

# **The Shining Star Above The Heaven**

## **#Chapter 151: The Last Strike - Read The Shining Star Above The Heaven Chapter 151: The Last Strike**

### *Chapter 151: The Last Strike*

Before the lightning strike descended, Aldrian had already bear the immense pressure that caused the ground beneath him to crack. The thick heavenly aura surrounding him also tried to force him into submission. Yet Aldrian stood tall, his golden energy flaring to its fullest as he resisted heaven's attempt to bring him down.

A thunderous voice echoed, and black and red lightning—imbued with the power of heavenly judgment unlike anything ever seen on the continent filled the sky. Aldrian's smile had grown crazed. His entire body thrummed with excitement, anticipating the prospect of blocking the most powerful strike he had ever faced, one delivered by the heavens themselves.

He quickly circulated his energy, focusing it into a hardened dome shield. This final strike was different from any before; Aldrian could sense that the heavens had broken their own rules for this attack. It had deviated from their usual pattern, marking this as a special occasion. If he didn't defend with all his might, he might truly die.

The energy in his entire domain surged in a single direction as Aldrian poured everything he had into blocking the strike. Everyone within his domain—people, spirits, and beasts alike—could feel the energy's movement. Even nature lent its support. Some spiritual trees released vast amounts of energy from their cores, while certain cultivation resources exuded a denser, more potent energy than ever before.

This was also true for the world trees throughout the entire Ivory Empire, which released even thicker streams of energy than usual in an effort to aid their lord. Olivia and Alice, spirits of the world trees, could sense Aldrian's call and gladly gave their utmost help, though he was far away.

With the vast flow of energy surging across Aldrian's domain, a breathtaking phenomenon unfolded. All living beings could see streams of vibrant, colored energy, forming a grand aurora in the sky. Like rivers branching out, these radiant currents converged toward a single source.

As the controller of all this energy, Aldrian didn't waste a single bit of what his domain was providing. The heavens themselves seemed to wait, as though recognizing this gathering of power. Only once he had fortified the dome shield with three additional layers did the heavens release their most thunderous roar.

At last, the final strike descended.

Aldrian braced himself, having created the strongest defense he could muster within the limits of his domain.

**BOOM!!!**

The strike landed with immense force, its thunderous sound resounding across the entire continent. Even those on the western side caught a glimpse of the intense lightning flash, and the aura of the heavens was palpable to every inhabitant of the land.

When the lightning struck the first layer of the dome shield, it shattered instantly. As it touched the second layer, it didn't break immediately but was destroyed after holding for a second. Upon reaching the third layer, the shield held for a few seconds before cracks began to spread.

Knowing it wouldn't last, Aldrian created an armor of golden energy around his body, activating his peak heaven-grade artifact armor. He also formed an earth barrier reinforced with his space laws, hoping the lightning might be absorbed into the spatial folds if it touched the barrier. At this point, he used every defense he could muster to withstand the incoming strike.

Finally, the dome shield shattered, and the lightning met his earth and space laws barrier. Aldrian's eyes widened as the lightning pierced through his space defenses and destroying the earth barrier as if it weren't there. The lightning finally reached Aldrian, with its power still strong enough to kill him.

He was instantly electrified by the force of the heavenly lightning as his peak heaven-grade armor shattered under the intense power, leaving him protected only by his golden energy armor—which soon collapsed as well. Unlike before, when he had merely touched the lightning with his finger, now his entire body felt engulfed in a sea of lightning.

He felt as if his body were on the verge of bursting from within. Dizzy and struggling to maintain focus, his energy circulation was in chaos and he teetered on the edge of blacking out. Yet his golden energy still blazed around him, trying to expel the rampaging lightning within. This was the first time he had experienced such excruciating pain, even sensing his skin beginning to melt.

But he refused to give up, roaring with all his might as his entire domain trembled from the impact.

"ARRGHH... I WILL SURVIVE!"

He wanted to declare to the heavens that he had returned and would survive this trial, even though he still didn't fully understand their shared past. Now, he was here as Aldrian Aster.

Then he felt it— a new intent within this lightning. Amidst his struggle, a gentle warmth began to spread through his body. As for the lightning had nearly exhausted its energy, he only needed to hold on a few seconds longer.

And in that moment, amidst the heavenly lightning he struggled to endure, he felt an embrace—a genuine hug, as if two beings long separated had finally reunited. He couldn't fully comprehend this sensation while still grappling with the lightning, but he was stunned as the intent became clearer, shaping into a form of communication he could understand vividly.

*Welcome back.*

It was the clearest communication he'd ever felt from the heavens, almost as if he'd heard an actual voice, though it might have been his imagination. He managed a rigid smile, still fighting to withstand the lightning's persistence within him. Finally, after a few more seconds, the lightning dissipated, and Aldrian stood tall, still standing.

His body was covered in burn wounds, his disguise gone, revealing the true form of Aldrian Aster with his red hair. Most of his hair had been singed away, and his once-handsome face was marred with burn marks, making him nearly unrecognizable—like a man on the edge of death.

With half-closed eyes, he looked up at the sky. He felt tired, weak, yearning to fall asleep. His dantian was completely drained, every ounce of his strength exhausted, yet he remained standing.

At last, the black clouds began to slowly dissipate, allowing sunlight to break through and illuminate the earth. He wasn't sure when it happened, but the violent phenomena around Dragon Back Mountain had ceased; the powerful winds were gone, and the mountain's formation had stopped functioning.

Finally, Aldrian slumped to the ground. He wanted to disguise himself again, but he had nothing left to give. In this moment, he was more vulnerable than ever in his life.

"I need to stay awake!" he muttered, struggling to keep his eyes open despite the overwhelming urge to sleep. He tried to circulate his energy, but even that simple act felt unbearably heavy.

Suddenly, he noticed the shadow of someone approaching from his side. His vision was too blurry to make out who it was, but when they reached his side, he heard a muffled voice.

"So, this is you without your disguise."

Though he couldn't hear the words clearly, Aldrian managed to guess who it was. And with that thought, he drifted into darkness.

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In an unknown place, a man sat cross-legged. His white robe was pristine, and his serene, aged face was untouched by any stain. All around him was a vast white space devoid of furniture, filled with a strange, rich energy so potent that any cultivator would be tempted to remain here and cultivate for eternity.

The old man was meditating with closed eyes when he suddenly opened them, frowning as he sensed a disturbance tugging at his heart. He closed his eyes once more, attempting to trace the source of this anomaly. Yet, as he tried to follow its trail, his vision was blocked by an unknown power, and his eyes widened in surprise.

"It's coming from a small part of the First Heaven! How is that possible?! We nearly breached complete control over the First Heaven, yet this one part has somehow grown stronger! Even I can't see into this fragment of the world! How?" he pondered.

"They must have sensed the disturbance as well. This is troubling—what kind of power can block my perception?"

The old man still felt doubt about what he had just sensed, but he closed his eyes once again, allowing his uncertainties to sink deep into the recesses of his mind.

"Whatever it may be, sooner or later, all of this will end."

#### *Chapter 152: The Gain After the Tribulation*

He doesn't know how long he has been passed out, but Aldrian can sometimes hear muffled sounds. When he opens his eyes, he sees the ceiling. Turning to his side, he notices Xin Haotian, Duke Valiard, and Mardred talking to each other. However, when they sense Aldrian waking up, they look in his direction.

"How do you feel?" Xin Haotian asks.

Aldrian tries to sit up by himself and adjust his position. He sighs, still feeling a little sore in his body.

"I'm good. How long have I been passed out?"

"Six hours. I have to say, your recovery is impressive. You were in really bad shape out there; I thought you were done for, crippled for life. You had 95% of your body burned, all your meridians burst, and your dantian was damaged. But that golden energy of

yours is truly amazing, and your body's self-recovery is shocking. With how messed up your body was earlier, it's a miracle that you can heal yourself. All the physicians on the continent would want to study your body if they knew how it works," Xin Haotian explains.

"Forget about being crippled after that kind of tribulation; instead, you're now at the peak Earl stage. It's really crazy! How did you attract that kind of tribulation? Did you somehow offend the heavens or something?" he adds.

Duke Valiard and Mardred also look at Aldrian with curiosity. Earlier, they thought they were going to die, being the closest to him under the tribulation clouds. Even though they were inside the cave for cover, they could still feel a power they would never forget in their lives. They believed that the heavens wanted to destroy the world with such a tribulation.

Even before the first strike of the tribulation, they had already felt the terrible pressure. During the final strike, they genuinely thought they had entered the afterlife, even though they were not the ones facing the tribulation. At first, they wondered who could attract such a powerful tribulation, but when they remembered Aldrian, they realized it was him who had somehow drawn this kind of calamity.

After the tribulation ended, they assumed Aldrian was dead—there would be no remains, not even ashes left after that lightning strike. But when they sensed life in the rocky field beneath them, they were shocked to see that Aldrian was still alive, albeit in bad shape.

Now, witnessing what had just happened to this young man, they suddenly felt small in his presence. Even though he was much younger and weaker in terms of cultivation level, he had achieved something that would be engraved in history if many had witnessed it. Yet they were the only ones to witness Aldrian's glorious victory against a magnitude of heavenly tribulation they had never experienced in their lives.

Xin Haotian had already informed Duke Valiard and Mardred about Aldrian's circumstances and instructed them to keep both his true appearance and situation a secret. They still had many lurking enemies, and Xin Haotian knew better than to make the situation worse.

