

The Shining Star Above The Heaven

#Chapter 161: The Strongest Technique of the Greed Devil - Read The Shining Star Above The Heaven

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Creating a middle divine-grade artifact can immortalize a blacksmith's name in the continent's history, allowing their work to be cherished by generations to come. But what about those capable of forging something even higher? The only fitting title for them is 'Legend.' Such blacksmiths are never forgotten by all people even the mortals without cultivation across the continent, their achievements marked by the creation of high divine-grade artifacts.

Throughout the history of Barisan, only a few individuals have managed to create high divine-grade artifacts, and their names are immortalized as the names of major cities, honoring their extraordinary legacy. When Aldrian saw the sword that the Greed Devil wielded, he instantly recognized its history.

Heavenly Blaze Sword

Description: A sword forged by Dalahan, the first king of the Forgeheart Kingdom himself. One of his masterpieces, it was crafted from the tooth of the Fire Dragon to form the blade. This sword amplifies the power of fire-element swordsmen by 5%. When wielded by a non-fire element swordsman, it grants their strikes a flame property.

Level: High Divine Grade.

A sword forged by King Dalahan, the first ruler of the Forgeheart Kingdom. Aldrian couldn't hide his shock upon realizing this, as a sword of this caliber should reside securely in the royal palace's treasure vault.

"Why is this sword here?" Aldrian wondered, his thoughts drifting to Duke Badin.

"It looks like he is a key I need to secure if I can't get information from the Greed Devil." Aldrian needed to find out if the devils' plans across the continent were connected to Duke Badin and his colleagues. After confirming that Mardred had no ties to the devils, the only one left to investigate was Duke Badin. But first, he had to confront this crazed individual wielding a high divine-grade sword.

He couldn't underestimate the power of this high divine-grade weapon, a level above even Xin Haotian's Illumination Sword. As for his own Eternal Spirit, Aldrian knew it couldn't be measured by the continent's standards, given the material used to create it. Divine Iron wasn't native to this world, and its properties and enhancements were extraordinary—fitting for something used to craft weapons for gods.

With the Greed Devil wielding a high divine-grade sword in his devil form, his strength had surpassed the peak emperor stage, though he hadn't fully entered the next realm. Yet Aldrian smiled boldly at the situation. Compared to the final strike of his Heavenly Tribulation, the Greed Devil's current power was still no match. Though unexpected, he wasn't desperate. In fact, he felt grateful to the Greed Devil for revealing such an artifact and power. It reminded him to stay grounded, even after acquiring his middle-grade divine sword, Eternal Spirit. This was a reminder not to grow arrogant, despite his strength being beyond comprehension for all people.

"I take back what I said about there is no being on this continent worthy of my full strength. There are still countless possibilities and situations I haven't considered, and this is one of them," Aldrian thought.

"I have to say, you've opened my eyes and made me realize just how ignorant I still am in many things. For that, you have my thanks," he said.

The Greed Devil grinned. "Are those your last words?"

"No, I only said that you're one of the few worthy to receive my full strike."

"What are you—?" The Greed Devil's heart suddenly tightened. He sensed a change in Aldrian, though he couldn't pinpoint it. Something in Aldrian's bearing had shifted, an unsettling presence radiating from him. Aldrian was already channeling all his domain power and stood at his most powerful state, but now he was about to unleash his full strength, combined with the Eternal Spirit. He, too, was curious to see its full potential.

The Greed Devil wasted no time. In an instant, he dashed toward Aldrian with such speed that he seemed to teleport, striking with a chopping motion. The air cracked with ferocious devil energy, making the entire area feel ominous. Aldrian, prepared for this final showdown, paired his strike with Eternal Spirit, and as their divine-grade swords collided, spatial rifts opened around them, nearly shattering the trap barrier Aldrian had created.

Sword Devil's Splitting Strike

The Greed Devil took a stance distinct from the 12 movements of the Void Sword. His aura sharpened, intensifying as he unleashed a sword energy so powerful that it surpassed the peak emperor stage. Seeing the strike, Aldrian quickly summoned an energy shield. Although it wasn't as strong as the one he used against the Heavenly Tribulation, it was still reinforced with space laws.

When the strike hit the shield, the ground trembled, and a spatial storm erupted. Yet, the shield only cracked slightly as the space laws, bolstered by Aldrian's domain power, absorbed much of the impact. The Greed Devil marveled at Aldrian's resilience, astonished that he could survive such an onslaught, especially against a high divine-grade weapon.

Aldrian decided it was time to strike first and create an opening for his ultimate move. With swift precision, he unleashed the Slash of the Vanguard, catching the Greed Devil off guard. Stunned by the sudden attack, the Greed Devil was forced to block, but this time, Aldrian's strength was on a whole different level than when he fought Erik earlier. The impact of the slash sent him reeling, his hand trembling as he blocked with the Heavenly Blaze sword.

The Greed Devil was driven backward, crashing into several boulders before finally stopping as he collided with a cliff, causing it to collapse over a distance of 1.5 kilometers from Aldrian. Emerging from the rubble, he looked down at his bleeding hands and then across the battlefield at Aldrian. A sense of shock ran through him; had Aldrian unleashed this power earlier, he might have died regretting his own arrogance.

But now, he felt an ominous sensation as the vast energy of the area surged toward Aldrian. He could feel the strongest sword will he had ever encountered. From Aldrian's form radiated a sword will so intense it gave him the illusion of being sliced to death. The Greed Devil's entire sword collection rattled, attempting to break free of his storage ring as if compelled to greet the arrival of the Sword God. In fact, at this moment, every sword across the continent was floating, each one pointing its tip toward Dragon Back Mountain.

This scene was even more spectacular than when Aldrian had unleashed the Slash of the End in the Ivory Empire. It made sense, as he was now far stronger, wielding his own divine-grade sword. Across the continent, people turned their gaze toward Dragon Back Mountain, where every sword pointed its tip in reverence.

Without hesitation, the Greed Devil steadied himself, preparing to unleash his strongest sword technique. Devil energy surged violently from his body, casting a reddish-black aura over his surroundings. The space around them trembled heavily, and even the barrier Aldrian had created began to shatter under the weight of their combined powers. Lifting his sword high above his head, the Greed Devil entered the final phase of his technique.

Aldrian noticed the Greed Devil preparing his own technique, but he remained unfazed, his mind calm and steady. As he unsheathed his sword in a slashing motion, each inch revealed seemed to distort time and space around it. Infusing the strike with the death laws, Aldrian added profound complexity to the simplicity of his slash.

"This is bad!" The Greed Devil's eyes widened as he sensed the lethal strike approaching. Without delay, he unleashed his ultimate technique.

Sword Devil Annihilation Strike

The Greed Devil's attack tore through the air, space collapse around the blazing sword energy as it shot toward Aldrian at a speed faster than sound. Heaven and earth seemed fragile before the strike's might, and even the surrounding heavenly energy and aura were pushed back by its force. Yet to Aldrian, the incoming attack appeared slower than it truly was. With Eternal Spirit in hand, he was about to unleash the strongest strike he'd ever mustered, eager to witness the collision of his own power against the Greed Devil's strongest blow, each supported by a divine-grade sword.

Slash of the End

When the sword technique was unleashed from Eternal Spirit, the entire continent felt, for a split second, the sword intent and will capable of annihilating everything. But even that brief moment was enough to send a chill through everyone who sensed it—the razor-sharp edge of a strike that could annihilate anything in its path. This was a sword technique designed to bring the end to all that stood before it.

Chapter 162: The Return of the Mysterious Swordsman

The power of annihilation released by the Slash of the End caused even heaven and earth to tremble before its might. Within this slash, Aldrian also infused his comprehension of death laws, aiming to see if he could affect his target with the touch of death itself. The death laws—the bane of all existence—represent the end of the road for all who reside in the universe. The end of existence, the end of beginnings, and the beginning of the end.

This is Aldrian's understanding of the death laws, with them, the Slash of the End becomes more "complete." Sensing the power of Aldrian's Slash, the Greed Devil's survival instincts kick in, and he scrambles to use an escape talisman. Now that the trapping barrier has collapsed, he can attempt to teleport away from this place.

He tries to reach for the escape talisman hidden beneath his robe, but, unfortunately for him, he has yet to grasp the full extent of the Slash of the End. This sword technique traps its victim in place by condensing space, stabilizing and intensifying the entire area in front of the oncoming slash until it feels unbearably heavy. As a result the victims will have difficulties to move, and even if they manage, they cannot escape using any technique related to space laws.

This time, Aldrian poured his entire domain power into the slash, equating its force to the power of heaven and earth over a quarter of the continent. The Greed Devil feels the oppressive weight of space and finally realizes how doomed he is. The Slash of the End collides with the energy strike of the Sword Devil's Annihilation Strike. The devil's strike holds for only a split second before collapsing—a brief resistance of which the Greed Devil can be proud.

The slash energy continued moving at full speed even after colliding with the Sword Devil's Annihilation Strike, still brimming with immense power. Behind it, space fractured into a violent storm, with cracks stretching over 800 meters wide. Traveling at the speed of sound, the energy left a trail of spatial cracks and storms in its wake, intensifying the destruction as it advanced.

