

The Shining Star Above The Heaven

#Chapter 251: The Emergency Situation? - Read The Shining Star Above The Heaven Chapter 251: The Emergency Situation?

Chapter 251: The Emergency Situation?

Inside the imperial palace, Emperor Durand was with his family when he sensed a disturbance in the distance. At the moment, he was seated at a table laden with a lavish feast, surrounded by the main members of his family. To his right sat a beautiful brown-haired woman with blue eyes. She is his main wife, Empress Claudia. Beside her were Hector and Alderia.

On his left side sat his second wife, a black-haired woman with sharp features, Imperial Consort Veronica. Beside her was a young man with the same hair color as hers. He seemed timid, as his behavior made evident. Unlike Hector or Alderia, he kept his head lowered, as though ashamed, with his hands resting on his thighs, making him stand out in stark contrast to his half-siblings. He was the third prince, Lewis Doria.

Why were they gathered at this time, when it was uncommon for the family to meet? The answer was simple: Emperor Durand wanted to bring them together. After his curse was dispelled, he desired to spend time with his family—to chat, learn about their well-being, and nurture harmony in their relationships.

He had kept quite some distance from them while under the curse, but now he could finally interact with them without worry.

"What is that? Why is there a spatial crack unleashing elemental attacks?" Hector said, hearing the rumbling sounds of the disturbance. Although the spatial crack was far away, it was still within his range as a King-stage cultivator. In fact, everyone here could sense the disturbance—maybe except for Lewis, who seemed completely clueless.

"Are there some cultivators fighting? But there's still no report, so whatever it is, I think it can be taken care of," Alderia said. That kind of spatial crack is not something created naturally—it must have been shaped by some kind of technique.

Emperor Durand remained silent as he sensed the spatial crack more clearly from his seat. He could feel that the elemental attacks held the power of Emperor-stage attacks, with some at the King-stage level as well. With such a scale of fighting, there should have been reports about the chaos by now, but he hadn't received any. He found it strange but chose not to dwell too deeply on it. If there was no report at all, he would not pay it any further attention.

"Let's ignore them. I think it has already been taken care of," Emperor Durand said. He then ate the food on his plate, the best quality meat from a wild beast.

"My emperor, about the succession—" Imperial Consort Veronica suddenly said, but she was quickly cut off by the emperor.

"Don't talk about the succession at this time. It's not good if we keep discussing this matter."

Imperial Consort Veronica fell silent and simply nodded. Truthfully, she knew that her son didn't have the qualities to become emperor. But the fact that her brother had chosen his nephew—his purpose couldn't be clearer. She knew her brother's ambition for power, but there was nothing she could do about it. Though she was the consort of the emperor, she still had her blood ties to her family.

Because she was aware of her son's condition, she wanted Emperor Durand to postpone the succession race. She wanted her son to gather more political support, knowing that he had already lost in terms of cultivation.

With Emperor Durand rushing the succession race, it was as if he were giving Hector the crown prince title, since most of the nobles viewed Hector in a positive light—very different from Lewis, who only had support from his older brother's faction.

But if she could entice some of the nobles with their interests, it wouldn't be impossible to sway them to support Lewis. Glancing at his mother, the third prince lifted his head and looked at her.

"Mother, it's okay. If that is father's decision, I can even forfeit from the succession race. I know there is no way I can compete with eldest brother," he said in a regretful tone. He then looked at Hector.

"I know you are the most suitable one to be chosen," he said, glancing at Alderia for a split second.

"You're exaggerating, third brother. The succession race is still uncertain; we don't know who will be chosen yet," Hector replied.

Hector didn't know why, but he felt that something was off in the words Lewis had just said. With those words, it seemed like Lewis wanted to spark a dispute between him and Alderia. Fortunately, Alderia didn't seem to care, likely because of his lack of interest in the throne.

Hector then fell silent and ate his food, not wanting to comment further on the matter. After hearing Emperor Durand's reasoning last night, it seemed the situation would be more harmful to the empire if the crown prince title fell to his third brother. He knew that

Grand Duke Gouvard was a man of great ambition, and due to his immense political power and strategic position, his father would have to be cautious.

The emperor's steward observed their interaction with an expressionless face, but he, too, was thinking about it.

If Emperor Durand simply decided that Hector would be the crown prince, it would only raise the displeasure of Grand Duke Gouvard and his faction. Therefore, the emperor had to announce the commencement of the succession race, ensuring that the crown prince would be appointed "fair and square," based on the power they held at the deadline, which would be next year. While still under the curse, Emperor Durand had hoped he could hold on until then to appoint the crown prince.

The emperor believed that Hector would be the one to gain more support because of his achievements. It was better that way than having a weak and timid emperor who could be controlled by the nobles.

They continued to eat, but suddenly Emperor Durand paused and frowned. Empress Claudia looked at him with a puzzled expression.

"Dear, what is wrong?"

The emperor did not answer but instead touched his stomach as he felt a sudden discomfort. There was a burning sensation in his dantian and inner organs. However, he soon felt another sensation coming from his dantian and meridians.

"This... this is young Aldrian's energy," the emperor thought.

It seemed that the remnant of the golden energy, which had slipped into the emperor's body while Aldrian healed his condition and destroyed the curse, was still lingering inside him. With the energy still present, the emperor finally realized the source of the sudden discomfort.

"Poison!"

Finally, he detected something in his stomach—something foreign and sinister. With Aldrian's energy combined with his own, the emperor tried to push the poison out of his system. The others, seeing this, looked worried. They seemed ready to help, and the emperor's steward also wanted to intervene, but the emperor signaled them to stop.

After a few seconds, the emperor vomited some of the food he had eaten to the side. Mixed in with it was a black substance bubbling with corrosive properties.

"What is that?" Alderia asked, shocked by the disgusting substance that had suddenly appeared in the vomit.

"All of you stop eating—it's poison!" the emperor said.

"What?!" the others shouted.

In the split second that followed, a few of the Imperial Crown Daggers appeared, surrounding the emperor. These were the emperor's hidden guardians, who formed a protective formation to ensure his safety.

The emperor's family didn't pay much attention to them, but they immediately moved toward Emperor Durand to assist him.

The steward remained calm, quickly retrieving the communication artifact and sending out an announcement.

"To all imperial guards and knight orders, close the imperial palace, this is not a drill. I repeat, this is not a drill. From this moment on, no one is to enter or leave the palace. Secure all vital locations and await further instructions."

Once he finished speaking, not even five seconds later, the entire palace was shrouded in a protective formation, and all the soldiers of the imperial palace rushed out from their rooms or barracks. They sealed all the doors leading to the surrounding areas of the capital. Tension filled the air as the sudden announcement reverberated throughout the palace.

"Dear, are you really okay?" Empress Claudia asked, her concern evident.