Aldrian sighed as he listened to Xin Haotian's explanation. It seemed he had really pushed himself to his limits. He still felt the aftermath of his 'battle' with the heavens, sensing rigidity in some parts of his body. With another sigh, he said to them, "I accidentally comprehended something, and that triggered the heavenly tribulation."

Duke Valiard and Mardred looked at Aldrian with frozen expressions.

*"What do you mean by 'accidentally comprehending something'? To trigger the heavenly tribulation, you must have comprehended something extraordinary! The scale*

*of that tribulation was the largest we've ever seen, and you're telling us you did it by accident and still survived?" they shouted in their minds simultaneously.*

Xin Haotian facepalmed. *"If you're going to lie, at least do it better! I bet you intended to comprehend that 'something' since earlier. I found you on the rocky field where we passed on our way here, which clearly shows you discovered something interesting there,"* he thought, knowing Aldrian's character well.

After saying that, Aldrian closed his eyes and fell silent. He wanted to check his entire body for any anomalies since this time he had faced a heavenly tribulation. The heavenly energy within the tribulation is very deadly for a cultivator, as it can cause injuries that are difficult to heal or even impossible, depending on the severity of the injuries.

He tried to circulate his energy throughout his body and was shocked to discover that his dantian and meridian tissue now contained heavenly energy! He found that his entire meridian system was even stronger than before. This amazed Aldrian, as he realized that his golden energy could also tame the heavenly energy from the tribulation, refining it for his use.

After checking his entire body and finding nothing else amiss, he looked over his own information.

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### **Aldrian Aster**

**Domain** : The secret realm, The Ivory empire, The Demon Territory of Barisan continent, Dragon Back Mountain

**Age** : 15 years

**Cultivation** : Peak Earl

**Current energy**

: 645,075 (+3.1 /15m)

**Energy needed for the next stage** : 720.001

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He gained many benefits from the tribulation; his current energy jumped to 645,075, a number he would normally need three months to reach at his current rate. With these improvements, he was confident he could defeat even a middle grand duke stage opponent without using his domain if they underestimated him in battle.

The struggle he experienced when he fought the city lord of Dual Horns Peak in Demon territory would not repeat. He also gained new visions and insights that would aid him in the future. He still closed his eyes to focus on one of his new laws comprehension, feeling death itself within his mind.

He stretched out his hand, and suddenly a tiny black energy appeared in his palm. Aldrian opened his eyes to see this minuscule black energy, releasing it was enough to drain his energy storage like a waterfall, but fortunately, he was inside his domain.

This tiny energy was enough to make Xin Haotian, Duke Valiard, and Mardred back away from Aldrian, as they felt the overwhelming sensation of death in their minds and bodies when they sensed that energy. They had already felt it earlier before the heavenly tribulation, when they saw the swirling mass of black energy.

They did not know what kind of laws Aldrian had comprehended, but the horrifying sensation and their instinctive reactions to this energy made it clear why the heavens had sent such a powerful tribulation to him. Even with this tiny energy, they felt their souls tingling, as if they wanted to leave their bodies and rush toward Aldrian.

He even wondered if Aldrian was trying to pull their souls like an angel of death. However, looking at Aldrian's curious expression, they realized he was unaware of what they felt.

"Young master... what is that?! It's truly terrifying! I feel like my entire body and soul are trembling in its presence. It's as if my soul has met its nemesis, trying to force me out. It's ominous," Duke Valiard exclaimed.

Xin Haotian looked at the black energy solemnly. As a cultivator who had comprehended light laws as his main laws, he could say that this black energy is the counter of his laws and energy. In fact, he doubted that any energy could withstand the presence of this black energy, it felt like a bane to any being, whether dead or alive. The ominous aura affecting their souls with such a deathly sensation, even from this tiny presence, made him think it was connected to death itself.

He then remembered a time when he encountered a powerful necromancer during one of his adventures. The necromancer could summon entire armies of undead with his techniques, and those undead could fight as if they were still alive, utilizing various techniques. At that time, he had also felt an ominous aura almost similar to this black energy, but it was nothing compared to aura of this tiny black energy that could even influence their souls.

"Aldrian, what have you comprehended seriously?! This is the first time I've felt this way. Are you comprehending something connected to the essence of life itself?" Xin Haotian asked solemnly. There was no trace of satire or joking in his voice, which was unusual when he spoke to Aldrian.

"To be honest, at first, I didn't recognize this black energy or the laws it contains, but from my comprehension, this is what we call death energy and death laws—the laws that accompany every being, just as life follows you," Aldrian explained, dispersing the black energy from his palm.

The others widened their eyes upon hearing the name of the laws they had never encountered until now.

"Is there really such a thing as death laws? Is it about controlling death or something?" Duke Valiard asked.

"Is it something the necromancers use? I don't know what kind of laws they used, they are truly mysterious. I've only met them accidentally, and they seem to have this kind of aura, but this one is much stronger and more terrifying," Mardred added.

"No wonder you attracted the heavenly tribulation. The laws themselves are foundational to the universe, and you comprehended them," Xin Haotian said.

Aldrian listened to their opinions while checking the domain of Dragon Back Mountain to see if there were any changes after his heavenly tribulation. However, after spreading his senses throughout the entire mountain region, he felt puzzled by the changes he discovered.

## **The Shining Star Above The Heaven #Chapter 153: The Discussion About Aldrian - Read The Shining Star Above The Heaven Chapter 153: The Discussion About Aldrian**

*Chapter 153: The Discussion About Aldrian*

One of the things Aldrian noticed after spreading his senses throughout the entire domain of Dragon Back Mountain was that the phenomenon had stopped. The strong winds that everyone had feared ceased, leaving only the normal mountain breeze. The scene was a stark contrast to how it had been when he first arrived.

"I'll check on something for a moment. Wait here," Aldrian said to Xin Haotian, Duke Valiard, and Mardred. With that, he disappeared, teleporting outside.

Watching Aldrian vanish, Mardred turned to the other two. "He's not planning to do something dangerous like before, is he?"

"Maybe? I'm not sure; his abilities are so mysterious. I don't understand how he pulled that off. That heavenly tribulation should have killed him, but he doesn't even seem affected by that lightning strike. What kind of technique, or how powerful, does he have to be to withstand that?" Duke Valiard wondered aloud.

"By the way, about his red hair—with how great he is, I thought he was from a noble family, and if he's from a noble family, isn't there only one noble family known for red hair?" Mardred asked.

"The Flamecrest family?" Duke Valiard looked stunned, then slapped his forehead. "How could I have forgotten his connection to Aldrey! He must be from the Flamecrest family!" Duke Valiard said. All this time, he had assumed Aldrian was a distant relative from a different family, especially since Aldrian's techniques didn't seem related to the Flamecrest family's styles. For example, Aldrian's sword technique was unlike any he had seen from the Flamecrest.

"Wait, how do you know he has a connection to Aldrey?" Mardred asked.

Then Duke Valiard told Mardred the details of his first meeting with Aldrian. He hadn't had the chance to share this before, only mentioning Aldrian's arrival but not the specifics of who Aldrian truly was. When Mardred heard that Aldrian was the new owner of the Fire Dragon Sword—a weapon he knew his little brother had created with his full skill—he was shocked.

If Aldrey really entrusted the Fire Dragon Sword to Aldrian, then their relationship was far from ordinary. It could even be said that Aldrian was one of Aldrey's most trusted individuals. The Fire Dragon Sword, which Aldrey wielded in all his adventures, was his most treasured weapon, a symbol of his glory with a storied past. For Aldrey to pass it on was akin to sharing the legacy that elevated him to his current revered status as the "Fire Apostle."

Mardred and Duke Valiard both knew that Duke Flamecrest had only two sons: Aldrey and his younger brother. If they considered that Aldrian had a close connection to Aldrey, then the only plausible relationship between Aldrian and Aldrey would be...

The two men exchanged looks.

"Don't you think Aldrian's face resembles Aldrey's somehow?" Mardred asked.

Duke Valiard's eyes widened. "Are you saying he might be Aldrey's son?!" he asked in shock.

"I'm not sure, but given all the information you've shared, it's the only explanation that makes sense. If Aldrian is Aldrey's son, then it would be natural for Aldrey to willingly pass on his most cherished sword to him," Mardred replied.

Xin Haotian, who hadn't known any of this about Aldrian, was stunned. He quickly questioned the two of them.

"Hold on, let's step back for a moment. Doesn't Aldrey Flamecrest not have a wife? How could he have a son?"

Duke Valiard and Mardred looked at Xin Haotian, puzzled.

"Don't you know his origin?" Duke Valiard asked, confused. But Xin Haotian shook his head.

"No, he's always been reluctant to tell me about his true background since I met him two years ago."

Duke Valiard then fell into thought.

"Then, was his story about his parents leaving him a lie? Why would he lie about his family?" he wondered aloud.

"I can think of a few possibilities," Mardred replied. "But if we consider his abilities, he's already powerful enough to be recognized as one of the continent's powerhouses—someone destined to leave his mark on history. There's no way the Flamecrest family would hide Aldrian's existence from the world. They'd give him a place of honor if he were truly Aldrey's son. We're talking about the strongest genius of this era, after all."

"If the Flamecrests haven't revealed Aldrian to the world, and Aldrian himself seems reluctant to discuss his origins, then perhaps the Flamecrest family doesn't know he exists! There's no way they'd let him roam freely if they knew. With his talent, they'd do anything to keep him within the family. Even if there were strained relations, they'd find a way to bring him into the fold," he added.