"MOVE!!! AAGGHH!!" The Greed Devil shouted at the top of his lungs, raising his sword in a desperate attempt to block the Slash of the End. He wasn't sure if he could withstand such an attack, but it was better than doing nothing. His instincts and his very nature as the Sin of Greed drove him to cling to his life at any cost. Having failed to rely on the escape talisman, he resolved to face the strike head-on.

He focused all his devil energy into the Heavenly Blaze Sword, attempting to block the incoming attack. The instant the slash connected with his sword, his entire body trembled violently, instantly engulfed by the golden slash energy that obliterated his consciousness. His physical form was destroyed before he even had time to scream in frustration, leaving nothing behind.

The Heavenly Blaze Sword, now released from his grip, was flung five kilometers away from the point of impact, unable to withstand the Slash of the End. However, once it drifted beyond the path of the slash, the sword steadied itself in midair, its tip pointing in reverence toward Aldrian. Meanwhile, in the place of the fallen Greed Devil, his storage ring had also been flung aside and shattered, spilling its contents—including the entire collection of swords he'd hoarded—into the air, where they now floated.

The golden slash energy continued traveling westward at full speed, slicing through the entire mountain range before it. In a few hours, it would reach the west coast and continue beyond. It was unclear where the energy would finally exhaust itself, but thanks to Aldrian's careful adjustments when unleashing the Slash of the End, it would remain airborne, sparing the earth's surface.

If Aldrian had directed the slash horizontally without angling it upward, the landscape on the western side of the continent would have changed drastically, with the slash claiming countless victims in its path. In this instance, the slash traveled above parts of the Forgeheart Kingdom and the Buddhist territory without causing direct harm.

From Badin City, the spectacular sight of millions of swords filling the sky drew the attention of people still recovering from the effects of the heavenly tribulation. They turned to face the direction of the Dragonback Mountains, where they glimpsed a fleeting golden light and seconds later, they watched as the clouds in the western sky split in two, stretching all the way to the horizon. Though they couldn't fully grasp what had happened, the sudden surge of sword intent and sword will in the air left no doubt about its powerful technique.

They didn't know who was battling, but this phenomenon marked the return of the mysterious swordmaster, who had seemingly disappeared for over two years.

Coincidentally, it occurred not long after the immense heavenly tribulation, leading them to wonder if this enigmatic figure had just broken through to the Emperor stage and was now facing formidable enemies?

The terrifying sword intent they sensed illustrated the power of the sword technique, and the golden energy matched the descriptions given by eyewitnesses in Balin City, where the mysterious swordmaster first appeared. Despite their fear of the overwhelming power, human nature fueled their curiosity about this enigmatic swordsman.

As the golden energy faded into the horizon, the millions of floating swords finally dropped to the ground, creating a cacophony throughout the city. High-level cultivators in Badin City, from the Duke stage and above, instantly moved toward the Dragonback Mountains. Even hidden Kings and Emperors joined the fare, eager to learn the identity of this extraordinary individual, hoping to forge a connection with him.

Duke Badin, the only person still conscious at the foot of the mountain, didn't know what to make of the unfolding events. The sudden disappearance of the two devils and the terrifying battle erupting from the central part of the mountain were palpable, even from his position. He felt lost, unsure of what had happened to those two devils, and his unease intensified after witnessing the sword technique that had terrified him to his core.

Desperate to escape, he planned to run as far from this place as possible. As for his mission to acquire the blueprint or Mardred, that could wait for another time; he needed to assess the situation first. He glanced at his surrounding underlings, all still unconscious, before reaching for the teleportation talisman in his pocket, ready to crush it.

"Not so fast, sir." A sudden hand on his shoulder shocked him to the core. Before he could scream, he vanished from the scene, leaving behind a silence.

At this time the devil lord already informed all the devils that located in the Dalahan city and Valiard city to stop their operation and some of the high levels devils to retreat. He decided to cancel his plan in these cities after his communication with Aldrian, he is considering that with the unknown factor like Aldrian, he will have unknown result. That is not something he likes as his plan will have to move according his will. Although some of his plans in the continent face setback for the past few years, it will not changed the end outcome.

However, if something worse were to happen in the Forgeheart Kingdom while operations were underway, he would lose a significant portion of his forces. It was not

yet time for him to sacrifice so many of his chess pieces; he needed more time before his ultimate trump card could be used.

When he suddenly felt a powerful sword will and the phenomenon of the floating swords, his mind turned toward the mysterious swordsman who was finally revealing himself. A few moments later, something snapped in his mind, causing him to frown.

"The greed devil is dead?" Not only that, but the life signs of his right-hand man had also disappeared. He had connected the souls of all devils above the duke stage to himself, allowing him to monitor their statuses—especially the seven deadly sins. Not long ago, he had ordered the greed devil to retrieve the blueprint as soon as possible due to the emergence of Aldrian.

Now that the greed devil was dead, he realized, after sensing that powerful sword will and the direction from which it came during his communication with Aldrian, that he had finally connected the dots.

"That person who comprehended the death laws is the mysterious swordmaster." Although he couldn't see the person's features, he now had a clue and their last known position. With this information, he could plan more thoroughly. With the death of the greed devil, he assumed that an uproar would soon erupt among the noble families of the Forgeheart kingdom, as the devils' operations would be uncovered. However, he was not discouraged, he saw this as an opportunity to take advantage of the chaos.

Depleting the forces of the orthodox cultivators before the prophecy days arrived would be advantageous.

"Maybe I can create chaos in the Doria or Ivory Empire as a greeting?" he wondered, grinning with anticipation.

Chapter 163: The Memories of Duke Badin

Thud!

Duke Badin felt his body slam against the ground. He wanted to resist, but his cultivation was blocked by some kind of energy that made his flow of energy sluggish. When he looked down at his abdomen, he saw a sealing talisman, though he had no idea when it had been placed there. Still in shock from the sudden kidnapping, he looked up at the face of the young man who had taken him.

"You?! What is the meaning of this?! How dare you kidnap me! I am a duke of the Forgeheart Kingdom! You will regret offending me! His Majesty will not tolerate an outsider bringing such humiliation to the kingdom's nobles!" Duke Badin fumed, his face contorted with fury at being abducted by Duke Valiard's unknown associates. This young man wasn't even past the peak Earl stage!

"Bold words, Duke Badin," Aldrian replied calmly. "Especially coming from someone in league with the devils."

Duke Badin froze, his heart racing, though he quickly composed himself before shouting, "Are you out of your mind?! To accuse me of conspiring with devils is akin to slandering the entire Forgeheart Kingdom! You're truly brazen to make such a claim! I'll report this to His Majesty, and you'll be severely punished. Not even Duke Valiard can protect you!"

"Is that so?" Aldrian's smile widened. "What if I told you the Greed Devil himself told me? And that his right-hand man, Erik Van Jaager, sends his regards?"

Duke Badin shuddered, not only from Aldrian's smile, one that looked demonic but also from the accuracy with which Aldrian had identified his two accomplices. He gritted his teeth, imagining that those devils had burned the bridge by revealing their connection to him to this young man. Judging by his confidence, had Aldrian already fought the two devils and returned unharmed? Did that mean he was strong enough to match them?

Suddenly, Aldrian took out a sword from his storage ring. Duke Badin's eyes widened when he saw the sword as he recognized it immediately—the Heavenly Blaze Sword, a high divine-grade weapon that belonged to the royal family.

"I wonder if the royal family would reward me for returning this sword. What do you think?" Aldrian asked with a faint smile.

Duke Badin's gaze remained fixed on the sword. At that moment, he realized he had already lost. If Aldrian held this sword, then those devils might already be dead, leaving him with no escape. It was clear Aldrian intended to make him confess his alliance with the devils.

"To be honest, I don't understand," Aldrian continued, his expression curious. "Why would a noble like you, with high status in the Forgeheart Kingdom and influence across the continent, align with the devils, betraying your fellow cultivators? Wouldn't it have been easier to stay in your comfortable position and avoid getting involved in the devils' affairs?"

"What do you know? You know nothing! You're truly an ignorant fool!" Duke Badin spat. "They offered me a reasonable profit, and I had what they wanted. We simply took advantage of each other. Besides, they have a trump card that could engulf this entire continent! I'm ensuring my family's survival, even if it means working with the devils. I only chose the side with the highest chance of victory. That's all."

"Oh? Care to tell me what kind of trump card they have? Enough to make you betray all cultivators on the continent?" Aldrian asked, his tone probing. This information was crucial. If he could learn what card the devils held, he could prepare himself and the others.

"Even if I told you, it wouldn't matter! The devils will prevail! That 'thing' will descend upon this land, and darkness will cover everything, just as the prophecy foretold!" Duke Badin ranted, his eyes gleaming with a crazed certainty as he remembered whatever 'thing' it was that convinced him of the devils' victory.

Aldrian considered extracting more information verbally, but he had already gotten what he wanted from the man's confession. For additional details, it seemed he would need to read his memories. He reached out and touched Duke Badin's forehead, intent on delving into his memories. Duke Badin's eyes widened as he realized Aldrian's intention, but he managed a defiant grin.

"You will never—" He stopped mid-sentence as Aldrian struck at his soul, causing duke Badin to faint.

"Now, that's much better—you talk too much," Aldrian said. He then began searching through Duke Badin's memories, wanting to uncover the truth about his betrayal, the mystery behind the devils' ability to infiltrate so many territories undetected, and the extent of the devils' actions.

