the place where the Heavenly Demon threw him out from the 'white realm'—what kind of place is that? It was a realm of total darkness, with only a single source of light like a star in the distance. He then remembered his talk with Baek Ji-Min and wondered if that was his 'Being essence.' All of those memories also appeared when he approached the source of light.

Now he was 90% sure that he had other experiences in places beyond his 14 years of life. It felt really strange, but he thought about a cycle that most people believed in—a cycle of reincarnation.

It looked like a reincarnation cycle, a cycle of samsara that shaped the lives and deaths of all beings in the universe. Did those memories come from his past life or something? Those memories also seemed too random, leaving him confused about which one was the real 'him.' There were many 'characters' that he had played during that time.

Another question then popped up: were the strange visions he had since childhood also from his past experiences? All those strange visions felt quite real, and he had experienced many emotions while witnessing them, although they weren't as strong as the feelings he had when he was in that dark place.

He wondered how he could return to that place. Maybe, there, he could finally uncover his 'truth' and find what he had been searching for, just as the Heavenly Demon had hinted. But to do so, he knew he needed to grow stronger, faster, in order to unravel the many mysteries still surrounding him.

In conclusion, this trip to the Piercing Heaven Sect had been incredibly fruitful and insightful. He was glad he had accepted Sect Master Ryu Hyuk-Jae's offer.

"No wonder he dared to take an oath with the Heavenly Demon's karma at that time to entice me. He must have received a sign from the Heavenly Demon that the destiny bearer thing wouldn't work for me. I felt it after I comprehended it; this scripture is extraordinary, and I can truly feel it. The strong, intangible force, like karma, tried to bond with me, but it dissipated after it touched me. I presume that's the destiny trying to connect with me."

Sect Master Ryu Hyuk-Jae, having such a strong karma bond with the Heavenly Demon's Scripture after years of trying to comprehend it, likely received signs from the Heavenly Demon himself.

"Somewhere... he must be somewhere. A place full of beings as powerful as that 'thing,'" Aldrian mused. Though that place was far beyond his reach for now, he would move steadily in that direction.

After counting his gains, Aldrian slumped back on his bed, closing his eyes for a moment. But then he remembered something, and he quickly sat up again. Reaching out with his senses, he scanned the entire sect until he located what he was looking for. In an instant, he teleported in front of a room.

From inside, he could feel a resonance, a familiar connection to the person within. Without waiting long, the sliding door opened, revealing a beautiful woman with red eyes. She was wearing a night robe that didn't diminish her elegance, if anything, it made her look even more refined. She smiled warmly at him, unable to hide her joy at sensing his presence.

"Have you been waiting for me all this time?" Aldrian asked.

"No, I've just been cultivating. It's my habit to cultivate at this hour," she replied with a smile. "Please, come in. I want to hear about your experience with the Heavenly Demon's scripture."

Aldrian raised an eyebrow and teased with a smile, "Are you not afraid to invite a man into your room at night, all by yourself?" Baek Ji-Min blushed in embarrassment.

"You won't do anything to me. I know you won't; you have your own morals and standards," she replied, looking at him despite her flushed face. He smiled at her response, still holding her gaze.

"Thank you for your trust. I also want to talk to you about something." He then stepped inside the room but glanced back at the empty space outside, into the shadows of the night. He nodded his head before entering the room and closing the door.

In the shadows, the guardians tasked with protecting Baek Ji-Min were stunned when Aldrian looked directly at them. They were Emperor-stage cultivators and were sure they had concealed their existence to the best of their ability, yet he still found them. No wonder he was the destined one for the Heavenly Demon's scripture.

Chapter 109: Please Spar With Me

Inside the room, Aldrian sat face-to-face with Baek Ji-Min. A table between them held all kinds of snacks and two glasses of hot tea. As they spoke, Aldrian recounted his experience comprehending the Heavenly Demon's scripture. Though he didn't share all the details, it was enough to keep Baek Ji-Min entertained.