"With all that in mind, I can only conclude that Aldrey had a relationship with someone and ended up having a son in secret, which led him to hide this from the Flamecrest family. And Aldrian himself likely understands the situation, which is why he keeps his origin hidden from others!" Mardred concluded, slamming his hand on the ground as he shared his final analysis.

Duke Valiard and Xin Haotian listened to Mardred's analysis with solemn expressions. If this were true, it would be explosive news, as the Flamecrest family is one of the most renowned noble families on the continent. Aldrey Flamecrest, widely known across the land, is the son of Duke Flamecrest and has earned the title "Fire Apostle" due to his mastery over fire laws.

If Aldrey Flamecrest, as the family's successor, had a hidden relationship with an unknown woman, many nobles would see it as tarnishing the Flamecrest family's reputation. Given the high pride of the Flamecrest family, they likely wouldn't tolerate such a scandal, and Aldrey might be held accountable by his family. That's the expected outcome.

However, when they considered Aldrian's abilities as a swordsman, a fighter, and a blacksmith, they doubted that the Flamecrest family would reject him, even if he were the son of a commoner. This fifteen-year-old, whose genius surpassed anything seen in

history, would undoubtedly drive the Flamecrests to do whatever it took to claim him as their own.

Now, the question lingered: Who was his mother? If Aldrian were such an unparalleled genius, it didn't seem necessary to hide him, even if his mother were a commoner. His family would likely still support him. So why would Aldrey feel the need to keep Aldrian's existence a secret from the Flamecrest family?

The three of them pondered in silence until Xin Haotian suddenly spoke up.

"Considering Aldrian's age and the timing of Aldrey Flamecrest's disappearance in the Everlasting Silent Forest, it's possible that Aldrey fathered Aldrian during his time there. I don't know all the details, but around that same period, the daughter of the Rivas family also disappeared. Could there be a connection?" he asked, unsure but recognizing the significance of the question.

"The Rivas family from the Doria Empire?" Mardred asked.

"Yes. Irene Rivas vanished around the same time as Aldrey, and they both returned around the same time. It feels like too much to be mere coincidence," Xin Haotian replied.

Duke Valiard and Mardred exchanged glances, and suddenly, their eyes widened with realization. They stared at Xin Haotian, their expressions shifting with a mixture of awe and concern.

"If this is true, and we're thinking along the same lines, this would be sensational news for the entire continent! No, it could be disastrous for the entire continent! You understand what this means, don't you?" Duke Valiard said, his voice tense.

"We're on the same page, aren't we?" he asked again.

Xin Haotian and Mardred solemnly nodded, replying, "Aldrian's mother is Irene Rivas."

At last, they understood the gravity of Aldrian's situation and the reason he needed to conceal his parentage. If the heirs of two rival families renowned for their longstanding feud and hailing from competing empires were discovered to have a romantic relationship and even a secret son, it wouldn't merely tarnish their family names, it would be considered treason.

Even if Aldrey and Irene were let off the hook by their families, the very existence of Aldrian could ignite a conflict between their two families. Aldrian's monstrous genius would undoubtedly become a prize both families would fight to claim, turning him into a potential catalyst for war. Such a dispute wouldn't likely stay confined to the two families—it could escalate into a full-scale conflict between their empires.

This was troubling news for the rest of the continent, as these empires served as border guardians against the devil territory. If they turned their focus inward, the devils would surely seize the opportunity to spread chaos across the land.

As they considered this, the pieces began to fall into place: it made sense now why Aldrian concealed his parentage and why there was no sign of acknowledgment from the Flamecrest family. If they were in Aldrey or Aldrian's position, they too would keep such a lineage hidden.

Outside the cave, Aldrian continued inspecting the formation's eye, completely unaware that the three men had finally uncovered the truth about his parentage.

#### *Chapter 154: The Everlasting Silent Forest's True Nature?*

Aldrian checked the formation's eye, which had stopped functioning after his heavenly tribulation. Upon inspection, he found no visible damage or irregularities with the formation's eye itself. He carefully examined each point of the formation across the entire mountain but found nothing unusual. Yet, the formation had indeed stopped working.

While everything appeared fine on the surface, the formation had ceased absorbing the surrounding heaven and earth energy needed for activation. Aldrian suddenly realized the likely reason: something entirely new had appeared following his tribulation.

"The thick heavenly energy and aura now filling the entire mountain, mixed into the very air, can't be absorbed by the formation. I see—the formation needs time to adjust so it can handle the dense heavenly energy," he thought.

Since his heavenly tribulation, Dragon Back Mountain had essentially become a heavenly territory, infused with a powerful heavenly energy and aura. Compared to ordinary heaven and earth energy, or elemental energy, the heavenly energy was far heavier and more overbearing. Aldrian understood that the formation would need to recalibrate to absorb it properly.

From his comprehension of this Dragon Back Mountain formation, it had a self-adjusting mechanism. If there were any significant changes or obstructions, the formation's eye would automatically adjust to restore functionality.

After establishing his domain here, Aldrian finally realized that the entire Dragon Back Mountain itself was one enormous formation. The mountain appeared to be an artificial construct shaped into a formation—a concept no formation master here would have likely conceived. He had to admit that this vast natural formation was remarkably complex, even more intricate than the formation within the Forest of Despair.

Although he could see some similarities in the formation patterns, this one was on a completely different scale. It was much larger and had a far more profound mechanism.

The formation in the Forest of Despair only covered the central area—a mere fraction of the forest, the formation of Dragon Back Mountain however spanned different zones and levels. The deeper one ventured toward the center, the more intense the killing wind became. Moreover, the formation adjusted its power based on the strength of any cultivator who entered.

If it were an ordinary natural formation, it would likely never be able to absorb the dense heavenly energy and aura present here. But he believed that this mountain-wide formation was capable of just that. Once again, he was astounded by whoever had crafted this place, learning countless new things from its formations, secret realm, and extraordinary mechanisms—all truly beyond common understanding.

A sudden thought crossed his mind. If Dragon Back Mountain was a natural formation protecting a secret realm, he wondered one place like this that he had in mind—the infamous forbidden zone of ancient times, the Everlasting Silent Forest.

Of all the stories he'd heard about the Everlasting Silent Forest, the most infamous was that it never allowed its victims to escape—they were trapped within its depths forever. These stories had been passed down for ages, with many testimonies to support them. As to why or how people disappeared, no cultivator had ever uncovered the answer—except for members of hidden families, like Xin Haotian's.

From what he had heard, the Everlasting Silent Forest was like a giant trap, ensnaring anyone who dared enter without permission. He couldn't help but notice similarities between the Dragon Back Mountain and the Everlasting Silent Forest.

"The Dragon Back Mountain formation is designed to kill anyone who tries to barge in. Without knowledge of the Dragon Back formation or my energy, it would be impossible to get past it. As for the Everlasting Silent Forest, it devours everything that enters, trapping them within—and it's recently been revealed that these victims are held inside various secret realms scattered across the forest," Aldrian mused.

"Unless a cultivator like Xin Haotian, who knows the way or possesses a key, attempts to bypass the forest's traps, they'll never reach its central area."

Although the mechanisms of the two places were different, they have a similar purpose: to prevent outsiders from entering. The Everlasting Silent Forest used space laws, while the Dragon Back Mountain used wind laws. These resemblances led him to a profound conclusion.

"What if the entire Everlasting Silent Forest is actually a giant formation?"

As Aldrian considered this, he felt a chill deep in his mind. The scale of the Everlasting Silent Forest was on another level entirely, vastly larger than Dragon Back Mountain. The forest was at least several times the size of the mountain region, and that didn't

even account for the many secret realms within it—each one attested to by people who'd managed to return after years trapped inside.

From what he'd heard, after a recent shift in the Everlasting Silent Forest, some of the people who'd been trapped were able to escape. They brought back a variety of stories, each person describing unique experiences within different secret realms.

One man had been trapped in a realm covered in perpetual snow, where the cold was enough to freeze a cultivator to death. To survive, he'd built a shelter at the edge of the realm, where the chill was somewhat less severe. He had even forced himself to comprehend ice laws just to endure the freezing environment.

Another story was from a woman who'd been trapped in a realm dominated by fire. Her surroundings were volcanic, with a fiery red sky and earth so scorching it was uninhabitable. Fortunately, she was a fire element cultivator, though even she struggled to withstand the intense heat. Using every resource at her disposal, she managed to survive there for years. By the time she escaped, she was much stronger than when she had first entered because she had spent most of her time cultivating inside.

These were just a few of the many stories recently shared with people across the continent, each recounting a unique secret realm. His parents, fortunately, had found themselves in a realm with a livable environment.

From what Xin Haotian had told him, each of the four guardian families of the Everlasting Silent Forest possessed a primary secret realm along with additional realms under their domain. Based on numerous testimonies, Aldrian estimated that there might be hundreds, if not thousands, of secret realms scattered across the Everlasting Silent Forest, each with unique properties. If all of these realms were indeed created by one person—or even a group of individuals—encompassing such a vast area with space laws as a foundation and sustaining it to this day...

He covered his face with both hands. This level of power was still beyond his comprehension. But if the Everlasting Silent Forest was akin to Dragon Back Mountain, then he would need to reach the forest's central part. This was also one of his original goals with Xin Haotian: to uncover the mysteries hidden within the Everlasting Silent Forest.