Within the mindscape of memories, Aldrian viewed Duke Badin's experiences from a first-person perspective, as if he were the duke himself. He examined various parts of these memories and eventually uncovered both the artifact and its creator—the very elements that allowed the devils to infiltrate territories across the continent undetected.

His face grew solemn; the situation was far deeper and more complex than he had anticipated. He continued searching through the memories, eventually reaching one where Duke Badin first met with the devils. Aldrian was searching selectively, focusing only on key moments, and this initial meeting held particular significance.

In the memory, Duke Badin was seated in his study late at night, looking frustrated. Suddenly, shadowy figures appeared out of nowhere, startling him.

"Who are you?! How did you get in here?" Duke Badin asked warily.

"The Badin family, once the foremost noble house of the Forgeheart Kingdom, has fallen to this pathetic state thanks to the Valiards. Truly, a sad era for the Badins," came a raspy voice laced with mockery. Aldrian recognized it immediately as Erik Van Jaager, the right-hand man of the greed devil.

Duke Badin frowned deeper, trying to retrieve an artifact to trap the unknown intruder. Suddenly, he sensed something that made him realize the identity of the intruder.

"The devils!" He sensed a trace of devil energy leaking from the shadows, triggering his instinct to attack. However, he suddenly found himself unable to move; the space around him had hardened, trapping him in place. He watched in horror as two cloaked figures emerged from the shadows, sending a shudder through him. He could feel their

immense power—these were emperor-stage cultivators! With his movements restricted and no means to defend himself, he realized that his death was imminent.

"Do you want to live?!" Erik suddenly asked.

"Do you want to survive? Do you want to restore your family's glory? Do you want to leave your name in history like your ancestors?" His voice dripped with temptation, aiming to exploit Duke Badin's insecurities and feelings of inadequacy compared to the Valiards.

Yet, Duke Badin gritted his teeth, determined to resist the lure. "Even though I have my own problems, I will not ask the devils for help."

"Hmmm, is that so? Regardless of whether you succumb to your desires or not, the outcome will be the same," Erik replied, touching Duke Badin's forehead.

"Hmmm, is that so? Whether you succumb to your desires or not, the outcome will ultimately be the same," Erik said, placing his hand on Duke Badin's forehead. Inside Duke Badin's mind, he was met with a horrifying vision: a terrifying entity enveloping the entire continent in darkness. Its massive shadow loomed so large that it covered the entire land!

Aldrian looked at the massive shadowy figure, its enormous eyes surveying the continent and all the living beings on the land as if they were mere ants. Chaos reigned everywhere, and negative energy spread throughout the land, rendering it uninhabitable. The only place still attempting to resist was the Everlasting Silent Forest; however, even that last bastion was beginning to succumb to the encroaching darkness.

After witnessing the visions presented by the devils, Duke Badin appeared lost and broken, his mental fortitude crumbling under the weight of fear. Erik repeated his earlier questions, his voice cutting through the haze of terror. "Do you want to survive? Do you want to make your family glorious again? Do you want to leave your name in history like your ancestors?"

Duke Badin's head nodded weakly in response, awakening from his fear.

Aldrian then pulled away from Duke Badin's memories, a deep frown etched on his face. *"That creature that covered the land, those eyes—they're similar to what I saw with the Heavenly Demon, but much smaller."* However, even that smaller version was still more than enough to overshadow the entire continent. Thanks to the shared feelings and senses from the memories, Aldrian could also grasp the tremendous power of this 'thing.'

"That is a smaller and weaker version of that 'thing.' Are the devils trying to summon that creature into this world?" Aldrian's face became extremely solemn. Although the

creature in Duke Badin's memories was much weaker than the original he had encountered, it still exuded too much power and pressure for the beings of this world.

"This is really bad. If this is what they mean by darkness covering the land, then we need to crush the devils' plans as soon as possible."

Chapter 164: The 'Thing' That Can Hide the Devils

The situation was more dire than he had thought; the appearance of that creature would surely bring doom to the entire continent. Even though he was now strong enough to face anyone on the continent, he wasn't sure he could defeat *it*. A sense of urgency and pressure filled him, warning him that he and the entire continent must prepare for the worst.

"No wonder Duke Badin and the other two duke houses betrayed the continent's cultivators by working with the devils," he thought. "That creature is beyond anything this continent's beings can contend with, and their mental fortitude would collapse upon seeing it."

Though the creature he saw in Duke Badin's memories was only a weaker version of the original, it was still enough to overwhelm anyone with fear. When he first encountered the original alongside the Heavenly Demon, even he had been nearly overcome by fear as well. But his innate resilience, strong mental fortitude, and fierce pride allowed him to transform his fear into rage instead.

If the devils truly plan to summon that creature as a trump card, then the entire continent's fate will be sealed by prophecy. However, he knew that prophecy was not set in stone. There was a light that would rise to fend off the darkness. The Ivory Empire believed that he was that light, and the Heavenly Direction Church regarded him as the light who would descend to expel the darkness. He really felt the weight of responsibility for the impending battle.

However, amidst this heavy destiny on his shoulders, he remembered what the Heavenly Demon's wife had told him: his destiny was even greater than that of the Heavenly Demon.

"Yes, if my past is so grand that even the Heavenly Demon's destiny pales in comparison, then I can also face that creature alone! If the Heavenly Demon could confront it alone, then as the bearer of an even greater destiny, I can certainly face the weaker version of that creature," Aldrian thought resolutely.

"If this is part of my destiny, then so be it. That creature has been getting on my nerves anyway."

With this, he also confirmed that the devils indeed had a connection to that creature. However, he set aside thoughts of the mysterious being for now, focusing instead on the crucial information he had obtained to thwart the devils' plans.

"So, the 'thing' that allows the devils hide their true nature isn't exactly an artifact but rather something they can ingest—created through a collaboration between a blacksmith master, an alchemist, and a cultivator with holy energy. The blacksmith crafts a small item called 'the ball,' with a diameter like a pill, designed to function as an energy container. The alchemist then takes this ball, placing it into a cauldron with various spiritual herbs, coating it in ingredients that form an outer shell. This shell gives it the appearance and effects of a typical cultivation supplement pill," Aldrian thought.

"And lastly, holy energy is injected into the ball, which then stores this energy inside. When the devils swallow it, the holy energy spreads throughout their body and even reaches their soul, preventing an artifact based on karma, like the Orbs of Origin, from detecting their devil energy." Aldrian frowned deeply.

"What crazy bastards, By swallowing this ball, they're essentially harming themselves by allowing holy energy to invade their bodies, but they endure this weakening effect as long as it helps them infiltrate their assigned locations. This item is even distributed to all devils below the king stage specifically for infiltration," Aldrian finally understood, grasping the intricacies of what the devils relied on to remain undetected in foreign territories.

However after he knew the way, he look at duke Badin with frustration.

"I've been thinking inside the box. By assuming the devils were using an artifact, I locked my mind onto a single possibility, ignoring other options. When the World Tree's spirit couldn't detect the devils' anomaly, I thought the creator must be an emperor-stage blacksmith. But, in truth, this was the combined effort of three professions. I wasn't entirely wrong, but it still irks me,"

"No wonder when I saw some of their memories, they were consuming pills that supposedly supplemented their cultivation. I thought they were just ordinary pills—common enough that many cultivators have them." Though he felt tricked, he was glad to finally understand the truth.

He sighed before picking up the information crystal he'd placed here to record Duke Badin's confession. Lifting the unconscious duke onto his shoulder, he vanished from the small cave he had created using his earth laws solely to interrogate Duke Badin.

Inside the cave where the secret realm was located, Xin Haotian, Duke Valiard, and Mardred sat gathered in the center of the hall, their expressions blank. Not long ago, the entire mountain had shaken violently, and they sensed a terrifying battle erupting

nearby. When they saw Aldrian battling a devil, they were shocked by the devil's power and immediately knew who it was.

The Greed Devil that was feared by the Forgeheart Kingdom for his character was here, battling Aldrian with all his might. They were outside the trapping barrier created by Aldrian, unable to get closer and forced to watch from afar. As high-level cultivators, their sight was sharp enough to observe the battle from a distance.

When the Greed Devil drew the high divine-grade sword, an artifact of the royal family, Duke Valiard and Mardred nearly shouted in disbelief. However, the battle was escalating to the point of a final showdown between Aldrian and the Greed Devil. Sensing the incoming powerful strike that could affect them, they quickly took cover, narrowly avoiding being swept away by the clash of the Slash of the End and the Sword Devil Annihilation Strike.

They were shocked by the scale of the technique Aldrian unleashed. As for Xin Haotian, he finally witnessed the slash technique that had drawn him to Aldrian in the first place. The only thought that crossed his mind upon seeing that destructive display was...

"The End."

The sword technique that brought an end to everything. This time, the power was beyond anything he had ever felt, and he knew that such a strike was impossible to defend against—at least for the cultivators on this continent.

From this strike, he also grasped the extent of Aldrian's power and potential. Aldrian was growing stronger at an incredible pace, and with his cultivation at the peak Earl, he already possessed this kind of strength. What kind of power would he wield if he reached the Emperor stage?

Xin Haotian shuddered at the thought. Perhaps Aldrian could break the continent's "curse" that prevented cultivators from breaking through beyond the peak Emperor stage. The Barisan continent was too small for a monster like Aldrian, and this realization bolstered Xin Haotian's confidence in Aldrian, especially as they prepared to uncover the mysteries of the Everlasting Silent Forest.