"You're incredible. I still can't understand how you wield two different energies. I suppose you really are that special," she said with a smile.

"Of course. Haven't you seen me already?" Aldrian teased.

"By the way, when you saw my being's essence, can you describe it in more detail?" Suddenly, Aldrian changed the topic.

Baek Ji-Min was briefly puzzled but soon responded, "Like I told you before, it felt like I was in a vast void—inside a space of darkness. There was absolutely nothing. But above it, there was a golden light. I couldn't look at it for long, but I felt drawn toward it. Beyond that, I didn't notice anything else."

Aldrian pondered her words for a moment.

"The golden light must be that 'star' as for the darkness... that sounds exactly like what I saw and felt. There was nothing—no sensation, no presence. It was like I was one with the void, yet, at the same time, I was a separate entity from it."

"The only thing that made me realize I was still different from the void was my ability to move, to think. My will as a human was still intact."

Aldrian's thoughts grew clearer. He was now almost certain, that void was his 'being essence,' the truth of who he really was.

"Can you visit the 'being's essence,' either physically or spiritually?" Aldrian asked, watching as Baek Ji-Min shook her head.

"How can we visit something that's abstract in nature? It's not a place, nor does it have a form for you to visit, even in your spiritual state. I could only see and sense your

'being's essence,' but that doesn't count as truly being there. It's more like witnessing the 'truth', but I'm not actually present within it. Do you understand what I mean?"

"A 'being's essence' isn't something that can be seen normally. The only reason I could see it is because of my eye technique. Before comprehending the Heavenly Demon's Flower scripture, I didn't even know such a thing existed. The term 'being's essence' only appears in the Heavenly Demon's Flower scripture—or at least that's all I know of."

Aldrian was stunned.

"But I visited that place! Is there some kind of mistake?"

His thoughts shifted to the Heavenly Demon. Was it him who made it possible to enter such a place? He realized he was missing crucial information. If he wanted to return to that void, he needed to understand more about a 'being's essence'.

He looked at Baek Ji-Min and wondered if reading the full content of the Heavenly Demon's Flower scripture would offer any answers.

"Miss Ji-Min, may I visit the Thorny Flower Garden's temple of the Heavenly Demon and read the Heavenly Demon's Flower scripture?"

Baek Ji-Min raised her eyebrows in surprise. "Why would you want to read that scripture? You already have your own Heavenly Demon scripture."

Aldrian sighed.

"It's nothing. I just wanted to find more information about the 'being's essence.' It seems connected to me," he explained, sharing a small part of his experience visiting the place he could only describe as the 'being's essence.'

Baek Ji-Min was stunned by Aldrian's story.

"That's truly unbelievable. But from what I understand, the 'being's essence' isn't a place, it's something abstract. Every being has their own 'truth,' but it can only be seen through the eye technique in the Heavenly Demon's Flower scripture."

She then looked at him with a determined expression.

"I'll try to talk to my mother, but I can't promise you anything. We are talking about the secret of our sect, so I don't know how she will react."

Aldrian smiled.

"It's fine. Whatever the outcome, I'll accept it. I just need to see what I can uncover in the future."

They chatted a bit longer, discussing other topics, before Aldrian excused himself. The moon had already reached its peak, and it was time for him to head back.

The next day,

The disciples of the Piercing Heaven Sect were busy doing their daily activities, like practicing their combat techniques, cultivating in seclusion, comprehending something to reach enlightenment, and others. Aldrian looked at all of this with an amused expression as he stood near the training field designated for sparring.

Many disciples cast curious glances at him, wondering who this young man was. He clearly stood out, not wearing a disciple's robe and simply standing there, observing. Though news of Aldrian's arrival at the sect had spread a year ago, no significant updates followed, and over time, his existence had faded into the background. Sect life continued as usual, and most disciples hadn't even seen his face, so it was understandable that many didn't recognize him.