Its central part had become the most important destination for him on this continent, as he felt a call drawing him in that direction. He sensed that, upon arrival, he would undergo a profound change and gain something significant—perhaps even uncover his origin.

For now, Aldrian set aside his thoughts about the Everlasting Silent Forest. He turned his attention to the base of the mountain, where the presence of people had once been prominent. The people of the Badin family and the devils had already evacuated,

leaving their posts abandoned. He couldn't blame them; the sheer power of his heavenly tribulation must have terrified them, especially the devils.

The heavens were not only the most feared entity but also the most detested by the devils. Because of their evil behavior, given their nature of absorbing the universe's negative energy, the devils accumulated more bad karma than other cultivators, and it was certain that when they attempted to break through to the emperor stage, the heavens would send them a heavenly punishment.

Their devil energy was also highly repelled by heavenly energy and aura—in other words, heavenly energy was the most potent counter to devil energy.

That was what most people understood about devil energy, but Aldrian knew he could tame even heavenly energy with his golden energy, leading him to believe his golden energy was even more potent.

With Dragon Back Mountain now brimming with heavenly energy and aura, the devils would surely avoid this place for now, unless they had something to shield them from the heavenly energy itself. If they ventured here recklessly, they would only weaken themselves; the overwhelming presence of heavenly energy and aura was intense enough to be sensed from afar.

Aldrian decided to wait beside the formation's eye, closing his eyes to comprehend his recent gains and attune himself more deeply to the mountain. After an hour or so, he sensed a number of presences approaching the base of the mountain. He recognized them instantly—they were the same group that had once surrounded this mountain.

*"Oh, they're back?"* Aldrian thought, a smile forming on his face.

#### *Chapter 155: The Groups Entering the Mountain*

At the foot of the mountain, groups of dwarves and cloaked figures moved cautiously. Even though the heavenly tribulation had dispersed, they still dared not approach too closely, as a lingering fear held fast in their hearts. The power of the tribulation exceeded anything they had experienced before, as if signaling the end of the world, leaving them tempted to abandon the mission altogether.

Among them was Vandal, a guardian of the Badin family, clad in middle divine-grade armor. Despite his protective gear, his face was pale with anxiety, still haunted by the experience he had just endured. Now, he had to get even closer to the site of the heavenly tribulation. The fierce wind phenomenon, something he would normally dread, had been all but forgotten amid the overwhelming fear that gripped him.

However, Duke Badin continued to pressure everyone to search the mountain for any clues, still insisting on capturing Mardred and obtaining the blueprint. Duke Badin was also supported by groups of cloaked men, though they still wondered about their

identities. Duke Badin appeared unusually polite to the two leaders of the cloaked group, and the men accompanying them seemed quite formidable.

But Vandal noticed something strange about these cloaked men. After the heavenly tribulation, their once-mysterious and powerful entrance suddenly faltered, and they appeared even more anxious than the dwarves. This made him wonder if these men were truly reliable as their support.

They appeared even more frightened than the dwarves, despite having an average cultivation level much higher than all his groups. Although their faces were masked, their anxiety was evident as they moved closer to the mountain, even while still at its base.

Vandal sighed, hoping these men wouldn't become a burden on their journey ahead. The dwarves had already formed a defensive formation, their artifacts ready, especially for the feared phenomenon of the deadly wind. By now, all paths leading to and from the mountain were blocked by their own forces, ensuring that nothing within the mountain could escape without taking an unusual and far harsher route.

Only after an hour of walking did Vandal and the others realize that the wind phenomenon, which should have appeared when they first entered the mountain, was nowhere to be felt. This absence confused them, but their lingering fear of the heavens had delayed their awareness until now. The area was still saturated with a heavy heavenly aura, constantly reminding them of the tribulation.

The dwarves also observed that the cloaked men seemed to tremble and sweat more as they ventured further into this heavenly zone. While the dwarves were still uneasy in the presence of the heavenly aura, they pressed on, but it was clear that the cloaked men were struggling to keep themselves from fleeing.

Vandal looked at one of the cloaked men and asked, "Hey, if you can't handle being here, you should turn back. I don't want anyone becoming a burden if something happens—or worse, running away when things get tough."

The man he spoke to had a cultivation level at the low king stage, just like Vandal. However, the cloaked figure remained silent, and Vandal said nothing more; if they chose to continue and ended up as a burden, he would deal with it accordingly.

Though the cloaked man kept his silence, he cursed Vandal in his mind for underestimating him.

*"This short little bastard dares to talk to me like that? In normal circumstances, you'd be dead a hundred times over!"* For now, though, he had to endure. Not only was Vandal wearing middle divine-grade armor, but the thick heavenly aura and energy in the area made every step toward the mountain's center even harder to bear.

This was very bad news for him and the rest of his group following close behind, as the heavenly aura and energy here were their greatest weaknesses. All of them were devils, and this kind of environment was unbearable for them. The heavenly energy was corroding their power, and with nothing to shield them from the heavenly elements, the effect was severe. Who could have known someone would trigger a heavenly tribulation here—and on a scale never seen before?

After a few hours, they finally arrived at the artificial land bridge, the place where Vandal had previously been forced to turn back with all his subordinates due to the ferocity of the winds in this section. He had lost several men here before, so returning to this spot irritated him. Beyond the bridge lay the vast, rocky field where Aldrian had comprehended death laws and undergone his heavenly tribulation, marking it as the very heart of the tribulation's impact.

The heavenly energy here was so overwhelming that each dwarf felt the urge to prostrate, especially in the direction where Aldrian had stood during his tribulation. For the dwarves, the aura inspired full reverence, but for the devils, it was disastrous, with their powers already weakened by half. They had never felt this debilitated merely from the residual effects of a heavenly tribulation, and it left them feeling dreadfully vulnerable.

Despite lingering doubts, the group pressed on and crossed the bridge. As they glanced into the depths of the gorge, they shuddered, silently praying that the wind wouldn't suddenly return to hurl them off. When they finally reached the other side, many sighed in relief, and once everyone was across, they found themselves on the rocky field.

Here, the heavenly energy and aura were thickest, making it almost unbearable for the devils, who felt an intense urge to escape. Yet they knew that desertion would only lead to certain death as punishment for disobedience—their leader was far more ruthless than any of them.

Thinking of their leader, they forced themselves to push aside their fear and weakness, beginning to walk again. The dwarves and devils moved in groups, when suddenly, they spotted a silhouette—a figure of a man. They halted, standing warily as they drew their various artifacts: hammers, swords, spears, and shields. The mere presence of someone here, in the aftermath of that terrifying heavenly tribulation, made them suspect that this man might be the one who had endured it.

The devils also fixed their eyes on the man standing there, though they struggled to detect him amidst the thick heavenly energy and aura. The figure was a young man with black hair and blue eyes, yet they couldn't sense his cultivation level. He stood with his eyes closed, emanating an aura that made them uneasy, but they suppressed their instincts, keeping their distance.

"Who are you? State your name!" Vandal shouted at the young man.

The young man remained silent, his eyes still closed, ignoring them. Vandal, feeling a creeping sense of foreboding as he watched the figure, cautiously approached with a group of dwarves, intending to move closer. However, they all froze as the young man opened his eyes—and then, they heard his voice.

"Over a thousand dwarves surrounding this place—a considerable force you've gathered. And the devils also sent nearly a thousand of their own. Is the blueprint and Mardred really that important to you?" Aldrian remarked calmly.

He had been waiting here, at the very spot where he'd undergone his tribulation, anticipating their arrival. This was the only path to the cave where the secret realm lay hidden, so these groups would have no choice but to pass him to reach Mardred.

The dwarves were stunned by the young man's question. Two things puzzled them: how did he know their objective, and what was he talking about? The devils? Where were these supposed devils? Suddenly, Vandal and the others thought of the cloaked men who had joined them. Could they be the devils?

"What are you talking about, boy? We don't see any devils here, so stop your nonsense!" Vandal shouted, though unease crept into his voice. In truth, he didn't know if the cloaked figures were devils or not, and he didn't want to find out. If they were, it meant they'd have to silence this young man at any cost to keep that secret.

Observing the dwarves confusion and their intent, Aldrian realized that these groups of dwarves truly had no idea they were working alongside devils.

"Duke Badin is quite the meticulous planner," Aldrian mused, "not even telling his subordinates that these cloaked men are devils."

Aldrian then directed his gaze at the strongest devil in the group, the one Vandal had spoken to earlier. "Well, devils or not, the truth will reveal itself. Isn't that right, Xarz Raliath?" he said, addressing the devil directly.

Without warning, the devils surged forward, unleashing their artifacts and various techniques in a single, relentless assault on Aldrian. It seemed they no longer cared that their identities had been exposed; their only focus now was to eliminate the young man before them.

As the attacks bore down on him, Aldrian remained calm. With a mere shift of his will, the space around him seemed to distort, becoming fragile. Suddenly, it cracked open, swallowing every attack in an instant before sealing itself shut again.

The devils, charging with full force, froze in shock, unnerved by the abrupt manifestation of space laws. But even more chilling was the predatory glint in Aldrian's eyes as he watched them.

"Thank you for coming. Truly generous of you to deliver yourselves to me," he remarked.

What the dwarves witnessed next was a scene they would later describe as "Carnage."

#### *Chapter 156: Meeting 'Him' Again*

The moment the devils saw their attack and artifact swallowed by the space crack that appeared and vanished in an instant, they immediately realized it was the work of space laws. They had no time to react before Aldrian disappeared, only to reappear directly in front of their group leader, Xarz Raliath. Instantly, Xarz unleashed his devil energy to its fullest, channeling a fiery technique through his hand.