"It's fine. The poison hasn't reached my vital organs yet, so I'm alright," Emperor Durand said, trying to reassure his family. However, despite his words, he was shaken inside.

"This poison nearly took me! I couldn't detect it at all, and I can feel how potent it is—strong enough to kill me quickly! If not for young Aldrian's energy still lingering inside my body, I'd be in a dying state right now!"

The emperor then took out his own communication artifact.

"I want the cooks' department to report to me. If anyone has left the palace in the past two hours, bring them back here. I want to inspect them myself."

In the midst of this chaos, someone watched the emperor with trembling eyes.

"How is that possible?!"

Chapter 252: Lewis's True Face

There is one person in the dining room who looks at Emperor Durand not with worry, but with shock instead.

"How is that possible? Didn't he say that this poison can't be detected by any means? Did that bastard lie?" he thought.

Lewis, the third prince, although his expression shows a slight hint of panic for the emperor, actually feels turmoil and panic for another reason. To think that the poison can be detected, and now the emperor wants to interrogate the cooks himself. However, after a few seconds, he calms his mind and maintains positive thoughts.

"Well, whatever. I already know I can't trust those bastards entirely, so I'll go with my own plan this time. Even if Father wants to check the cooks, he won't find anything. I've already taken care of it."

Not long after, all the cooks of the imperial palace were brought to the dining room—there were 50 of them. As they were confused about why the emperor wanted to inspect them, one of the imperial guards moved forward and reported to Emperor Durand.

"This is all of them, Your Majesty. No one has left the imperial palace in the last two hours, and we have ensured that no one was missed."

"Good. You may leave," the emperor responded, which was met with a bow before the imperial guard left the dining room.

Emperor Durand looked at each of the cooks' faces. Some appeared confused, some gazed at him with admiration, and others seemed panicked, worried that they might have done something wrong. However, he noticed one person who kept his head lowered, hiding his expression. For now, Emperor Durand chose to ignore him and addressed the group.

"You are the cooks chosen by our family, entrusted with the honor of serving the imperial household. I trust that you are already aware of this," he began.

"As your top superior, I also place my trust in you. Your position is vital to the imperial family, and I believe you all understand the significance of your responsibilities."

"However, I cannot hide my disappointment. I cannot put into words how betrayed I feel by those I trusted," Emperor Durand said, sweeping his gaze over all the cooks.

"I was just poisoned, and fortunately, the heavens granted me a chance to survive. You all understand why you are here, don't you?"

Hearing Emperor Durand's speech, they were all shocked. He had been poisoned? Finally, they realized the dire situation they were in. If the emperor had been poisoned, it was only natural for the cooks to be the prime suspects. Their faces turned pale as countless scenarios raced through their minds, trying to make sense of how this could have happened.

Did one of them betray the emperor? Or did someone unknowingly mix poisonous ingredients into the food or drinks? Panic overtook them all. If they were somehow found guilty of this mishap, it wouldn't just cost them their lives— even their families could be implicated.

Observing their reactions, Emperor Durand began walking slowly in front of each cook. His piercing gaze seemed to see straight into their souls, leaving no room for secrets. He continued walking until he stopped in front of the cook standing at the edge of the line. This was the one who had kept his head lowered, Emperor Durand could sense the nervousness radiating from his body. The cook's body trembled slightly as the emperor stopped before him.

"Head Cook Frans, raise your head. You're the one who arranged the food my family and I just ate, correct?"

"Yes, Your Majesty." He raised his head and answered, though his voice was tinged with nervousness.

"You have been one of my most trusted men, serving me for nearly 15,000 years. I personally selected you from your previous establishment because of your exceptional culinary skills, and I have never doubted your integrity. So, tell me, Frans, how did poison end up in my meal?"

Frans did not answer immediately. Instead, his eyes darted around nervously, landing on Lewis for a split second. In that instant, he caught a cold, threatening stare from Lewis—a stare that warned him of dire consequences if he revealed something he wasn't supposed to say. Lowering his head and bowing his body, Frans gritted his teeth and spoke in a trembling voice.

"I'm sorry, Your Majesty. This is my mistake for not thoroughly checking the food. I deserve punishment."

The other cooks looked at Frans with pitiful gazes. Having worked together for so long, they couldn't help but feel sorry for him as he now seemed to be under suspicion by His Majesty. However, their desire to protect themselves kept them silent. None of them wanted to risk being misunderstood by the emperor as the one responsible for poisoning the meal.

Emperor Durand looked at Frans with an expressionless face, but inwardly, he felt a great sense of disappointment. Frans was one of his trusted men, and he knew almost

everything about his personality and character. He had never seen Frans this nervous before, and there was one expression he could sense in his gaze—the expression of guilt.

He truly wanted to know why Frans felt that way. Emperor Durand seemed to be trying to escape an answer he wanted to avoid, but as both an emperor and a cultivator, he knew that unexpected situations like this were common in this world.

He could only sigh in disappointment and look at the steward.

"Lock him in the prison. I will speak to him later." The steward nodded and seemed to send a voice transmission to someone. The door to the dining room opened, revealing several imperial guards entering. They then apprehended Frans and took him away. Once they were gone, Emperor Durand continued inspecting the rest of the cooks.

But suddenly, he stopped what he was doing when he saw Hector collapse. Lorenzo, who had been standing beside him, instantly grabbed his body before he could fall to the ground.

"Hector!" Empress Claudia rushed to her son, trying to check his condition. Everyone present could see the black veins protruding from Hector's skin. His face was twisted in incredible pain, and sweat began to drip from his forehead.

"His heartbeat and energy circulation are in chaos, and his internal organs show signs of rotting," Empress Claudia said, her eyes trembling.

"Call the physician!" Emperor Durand shouted. Then, he suddenly remembered something and quickly looked at Lorenzo and sent a voice transmission.

"Call young Aldrian here. I think he can heal Hector. If this is the same poison that I just consumed, then Hector doesn't have much time. Go!"

Lorenzo was stunned, but he still obeyed and quickly disappeared from the room. The situation turned into panic and chaos once again. Amidst all of this, Lewis watched with a calm gaze, though inwardly, he was grinning.

"Success! Even though 'he' told me to give that dose to the emperor, I kept a portion for Hector. If only both of them had died, there would be no one left to block my path to the throne. Aish, if only I had more of the poison, I would give it to all of them!" Lewis thought.

However, he wondered what caused the poison to fail with the emperor but succeed with Hector. Was it because the emperor is at the emperor stage? No, that "man" had said the poison was fatal even to someone at the emperor stage and could not be detected by him. Yet, in front of him, the poison had only worked on Hector, who was at the king stage, and not on both of them.

"Whatever, with this, the chance of me succeeding to the throne will significantly increase. The only obstacle may be..." Lewis then glanced at Alderia.