Swish!

He was startled by Aldrian's sudden appearance with someone slung over his shoulder. Duke Valiard and Mardred were equally stunned, initially wondering if Aldrian had brought the body of the devil with him. However, when they recognized the familiar face, shock washed over them.

"Why is duke Badin here?" duke Valiard asked.

"He is in cahoots with the devils to bring chaos to this continent. I hope Duke Valiard and Sir Mardred can help me deal with this," Aldrian replied.

They were shocked by the revelation; to think that Duke Badin was working together with the devils!

"Do you have any proof? If not, it will be difficult to convince others about this matter. Duke Badin has his own reputation, and his collaboration with the devils would cause an uproar in the kingdom," Duke Valiard asked. Without hesitation, Aldrian tossed the information crystal to them, allowing the others to view the recording.

As they intently watched the content, their expressions turned solemn.

"This is bad! If he's working with the devils, then the royal family has been infiltrated for a long time! His Majesty's safety might be in jeopardy if this continues!" Mardred exclaimed.

"Is that why the Greed Devil has our greatest treasure, the Heavenly Blaze Sword? No wonder he could infiltrate the royal family's treasure vault. This is a humiliating event for the royal family that has been hidden from the public," Duke Valiard said, his face contorted with anger as he glared at the unconscious Duke Badin.

Aldrian simply nodded and spoke to them solemnly.

"The devils visited him over 20 years ago, which suggests that they have been planning this for a long time. This time, they have enticed many factions, both orthodox and unorthodox, to join their cause. As for Duke Badin's judgment, I will leave that to His Majesty, King Douwin. I hope His Majesty can offer more assistance afterward, as the devils' future actions will be even more terrifying and will ultimately determine the fate of this continent."

Chapter 165: Return to Badin City

"What kind of act will the devils carry out? Is it something so severe that even the entire continent can't contain it?" Duke Valiard asked.

"Something beyond your comprehension," Aldrian replied. "I'm sorry, but I can't show you yet. This is something that demands the attention of the entire continent. We need everyone to work together to destroy the devils' plans." Aldrian knew that revealing the scene of the creature would only shatter their spirits, and he preferred it this way—sometimes ignorance was a blessing.

Aldrian then took out the Heavenly Blaze Sword, its sentience already docile toward him. Usually, a divine-grade artifact is difficult for random people to touch, especially if it already has a master. However, this sword showed no reaction when Aldrian picked it

up. Fortunately, the Greed Devil had not been strong enough to withstand the *Slash of the End*, so the sword's damage was only minor.

Duke Valiard and Mardred widened their eyes, and Xin Haotian looked curiously at this sword, which was of a higher grade than his Illumination Sword.

"The Heavenly Blaze Sword," Duke Valiard said. "To this day, I still wonder how the Greed Devil managed to steal our most precious artifact from the treasure vault. It seems Duke Badin played a role in this. The sword was stolen a few years before the blueprint accident, and at that time, we didn't know the thief's identity. It looks like the Greed Devil was behind it all."

"Yes, Duke Badin provided the Greed Devil with the structure and intricate layout of the royal palace, including the route to and interior of the treasure vault. Being a master of space laws, the Greed Devil was able to bypass all detection and take the sword." And with Mardred's disappearance along with the blueprint a few years later, Duke Badin persuaded other lesser noble families to pressure the Valiards, casting them as suspects. It was a clever move to shift the royal family's attention to Mardred instead of the devils.

However, after all these years, there was still no sign of Mardred or the Heavenly Blaze Sword, and not enough evidence to prove Mardred's involvement in the sword's theft, preventing them from taking serious action against Duke Valiard. As a result, most nobles at that time were satisfied with the challenge for Duke Valiard could at least produce a low divine-grade artifact as proof of his contribution to the kingdom and as a way to redeem his family for his brother's disappearance and the allegations of his involvement in the blueprint matter.

"However, what are we going to do about the blueprint?" Duke Valiard asked. "My brother said the blueprint wasn't with him. How are we going to inform His Majesty?" He already understood the blueprint's status, but now that it had vanished, he wasn't sure how the royal family would react.

"You don't have to worry. I'll speak to His Majesty myself. I need to talk to him, anyway," Aldrian replied, glancing down at Duke Badin's body.

"Anyway, our business here is done. Let's return and inform His Majesty as soon as possible—there are many matters that require his attention," he added. As for the remaining soldiers of the Badin family, Aldrian decided to leave them be. Initially, he had wanted to intimidate Duke Badin by slaughtering the devils and instructing his underlings to inform the duke. He hoped that in his anxious and nervous state, Duke Badin would make a mistake that he could exploit. However, everything changed when he discovered that the Greed Devil and his right-hand man were also present. With their appearance, his plans would now be more swift and direct.

However, there was one drawback: the members of the Badin family had already seen his disguised face, so he guessed that many people would soon recognize him. However, it didn't matter; he could simply change his disguise again. Fortunately, he had been alone when they saw him.

Without wasting any time, they emerged from the cave and flew into the sky, which was now free of deadly winds. However, Aldrian could sense that the mountain's formation was beginning to reactivate after his intense battle with the Greed Devil. He was amazed that, despite the devastation that had altered a quarter of the entire mountain's landscape, the formation was still functioning. Now that the heavenly energy and aura had scattered because of his battle, the formation could operate more smoothly, just as it used to.

He predicted that within an hour, the deadly winds would return, making Dragon Back Mountain a forbidden zone once again. They then flew toward Badin City at high speed. Aldrian knew that his heavenly tribulation had already drawn attention to the mountain, and many cultivators would flock to the area to investigate, so they needed to leave quickly. True to his prediction, not long after they left the mountain region, they sensed many incoming presences approaching their location.

Aldrian and the others then hid on the ground to avoid encountering anyone, waiting for the crowd to pass. Moreover, they were carrying the body of Duke Badin, which they couldn't conceal in their storage rings since those were only meant for objects, not living beings. They watched as dozens of King and even Emperor stage cultivators flew past them toward Dragon Back Mountain. Duke Valiard had already taken out an artifact that could conceal their presence, ensuring that even those at the Middle Emperor stage couldn't detect them.

After a few minutes, and believing there were no more followers from the group that had just passed, they resumed their journey to Badin. Aldrian had already devised a plan for them to pass through Badin City's gates and transport Duke Badin to the teleportation station. Once in Dalahan City, he would meet with King Douwin, and afterward, he wanted to check something, as he had already received reports from his slaves regarding his parents' movements in Dalahan City!

Half an hour after Aldrian and his group left Dragon Back Mountain, the formation was almost back to its original state. However, this region had become a gathering point for cultivators curious about the events that had just transpired. When they arrived, they were stunned to see many unconscious dwarves scattered throughout the surrounding mountain area. They also observed the destruction of one part of the mountain, which was enough to convince them that a battle between emperor-stage cultivators had taken place.

They didn't dare venture inside the mountain due to the phenomenon surrounding it, so their only hope was to wake up the dwarves and ask them about the events. They were also curious about what had happened to the dwarves and why the members of the Badin family were in the area. However, after they managed to wake up some of the dwarves, the only thing they heard from them was the appearance of the "Grim Reaper," a creature that embodied death itself. Wherever he passed, death followed, leaving slaughter in his wake, and nothing could stop him.

Many cultivators felt confused but couldn't dismiss what the dwarves said, as they all recounted the same tale. Aldrian was unaware that because of the dwarves' description of him as the personification of death, Dragon Back Mountain that already feared, would gain an even more ominous title "The Grim Reaper Mountain" in the future.

The traces of battle that had destroyed the landscape were engraved in their minds, and they wondered if this "Grim Reaper" was also the same person as the mysterious swordsman. They couldn't enter the central area of the mountain because the formation was already active again, preventing them from checking the area. With that, they could only speculate about where the mysterious swordsman might be now.

Aldrian and his group were now inside Badin City, preparing to take the teleportation portal to the capital. After pulling a few tricks to bring the still unconscious Duke Badin with them, they finally reached the teleportation station. They placed Duke Badin inside a box, adjusting his body to fit the box's size. The box was neither too big nor conspicuous, ensuring that people wouldn't be suspicious of its contents. Many others were transporting their belongings in similar boxes, making it a perfect disguise.

While they waited, Aldrian extended his senses to the surrounding area, wanting to ensure there was nothing amiss and that they weren't being followed. As he focused, he overheard various conversations about the heavenly tribulation and the mysterious swordsman, along with reports of many people heading to Dragon Back Mountain. He ignored those discussions and relaxed only after confirming that nothing seemed out of the ordinary.

Just as they were nearing their turn to enter the teleportation portal, a bald man suddenly approached them. Aldrian raised an eyebrow at the sight of him, recognizing him as a monk from the Buddhist sect.

"Good friend, may I follow you to your destination?" the monk asked.

Aldrian regarded the monk attentively. He was a middle-aged man dressed in a simple brown robe, devoid of any luxurious or conspicuous items. He resembled a humble monk, detached from worldly matter. His aura seemed to blend seamlessly with nature, and there was nothing particularly noteworthy about him.

"Of course you can follow us, teacher. May I know who I'm speaking with?" Aldrian replied.

Chapter 166: Strange Monk

Duke Valiard and the others looked at the monk with suspicion, but they held back from taking any action. They knew that monks generally appeared friendly to others, yet after everything they had just gone through, they needed to be cautious. They couldn't sense any cultivation from this monk, which only added to their uncertainty about him.