Flames spewed from his hand, trying to engulf everything in front of him. Yet Aldrian simply grabbed his hand as if it were nothing and crushed it. Before Xarz could scream from the pain, Aldrian delivered a punch to his abdomen, targeting the middle dantian. The peak heaven-grade armor that Xarz wore shattered upon contact with Aldrian's punch, and his middle dantian was instantly destroyed, rendering him crippled.

"Arrgghhh!" Xarz screamed in agony from the consecutive blows.

Without stopping, Aldrian turned his attention to the other devils. With a mere thought, he altered the gravity beneath them. As they attempted to assume their devil forms, the sudden weight pinned them down, forcing them to crash to the ground and disrupting their transformations.

In that moment, Aldrian became an executioner, mercilessly dispatching his powerless foes. He killed every single devil present, using the overwhelming gravity to crush their bodies. The sound of splattering filled the air, leaving the ground bloodied and littered with scattered body parts, ensuring that none were left alive.

Watching his underlings slaughtered with ease, Xarz Raliath trembled, momentarily forgetting his pain. Now he was certain—this young man was the one who had triggered the heavenly tribulation. He couldn't comprehend how someone at the mere peak of the Earl stage could invoke such a powerful tribulation, let alone withstand it. How was it possible for a cultivator of that level to endure such immense power?

He had no answer, but he didn't have time to dwell on the question. In his pitiful state, all the cultivation he had amassed over his life was vanishing rapidly, leaving him a mere mortal without any trace of his former power. He gritted his teeth, glaring at Aldrian with eyes full of hatred, while Aldrian barely spared him a glance before turning his attention to the dwarves who were trembling in terror.

In under 15 seconds, the hundred devils in Xarz's group had been slaughtered, leaving only Xarz alive. Vandal, the leader of the dwarves, felt his heart quiver as he watched the massacre, overwhelmed with fear, even forgetting that he wore middle divine-grade

armor. In this moment, the gaze Aldrian cast upon him and his group was that of the Grim Reaper himself.

Yet, despite the dwarves' terror, Aldrian's mind was elsewhere.

*"How am I going to handle these guys? Is it really okay to kill them?"* Aldrian hesitated. These dwarves belonged to one of the largest noble factions in the kingdom, and he didn't feel he had a solid reason to kill them. He wasn't sure of the consequences if he were to recklessly eliminate so many cultivators who had only been following Duke Badin's orders, unaware of the devils among them. If they had known about the devils' presence and willingly worked with them, he wouldn't hesitate to slaughter them.

He looked at Vandal, who stared back with a horrified expression. Since Aldrian had already erased Vandal's memories about him, it was no wonder the dwarf couldn't remember him. After weighing his options, Aldrian made his decision. Stretching out his hand, he focused intently and released his death energy toward the group of dwarves.

Unlike the faint energy he had shown to Xin Haotian and the others, this time he unleashed it fully, like a black flame enveloping his entire body. The black energy radiated an aura of death and an intense chill, sending waves of fear through the dwarves, who had never sensed anything like it.

The dwarves felt the very essence of death before them, an abyss of darkness threatening to consume them. The terrifying sensation struck them to their core, many collapsed instantly, unable to bear the horror. All of them are Earl and Marquess stage cultivators, while those at the Duke stage or higher remained conscious but they were paralyzed, their faces were pale as if drained of blood.

Their mental fortitude was already strong, but they were still affected by the death energy radiating from Aldrian. They felt as if they were losing their minds, yet they struggled to push their fear aside, trying to resist by releasing their own energy to dispel it. As they watched Aldrian approach, they attempted to form a defensive stance, but shock and fear had already gripped them. With that eerie black energy surrounding him, he seemed more like a devil himself.

"D-Don't come any closer!" Vandal stammered, his voice trembling. Aldrian ignored his plea, continuing forward until he stood directly in front of him. Helpless, Vandal collapsed to the ground, looking up in terror as Aldrian spoke.

"After all this is over, go back to Duke Badin and tell him that he will face retribution for collaborating with devils. Tell him everything I did here," Aldrian commanded, his voice carrying the weight of an underworld king, each word an order that couldn't be defied.

"For now, sleep." With those words, Aldrian cast an illusion over the last ten dwarves still standing, making them faint. Their minds already overwhelmed by the slaughter and the chilling aura of death, succumbed easily to his illusion—a technique he never

used. After so many battles, he had realized the value of an illusion technique for situations like this, where he needed to incapacitate opponents without killing them. Merely striking their mental state was enough to render them unconscious.

After that, he looked at Xarz, who was trying to escape, a faint smile playing on Aldrian lips as he watched the attempt. Now that Xarz was crippled and reduced to a mere mortal, all he could do was run for his life. But for a mortal to flee from a cultivator was like a child trying to outrun an adult—especially against someone like Aldrian, who could teleport. With a flash, Aldrian appeared in front of Xarz, blocking his path. Xarz tried to punch Aldrian, but even at full strength, it couldn't make Aldrian feel so much as a tingle.

Aldrian then touched Xarz's forehead, attempting to read his memories. He recalled the existence of the lord, knowing that breaking the memory seal of devils at the duke stage and above would trigger his presence. When he finally shattered the seal and felt that existence loom over him, Aldrian faced it with a calm demeanor.

This moment was different from when he had first sensed it, back then, he had hesitated to confront it. Now, he was ready to meet this lord of the devils. He wanted to understand the adversary he would face in the future.

Inside the mindscape of the memory seal, Aldrian enveloped his entire body and face with death energy, ensuring the lord couldn't see or sense his physical features. When that existence finally appeared as a giant black silhouette that engulfed the entire mindscape, its nonchalant eyes that looking Aldrian suddenly widened in surprise.

"Who are you?! How can you comprehend energy like this?!" the voice boomed, thunderous with disbelief. Aldrian ignored the question, his focus fixed on something else.

"Why do I feel something familiar yet irritating from this guy? What is this?" Aldrian tried to recall something and finally remembered that 'thing' from when he encountered the Heavenly Demon—the 'thing' that had instilled fear and rage in him at the time, an existence incomprehensible to him. Although this devil lord was not as strong as that 'thing,' he exuded a quite similar aura and energy.

His eyes suddenly turned cold, when he looked at the black silhouette, there was no fear—only pent-up anger.

"So, you're the Devil Lord, aren't you? Mark my words—when the time comes and we meet again, I will crush that face of yours! I'll tear apart every piece of your being, including your soul. The devils have no place before me—I'll slaughter every last one of them. And if prophecy says darkness will cover the land, then I'll shred that prophecy too. You will see me at every turn, and I will be your nightmare!" His voice, ice-cold and steeped in killing intent, caused the entire mindscape to tremble under his resolve.

Aldrian then channeled his death laws, merging them with golden energy to shatter the mindscape. Now free from interference, he could access Xarz's memories at will. His declaration to the Devil Lord had been intentional, and he was fully aware of it. The mere thought of that 'thing' ignited a fierce rage within him, if the Devil Lord was connected to it in any way, Aldrian would unleash his wrath on the Devil Lord and all devils alike.

After a while, he finally finished reading the crucial parts of Xarz's memories. Without even glancing at him, Aldrian decapitated him with a swift slash of his hand. After reviewing his memories, Aldrian uncovered something interesting.

*"So, the Greed Devil and his right hand are at the foot of the mountain."*

The thought brought a smile to his face. Finally, he would encounter one of the Seven Deadly Sins. At least among these devils, he had found someone... interesting.

#### *Chapter 157: One of the Primordial Laws*

In an unknown place.

The dim light from torches along the walls casts a faint glow, illuminating a throne at the center where a black silhouette sits. The figure's usual nonchalant expression is gone, replaced with a solemn look and a hint of disbelief in his eyes. The encounter with Aldrian still lingers, leaving him shocked.

"How can he comprehend the Death Laws?" he wondered.

The Death Laws are one of the foundational forces that shape the universe. Since the dawn of creation, their presence signaled the emergence of laws that have structured the universe ever since. These laws maintain cosmic balance, much like the relationship between yin and yang, without them, the universe would spiral into chaos. The wheel of existence continues to turn smoothly because of these fundamental laws, with Death being one of the core pillars.

'Death' can mean many things, but its essence remains the same: it signifies the end of existence, whether for a living being or an inanimate object. The death of a living creature, for instance, embodies part of the Death Laws, while an artifact that has been used until it crumbles is also considered to have 'died' in its own way. Since the creation of the first existence, the Death Laws have been intertwined with life, shaping the cycle that sustains the universe.

As one of the primordial laws shaping the universe, the Death Laws can only be touched by higher beings. The karma required to comprehend these laws is so immense that it triggers a heavenly tribulation. Additionally, the complexity of the Death Laws makes them exceptionally difficult to grasp, it is natural that only beings with divine characteristics can understand them.

The Devil Lord knows all this from knowledge passed down to him by his own source. He understands the nature of the Death Laws, the form they take, and the aura they emanate when a cultivator comprehends them, which is why he was shocked to see them under the control of a low-level cultivator on this continent. Recognizing the terrifying potential of the Death Laws, he realizes that if one of his subordinates were killed by this cultivator, the situation would be dire.

He sensed that this cultivator is located in the southwest of the continent, where a disturbance was reported a few hours ago. The rumbling sounds of lightning strikes even reached his location, prompting him to grow serious.