While Xin Haotian, Eleine, and Sylphia had been occasionally spotted walking through the sect since last year, Aldrian had remained unseen. Now that this unfamiliar young man had reappeared, some disciples speculated about his status, remembering the rumors that tied him to the sect master and the elders. They didn't dare approach him recklessly, fearing they might offend someone important.

But, as they say, "moths are drawn to a flame." A person still approached Aldrian, a robust and tall man who now stood beside him, looking down with a challenging presence. Aldrian glanced at the man, recognizing him from the temple of the Heavenly Demon the day before but chose to ignore him.

Judging by his robe, Aldrian knew the man was from the Black Dragon Pavilion. Now that he was standing close, Aldrian could study him in greater detail.

Kang Yong-Jin

Age : 130 years

Race : Human

Cultivation : Middle Earl

Cultivation technique : The Heavenly Demon's Black Dragon Scripture

Attack techniques : Demonic Dragon Fist, Fist of Obliteration, Void Punch, Dragon Roar

Defense technique : Dragon's armor

Movement technique : Dragon stomp

Supporting technique : Black Dragon's form, Dragon aura

Aldrian raised an eyebrow, realizing this man had comprehended the Heavenly Demon's Black Dragon Scripture. From the information Aldrian had studied, he knew this cultivation technique leaned heavily toward body cultivation. Recalling the people from the Black Dragon Pavilion like the envoy he first met at Dual Peak Horns, the sect master, and now this man—it became clear that the Black Dragon Pavilion specialized in body cultivation techniques.

He observed the man with a calm expression. Though Aldrian had grown taller over the past year, he was still shorter than the sturdy, robust figure standing before him. He waited for the man to speak, and soon enough, the towering figure cupped his hands in a formal gesture.

"Please spar with me," the man said.

The surrounding disciples were stunned. They all knew who this man was—the young lord of the Black Dragon Pavilion, famous throughout the Demon Territory, Kang Yong-Jin. His immense power and love for combat were well-known. Now, he was challenging this unknown young man? This would surely be an entertaining spectacle.

Aldrian tilted his head slightly, his expression curious.

"Why me?"

"Because I think you'll give me a good fight," Kang Yong-Jin replied confidently.

Aldrian studied him for a moment, reading the competitive spark in his eyes, before nodding.

"I see, he's just the typical fighter always looking for a strong opponent."

"So, you agree?" the man pressed.

"Sure, it's a good way to pass the time. I'm curious to see how strong the successor of the Black Dragon Pavilion truly is." Aldrian replied.

As if by instinct, the crowd cleared the training field, making space for Aldrian and Kang Yong-Jin. Word of their impending spar quickly spread throughout the sect, causing an excited buzz. Disciples rushed from all corners to witness the spectacle.

"Who did young master Kang challenge to spar?" one disciple asked.

"It's that guy who arrived at the sect a year ago."

"Is he any good?"

"If young master Kang challenged him, he must be the real deal!"

The voices of excited disciples echoed around the training field, and even the elders had caught wind of the event. They immediately reported it to Sect Master Ryu Hyuk-Jae. His response?

"Let them fight! It's a good chance for the disciples to get to know young master Aldrian better," he said with a smile.

By the time Xin Haotian, Eleine, and Sylphia arrived at the training field, it was already packed with spectators. At the center of it all, Aldrian and Kang Yong-Jin stood 100 meters apart, facing each other, ready to begin their sparring match.

"To be honest, when I first heard about you, I felt skeptical," Kang Yong-Jin said as he took a battle stance. His hands clenched into fists, radiating a powerful aura that made the surrounding arena tremble slightly.

"But after I saw what you did yesterday, I have to acknowledge that you are a strong opponent worthy of my fight!"

Chapter 110: Battle of Body Cultivators

The sparring platform trembled under the sheer pressure exuded by Kang Yong-Jin. The air around his body shimmered as if heat radiated from him. Aldrian observed calmly, raising his hand and motioning for him to "come."