Aldrian also attempted to read the monk's intent and mind, but he was stunned when he sensed that the monk's entire body was shielded by a powerful layer of karma. The karma laws surrounding him were so complex that Aldrian thought they were the most intricate he had ever encountered.

Curiously, he examined the monk's information, but when he saw the details, he was shocked.

Karmasiddhi

Age : 89,032 Years

Race : Human

Cultivation : Peak Emperor

Cultivation technique : Grace of the Karma Buddha

Attack techniques

: Golden Palm, Voice of Dharma, Dharmapala's Annihilation Palm, Asura's Strike, Karmic Strike, Karmic Curse.

Defense technique : Golden Body Dharma

Movement technique : Buddha's Celerity

Supporting technique : Karma Buddha's Eyes.

He was shocked to discover that this monk was at the Peak Emperor stage, the most powerful being he had ever encountered.

"*Could this monk be the abbot of a Buddhist sect?*" he wondered. With such a high level of cultivation, there was no way this could be an ordinary monk. He even doubted that the monk's face was his real face—this was the first time he couldn't distinguish between a disguise and the true appearance. He guessed it had something to do with the monk's profound attainment in karma laws. He even dared to admit that this monk might have a greater mastery of karma than he did!

"You may call this humble monk simply 'Karma Seeker.' May I know the benefactor's name?" the monk asked, cupping his hands in respect.

"My name is Aldrian Aster. You can call me Aldrian, teacher."

"Aldrian Aster—what a great name. I hope I haven't caused you any trouble, Benefactor Aldrian."

"No, not at all." Although Aldrian was still somewhat suspicious of the monk's intentions, the monk didn't seem to have any ill will. After that, the monk paid some energy stones to the teleportation station operator, stating he would join Aldrian's group. Once the operator confirmed this, the monk sat beside Aldrian, remaining perfectly still and silent, as if he were one with nature.

Aldrian decided to start a conversation with the monk.

"Teacher 'Karma Seeker,' are you also interested in the middle divine-grade sword and came to visit Dalahan City for it?"

"No, I'm not interested in an object like a divine-grade sword. I visit Dalahan to follow karma and to gain more karma," the Karma Seeker monk said.

Aldrian felt a bit puzzled, but he nodded and accepted the answer, not wanting to pry too deeply into others' affairs. When their number was called, it was their turn to enter the teleportation portal. Without hesitation, they stepped in. However, the monk cast a brief glance at the box Duke Valiard was carrying and then turned to Aldrian.

"Benefactor Aldrian is a man of righteousness—a man of righteousness," the monk remarked.

Aldrian couldn't quite grasp the monk's cryptic way of speaking, but he simply replied.

"Teacher, you seem fond of complimenting people. But isn't that what we all should be? To be righteous?" he said as they entered the teleportation portal.

"Of course, what the benefactor said is true. However, not every being's heart can hold righteousness, and even if they have a righteous heart, not all of them can bear the weight of that righteousness," the monk said as they walked and stepped into the

teleportation formation. Instantly, they arrived at the teleportation formation in Dalahan City, but Aldrian continued to ponder the monk's words.

"It's true that the weight of a righteous heart can only be comprehended through implementation in one's life. It's worthless to possess a righteous heart if you allow injustice or evil to prevail," Aldrian sighed. "But in this cultivation world, where injustice and evil are everywhere, can an ideal like a righteous heart truly prevail?"

They had already exited the teleportation portal when Aldrian finally stopped contemplating these thoughts. As they walked further from the teleportation station, the monk turned to Aldrian and said,

"I think this is where we part ways. Thank you for your generosity, benefactor Aldrian. I hope you can always walk the path of righteousness, the path of the 'sovereign,'" the monk said.

Aldrian was stunned, he looked at the monk intently but still cupped his hands and slightly bowed his head.

"Thank you for the advice, teacher. I wish you a safe journey."

The monk simply smiled and turned around to walk away, blending with the crowd. However, in Aldrian's mind, this monk seemed detached from his surroundings, the crowd appeared unaware of the monk's existence. He walked away unhindered, as if an invisible wall surrounded him, preventing him from being touched by others.

"That monk's intentions for approaching us seem directed at you, young master, he doesn't seem interested in talking with us," Duke Valiard remarked.

Aldrian nodded and looked at the others. "Anyway, let's head to the royal palace; we need to report in first."

In the throne hall of the royal palace, King Douwin was facing a headache over the recent events in his kingdom.

"Those people seem insistent on seeing the Eternal Spirit Sword. Am I supposed to tell them that the Eternal Spirit already has an owner?" Many factions had been requesting an audience with him, and King Douwin was well aware of their intentions: to see and even acquire the middle divine-grade sword. He had rejected their requests, citing that the matter of the sword was for Duke Valiard to decide. However, some of them remained persistent, even bringing offers to entice him into helping them with the negotiations.

As the king of the Forgeheart Kingdom, he could act as he wished with them. However, being too harsh was not advisable, given that they belonged to prominent families and sects from their respective territories. Even imperial families had been reaching out to him. Additionally, he didn't want to disclose Aldrian's involvement to these factions, as he sought to avoid burdening him with such matters. Aldrian was someone he wanted to ally with.

He then saw a royal guard enter and kneel before him. "Your Majesty, Duke Valiard has arrived with Young Master Aldrian, seeking an audience."

King Douwin's eyes brightened at the news. "Quick, bring them in."

Before long, Duke Valiard and Aldrian entered, accompanied by Mardred, who was still in disguise. King Douwin felt puzzled by this stranger but waited for their report. After bowing to the king, Duke Valiard addressed him.

"Your Majesty, I have returned to inform you that we successfully completed our mission."

"Is that true, then—" King Douwin began, glancing at the stranger before Mardred's disguise shifted, revealing his true face.

"It's been a long time, Your Majesty—or at least, to you," Mardred said with a smile.

King Douwin trembled as he stepped closer. Once he stood in front of Mardred, he embraced him warmly. "It's good to have you back."

"Oh, come on, don't be too sentimental; I'm already here, aren't I?" Mardred chuckled, returning the hug—a brotherly embrace that reflected their deep bond as best friends and sworn brothers. After their reunion, King Douwin took his seat on the throne, looking at Duke Valiard and Aldrian with a proud expression.

"Excellent work, you two! Now, I want to hear all about your journey in detail," King Douwin declared.

"I'll share the details, Your Majesty, but could you ask everyone to leave the hall except for us?" Aldrian requested.

King Douwin was puzzled by Aldrian's request but obliged, ordering the surrounding royal guards to exit the throne hall. Once they were alone, Aldrian began to recount their journey to the Dragon Back Mountain.

King Douwin listened intently, his expression shifting between shock and solemnity as Aldrian recounted their journey. Aldrian, of course, left out details about the Origin Sword, only mentioning that Mardred had been found in the secret realm. When Aldrian described his battle against the greed devil, he revealed the Heavenly Blaze Sword

from his storage ring. King Douwin's eyes widened in astonishment as he rushed to examine the sword closely.

"It's the true Heavenly Blaze Sword! So it was stolen by the greed devil! How could he sneak into the treasure vault? It doesn't make any sense—the vault is protected by layers of traps that would instantly detect even someone with space laws if they tried to breach it!" King Douwin exclaimed.

"Yes, that's true, Your Majesty. That's why I brought it here," Aldrian replied, gesturing to the box they had carried with them. King Douwin's curiosity piqued as he turned his gaze to the box, and when Duke Valiard opened it to reveal its contents, King Douwin was shocked yet again.

"Duke Badin?! So you brought him all the way here from the Badin Dukedom? Inside a box?"

"Yes, your majesty. Please take a look at this information crystal; it will explain everything."

King Douwin then watched as the recording crystal played, showing Aldrian interrogating Duke Badin. Once the recording concluded, the entire hall trembled, and King Douwin's face contorted with rage, his aura flaring throughout the palace.

"Bastard!"

Chapter 167: I Can Help You to Finish the Sword

The entire palace trembled with the king's shout of rage, prompting the royal guards and many of the hidden guards to attempt to enter the throne hall. However, King Douwin ordered them to remain outside, and they had no choice but to obey.

After King Douwin regained control over his emotions, he walked toward Duke Badin, grabbed his collar, and, without hesitation, slapped his face. The slap was just strong enough to jolt the duke awake, any stronger, and it might have shattered Duke Badin's head, granting him a quick death. Feeling his head spinning, the duke opened his eyes, though he was still dazed and confused about what had happened.

"How dare—" he began to shout, but his words caught in his throat as he recognized the man standing before him and realized where he was.

"You are certainly bold for a traitor. Do you have any last words?" King Douwin asked.

"What—" He wanted to retort, but then he finally noticed Aldrian and his group.

"You! This must be your doing! You outsiders have ruined my reputation, destroyed everything my family has built!"

SLAP!

"Look at me, traitor!" King Douwin shook Duke Badin's body. "Do you have any retort for what you did? Or are you ready for your last words?"

"No, no, Your Majesty, I am not guilty of what you accuse me of! You have been deceived by these people. Please, Your Majesty!"

"Then explain this!" King Douwin said as he played the information crystal before Duke Badin. It took only a moment for Duke Badin to realize that his life was over. The contents of the recording were the final nail in the coffin—proof of his collaboration with the devils, a betrayal that would end his family's long and glorious history. He could already foresee that King Douwin would announce his treachery across the kingdom, making him an example for all traitors.