It was unusual—too many strange events were unfolding on this continent at once, and he couldn't help but wonder what was happening. From the mysterious swordsman, to the phenomena in the skies over demon territory and the Ivory Empire, the birth of a mid-tier divine artifact, and now a heavenly tribulation echoing across the land.

Despite it all, he believed the continent would fall into his hands. He had planned meticulously for this moment, and failure was not an option. He would not repeat the mistakes of his ancestors. Yet, the appearance of a cultivator capable of comprehending the Death Laws forced him to adjust his plans. This cultivator was a dangerous, unpredictable factor—and he seemed to harbor a deep hatred toward him.

*"I must find him and eliminate him, even if I have to come out myself."*

However, he couldn't simply charge into either orthodox or unorthodox cultivator territories to hunt him down—that would unite the entire continent against the devils. For now, he needed to cancel his operation in Forgeheart Kingdom, this unknown variable cast too much uncertainty over the success of his plans. After a moment of thought, he smiled—for the first time in ages, he had found a truly interesting challenge.

He had lived a long time, waiting for the day foretold by prophecy—the day when all beings would be shrouded in darkness. That day would come, and when it did, he would finally break through to a higher realm, leaving behind this place.

"Soon... soon."

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At the foot of Dragon Back Mountain, Duke Badin and two cloaked men waited for their subordinates' report on the mountain's situation. The first wave had moved ahead to scout and clear the way, while the following waves provided support, already blocking all paths leading to the mountain's central area.

The latest report from the first wave indicated they had crossed the bridge, and the strange phenomenon had stopped, allowing them to proceed without issue. However, moments later, one of the cloaked men frowned and turned toward the mountain.

"The first wave is dead. All of them," he said with raspy-voice. Duke Badin, stunned, quickly took out an artifact to check the status of Vandal, one of his family's guardians. To his relief, Vandal seemed unharmed. The cloaked men exchanged glances, puzzled—whatever had killed the devils had spared the dwarves. The raspy-voiced man voiced his thoughts.

"Someone killed the devils but left the dwarves unharmed."

"Could it be Mardred? Or perhaps Duke Valiard and his group?"

"I don't know, but the entire group was wiped out at once—a one-sided massacre," replied the raspy voice, though a small smile crept across his face, showing little concern for the loss of his men. Yet, his smile vanished abruptly as he sensed the annihilation of the next wave of devils, then the following, and the next.

He frowned deeply and turned to the cloaked man beside him.

"Whatever it is, it's only killing the devils."

The other man remained silent, and by now, all the devils who had climbed toward the mountain's central area were dead, leaving only the two of them. Suddenly, they received a voice transmission from someone, and both turned their attention toward the central area.

"Change of plan. I'll check the mountain. You continue—" The raspy-voiced man abruptly stopped, stunned by the sudden appearance of dwarves surrounding them. The dwarves seemed unconscious, showing no external wounds, which left the two men baffled. The other cloaked man realized what was happening.

"This is teleport—" he began, but before he could finish, their surroundings shifted. When they regained their senses, they found themselves in a different place—a rocky field where Aldrian had recently undergone his heavenly tribulation. The intense aura and energy of the place instantly registered in their bodies. Fortunately, they had artifacts designed to shield them from the oppressive Heavenly energy and aura.

As they tried to process the sudden change, they noticed a young man standing not far from them. Though they had been transported here by some unknown means, they still held trump cards they could use if needed. Confident in their ability to escape if things turned dire, they regarded the young man warily but remained self-assured.

"To be honest, I'm really surprised that one of the Seven Deadly Sins has come to this place. It looks like Mardred or the blueprint is quite important to you. If I had to guess, the devils need the blueprint more than Badin does, right?" Aldrian said.

"Ohhh, clever guess right there. Who are you? How did you know that the Seven Deadly Sins were here? And were you the one who just triggered that tribulation?" the raspy-voiced man asked.

"Who am I? Maybe you'll find out after this. As for the tribulation—who knows?" Aldrian replied with a smile.

Aldrian, whose domain enveloped the area where Duke Badin and the two devils stood, instantly teleported the two men to face him after he finished dealing with the groups trying to investigate the mountain. After slaughtering the first wave of devils and instilling fear in the dwarves, he teleported them to the foot of the mountain where Duke Badin was located.

The man frowned. Even if this young man somehow triggered a heavenly tribulation of that scale, he believed Aldrian must be using an artifact. There was no way anyone could withstand such a tribulation without preparation. Perhaps this young man possessed a middle or even high divine-grade artifact, recklessly using it in a desperate manner to survive. Alternatively, he might have employed a high-level defensive formation.

"Then I suppose we have to force you—" the raspy voice stopped as Aldrian appeared in front of the other cloaked man, his hand already coated in golden energy and sword will.

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However, Aldrian's surprise attack met with the hard armor beneath the cloak—a shiny silver armor that radiated divine grade aura. Aldrian didn't seem surprised, he instantly teleported back to his initial position.

"As expected from the Greed Devil, you truly enjoy collecting these kinds of things, don't you? Rijk van Denberg," Aldrian said.

#### *Chapter 158: The Greed Devil*

The Greed Devil is one of the Seven Deadly Sins, a title given to seven prominent figures serving under the Devil Lord. Their authority within the devil territory is second only to the Devil Lord, and each commands their own devil faction. True to their titles as the "Seven Deadly Sins," each possesses unique traits that are also reflected in their subordinates.

Rijk van Denberg, the Greed Devil, lives up to his name as a cultivator who channels the dark energy of greed to fuel his cultivation. This path has heightened his insatiable desire for anything that piques his interest, such as rare and high-grade artifacts. His greed for these artifacts knows no bounds, and over the years, he has amassed a considerable collection.

No matter the means, he will seize any artifact that catches his eye, often leaving devastation in his wake. Known as a relentless thief, he spares no one when he sets his sights on a target. His infamous reputation instills fear in families and factions across the continent that possess treasured artifacts. As a result, many have been forced to heighten their security to prevent this devil from stealing their valuables.

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## **Rijk van Denberg**

**Age** : 60, 341 years

**Race** : Human

**Cultivation** : High Emperor

**Cultivation technique** : The Curse of The Devil God

**Attack techniques** : Sword Devil Annihilation Strike, Sword Devil's Splitting Strike, Devil's Space Crusher, Void Slash, 12 Movements of the Void Sword.

**Defense technique** : Devil form, Space Distortion

**Movement technique**

: Void Step

**Supporting technique** : Devil form

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As Aldrian examined the Greed Devil's information, he realized that this was the first space-element cultivator he had encountered on his journey—one who also possessed a high level of cultivation. He wondered if the other Seven Deadly Sins possessed this kind of cultivation level, if so, it was no surprise that the devil territory was the most feared region on the continent. At a level like this, most cultivators would have already become rulers of their own domains.

At the peak Emperor stage, they had already become ancestral figures, much like Alice, the spirit of the World Tree in Evergreen City. It was safe to assume that the Devil Lord himself was a peak Emperor, and since devils were inherently stronger than ordinary cultivators, he was likely one of the continent's most formidable figures—perhaps even the strongest.

But that didn't concern Aldrian for now, he would wait for the day when he would finally meet the Devil Lord. He wasn't in a hurry. For now, his focus remained on the man

before him, who wore a middle-divine-grade armor. With such high-level cultivation, the Greed Devil could unleash more of this armor's potential. Although it was on par with the armor Vandal had worn, Aldrian could sense its unique qualities.

*"The Armor of Obsidian Diamond from the Barford family in the Doria Empire, capable of negating any physical or soul attack... truly a masterpiece,"* Aldrian thought.

The Greed Devil grinned, addressing Aldrian.

"I have to admit, you've surprised me with your unknown way of manipulating space laws. To teleport without any detectable energy flow or spatial fluctuation is truly remarkable. But as you can see, with this armor, none of your attacks will harm me."

*"Of course you can't detect the energy flow; this is the teleportation ability of my domain,"* Aldrian thought before addressing the Greed Devil.

"Is that so? We'll see about that." Aldrian vanished again, this time wielding a peak heaven-grade sword he had forged with Duke Valiard. He brandished the sword, infused with his own sword will, and slashed toward the Greed Devil. Yet, the devil stood unmoving.

*Clang!*

As expected, despite the sword being coated in his powerful sword will, it didn't even dent the armor. Though he wasn't using his full domain power, this strike was enough to seriously injure most high Emperor cultivators. Unfazed, Aldrian prepared for another strike, but he had to quickly dodge an incoming attack from the side.

The raspy-voiced man had finally entered the fray, drawing his peak heaven-grade spear and slashing at Aldrian. Dodging each strike, Aldrian teleported behind the man, aiming a swift strike at his head.

*Clang!*

His sword collided with an energy shield that formed just as his blade was about to connect, revealing that this man also wore a divine-grade armor artifact. Aldrian teleported 50 meters away, studying the raspy-voiced man.

"Oh, I almost forgot about you the right-hand man of the Greed Devil, Erik van Jaager. I was a bit too focused on your boss. My apologies."

A vein bulged on Erik's forehead. As a low Emperor stage cultivator, he was clearly frustrated by Aldrian's lack of regard, feeling underestimated. Without hesitation, he unleashed his spear technique. His spear seemed to grow sharper and sturdier, and Aldrian felt as though he stood before a massive spear, radiating a mountain-like pressure.