"No, he will not become a threat after tonight. Tomorrow will mark the new dawn of this empire." Lewis already imagined himself as the emperor.

In the midst of his daydream, Lorenzo suddenly appeared again with a solemn expression and sent a voice transmission to Emperor Durand.

"Your Majesty, before I left the palace, I received a report from my informant that the mansion where Sir Aldrian is staying was attacked by an unidentified faction."

"What? Then what are you waiting for? Go to that place and offer any help they need."

"Uhm, the thing is..."

Boom! Rumbling!

A few moments ago, in the underground base beneath the capital, the battle was still ongoing as numerous elemental attacks rained down on Aldrian. However, he parried or blocked them with ease. His breakthrough to the low Marquess stage had given him a significant boost in strength, and his battle sense had become much sharper.

The combined attacks of the five cultivators at the King and Emperor stages couldn't penetrate Aldrian's defenses, especially his space shield and swallowing space. It frustrated them, as they couldn't unleash their strongest attacks for fear of collapsing the entire base. Aldrian was also impressed by the variety of their attacks and encountered one of the new technique attributes: poison. That particular one was quite dangerous if he didn't have his golden energy. Now, he understood why Wei Zhi was so feared.

"Aldrian, why do you have to involve yourself in this mess?! Why forsake your own safety and your friends' safety? I know you are strong, but what about your friends?!" Master Dan shouted as he attacked Aldrian with his artifact, throwing a large cauldron at him. Aldrian knew that if the cauldron hit him, he would be seriously injured.

However, he didn't dodge it. Instead, he clasped his hands together and created multiple layers of space shields. The cauldron broke through a few of the shields before finally stopping and dropping to the ground with a loud boom.

"I'm afraid if you stay here, you'll only find your friends' corpses when you get back. That is, if you even make it out of here!"

"Oh, so you're threatening me using my friends?"

Chapter 253: The Attack on the Mansion

"Oh, so you're threatening me by using my friends?" Aldrian asked with a calm expression while dodging one of Wei Zhi's attacks.

Master Dan only smiled slightly.

"It's not a threat, but if you continue down this path, I can only lament your decision to abandon your friends. Your mansion is already surrounded by assassins. They report to me every four hours, and if they don't hear response from me, that will be their signal to strike. Their next report is almost due, so you'd better give up."

"Hahahaha."

The others were stunned when Aldrian suddenly burst out laughing. After a few seconds, he stopped and his face returned to its usual calm expression. However, the others could sense that the atmosphere had already shifted. The presence Aldrian now exuded was somehow more intimidating and oppressive.

"I see, so that's how you're playing it. No wonder I sensed a few suspicious presences when I left the mansion today. You stationed the assassins as preparation for tonight, and the four-hour reports are just a failsafe in case something happens to you and you need their presence there," Aldrian said.

"I already know about your betrayal, so I doubt you'll let me live. But here's the thing, Master Dan—I hate being threatened, especially when it involves my loved ones." Suddenly, crackling lightning began to surround his entire body. The others who witnessed this trembled at the overwhelming might they sensed from the lightning.

"Heavenly lightning! How is it possible for a human to possess the power of the heavens?" Grand Duke Gouvard exclaimed in shock. But it didn't stop there—suddenly, the white-blue lightning turned black, radiating an even more terrifying pressure and strength.

The others had never seen or felt anything like it. It was as if they were standing before death itself. Their souls trembled, as if on the verge of being pulled away, and their minds were deeply shaken.

"What the fuck is that?" the king-stage devil beside Wei Zhi asked. For him to feel that long-forgotten sensation, the fear, he knew the black lightning was bad news. They had already witnessed a heavenly tribulation and knew how fearsome it could be, but they had never feared it to the point of giving up facing it.

However, that black energy combined with lightning was something that could trigger fear deep within his soul. The dark abyss that seemed ready to swallow his sanity and

life made him feel as if he would be doomed the moment he was struck by that lightning.

"To be honest, I don't think any of you here are worthy of this new technique of mine, but thanks to someone, I want to test it on you guys," Aldrian said. Lightning crackled around him, striking the area with terrifying force.

"You'd better prepare your best to survive, because this time, I'll be more serious."

In the mansion where Aldrian and the others were staying, Sylphia walked through the garden, enjoying the breeze and gently touching the beautiful flowers, as though she were communicating with them.

The elves have a deep appreciation for the beauty of nature, and plants are among the things they truly preserve. To them, plants are like friends. As the princess of the Elven Empire, Sylphia naturally shares this principle. Since she was a child, she loved watching plants, especially flowers. It was during this time that she awakened her hidden talent—the ability to "communicate" with them.

It's not the same as communicating with the World Tree's spirit like Olivia, but she felt as though she could communicate with them. Although not too clearly, she could somehow sense their intent.

As she touched the flowers, enjoying her time alone and occasionally thinking of Aldrian, she suddenly felt one of the plants' intents warning her of danger. Confused at first, she then sensed a few presences behind her. Without hesitation, she instantly unleash one of her defensive techniques.

But their movements were fast. With daggers in hand, they aimed to strike at Sylphia's vital points. Just as the daggers were about to pierce her, a flash of light passed before her eyes, and suddenly, the attackers' heads flew in all directions.

Thud! Thud!

The heads rolled in many directions as Sylphia looked at them with trembling eyes. She had almost died! She thought she was done for because she hadn't detected them until they attacked. She glanced to her side and saw Xin Haotian clean his sword by swinging it to the side before sheathing it.

"Sylphia, you'd better return to your room; it's much safer there right now. These guys are actually quite skilled for assassins—most of them are at the Marquess level, and there's even a King-stage among them. I've already taken care of some inside the mansion, so it's safe for now, but I can still sense a few around the vicinity. I'll handle it first," Xin Haotian said.

Sylphia widened her eyes but nodded.

"Thank you, Sir Xin Haotian."

After seeing Sylphia enter the mansion safely, Xin Haotian looked in a certain direction. Truthfully, he was stunned by the sudden appearance of these assassins inside the mansion. It was still daytime, with the sun shining beautifully, but they had appeared through the portal formation that Aldrian had already explained to them. Fortunately, Aldrian had modified the portal formation so that it directed them to the designated locations he wanted—his room and Aldrian's room.

Because of that, his work was much easier—he just needed to kill them as soon as they popped up from the formation.

Now, he needed to quickly take care of the others he could sense, whose appearance he had noticed earlier. He was worried that another batch of assassins might have come through the teleportation formation inside the mansion.

In the vicinity of the mansion, there weren't many buildings due to the exclusivity of the area, but there were plenty of trees. Under the shade of the trees, a few assassins were hiding, observing the mansion. They seemed to be waiting for something.

"Why hasn't there been a report yet? Is something wrong?" asked one of the assassins.