Duke Badin suddenly grinned maniacally, as though he had lost his mind, watching all his work crumble before his eyes. Yet, he still shouted defiantly at King Douwin and the others.

"So what if I worked with the devils?! That creature will descend upon this land, and you will all die by its hand! Nothing can stop it. I chose what was certain for my family's survival! You ignorant fools! I'm warning you—you should bow to the devils if you want to cling to your pathetic lives in the future!"

The others watched Duke Badin's outburst with stony expressions, and King Douwin simply looked at him and replied,

"I don't know what you're talking about, but what is certain is that you will be executed for your treasonous acts, and your family will be demoted from high-ranking nobility. You can enjoy your remaining days here before your execution. GUARDS!"

At the king's command, the royal guards outside rushed into the throne hall, stunned to find Duke Badin there with a disheveled appearance. They wanted to know what had happened, but they quickly heard the king issue another order.

"Take Duke Badin to the dungeon and keep him there until I announce to the crowd what he has done and he faces judgment."

The royal guards were momentarily taken aback, but they obeyed the king's orders, dragging the duke—whose cultivation was still sealed—toward the dungeon where the royal family housed criminals.

"You can't do this to me! I'm a duke of this kingdom! I'm a noble! How dare you!" Duke Badin shouted as he was pulled from the throne hall, but the royal guards were forced to silence him using their techniques.

After Duke Badin was dragged from the hall, King Douwin sighed and turned to Aldrian, placing a hand on his shoulder. Though Aldrian was taller than the king, he did so anyway.

"Thank you for your help, Aldrian. You have performed a great service for this kingdom. You saved us and indirectly saved me from the knife at my back. You also brought Mardred back and the blueprint itself—"

"Actually, Your Majesty, I want to tell you something about the blueprint," Aldrian interjected.

The king looked puzzled but nodded for Aldrian to explain the circumstances regarding the blueprint. When Aldrian finished detailing the entire picture, King Douwin sighed heavily.

"So the blueprint is not with you?" he asked Mardred.

"How am I supposed to have something I never brought with me? The blueprint really just vanished before my eyes; it is what it is," Mardred shrugged.

King Douwin turned back to Aldrian. "So, what about the blueprint?"

"Your Majesty, I already told you that the symbol on the golden box showed me the way to create the Divine Sword, and during this journey, I uncovered a mystery: the blueprint is actually not the true method for creating the Divine Sword."

King Douwin frowning. "Not the real way to create the divine sword? What are you talking about?"

Aldrian sighed. "The blueprint is indeed a way to forge a peak divine grade sword, but you will never complete it because the true method to create this sword is contained within that symbol, which can only be activated by me."

Aldrian could sense the confusion and even anger radiating from King Douwin. Despite this, the king appeared to be holding back his fury as he addressed Aldrian.

"So, all my kingdom's efforts over millions of years are for nothing? Are you telling me that all that effort has resulted in nothing more than an incomplete sword?" He released his aura, and the pressure in the room intensified. Anger and a sense of betrayal coursed through him. How could all the time and effort of his ancestors culminate in the creation of a mere incomplete sword?

"Why should I believe you? The sword only needs one last material to be complete. We still don't know the end result if we don't try!" King Douwin's voice was sharp, his frustration evident.

Duke Valiard and Mardred felt tense in response to the sudden change in mood, realizing how the initial amiable atmosphere between the king and Aldrian had soured. Mardred understood the king's frustration all too well; as one of the researchers involved in the creation of the Divine Sword, he felt personally affronted by Aldrian's information.

But after witnessing Aldrian's abilities and capabilities, he didn't want to underestimate the young man. He also wondered why Aldrian had chosen to speak so bluntly to King Douwin. Couldn't he have approached the matter more diplomatically to avoid offending the king? Yet, Aldrian maintained his calm expression as he continued to explain himself to King Douwin.

"You don't have to believe me, your majesty, but I'm here to inform you about my findings. I never said that the ancestors of the Forgeheart Kingdom were for naught; in fact, I believe they were extraordinary for attempting to create the Divine Sword. I share this information with you because I want to let your majesty know that I can help you complete what the Forgeheart Kingdom has strived to accomplish all these years—finishing this sword!" Aldrian said.

King Douwin was stunned but then laughed. "Hahahaha, you are truly arrogant to say something like—" He suddenly stopped as Aldrian pulled out a huge rock from his storage ring. King Douwin widened his eyes, sensing the rock exuding numerous laws powerful enough to stir his heart and comprehension. He looked at the massive rock and examined it intently, feeling its great benefit even as he stood there without cultivating.

Mardred was also stunned by the appearance of this material, so he began to look at and examine it as well. They didn't know what kind of material it was, but given the many laws it exuded, both King Douwin and Mardred could only guess that this material would make any artifact created from it compatible with all elemental cultivators.

"What is this?" King Douwin asked incredulously, having never seen a material like it before.

"This is the last material you need to complete the sword, the Divine Iron," Aldrian said with a smirk.

King Douwin and Mardred trembled, and Mardred shouted at Aldrian, "Is that true?! I've been searching for traces of this material for ages! From numerous records, I finally narrowed down the search area to the northern part of the Demon territory. Where did you get this?" Mardred's research and investigation had almost led him to the location of the Divine Iron, but unfortunately, before he could find it, he had been possessed and forced to enter the Dragon Back Mountain by an unknown figure—one Aldrian still did not know.

"True, Sir Mardred. I found this material in the northern part of the Demon territory, stored by one of the noble families there. They gave it to me in gratitude for helping to solve their problem," Aldrian said.

King Douwin regarded Aldrian for a moment before speaking.

"You say you want to help us finish the sword. What benefit do you expect to gain once it's complete? What do you want?"

Aldrian's expression turned solemn.

"Your Majesty, this continent will face an unprecedented catastrophe, and we need to unite the power of all its inhabitants. Therefore, I ask you to lend me the strength of this sword. I will require the Divine Sword's power to confront the great battles ahead. I hope you can grant my request."

Chapter 168: Adding One More

"You want to borrow the power of the 'Divine Sword'? What kind of catastrophe are you referring to? Is it the prophecy from the Heavenly Direction Church?" King Douwin asked, frowning.

"Yes, that's correct," Aldrian said seriously. "And I must say, if the entire continent doesn't unite to face the coming prophecy, this continent will fall into the devils' hands—just as Duke Badin said."

King Douwin pondered for a moment, then looked at Aldrian.

"Even if that's true, do you really need to use the 'Divine Sword'? Are you certain you can withstand its power? Look, I'm not underestimating you, Aldrian, but this 'Divine Sword' is unlike any other divine-grade artifact. We're talking about the peak of the divine grade here—it's not like the Eternal Spirit."

However, he noticed the strange expressions of Duke Valiard, Mardred, and Xin Haotian. When he looked at Duke Valiard, he saw him raise his hand.

"Your Majesty, may I add my own opinion?" Duke Valiard asked, to which King Douwin responded with a nod.

"If someone must wield the peak divine-grade sword, I believe there is no one more worthy than him, Your Majesty," Duke Valiard said.

"And why do you think that?" King Douwin asked.

"Uhhh, Your Majesty, he is the one who caused the phenomenon not long ago." King Douwin listened, but froze at the realization.

"Sorry? Do you mean *he* is the mysterious swordmaster?" King Douwin asked, to which the three men responded with repeated nods. King Douwin looked at Aldrian with wide eyes. This young man, whom Duke Valiard held in such high regard, was the great swordmaster? The one who had stirred up the entire continent for the last three years?

"You... you... you're that swordsman?" King Douwin asked, his voice trembling.

Aldrian didn't answer; he simply stood there and released his sword intent. Suddenly, King Douwin felt a chill as he sensed the sharp sensation of Aldrian's sword intent. He was shocked that even as an Emperor-stage cultivator, he could vividly feel the sensation of being cut by the sword intent of a peak Earl-stage cultivator.

He also sensed that all the swords in the palace area were trembling. When Aldrian released a hint of his sword will, the tremors intensified, but he quickly restrained it, not wanting to attract unnecessary attention. He simply wanted to show King Douwin that he was the real deal.

Many royal guards were confused by the sudden phenomenon. Although it lasted only a few seconds, it was enough for them to sense the powerful sword intent. King Douwin looked at Aldrian, his face filled with shock, as the sword intent and sword will he had felt were extraordinary. He could still vividly feel his skin tingling with the sensation of cuts and his soul standing before a deadly blade. With such sword intent and will, every technique of Aldrian's was a powerful, decisive strike that could end any battle in an instant.

He looked at Aldrian with newfound respect. Aldrian had already proven himself to be a master blacksmith, but now he had also shown himself to be a remarkable swordsman. King Douwin recalled how the mysterious swordsman had caused a sensation across the continent with a powerful technique that split an entire mountain. From Aldrian's account of his battle with Greed Devil and the recent phenomenon of the flying sword, it was clear that he had grown much stronger since his time in Balin three years ago.

King Douwin sighed at this twist in the story. To think that this young man was the very person many swordsmen of the continent wished to meet.

"I apologize for my anger, Aldrian, but you must understand that this sword is a matter of great importance to us."