Without hesitation, Kang Yong-Jin stomped his foot and propelled himself toward Aldrian with immense speed, breaking the sound barrier. His fist shot forward with all his might, and in the next moment, it was right in front of Aldrian's face.

As he watched the incoming punch aimed at his face, Aldrian's thoughts were elsewhere.

"This is a good opportunity for me to train against a body cultivator."

He raised his own fist to meet the blow, but held back most of his power to avoid causing any serious injuries. Seeing Aldrian attempt to match his strength, Kang Yong-Jin smirked mockingly.

"You dare to compete with me in physical strength? You're going to regret this."

When their fists finally collided, the impact produced a deafening sound. Kang Yong-Jin was shocked as their strength seemed evenly matched, with both forces canceling each other out. His hand trembled as he tried to push forward, but when he noticed Aldrian's calm expression, a vein bulged on his forehead in frustration.

Kang Yong-Jin quickly pulled back his other hand, forming a fist. He concentrated his energy into a more powerful punch. Just as his fist was about to hit, Aldrian repelled the blow with his palm, then swiftly caught the punch. Using his powerful grip, Aldrian yanked Kang Yong-Jin's body toward him.

Kang Yong-Jin almost lost his balance from the sudden movement, but he knew Aldrian's intent as he saw his knee approaching. Twisting his body, Kang Yong-Jin leaped into the air, aiming a kick at Aldrian's head. If Aldrian didn't release his grip, the kick would surely connect. However, Aldrian dodged the incoming attack by slightly tilting his head back, allowing the kick to barely miss his face.

Despite failing to land the blow, Kang Yong-Jin had achieved his goal—forcing Aldrian to release his hold. He quickly put some distance between them, his expression now more solemn. From their brief exchange, he could sense the power in Aldrian's body, as solid and tempered as his own body forged through the Heavenly Demon's Black Dragon Scripture. Aldrian's physical strength was a match for his.

Meanwhile, Aldrian's outward calm remained unchanged, though inwardly, he felt a twinge of disappointment.

"I won't gain much from this spar," he thought. "Even after reducing my physical power to just 10%, he still couldn't break through my defense. But seeing how body cultivators fight will give me insight into how I should face them in the future."

Aldrian's gaze shifted to Kang Yong-Jin, who was now preparing to unleash his technique. With a powerful punch aimed at the air in front of him, Kang Yong-Jin caused the atmosphere to tremble. The air pressure, infused with demonic energy, surged toward Aldrian, visible to the naked eye, demonstrating the immense force behind the attack.

Aldrian stood casually, raising his hand without any extra movement, allowing the incoming attack to meet his open palm. As his hand connected with the forceful strike, a booming sound echoed across the arena. The shockwave rippled through the platform, cracking the floor behind Aldrian and sending vibrations toward the spectators.

Kang Yong-Jin was stunned by Aldrian's defense. The technique he had just unleashed was powerful enough to severely injure, or even kill, a High Earl stage cultivator. Yet, Aldrian had blocked it so effortlessly. The full extent of Aldrian's strength remained a mystery for him, but Kang Yong-Jin was determined to test it further.

He then disappeared, putting distance between himself and Aldrian as Kang Yong-Jin's aura surged reaching its peak. His body began to swell, muscles bulging and becoming denser. The demonic energy he emitted distorted the air around him, throwing the surrounding energy into chaos. The pressure he exuded was stifling, terrifying even to the spectators. A gust of wind swept past Aldrian's face as he observed Kang Yong-Jin's rapid transformation.

Kang Yong-Jin's figure grew taller and more imposing. His already large build now appeared even more monstrous, making him a truly intimidating figure. The aura and energy he now radiated were comparable to that of a Peak Earl stage cultivator. Black, ominous energy leaked from his pores, enveloping him in a hellish hue, giving him the appearance of a demon risen from the underworld.

Without uttering a word, Kang Yong-Jin stomped his foot and leaned forward, as though preparing to shoulder-charge Aldrian. He then launched himself with such force that the sound barrier shattered, followed by a shockwave that further damaged the platform beneath him.