"I don't think so. Our targets are only at Marquess stage at most, so with their strength, they should have completed their task easily."

"Who is the targets, that we need Duke stage assassins? Isn't that a bit of an exaggeration? There's only one Marquess stage cultivator, and the rest are just weaklings under Marquess."

"I don't know, but we better—" Suddenly, he felt his vision shift upward, and he saw his own body. The others were shocked by the sudden death of their fellow assassin. His head flew off his body and landed with a thud. Before they could even register what had happened, the rest of them only saw a flash of light moving horizontally, passing each of them before their heads rolled from their bodies.

Xin Haotian looked at the bodies of the assassins for a moment before disappearing again. There were others, just like these, hiding in the surrounding area.

At that time, many dead bodies were scattered around or inside the mansion grounds. It was also when Lorenzo's informant arrived and observed the situation. He sensed that something was wrong when he caught the smell of blood, and upon checking the condition, he was shocked. He immediately reported it to Lorenzo.

From their attire, they were clearly assassins, but to dare attack someone in broad daylight was reckless. Who could their clients be?

Boom! Suddenly, a loud explosion and the rumbling of lightning echoed from a distance. He looked toward the source of the sound and was shocked to see black lightning striking toward the sky. Though he was far from it, he could still feel the terrifying power of the black lightning.

"What is that?"

In one part of the city, panic spread due to the sudden appearance of lightning from the underground. Fortunately, the lightning emerged in a vast plaza, and there was no one walking through that part of the plaza at the time. From the terrifying power of the lightning, they were certain that anyone struck by it would instantly be reduced to ash.

The lightning from underground created a sinkhole, but the people dared not approach it. They were terrified of the remnants of the lightning, which seemed like heavenly lightning, yet exuded a terrifying energy.

At the bottom of the sinkhole, Aldrian looked at the remaining four opponents after he had killed one of the king-stage cultivators with his lightning strike. The strike had obliterated his target instantly, and Aldrian himself was stunned by the sheer power of his own attack. His heavenly lightning, combined with death laws, had not only shattered the spatial barrier he had created but had also broken through the ceiling, piercing all the way to the surface.

"Well, I think that was a bit much for my first time. Fortunately, there's no one up there." Aldrian sensed that there were no passersby on the surface, which was a relief. He smiled at the remaining opponents, who stared at him in horror.

"Let's change our location, shall

Chapter 254: Bring the Battle to Another Place

Master Dan's group was confused by what Aldrian meant, but suddenly, they felt their surroundings change. They were shocked by the abrupt shift. How had he done that? Was it an illusion? Yet, they could feel the energy of heaven and earth flowing naturally, just like in the real world. If Aldrian had truly moved them using some kind of space laws, how had they been dragged along without any warning?

Wei Zhi, still reeling from the shock, finally took in his surroundings and found the place strangely familiar. Then, it dawned on him.

"This is Sazim Fortress!"

He and the others were shocked. Did this mean Aldrian had moved them all from the capital to the devil's territory in the blink of an eye? The distance was absurd—even for an Emperor-stage cultivator to attempt teleporting alone, let alone bringing all of them along. Yet Aldrian showed no signs of exhaustion or the usual symptoms of a cultivator drained of heaven and earth energy.

Could he possibly have infinite energy within his dantian?!

Aldrian brought them here because he believed they could fight more freely. After all, they were still Emperor and King-stage cultivators capable of causing mass destruction to an entire city. When they arrived, Aldrian sensed the presence of many devils around the fortress. They appeared to be in the midst of constructing a temporary base around it.

The devils knew that Sazim was not what it used to be, and the environment here was unfavorable for them. As a result, they decided to build a new base just outside his domain. A few devils, who were in the middle of their guard duty, noticed the sudden appearance of Aldrian and the others and immediately warned their comrades. However, Aldrian paid them no attention. Instead, he fixed his gaze on the four targets in front of him and, without hesitation, unleashed the same black lightning.

RUMBLE!

The power of this lightning was beyond his expectations. The already formidable heavenly lightning, combined with death energy and death laws, created something akin to lightning from the underworld. It even pierced the spatial barrier he had created to prevent others from escaping. The lightning corroded the barrier's power and "life," rapidly weakening and shattering it.

This perfectly aligned with the concept of death he envisioned: death comes for everything, even techniques.

Aldrian stretched his hand forward, and lightning shot from his palm toward his opponents.

RUMBLE!

"Evade!" Grand Duke Gouvard shouted as the lightning bolt hurtled toward them. Master Dan hurled his cauldron forward, using it as a shield to block the lightning strike.

DUM!

The sound of lightning striking the cauldron echoed, and the lightning actually created a dent on the cauldron's surface. Master Dan, who saw this, was truly shocked. That was a low divine-grade artifact cauldron! They could feel that Aldrian's strike was as powerful as a peak Emperor-stage attack, but to instantly dent a low divine-grade

artifact like that, which was meant to be used as a defensive tool, was something even a peak Emperor-stage cultivator difficult to achieve.

This strange lightning must have unusual properties and a unique concept to make the artifact seem vulnerable!

The lightning strike Aldrian had just unleashed spread out, unlike when he had focused it at a single point in the underground base to attack the already dead devil. As a result, it was much weaker now. But if he had focused it on one point, wouldn't that mean he could crack or even pierce the low divine-grade cauldron?

The others also used their movement techniques or defensive artifacts. The black lightning spread like a wide net, attempting to kill anyone caught in it. Grand Duke Gouvard instantly took out his family's legacy artifact—a middle divine-grade spear—and created a slashing motion with his technique.

The power of the attack he unleashed was nearly the same as the lightning strike. Although his slash didn't completely stop the lightning, it weakened it enough for him to block the remaining force with his other defensive artifact—a low divine-grade shield—in his other hand. However, the devils weren't so fortunate, as they lacked the proper defenses to block the lightning. The other devils, aside from Wei Zhi, couldn't defend against the strike and were instantly obliterated by it.

As for Wei Zhi, when he activated his defensive talisman, it instantly broke. But just before the lightning struck, he quickly used his secret escape technique. His body was struck by the lightning and instantly turned to crisp ash, but from the distance, something rose from the ground.

Thousands of small creatures formed a shape, and soon they molded into Wei Zhi. He gasped, his face tired as he looked toward Aldrian with trepidation.

He was fearless, unafraid of anything, even Emperor-stage cultivators. Yet, the black energy from Aldrian triggered a fear within him that he couldn't control. It felt as though his fear had awakened after lying dormant for so long.

He used his substitute technique, sacrificing the gu inside him. This was one of his last-ditch efforts to escape if he was cornered, but the side effect was a drop in his strength, as the gu he had painstakingly raised inside him was sacrificed.

"I have to escape! That man is abnormal!"