"It's okay, Your Majesty. I understand how you feel. However, it was necessary for me to demonstrate just how dire the situation is. I need the power of the 'Divine' Sword, and I believe I can help you finish it. The sword will be a significant asset for the challenges ahead."

King Douwin pondered for a moment before speaking to Aldrian.

"Do you know what kind of catastrophe will befall this continent that requires the power of the Divine Sword? Do you possess a technique that allows you to see the future, like clairvoyance?"

"No, I don't have that kind of technique. However, I received this information and visualization from Duke Badin. Based on my own sources, I can assure you 100% that all the information about the impending catastrophe is true. The Heavenly Direction Church prophecy does not explain the details of the event, but I witnessed it through Duke Badin's memories and saw how the devils influenced him to become their accomplice."

"Can you show me that event? I'm curious about what kind of darkness will cover the land," King Douwin asked.

"No offense, Your Majesty, but if you saw what I saw, the only feeling you would have is despair. It's better for you or anyone else not to witness this creature. I know you are very strong, but the being that will bring destruction to this continent is beyond your comprehension—beyond anyone's comprehension. It's only thanks to my experience that I can remain sane and not succumb to despair and fear after seeing that creature," Aldrian said, glancing not only at King Douwin but also at Duke Valiard, Mardred, and Xin Haotian.

"However, if you insist, I will show you the appearance of the creature that will bring darkness across this land. But know this, Your Majesty: you will be a different person once you see it. Do you really want to witness it?"

King Douwin gulped as he sensed the seriousness of Aldrian's words. He realized that if he insisted on witnessing the vision, he would likely be overwhelmed. Although curiosity tugged at him, he decided to set it aside for his own good.

"So, what are you going to do now? Do you want to rush to finish the sword?" King Douwin asked.

"Not right now, Your Majesty. I have some business to attend to, but I can start working on it tomorrow or the day after," Aldrian replied.

"However, may I visit the sword now, Your Majesty? This time, I want to examine it more thoroughly, as we didn't have time last time," he added.

"Sure." They walked to the place where the Divine Sword was stored, and upon their arrival, Aldrian finally used his Eyes of the Heaven to examine the sword. He searched for any parts that could be perfected or anything that could help perfected the sword. To his astonishment, the sword's outer appearance was almost flawless, matching exactly what he had envisioned. The fact that it had been crafted with so few mistakes, relying solely on the blueprint, spoke volumes about the genius of each generation of the Forgeheart Kingdom who had worked to finish this sword.

From Aldrian's observation, the sword needed only a few minor adjustments, and he would simply need to add a mixture of Divine Iron to it. Another essential element for this sword was the existence of 'encompassing all' energy, which Aldrian understood referred to his own energy. His golden energy embodied this concept, perfectly aligning with the description he had gathered from the symbol.

He wondered why they hadn't simply named this energy when he acquired the knowledge from the symbol, so he wouldn't have to refer to it only as 'golden energy.'

"Maybe even learning the name of this energy would bring about significant change for me?"

he thought.

After he finished inspecting the sword, he attempted to establish this place as his domain. This was the most crucial part of his visit. Why did he want to make this place his domain? Because the moment Aldrian successfully created his domain, he felt a sudden surge of energy—much stronger than before—and he felt more powerful than ever.

When he looked at his own information, he felt satisfied.

Aldrian Aster

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

Age : 15 years

Cultivation : Peak Earl

Current energy : 620,236 (+3.6 /15m)

Energy needed for the next stage : 720.001

He successfully made the entire Forgeheart Kingdom his domain. After learning about the kind of creature that wanted to destroy this land, he felt an urge to become stronger by the fastest means possible. For him, adding his domain was clearly the quickest way to grow stronger, so he decided to make the entire kingdom his domain.

He wondered where the faith of the people of this kingdom would converge, and his thoughts turned to the place where the blueprint and the Divine sword that the

Forgeheart Kingdom was striving to create were kept. It made sense, as this sword represented the long-held dream of the royal family and the nobles of the kingdom. He also sensed a significant concentration of energy and karma in that place.

The people of this kingdom still placed their trust in the royal family, making the karma in this place particularly strong. With that, his purpose here was complete, next he only needed to work on finishing the sword. But now he had something else to do.

"It's time I see Father, and maybe I can see Mother too."

Chapter 169: His Longing

At this time, the moon had already risen, yet Dalahan City remained lively, with cultivators from various parts of the continent gathering here. Many still stayed in Valiard City, awaiting Duke Valiard, while even more gathered in the capital, anticipating his appearance at the royal palace. Speculation had already begun that Duke Valiard had left Valiard City in disguise due to the apparent lack of activity from the Valiard family, leading people to search for him—especially in Dalahan City, where he was most likely to appear.

After leaving the royal palace, Aldrian didn't immediately return to the inn to meet with Eleine and the others. Instead, he first met with the First Finger, whom he had tasked with gathering information. After receiving updates from Arson Vuran, the leader of the Thunderous Shadow Pavilion, about his father's family's movements and their envoy, Aldrian asked the First Finger to track their location.

Even though Aldrian had already chosen his own path and lived independently from his parents, he still wanted to see them, at least to make sure of their condition and well-being. Perhaps he could also learn more about his mother's family this time. He quickly teleported to a district of the city where many noble families resided.

He sensed the First Finger on top of one of the buildings, so he instantly teleported beside him. The First Finger, unprepared for Aldrian's sudden appearance, nearly slipped and fell from the roof but quickly steadied himself.

"Master, could you appear in a more normal way? Even I can't detect your sudden arrival," the First Finger said.

"Shh, just report on the Flamecrest family," Aldrian replied, while extending his senses to the surrounding area. Finally, he found what he was looking for. His eyes trembled, his heart raced, and there had never been a time when Aldrian wanted to meet his father as much as he did now. Nothing had changed about his father—five years wasn't a long time for a cultivator—but for Aldrian, the time had felt endless, and now he could finally see his father.

Aldrey was in his room, cultivating, and Aldrian could see that his father was much stronger than he had been in the secret realm.

"Master, during my reconnaissance here, I stumbled upon something interesting," the First Finger said.

"What?"

"It looks like he has a connection to someone from the Rivas family, and he will meet that person tonight. As you know, the Rivas and Flamecrest families are not on amicable terms, but Aldrey Flamecrest seems to have a close relationship with this person. They exchange messages through a courier. However, after using my vision technique, I learned that they will meet an hour from now."

Aldrian listened carefully, deep in thought.

"The Rivas family? That's quite unusual. I heard they have a rivalrous relationship. What reason does my father have to contact someone in the Rivas family? Whatever it is, I'll find out tonight."

He looked at the First Finger. *"Is there anything else?"*

"Ah yes, the Second Finger found a few people hiding in the shadows, and they seemed to be following Young Miss Eleine, Young Miss Sylphia, and Young Miss Baek Ji-Min. After he caught them, they all chose to commit suicide by poisoning themselves. I don't know where they came from or how long they had been following the young misses, the strange thing is, after they died, they exuded thick devil energy. I felt confused by this sudden change, so for now, I've stored their bodies in my storage ring."

"How many were there?"

"Five."

"Good. They have been following us since Duke Valiard's mansion and all the way to the capital. It seems they are spies placed by the devils within Duke Valiard's mansion. I can guess their main target is Duke Valiard. They must have put something on him so the devils can track his movements. However, when they saw him heading to Dragon Back Mountain, they decided to follow the three ladies instead. It seems they were trying to pry into our group's activities and were prepared to kill the three ladies when necessary. They serve as bargaining chips for the devils," Aldrian said.

When he departed from Valiard City, Aldrian sensed subtle hidden presences following them from the exit of the secret passage. If someone knew about the existence of the hidden passage, it had to be the people of Duke Valiard. At that time, he let them be because he didn't know their purpose. However, after hearing from the First Finger that

they were exuding devil energy, Aldrian connected the dots and realized they were moles placed by the devils within Duke Valiard's mansion.

That is also why he asked one of the Fingers to protect the three ladies. Thanks to that, he was able to prevent anything that could worsen the situation. When the Greed Devil and his right-hand man, Erik, suddenly appeared at Dragon Back Mountain as Aldrian and his group entered, it must have been due to the information from these spies.

The First Finger raised his eyebrows at his master's sharp thinking. However, the idea that there were devils inside the duke's mansion was quite troubling. If the devils could infiltrate their mansion undetected and even become the duke's underlings, it posed a significant threat. Fortunately, those devils had not taken any action against Duke Valiard. If they had wanted him dead, he would have been buried underground long ago.

After waiting for an hour, Aldrian finally saw his father, cloaked in a garment that concealed his features, moving on his own without his group's knowledge. His movements were careful and secretive, ensuring that the king-stage elder within his group didn't detect him. It seemed he was using some kind of concealing artifact to remain undetected by the king-stage elder.

Aldrian saw his father move toward the south of the city just as he had ordered the First Finger.

"From here on, I will take care of it. You continue to be my eyes and ears in this city. Go."

"As you wish, master." The First Finger then disappeared into the shadows of the night. Aldrian now focused all his senses on his father, following closely behind him. His father, being at the middle duke stage, would find it impossible to detect Aldrian, even someone at the low emperor stage would have difficulty sensing him.

Aldrian kept following his father until they finally arrived at a deserted, dark alley, where Aldrey seemed to be waiting for someone. A few minutes later, another figure in a black cloak came to their location, and Aldrian finally caught sight of the person his father wanted to meet.