*"Ah, so he's mastered spear will and achieved high attainment as a spearman. It seems he doesn't just collect artifacts—he trains with them,"* Aldrian thought as he observed Erik's approaching strike.

Meanwhile, the Greed Devil watched from the sidelines, observing Aldrian with a calculating gaze. He, too, wanted to gauge Aldrian's abilities. *Why was this young man so relaxed? What gave him such confidence?* Although he had his own trump cards, the Greed Devil didn't want to attack recklessly without fully understanding this strange adversary.

Aldrian, aware of the Greed Devil's thoughts, only smiled. This was a rare opportunity to test his new abilities and power, and these two would serve as his training subjects and "sparring" partners.

Erik's spear slashed toward him repeatedly, emitting ferocious devil energy that surged at Aldrian. But Erik didn't stop there, he dashed toward Aldrian, following his energy strikes with relentless aggression.

Aldrian effortlessly controlled the space laws, allowing Erik's incoming attack to be swallowed by a spatial rift and returned to him with twice the power. Stunned by Aldrian's ability, Erik barely managed to dodge his own attack. But before he could sigh in relief, Aldrian appeared right in front of him, his sword poised for a stabbing strike.

Due to the close distance, Erik didn't have time to react, but he didn't panic. Instead, he allowed Aldrian's strike to make contact with his armor while sweeping at Aldrian with his spear. Confident in his low divine-grade armor, he aimed to strike Aldrian's head; if Aldrian failed to defend against his spear sweep, his head would be crushed by its force. However, Erik's shock widened as he felt the sword, which should have been stopped by the armor, crack and ultimately pierce through!

Instantly abandoning his spear swing, Erik stepped back to put distance between them. Watching from the sidelines, the Greed Devil's eyes widened at the sight of the low divine-grade armor failing to withstand Aldrian's seemingly simple stab. Though the strike appeared unremarkable, what neither Erik nor the Greed Devil knew was that Aldrian had combined his Dragon Back Mountain domain with his secret realm domain. By concentrating the power of his domain and his sword will into a single, condensed point, this seemingly simple stab was powerful enough to pierce even divine-grade armor.

Usually, a low divine-grade armor could withstand a strike from even a middle Emperor stage cultivator. But with Aldrian's focused domain power and mastery, this attack became an unstoppable force, capable of penetrating low divine-grade armor defenses.

After retreating, Erik took a step back, he looked at the spot where the sword had stabbed and was shocked to see deep piercing damage in his armor. A little deeper,

and it would have pierced his chest. He regarded Aldrian solemnly, finally recognizing this young man as a genuine threat to his life!

Without hesitation, Erik dashed forward again, this time fully aware of Aldrian's ability to penetrate divine-grade armor. He wouldn't make the same mistake twice. As he closed in, Erik made a throwing motion, hurling his spear with such force that the surrounding space trembled, almost splitting apart under its power.

But he didn't stop there. Erik also unleashed a combined elemental attack of fire and wind laws, aiming to overwhelm Aldrian with simultaneous strikes. This level of attack could easily kill even a middle Emperor stage cultivator, his spear, infused with the *Mountain Splitting Throw*, was designed to bypass spatial barriers, while the fire and wind laws trailing behind would roast the target on impact.

Suddenly, Aldrian felt the surrounding space grow heavier, making it difficult for him to control his environment. Glancing at the Greed Devil, he noticed him manipulating spatial energy to suppress the area around Aldrian, clearly intending to limit his spatial abilities.

*"I see, you're trying to trap me here so I can't use teleportation,"* Aldrian thought, recognizing the Greed Devil's strategy. Yet, he watched Erik's incoming attack with a relaxed expression. Everything seemed to slow down in his mind.

*"Too bad... you're all within my domain."* Aldrian shifted into a stance, preparing to unleash a powerful sword technique. The Greed Devil, noticing the sudden change in Aldrian's posture, felt a surge of foreboding feeling and shouted to Erik.

"Erik, take a defensive position!"

Startled by the warning but reacting swiftly, Erik activated his defensive technique. But before he knew it, he saw his spear and elemental attack split down the middle, while his armor shattered. In a flash, Erik's body reappeared next to the Greed Devil, his eyes wide with shock as he looked down at a slash wound on his abdomen. Fortunately, his escape talisman had saved him at the last moment.

"You have quite the collection of artifacts and talismans," Aldrian remarked, a smile evident on his face as he spoke.

"Let's continue our play."

### *Chapter 159: One Down*

The Greed Devil is a cultivator with high attainment in the space element. Since childhood, he has possessed a natural compatibility with it, marking him as a once-in-a-millennium genius. Few cultivators can match his mastery of the space element—those who can could be counted on one hand. This makes him feared for his spatial control.

His space laws have saved him from countless situations, and they are one reason why he has never been captured or killed by his hunters. To this day, capturing him seems almost impossible, given his vast collection of artifacts and high-level cultivation, combined with his profound understanding of space laws. Whenever he steals or kills, he relies on his space laws—his source of pride.

However, as he looks at this young man, who regards him and Erik with the casual confidence of an adult restraining a child, he feels an irritation he hasn't experienced in a long time. The sight almost feels like a dream, beyond anything explainable by the logic of this world.

The space laws he so prizes—his foundation and his strength—are useless before this young man. Both he and Erik have tried numerous attacks, especially after Aldrian effortlessly destroyed a low divine-grade artifact with a single sword slash. By now, they realize that this young man cannot be assessed like a typical cultivator. They constantly have to remind themselves that Aldrian is only at the peak of the Earl stage!

Initially, they suspected Aldrian of using an artifact to hide his true cultivation level. The power of his heavenly tribulation could have killed the Greed Devil a thousand times over, yet it wasn't enough to convince the two devils that Aldrian could survive on his own. But after battling him repeatedly and experiencing his strength firsthand, they are left with no choice but to acknowledge Aldrian as a true singularity.

How could an Earl-stage cultivator possibly fight on par with an Emperor-stage cultivator? Forget holding his own—Aldrian still seems to have energy to spare even while battling Erik with the Greed Devil has mainly been supporting the fight. Greed Devil still assessing Aldrian's abilities and trying to see what he has up his sleeve but he finally realizes it's pointless. Aldrian is an existence beyond understanding.

A peak Heaven-grade sword destroying a low Divine-grade armor? That would be impossible unless the technique Aldrian uses is extraordinarily powerful, amplifying the sword's strength.

The Greed Devil attempts to restrict Aldrian's movements with his spatial control, even using his domain to make his control over space smoother. Yet, this young man casually breaks free using his own control over space. When the Greed Devil tries to crush Aldrian with condensed space, Aldrian merely slices through it like it's tofu. This makes it clear: Aldrian's comprehension of both space laws and sword technique surpasses even his own.

And yet, this young man is only at the peak of the Earl stage, practically an ant compared to Emperor-stage cultivators like them. Meanwhile, Erik continues attacking Aldrian with his spear technique, seeking an opening. Finally, when an opportunity arises, the Greed Devil throws a mid-Divine artifact with a trapping function. This artifact can create a cage that isolates its target, cutting off their access to external energy

supplies and capable of imprisoning even high Emperor-stage cultivators. Now, he wants to see if Aldrian can escape without drawing on surrounding energy.

Seeing the incoming artifact, Erik unleashed a wide-area attack, destroying everything nearby. Space trembled and winds whipped around as he tried to obscure the artifact's approach. Unfortunately for them, Aldrian had already sensed the artifact and was curious about its function.

The spherical artifact remained unaffected by Erik's assault and rolled near Aldrian. Suddenly, it expanded into a barrier with a 100-meter diameter, trapping Aldrian inside. Without hesitation, Erik followed up, throwing his spear with Mountain Splitting Throw, this time enhanced with his wind laws for added acceleration.

The spear, now traveling faster than the speed of sound and powerful enough to fracture space itself, was aimed to kill Aldrian while he was weakened by the trap artifact. Under the Greed Devil's control, the spear would slip through the trap's barrier, making it nearly impossible for even Aldrian to evade this combined tactic.

Aldrian, however, remained calm. With a steady expression, he invoked his Demon Territory domain, a power that seemed excessive for this level of battle. He then executed a simple slash, merging his sword will and golden energy, cutting through the artifact's trap barrier, the incoming spear, and all other techniques hurled at him.

The Greed Devil and Erik frowned deeper, their combined efforts proving fruitless, while Aldrian seemed to be enjoying himself.

"Come on, use your devil form, show me your full strength; this is starting to get dull." Aldrian said.

Without a word, Erik activated his devil form, unleashing a furious roar as he dashed forward. Drawing a new spear—a low Divine-grade artifact he reserved for situations like this—he prepared his next move. With a stabbing motion, Erik released a dense surge of devil energy from the spearhead, obliterating everything in its path. Space itself began to collapse, unable to withstand the power beyond its limits. This attack was strong enough to kill even high Emperor-stage cultivators.

"Now this is more like it," Aldrian remarked with a smirk. "Why didn't you bring this out sooner?" Now, he couldn't rely on a simple stab or slash, given a few critical circumstances.

Glancing down at his Peak Heaven-grade sword in its worn condition, Aldrian noted it would likely only withstand one last strike. Every time he used a basic stab or slash infused with his domain power, the sword's durability dropped drastically. He knew that if he attempted a full-force technique with it, the sword would shatter instantly. Especially given the power behind Erik's divine-grade artifact, he couldn't underestimate this move.