When he attacked Aldrian with his poison technique, it seemed to have no effect. The poison appeared to be purified upon touching Aldrian's body, as though he had immunity to all poison. Wei Zhi could confidently say that even a body constitution like the "Thousand Poison Body"—a famous constitution immune to all poisons—would still be poisoned by the technique he had personally refined using various poisons.

However, Aldrian simply watched him and his technique with curiosity, interest clearly shown on his face. It was as if he saw only him or his poison as an object of interest—a kind of guinea pig. Wei Zhi felt humiliated, but he knew the bigger picture.

It was better to save himself first and plan for the future. He no longer cared about the Doria Empire. He would be dead before Lord Envy could catch him if he didn't escape now! He dashed toward the outside of the fortress, where he sensed many devils.

Grand Duke Gouvard and Master Dan, watching Wei Zhi try to escape, could only grit their teeth and curse him for his cowardice. However, they couldn't attempt the same escape, as Aldrian had them tied down and seemed to be letting Wei Zhi go.

Wei Zhi then stepped onto the fortress wall and looked at the devils outside, who seemed confused by the sudden appearance of the spatial barrier covering the fortress.

"What is this barrier?"

"That is lord Wei Zhi!"

The devils looked upward, their eyes widening as they saw one of the members of the Seven Devils of Annihilation. Wei Zhi ignored the devils and took a quick glance at Aldrian, who was still standing in the same position with one hand moving as he unleashed black lightning at Master Dan and Grand Duke Gouvard. Wei Zhi could tell that Aldrian didn't truly intend to kill these Emperor-stage cultivators but was instead playing with them.

Wei Zhi then saw Aldrian look in his direction with a smile. Seeing that smile, Wei Zhi felt a chill run down his spine and immediately tried to break the spatial barrier. Using his poison technique through his palm, he attempted to strike at the space itself. His comprehension of the poison laws had reached such a high level that it could even affect and poison space itself.

He used the corroding properties of his poison and attempted to corrode the spatial barrier. However, after striking the barrier, he was stunned to find that his poison had no effect whatsoever. Though the barrier seemed thin and transparent, it was actually sturdy enough to block one of his most powerful techniques, the *100 Poisonous Palm*.

He tried another trick: releasing poisonous gas from his mouth toward the barrier. Although it was much weaker, he could use this technique for much longer. With his experience, he could release the gas for more than two hours before exhausting the energy in his dantian. However, he didn't need that long. He only needed the gas to weaken the spatial barrier, allowing him to strike it with his next attack.

The devils outside also tried to help Wei Zhi by attacking the barrier, but their efforts were of little use, as the barrier only rippled slightly. There were more or less a thousand devils outside, the strongest of them at the Grand Duke stage.

"Arghh!"

Wei Zhi shivered when he heard the sound of Grand Duke Gouvard's pain behind him. Glancing in the direction of Aldrian, he saw that Grand Duke Gouvard was in a miserable state: his low divine-grade shield was broken, and his body was covered in burn marks.

Master Dan's cauldron had already cracked in several places and seemed on the verge of destruction. However, Aldrian remained calm, showing no signs of the pressure making him rush his poisonous technique. After a few seconds, he finally noticed some signs that the barrier was being affected by his continuous poison breath.

Even though it was a small development, he felt his chances of survival rising. He smiled, thinking that escape was no longer impossible.

However, his heart turned cold when he sensed a presence suddenly appear behind him.

"Where are you going, Wei Zhi? Why don't we have a great chat?" Aldrian's voice resonated in his left ear.

Chapter 255: Another Problem

Inside the imperial palace, following the sudden appearance of lightning from underground, Emperor Durand decided to send a knight order, led by General Giovanni De Calin, to investigate the location. Despite sensing that something was wrong within the city, he tried to calm his mind, while also grappling with the concerns over Hector's condition.

Hector lay in his bedroom, already in the midst of treatment by the imperial physician. His condition was worsening, his body growing increasingly pale. The physician had administered the strongest antidote pill he possessed and tried to channel his healing technique, but the poison was so potent that neither the pill nor the technique had much effect.

"Your Majesty, this poison is unlike anything I have encountered before. However, there is one distinct pattern I can identify—it's poison crafted by the devils," the physician said after attempting to heal Hector.

"When I used my healing technique, I could sense traces of hidden devil energy resisting it. Based on my observations and the poison's lethal nature, I suspect it was created by combining multiple toxic substances. Given the skill required to craft such a poison, one even Your Majesty could not detect, I believe this is the work of Wei Zhi, one of the Seven Devils of Annihilation."

Emperor Durand frowned and clenched his fist, deeply infuriated that he had let his guard down despite being wary of potential threats. In the end, he had overlooked one of the most common rules in the cultivation world: to remain vigilant even with those closest to him. He knew this well, but after living for so long among his trusted companions, he had come to believe he could entrust his back to them.

Hearing that Wei Zhi might be the one who created the poison, he knew he needed something stronger to heal his son or someone with the capability to remove the poison from Hector's body. To him, that person was the one who had even managed to dispel his own curse.

Although Aldrian claimed he was not a physician, Emperor Durand knew from his experience with Aldrian's method of dispelling the curse that his energy was among the most powerful for healing he had ever encountered. Having experienced the healing techniques of many renowned physicians and felt their energy, he could tell that the energy within Aldrian was unlike anything he had ever known. He believed that this energy could even purify the poison within Hector.

Emperor Durand, who had been waiting for Lorenzo's report, finally received a signal from his communication artifact.

"Your Majesty, I have met with the one residing inside Sir Aldrian's mansion, Sir Xin Haotian, and from what he said, it seems Sir Aldrian left earlier and has not returned yet."

Hearing Lorenzo, Emperor Durand touched his forehead in frustration. The timing was truly unfortunate. Why did Aldrian have to leave just when something like this was happening inside the palace?

"Is there no one who knows where young Aldrian went?" Emperor Durand asked.

"There is no one who knows Sir Aldrian's location, but after this, I will look in places he might have visited. I will report as soon as I find his whereabouts, Your Majesty."

"Alright, keep searching for him. We really need his abilities."

"Yes, Your Majesty."

After cutting off the connection, he suddenly received another signal from a different communication channel and switched to it. This one was connected to General Giovanni, and the emperor knew that the general wanted to report his findings in the city.

"Your Majesty, we found something unbelievable! There is actually a large underground base beneath the capital! The lightning that appeared came from the underground secret base, and from the traces we've examined, it looks like there was a battle

between Emperor, King, and, uh, Marquess stages. The lightning seems to be one of the techniques cast by one of them."

Emperor Durand frowned, then he realized that the Marquess stage was mentioned in the report. Aldrian had gone to an unknown location, and soon after, something happened in the city. When Aldrian healed him, he knew that Aldrian was at the low Marquess stage. Could this Marquess stage be Aldrian?