Aldrian raised an eyebrow at the sight of the man charging toward him like an enraged bull. The strength behind this charge bordered on the Marquess stage—a feat very few could achieve. With this technique, Aldrian was certain that even a Low Marquess stage cultivator could be injured if they weren't cautious.

He assessed Kang Yong-Jin as a formidable opponent for any Peak Earl stage cultivator, nearly unbeatable by anyone below that level. A smile tugged at Aldrian's lips as he admired the sheer potential and strength on display. If this wasn't even the full potential of the Heavenly Demon's Black Dragon Scripture, Aldrian could only imagine how fearsome its true power might be.

Despite the ferocity of the attack, what appeared blindingly fast to the spectators was still slow in Aldrian's eyes. Amused by the directness of the fight, he drew back his hand, forming a compressed space around his fist. The air around it trembled, distorting the scenery with its intensity.

Kang Yong-Jin, now mere moments away from colliding with Aldrian, suddenly felt an immense pressure radiating from Aldrian's fist. His instincts screamed at him to switch to a defensive stance, but before he could react, Aldrian unleashed his punch.

The space around them cracked, though it didn't fully collapse. Kang Yong-Jin felt the overwhelming power behind Aldrian's incoming strike—enough to incapacitate him. Reacting instantly, he canceled his technique, halting in place as he raised his forearms

to shield his face and upper body. He quickly formed his ultimate defense, channeling energy into his arms and hardening his skin, which took on the appearance of black scales.

The moment was so swift that as soon as Kang Yong-Jin finished raising his defenses, Aldrian's strike landed. The impact was devastating. Kang Yong-Jin's arms trembled under the force, and he felt his bones crack. The black energy and scales that had formed on his arms shattered immediately upon contact. His most formidable defense technique, *Dragon Armor*, was utterly destroyed by a single strike.

The force of the blow sent him skidding across the platform, nearly throwing him off its edge. His arms, though saved from severe injury by his defense technique, still bled—a testament to the power behind Aldrian's attack. He had never lost to any cultivator within the same realm since comprehending the Heavenly Demon's Black Dragon Scripture.

But today, he was forced to acknowledge the strength of an opponent in the same realm. Worse yet, it seemed Aldrian wasn't even using his full power. As he looked at Aldrian, who appeared relaxed and untroubled, not even breaking a sweat, Kang Yong-Jin gritted his teeth and struggled to rise.

"What a terrifying punch... no wonder he's been chosen by the Heavenly Demon's Scripture," he thought.

The spectators were equally shocked by the aftermath of the impact. They could sense that Aldrian's attack had reached the power level of a Low Marquess stage! The cracks in space disappeared the instant his punch hit its target, restoring the area to its normal state.

Usually, a powerful attack from an Earl stage cultivator can't break the space, as their attack power isn't enough to tear through a space layer. If an attack from an Earl stage could affect the space layer, the only conclusion they could draw is that Aldrian comprehended space laws.

They looked at Aldrian as if he were a monster, trying to embed his face in their memories. Unfortunately for them, he was in disguise. Most people here had never seen or heard of Aldrian, but after this sparring match, he would gain recognition as the man who could defeat Kang Yong-Jin within the same realm.

Sect Master Ryu Hyuk-Jae observed from his seat in his working room. He knew the outcome of the sparring match, but he hadn't expected Aldrian to try to compete with Kang Yong-Jin in body cultivation.

"Well, he must have a cultivation technique that balances inner cultivation with body cultivation. I really wonder who this young man's family is to possess such a formidable technique and power!"

The disciples buzzed with excitement after witnessing the epic spar. Even though it looked like a one-sided beating, as demonic cultivators, they loved the display of strength and a good fight.

Kang Yong-Jin, recognizing the gap between himself and Aldrian, let out a sigh. This spar had truly opened his eyes and served as a wake-up call. He stood up,

"I lost."