Now that the sword was in this condition, he figured he could use it for one final slash imbued with his technique. He decided on a simplified version of the Slash of the End since its full scale was too vast for this battle. Instead, he would use a technique he called the Slash of the Vanguard. This version retained the exact movements of the Slash of the End but required less comprehension, control of energy and strength.

When the Greed Devil saw Aldrian taking a stance, preparing to unleash a technique, he suddenly sensed something in his storage ring. Stunned, he watched as all his swords began to tremble, realizing that Aldrian was releasing a sword will so powerful it was affecting every sword in the area.

"*This is bad!*" he thought. But before he could warn Erik, he felt the sharp surge of Aldrian's sword will—a force far stronger than before, potent enough to kill even a high Emperor stage cultivator.

In a single, decisive motion, Aldrian slashed with his sword. The sheer power behind it split through Erik's attack, and the energy of the slash continued straight for Erik. Too late to react, Erik saw only a flash of energy before everything went dark. The slash obliterated his upper body instantly, leaving only his lower half, and continued onward until it collided with the mountainside, triggering a violent earthquake.

Erik, the right hand of the Greed Devil, died without even scratching the hem of Aldrian's robes, leaving only the lower half of his body from the waist down. The Greed Devil looked at the remains of his fallen right-hand man, his face showed little expression, aside from the frown that hadn't left since he first faced Aldrian.

"Do you not feel anything? That was your right-hand man, always by your side, wasn't he?" Aldrian asked, appearing unbothered despite having unleashed the Slash of the Vanguard, even though his sword was now destroyed.

"Well, I do feel bad—he was my trusted colleague. But I can always find another. Anyway, it seems my observations here are complete. I have to admit, you are truly terrifying, but that still isn't enough to kill me or stop my escape." The Greed Devil's frown disappeared as he shrugged, dismissing the loss.

"Is that so? I'm genuinely curious if that's true because I want to test something on you." Aldrian then released his death laws, combining them with the golden energy in his palm. The Greed Devil felt his heart tighten with a sudden sensation of death.

"I want to know how you plan to defend against this," Aldrian said with a smile.

#### *Chapter 160: Against the Greed Devil*

The death laws, pulling at living souls like a devouring abyss, make the Greed Devil's body tremble momentarily before he regains control. Any lingering doubt in his mind that

Aldrian was responsible for triggering the heavenly tribulation vanishes, now he is certain that this young man is the real deal.

The same chilling sensation he felt when he saw the swirling black energy reaching the sky before the tribulation returns, though this golden-black energy feels more refined and oppressive. He doesn't know exactly what kind of golden or black energy this is, but he knows it signals danger.

Keeping one hand hidden behind his back, he crushes a teleportation talisman to escape. While he is confident he could fight, or even kill, Aldrian, he knows that spreading word to the other devils of this singularity—someone capable of disrupting their plans across the continent—is more crucial right now. If Aldrian already wields power capable of killing an emperor-stage opponent while only at the peak of the Earl stage, reaching the peak Marquess or Duke stage would make him nearly invincible across the continent.

His lord had warned him and the other Seven Deadly Sins of an approaching prophesied event, cautioning that an unknown factor would likely emerge. Now, he realizes he's encountered such a factor, a young man with power beyond comprehension, whose origin and name remain mysterious. With abilities like these, he should have already been known continent-wide, yet he seems to have appeared out of nowhere.

Upon crushing the talisman, he disappeared instantly but reappeared only two kilometers from Aldrian, sensing him approaching at a leisurely pace. He was shocked, as the talisman should have teleported him as far as 5,000 kilometers away.

"Wha—" He finally realizes the problem: a thin spatial barrier, invisible from a distance, is blocking his teleportation. Though the barrier appears thin, it holds complex spatial laws that prevent spatial techniques from working inside or outside of it. In short, he's trapped.

He'd underestimated Aldrian and his methods, not noticing that a barrier had surrounded them all along.

"Why are you running? Aren't you confident in killing me?" Aldrian's voice cuts through his shock, already coming from behind him. When he turns, he sees Aldrian standing just 100 meters away and sighs.

"You are truly incredible. How is someone like you not famous already? Where did you come from?"

"You'll have to make me tell you," Aldrian says, shrugging.

"I see. I don't have a choice, then." He pulls out a mid-divine-grade sword, its blade emanating dark energy that spreads its formidable aura around them. He knows he

must end this battle quickly, preventing Aldrian from releasing that strange energy. As for Aldrian, he raises an eyebrow, impressed by the Greed Devil's collection.

"You really are a walking treasure trove. I wonder how many divine-grade artifacts you've stolen in your life."

He finally draws *Eternal Spirit*,

knowing there's no way he can face a mid-divine sword with only a peak-heaven sword. *Eternal Spirit* is the only divine-grade sword he possesses. When the Greed Devil sees the sword in Aldrian's hand, he is stunned by the appearance of this unfamiliar divine-grade weapon.

"I... want... it," he murmurs, his previously calm expression twisting into a crazed smile. The sudden change is striking to Aldrian.

"I WANT YOUR SWORD!" He dashes at full speed, slashing at Aldrian, who blocks with *Eternal Spirit*. Their clash causes the very fabric of space to collapse, creating cracks that ripple outward.

*Clang! Ting! Clang!*

The Greed Devil seems like he's lost his mind, yet each of his attacks is precise and heavy, forcing Aldrian to step back with each clash. Aldrian grins, feeling the real battle has just begun. He's in full focus, knowing he can't afford carelessness in such a high-speed duel. Emperor-stage opponents are no joke, and with the Greed Devil wielding numerous artifacts, even a moment's lapse could cost him his life.

Their swords clash relentlessly, wreaking havoc on the surroundings as the ground is torn up, and space fractures, triggering a spatial storm. Debris flies in all directions, but they ignore it, clashing like madmen.

## ***12 Movements of the Void Sword***

The Greed Devil suddenly shifts stance, preparing to unleash a technique. Aldrian watches as his opponent's sword seems to appear and disappear, becoming an elusive blur. Yet he instantly understands the technique's intricacies.

"The sword uses the void of space to make its movements unreadable, creating the illusion of appearing and disappearing." With his mastery over space laws, Aldrian tracks the sword's movement, blocking with ease. However, each movement creates an unpredictable pattern, giving Aldrian insight into how the sword could be wielded in this elusive way.

By now, the space around them is riddled with cracks and violent spatial storms, creating a terrifying sight of black void where the usual layers of space have been torn

open. Suddenly, amid their clash, the Greed Devil throws something at Aldrian. Sensing it instantly, Aldrian raises a barrier around himself.

*BOOM!*

A massive explosion shakes the entire Dragon Back Mountain. A mushroom cloud reaches the top of the barrier Aldrian had created to trap the Greed Devil. At the explosion's center, a large chunk of the space layer is obliterated, with the spatial storm pulling everything into its chaotic vortex. The Greed Devil only smiles at his masterpiece; he'd thrown an explosive powerful enough to kill even a high Emperor stage!

The ground has transformed, a vast crater now marking the explosion site. Standing at the barrier's edge, the Greed Devil suddenly slaps his forehead.

"Haiyaa, if that explosion killed the boy, that middle divine-grade sword would be lost in the spatial storm!"

He waits for the smoke to clear and the spatial cracks to mend. When he finally sees the giant crater clearly, he's stunned to find Aldrian still alive! Seeing Aldrian unharmed, the Greed Devil manages to regain some control over himself, realizing that he couldn't end Aldrian in his frenzied state.

"That sword... I want it! I've never seen one with such unknown properties. Where did you find it? Who forged it? Tell me! No... I'll take it myself, and you'll tell me everything!" he declares, his expression twisted with obsession.

Aldrian looks at the Greed Devil's current condition and can only sigh, lamenting his own weakness.

"I don't know what other artifacts he has or what tricks he might be hiding, but it seems I'm still too weak to capture him alive." Initially, he had planned to subdue the Greed Devil and his right-hand man to extract vital information, but the reality is that they are formidable opponents as a duo.

Their numerous high-level artifacts are a significant headache, each providing them with various ways to hinder him. Capturing them alive is difficult while they are together, that's why he needs to eliminate Erik first to lighten his burden and focus on capturing the Greed Devil. For this high-value target, Aldrian naturally chooses the Greed Devil as his final opponent, knowing he must possess valuable information.

However, after their clash, Aldrian has to admit the truth, the Greed Devil lives up to his name, boasting powerful cultivation and techniques, along with an array of artifacts. Aldrian is currently too weak to catch him alive. He could continue fighting until the Greed Devil exhausts all his energy, but he remains uncertain about what kind of trump card or artifact might emerge next.

*"Well, although it's unfortunate, I have to kill you now to reduce the devils' fighting force."* Aldrian sheathes his sword and smiles at the Greed Devil.

"You're truly a tough opponent, but it's a shame it has to end this way." he said.

The Greed Devil remains unfazed, staring back at Aldrian.

"Is that so? You're an arrogant bastard who doesn't grasp the vastness of heaven and earth. While you may be a singularity, I doubt you can withstand this." Suddenly, the Greed Devil stores his middle divine-grade sword and pulls out another. As he draws this new sword, the surrounding energy is drawn toward it, causing the space to tremble under its immense pressure.

The aura of the sword spreads throughout Dragon Back Mountain, intensifying the Greed Devil's presence, making it stronger and more ferocious as he transforms into his devil form.

Aldrian's eyes widen as he takes in the sword's full glory, feeling the strongest aura he has ever sensed from an artifact.

*"A High Divine Grade Sword!"*