"Your Majesty, there are many shocking things we found here. We discovered numerous artifacts and even large quantities of explosive powder! We calculated that these amounts could even spark a short-term war, and we found many dead devils. We are still investigating this matter."

"What?" Emperor Durand widened his eyes.

"Where did all of these things come from, and how did they slip under our surveillance?"

"I will see it myself right now. This is a serious matter. Keep investigating, General."

"Yes, Your Majesty."

Emperor Durand then looked at Hector and his wife, Empress Claudia, who was with their son, trying to ease Hector's pain, but it was no use. He wanted to shout in frustration because these situations had occurred at the same time, but he calmed his mind again and began to plan his next step. If the traces from the battle in the underground base truly came from Aldrian, then perhaps he could find him.

He then left the room and moved outside the palace. He wanted to see for himself the underground place that had been built right under his nose, undetected.

At Aldrian's mansion front yard, Lorenzo had arrived earlier. He was inspecting the corpses of the assassins when he found something that truly puzzled him. Some of the characteristics of these assassins, were familiar to him. They were members of the Southern Silent Daggers, a secret group of assassins affiliated with the imperial family.

The Doria imperial family has a secret group used for espionage and assassination, tasked with carrying out missions from the imperial family. These individuals can only be activated with an order directly from the emperor. The real question is, why are they here, and why are they attacking Aldrian's mansion? This doesn't make any sense.

His face turned solemn; there were missing pieces here. While he was thinking, Xin Haotian, who stood not far from him, was also checking his surroundings.

But then he frowned when he sensed someone approaching the mansion. The man wore a robe that covered the top of his head, but Xin Haotian could see a strand of long black and white hair. His face appeared to be that of a normal middle-aged man, unmarked by any stains, and he concealed his aura and cultivation. However, Xin Haotian's danger sense tingled as he looked at the robed man—something he seldom felt.

Lorenzo also noticed the sudden arrival of the man and frowned. His senses also detected trouble from this individual. The man stopped walking as he stepped into the mansion area and looked at Xin Haotian and Lorenzo.

"Oh, to think the guardian knight of the first prince is here. This is quite a surprise for me," the man said.

"Is this the place where that alchemist resides, the one named Aldrian? I don't want to spill unnecessary blood right now, so can you please let me meet with him? I'm pressed for time, so you better call him right now."

"Who are you?" Lorenzo asked. As for Xin Haotian, his face remained calm, but he had already considered many possibilities for striking this man if he decided to attack.

"You don't need to know. Really, there's no need to ask unnecessary questions. Just call Aldrian here and let me take him with me. My mood isn't good right now."

"He's not here," Xin Haotian said with a steady expression.

"Is that so?" the man said, but then, suddenly, he disappeared and reappeared in front of Xin Haotian, attacking him with a palm imbued with purple fire. Xin Haotian, with his quick reflexes, unsheathed his sword and blocked the attack. Lorenzo, shocked by the sudden assault, instantly distanced himself and took a defensive stance with his sword.

The man looked at the sword in Xin Haotian's hand and smiled at his disguised face.

"I see. It's truly another surprise that the Sword Saint is also here. The guardian knight of the First Prince and the Sword Saint—Aldrian surely attracts many people."

The purple fire in his hand grew in intensity as he grabbed the sword and then struck Xin Haotian with his other hand, delivering a palm strike that emitted purple fire.

Xin Haotian's body suddenly illuminated with light, momentarily blinding the man's eyes. The light he emitted wasn't merely a distraction or a means to blind his opponent—it was the sacred light with its own concept, capable of affecting the very soul of the opponent. This was the light of the God of Light, as the name of his cultivation technique suggested.

In that split second, the man loosened his grip on the sword, and that was enough for Xin Haotian to seize it. With the speed of light, he created some distance. The man's strike only hit air as the light faded, but he simply sighed.

"Truly, the Sword Saint's Light Laws are something special. Even I was stunned for a split second there," he said.

Xin Haotian looked at the man with a calm expression as he spoke.

"That is one of the Sky Flames, the Purple Fire of the Northern Volcano. So, you have refined Sky Flame inside your body. From your characteristics and the devil energy I can sense, there is no mistake—you are the Envy Devil."

Chapter 256: The Envy Devil

"Sword Saint, you already know who I am, so you'd better get out of my way. Don't unnecessarily involve yourself in my lord's plan. I know you are strong, but you are still not enough to defeat me or the devils," the Envy Devil said.

He uncovered his head, revealing his long black and white hair. Standing before Xin Haotian and Lorenzo, the Envy Devil seemed relaxed, as if he didn't consider them a threat.

Lorenzo also recognized the Envy Devil by his purple fire and distinct description. He was one of the Seven Deadly Sins that rarely *came out of the dark*, making information about him difficult to obtain. Yet, every time he stepped into the light, misfortune and disaster would inevitably befall countless people.

Lorenzo tried to contact Emperor Durand about the sudden appearance of the Envy Devil, but he discovered that the communication artifact wasn't working.

"It's futile. Inside my domain, every communication artifact is useless," the Envy Devil said.

Lorenzo's heart trembled.

"Since when were we inside his domain?" he thought.

"Now that you're already trapped here, don't think you can leave this place alive! To save time, why not attack me together so I can finish this quickly?"

"One is enough." Xin Haotian said.

In a split second, he vanished from his position and—

Tring!

His sword clashed with the Envy Devil's hand, successfully blocking Xin Haotian's attack.

"I've never fought the famous Sword Saint before, but you'll regret picking a fight with me," the Envy Devil said.

The Envy Devil smiled at Xin Haotian, but with a calm expression, Xin Haotian twisted his sword and delivered an upward slash, aiming for the Envy Devil's chin.

The Envy Devil tilted his head back in a quick motion to dodge the slash before creating distance and launching a palm strike at Xin Haotian.

Inferno

From the Envy Devil's palm, the purple flames spread, forming a giant wave of flames. This was one of the *Sky Flame*-grade flames, possessing immense destructive power—so intense that even space itself seemed to burn under its heat.

The massive wave of purple flames surged forward like a tsunami, rushing toward Xin Haotian and Lorenzo. Behind them, the entire mansion was also at risk of being reduced to ashes.

Facing the giant wave that contained the power of a High Emperor-stage cultivator, Xin Haotian remained calm. With swift movements, he unleashed his technique.

Dance of the Sword of Light

His hand moved in a series of slashing motions. At first glance, the technique appeared simple, without any intricate or impressive gestures to the untrained eye. Yet, in an instant, the massive wave of flames was cleaved into countless pieces. Like waves crashing against rocks on the coastline, the flames shattered, breaking apart after being slashed repeatedly.