Aldrian's eyes trembled, and time seemed to stop in that moment as he finally understood why his father wanted to meet someone from the Rivas family. He finally understood the challenges his father and mother faced due to their family's strained relationship. He finally understood why his parents couldn't bring him into the outside world, aside from the problems with the devils. For the first time in years, tears gathered in his eyes. Although he had faced many challenges throughout his journey, he was still a 15-year-old young man who missed his family.

The people he wanted to meet the most were now in front of him: his father and his mother. Aldrian saw his father recognize the figure in the approaching cloak, and he instantly dashed toward his mother, hugging her tightly with a sense of longing. Likewise, his mother reciprocated his embrace, and they finally kissed with full affection.

Aldrian could only smile as he watched his parents' display of affection, finally understanding their struggles as a couple from two families renowned for their rivalry. At that moment, he truly wanted to dash to them and hug them with all his might—well, not literally—but he knew he couldn't reveal himself right now, fearing it would only cause them worry.

Explaining to them what he had done in recent years was not a good idea, as it would only make them more worried. However, he really wanted to assure them not to worry about him anymore, as he was strong enough now. He knew, though, that it wouldn't be easy; his abilities were so extraordinary that they wouldn't believe him unless they saw it for themselves.

As he watched his parents finish their kiss, Aldrey spoke to his mother with a voice full of longing.

"How are you doing, dear?"

"I'm good. How about you?" Irene replied.

"Good, good. Although there are many things going on in the Flamecrest family, overall it's not bad."

Sigh. "If only Aldrian were here, it would be great."

Aldrian, hearing his mother mention him, felt his heart tighten.

"I'm here, Mother."

"Yes, I know, but he is safer in the secret realm than outside," Aldrey said.

"Hmm, I know. By the way, I have something for Aldrian that will be a great help to him."

Chapter 170: Even If I Have to Use My Strength

Aldrey watched as Irene took out a special box typically used for storing pills. His eyes widened as she opened it, revealing its contents. The aura and fragrance of spiritual herbs filled the air as Irene smiled, showing him a pill with four distinct colors. It radiated a rich energy and various laws of comprehension, even Aldrian's expression shifted, surprised by the depth of energy and laws within the pill.

"This is the Four Elements Pill, crafted by Grandmaster Alchemist Marco Villares of the Alchemist Association. With how talented our son is, this is the best resource I could acquire for him," Irene said proudly.

"The Four Elements Pill, said to aid in comprehending the laws of earth, air, water, and fire? Even those at the king stage could benefit greatly from it. I heard it had already been purchased by the Loraz family in your empire. How did you obtain it?" Aldrey asked in bewilderment.

Irene wore an annoyed expression as she closed the box.

"Don't remind me of that family. It's true that the Loraz family obtained it, and their young master tried to curry favor with my family by gifting it to my father."

"Oh, what a magnanimous heart he has. So, what's the catch?" Aldrey raised an eyebrow.

"You know the typical problem noblewomen face, don't you?"

"Ah, I see. No wonder he went so far as to give you such an expensive and rare pill. So, did your heart flutter after receiving his gift?" Aldrey asked, a teasing smirk on his face.

However, he froze as the surrounding temperature dropped instantly, and Irene's expression turned icy.

"Wait, I'm just joking—just joking!" Aldrey said, raising his hands in surrender.

"Don't you dare doubt my loyalty, or I'll be the one to strangle you to death." Irene said, her expression icy. Aldrey instantly hugged her tightly, filled with love.

"Of course not. I'm just joking, just joking," he said, gently stroking her long black hair.

Aldrian had rarely seen this side of his parents, but he was glad that their relationship remained as strong as ever, untouched by their circumstances. After a few moments, his mother smiled again; she, of course, knew that Aldrey was just joking, but she enjoyed teasing him too.

"By the way, I'm here to talk to you about our future. We need to figure out how to resolve our family's rivalry and create a more amicable relationship. With that, we'll have more room to maneuver for our future. I don't feel good about leaving Aldrian inside the secret realm for too long," Irene said.

"My father is opening a small door for the restoration of the relationship between our families, but he demands that it start with your family. I doubt your father will agree," she added.

"Right, I've already talked to my father about it, and he still seems quite stubborn about improving relations with your family. But don't worry; I'll keep persuading him, even if we have to use the devil problem as a reason," Aldrey said with a serious expression.

Aldrian, hearing their conversation, felt touched but also sad for their circumstances—more accurately, their circumstances that included him. He really wanted to help ease their burdens, but the question remained: how? The two families had been in a rivalry for many years, and reconciling their relationship would require an extraordinary event—something that could make them forget their past grudges.

He also wanted to see their families living together as soon as possible, so he felt the need to consider a reconciliation plan for both families.

"It looks like I have to adjust a few things for the Flamecrest and Rivas families," he thought.

"By the way, I plan to visit the secret realm after this. I don't know if you can follow me, but I intend to watch Aldrian for a moment. At least I can satiate my longing for him. This is the right time, as it's really difficult for me to leave my territory because of my protective father," Irene suddenly said.

Aldrian widened his eyes, thinking to himself,

"Oh no! If Mother doesn't find me, she will undoubtedly search for me everywhere. Shit, I have to think of something!"

While Aldrian was in a panic, Aldrey responded to Irene.

"No, I can't follow you. Maybe another time, as my schedule is really tight, and I have a king-stage guardian elder who always follows me. So, maybe next time. But how do you plan to visit? Your guardians won't permit you to go to that place."

"I have my ways."

"Don't tell me it's your clone technique?" Irene responded with silence.

"Ah, I see. It's the clone technique. But it won't last long if the clone is too far from the main body."

"That's why I only need to look for Aldrian for a moment. My clone will last at most three days if I stop at the southern part of the Heavenly Direction Church territory, and that's enough time for my clone to reach the secret realm at full speed. After that, I can cancel the technique," Irene said proudly, revealing that she had been planning this for a long time.

"That works too," Aldrey replied.

Meanwhile, Aldrian was racking his brain for a way to prevent his mother from visiting the secret realm. Finally, an idea struck him.

"Yes, I can set up a formation around the secret realm that will make Mother give up her intention to visit."

His domain of the secret realm was already covered a kilometer outside of the spatial crack that served as the entrance, allowing him to establish a formation designed to prevent his mother from entering. It would be a weaker version of the Dragon Back Mountain formation.

"Yes, let's do that! I'm sorry, Mother, but I have to do this! It's for your sake and mine." After making that decision, he continued to listen to his parents. Their conversation became less complex, focusing on their hopes for him and their family. Aldrian felt even more determined about his family's reconciliation, so he added it to his agenda: to help unite his parents and their families.

"Even if I have to use my strength to force them to reconcile." Aldrian's eyes flashed for a split second, he was truly serious about what he needed to do to achieve that goal.

"It looks like it's time. If I stay any longer, I'm afraid my group will realize I'm not in my room," Aldrey suddenly said to Irene.

"Hmm, me too. Although I want to spend more time with you, I *sigh*... I hope the time when we can unite as a normal family with Aldrian isn't too far away." Aldrey and Irene then hugged again before sharing a kiss as a sign of goodbye, and finally, they went their separate ways to return to their respective groups.

However, Aldrian stood there, contemplating his next steps. He actually wanted to follow his father or mother to observe their activities, but there were other matters that required his attention. He then teleported away, leaving the dark alley to return to its silence, the only witness to their family reunion.

On the other side of the city, a handsome blonde man was cultivating in a room located within the Heavenly Direction Church complex. He was dressed in casual clothes that most people would not normally see him in; usually, he was revered as the leader of the paladins of the Heavenly Direction Church clad in armor.

At that moment, his handsome face wore a serene expression as he circulated his cultivation technique. Suddenly, he unsheathed the sword beside him, the Heaven's Judgment Sword, and slashed it to the side just as a hand grabbed the blade with two fingers.

"Relax, it's me," came a voice and face the blonde man recognized, a face that engraved in his mind since 'that' day.

"Young Master Aldrian?" he asked in shock.

"It's been quite some time, Sir Arthur."

"Wait, how did you get here? There's no way the priests or bishops would let you in," Arthur asked in astonishment.

"I just teleported here, it's not difficult." Upon hearing Aldrian's response, Arthur wanted to pull his hair out. Why does he speak as if it's a walk in the park? The church has many detection formations, yet he still managed to pop up in his room nonetheless. Arthur could only sigh, realizing he didn't fully understand Aldrian's abilities, so he decided to accept it as it was.

"So what are you doing here in this city? I heard you were already on your journey, and I thought you had made it to the western part of the continent in the Buddhist territory. But after an unexplained heavenly tribulations, along with the spectacular phenomenon of the flying sword not long ago, I realized it was you. Who were you battling to unleash such a terrifying attack?" Arthur asked as he sheathed his sword.

"That's why I came here, it's connected to that. I fought and killed the Greed Devil." Aldrian answered as if it were no big deal, but Arthur's eyes widened in shock.

"What?! You killed the Greed Devil?! You killed one of the Seven Deadly Sins?!" If this were true, then the entire continent could rejoice at the death of one of the Seven Deadly Sins that had caused them so much trouble.

Aldrian simply nodded, but his expression turned serious.

"And while I was at it, I discovered that we have a traitor in the Heavenly Direction Church. Someone from your church is helping the devils behind the scenes."