The Envy Devil raised his eyebrows as he observed the scene. To ordinary eyes, Xin Haotian's movements appeared simple, almost unimpressive. However, with his sharp senses, the Envy Devil could see the truth—Xin Haotian had unleashed thousands, even tens of thousands, of slashes within that brief moment.

Each strike layered upon the previous one, relentlessly attacking the wave of flames. The combined force of the strikes stacked together, breaking the wave apart

The Envy Devil was truly impressed now. Even within his domain, Xin Haotian was still able to unleash such power. His domain had a unique property: any advantages his opponents might have would be nullified. It was imbued with his curse laws.

This was no simple curse domain; it affected both the mind and body of its victims. Anyone within his domain would find their strength reduced by 25%, as the surrounding energy was tainted by the curse, preventing them from unleashing their full potential. In addition, their minds were constantly under attack, bombarded with negative thoughts, especially the feeling of envy that festered in the hearts.

With all of these effects combined, facing the Envy Devil would be a nightmare for anyone. Yet, what he saw in Xin Haotian truly impressed him. And to note, Xin Haotian was only at the Low Emperor stage!

"Well, he's called the strongest swordsman on the continent for a reason," the Envy Devil thought.

He then used another of his techniques. Muttering something under his breath, a symbol appeared on his palm. His hand, now engulfed in purple flames, radiated an ominous aura, sending a foreboding feeling to anyone who dared look at it.

Xin Haotian's face turned solemn. He had guessed that the Envy Devil was finally using one of his curses. The ominous aura surrounding the Envy Devil's hand was unmistakable. Without hesitation, Xin Haotian dashed toward the devil, launching a swift slash. In response, the Envy Devil moved to meet him, striking with his palm, now engulfed in purple flames.

The slash and the palm strike collided, each blocking the other, and Xin Haotian finally engaged the Envy Devil in close combat. Within mere seconds, they had exchanged numerous moves, too fast for most to see. From a distance, some people could sense that a battle had erupted in this direction.

The entire front garden of the mansion had been destroyed by their exchange, and even Lorenzo could barely follow their movements.

"This is a battle I can't involve myself in; they are on another level." He felt a stifling sensation in his chest, and negative thoughts kept appearing in his mind. He felt weak, but he knew it was the effect of the Envy Devil's domain. Despite being a Low Emperor stage cultivator, he found it difficult to endure the pressure of this domain.

Inside the mansion, Eleine, Sylphia, and Baek Ji-Min appeared to be in poor condition. The effect of the domain was too powerful for them, as their cultivations were much lower than Xin Haotian's or Lorenzo's. It felt as if they were standing in a cramped room with no oxygen, cut off from the energy of heaven and earth. Negative thoughts began to rise in their minds, influencing their souls. They believed they were facing their inner demons and struggled to resist.

Xin Haotian and the Envy Devil flew into the air, standing not far from each other. The Envy Devil frowned as he noticed people starting to flock toward their location. It

seemed his time was running out. He even sensed some powerful cultivators approaching. The battle with Xin Haotian was taking far longer than he had anticipated.

"It looks like that alchemist isn't really here, I can't sense his presence at all," the Envy Devil thought.

He gritted his teeth. All the plans he had devised were in ruins due to the sudden intrusion of an unknown entity. Their hidden base had been exposed, and there were reports that the emperor's poisoning attempt had failed because the poison did not take effect on him. He knew how potent the poison Wei Zhi had created was, so for the emperor to survive after consuming it, he couldn't understand how it was possible.

He had already been assigned a task by the Devil Lord to oversee the Doria Empire's plans and make arrangements in case any unexpected situations arose. After the sudden disruption of their plans, he was determined to compensate for the loss. He needed to capture that alchemist, as the devils could gain a significant advantage from him. The person capable of concocting the Six Stripes Pill was someone who could become a game-changer in the future.

If he were to simply kill the alchemist, he felt it would be a waste. So, he decided to either force him to join the Devil's side or eliminate him.

He looked at the mansion but was suddenly stunned. He sensed something interesting. Smiling at Xin Haotian, he vanished without warning. However, Xin Haotian could see his movement as he made his way toward the mansion, and he followed him.

"No, you don't."

The speed of light was not something that could be outrun by a mere movement technique. Xin Haotian had already appeared beside the Envy Devil and struck at him with his sword. The Envy Devil swiftly dodged the strike and continued his dash toward the mansion.

"To think that the princess of the Ivory Empire is here, this is better than I expected," the Envy Devil thought. If he could capture the princess, it would be even better—he could control her and sow discord between the Ivory and Doria Empires at the same time.

Xin Haotian also realized that the Envy Devil had given up on their battle and was attempting to take a hostage. Xin Haotian blocked the Envy Devil's movements, but the Envy Devil seemed to pay him no mind, focusing all his strength and speed on evading Xin Haotian. In the middle of their cat-and-mouse game, the Envy Devil suddenly unleashed a powerful strike, sending a wave of purple flame toward the mansion.

Xin Haotian, who had intended to block the attack, suddenly saw the Envy Devil dash to the other side and throw an artifact toward the mansion—more specifically, toward Sylphia's location.

"Shit."

If Xin Haotian blocked the attack, the artifact would fall to Sylphia's location. If he blocked the artifact itself, the mansion would be destroyed in the process, instantly killing everyone inside. He didn't know what kind of artifact it was, nor did he want to find out. Everything the Envy Devil did was bad news for them.

His mind raced as he quickly decided to use one of his trump cards to block everything at once. But before he could activate his domain, he sensed the sudden appearance of someone. The artifact froze midair, as if caught between spaces. The purple flames in front of him were also swallowed by a spatial crack before it closed again.

When he finally saw a familiar face, he let out a sigh of relief.

"What took you so long?" he asked.

"I'm sorry, there were a few things I needed to take care of. Thank you for holding him off until now," Aldrian replied.

Chapter 257: Against the Envy Devil

The Envy Devil frowned at Aldrian's sudden appearance. He had not sensed any disturbance in energy or space. It was as if Aldrian had simply *popped* into existence—something that should have been absolutely impossible, especially within the confines of his domain. Nothing ever escaped his senses, not even the slightest movement of an ant. Yet Aldrian had appeared inside his domain as if it were the most natural thing in the world.

He then noticed Aldrian looking at him with those calm blue eyes. What he saw in those eyes was like staring into the gaze of a dead man. It was quite absurd, considering he could clearly sense that Aldrian's cultivation was only at the Marquess stage. Yet his instincts and intuition screamed that this man was dangerous. His long-dormant danger sense now blared like an alarm, a warning he hadn't felt in ages.

Xin Haotian, who felt relieved that Aldrian had returned, sent a voice transmission to him.

"While you were away, this mansion was attacked by a group of assassins. It seems something has also happened inside the imperial palace—the emperor and the first prince were poisoned. The emperor is good, but the first prince's condition has worsened. His guardian knight is here, requesting your help."

Aldrian nodded while still looking at the Envy Devil. From the curse symbol on the Envy Devil's palm, he sensed the same sensation as the one inside Emperor Durand. When he used his karma laws, he could finally confirm that there was indeed a connection between his own being and that curse symbol. This had happened because he had

already comprehended the curse and, in doing so, established his karma with that symbol.

"Break," Aldrian suddenly said.

In an instant, the Envy Devil's domain began to crumble. His domain, colorless and transparent, often left his opponents unaware they were already trapped within it. But as it shattered, the space breaking apart like glass.

The Envy Devil widened his eyes as he suddenly felt his soul tremble and a slight headache set in. His soul had been injured from his domain being forcefully broken. For the first time, shock appeared on his face—he had never imagined that his domain could be shattered so easily. The only explanation he knew for someone breaking another's domain was that the person possessed a stronger domain.

However, Aldrian was still only at the Marquess stage! How could he possibly have a domain?

Then, suddenly, he remembered a message from the Devil Lord not long ago:

"Be careful of a man with lower cultivation, black hair, or a sword technique with strange abilities. However, this may not always be fixed, as it could simply be a disguise. The key is to watch for any cultivator with unusual abilities. If you happen to encounter that man, do not hesitate to retreat."

The Envy Devil couldn't understand what the Devil Lord had said a few days ago, but it seemed that he finally understood now. This man was the one the Devil Lord had warned about. If even the Devil Lord had cautioned other devils to retreat upon encountering him, then he would have no choice but to do so, even though it still didn't make any sense to him.

The Envy Devil instantly crushed his teleportation talisman, but suddenly, the space around him condensed, causing the teleportation to fail.

"I will visit the imperial palace after I take care of this man," Aldrian sent a voice transmission to Lorenzo, who looked at him with amazement. Aldrian then checked on the condition of the ladies inside the mansion for a moment. They seemed to finally be able to catch their breath and rest after he had broken the domain.

"Don't think about escaping after intruding on my place. Let's change locations first." With that, Aldrian and the Envy Devil disappeared.

Aldrian and the Envy Devil then appeared in the Sazim Fortress. The Envy Devil, already shocked by Aldrian's ability to break his domain, was stunned once again by the

sudden teleportation. Since the appearance of this young man, he had felt like a powerless individual. His domain had collapsed with ease, and now his body was being dragged through the teleportation without him being able to do anything.

When he looked at his surroundings, he finally realized that he had been teleported to the Sazim Fortress. However, he frowned at the traces of battle here. He also sensed the many devil corpses outside the fortress, some even crucified beside the corpse of the successor of the Lust Devil.

Among the many traces of the battle, there were some familiar auras, but one stood out—an aura almost identical to his own. It was the aura of his successor.

He had sent his successor to oversee the underground base operation. A few minutes ago, he had suddenly felt the life connection with his successor vanish, which meant something had happened to him.

Does this mean the person in front of him is the one attacking their underground base?

"Envy Devil, so I heard you've been looking for me. Well, I'm here. What are you going to do about it?" Aldrian asked.

The Envy Devil raised his eyebrows.

"You are Aldrian?"

"What do you think?"

Hearing the teasing tone, the Envy Devil was certain that this was indeed Aldrian. But hadn't they said he was an alchemist? So why was he such a powerful cultivator who had comprehended space laws? He didn't dwell on it for long and instead asked Aldrian,

"Were you the one who killed my successor?"

Aldrian tilted his head. "Who? I don't think I've met your successor. Maybe I have, but truthfully, I don't remember things that aren't important."

The Envy Devil frowned. He couldn't tell if Aldrian was lying, but the most important thing was that he had finally met his target. Although the Devil Lord had already warned about a person with strange abilities, the Envy Devil still wanted to try to bring Aldrian to the devils' side.

"Al—"

"Nope, I don't want to. You all will be dead." Even before the Envy Devil could make his offer, Aldrian cut him off and denied him. A vein bulged on the Envy Devil's forehead; he had never felt so humiliated.

"You will regret—"

Space condensed

Once again, before the Envy Devil finished speaking, Aldrian made his first move. Suddenly, the Envy Devil felt the space around him pressing in. The abrupt change in the space stunned him for a split second before he tried to defend himself. He stretched his hand outward and unleashed his purple flame.

He unleashed the purple flame without restraint, aiming to burn even the space itself. He condensed the flame to make it more powerful, and it seemed to work. The space began to wobble, and he seized the opportunity, sending a palm strike to break the space trap.

"Break."

The space condensation broke, and he flew toward Aldrian at full speed, already preparing his technique. A combination of his curse laws and fire laws, he called it the Cursed Flame. He imbued the concept of a seal within the curse. Once touched by this flame, as long as you couldn't overwhelm the curse, you would be inflicted with great difficulty in activating your own techniques.

This curse essentially weakens the opponent, and if the Envy Devil uses his domain in conjunction with it, the effect is doubled, and it will even give another different effect, causing even more suffering for the opponent.

Unfortunately, what the Envy Devil did not know was that Aldrian, having already comprehended one of his curses through Emperor Durand, had discovered the weakness of the curse—or the curse laws in general. Aldrian's golden energy was a bane to any kind of karmic attack, like a curse. His golden energy was a force capable of destroying any curse.

Even without relying on his golden energy, he could break the curse using his karma laws.

The Envy Devil then sent a palm strike toward Aldrian. A massive fire palm print, with a symbol in the center, flew toward him. The strike was large enough to flatten half of the Sazim Fortress.

Seeing this, Aldrian countered with his own palm strike. He sent forth a strike infused with his golden energy. When the two palm prints collided—

Whoozz

The two palm strikes canceling each other out, causing the purple and golden palm prints to disintegrate. The Envy Devil did not pause. Instead, he unleashed another technique: the Wave of Flame. This one was different from the one faced by Xin Haotian earlier. It was far more ominous and intimidating, amplified by the curse that accompanied it.

As the Envy Devil unleashed the technique, he continued moving toward Aldrian, intending to close the distance and bring the fight into close combat.

Seeing the wave of flame that could engulf the entire fortress, Aldrian created a massive space shield. It was as though he was constructing a giant sea wall using the fabric of space itself.

The flame crashed into the space wall, and in that instant, Aldrian realized that the curse's effect was attempting to affect him, even though the flame hadn't touched him. However, he simply ignored the curse and launched his counterattack. This time, it was even more powerful than before, aimed directly at the advancing Envy Devil!

Chapter 258: The Envy Devil's Past?

As he created the spatial barrier, he counterattacked with his own technique. Heavenly lightning, fused with death energy, crackled from his body. With a swift motion of his hand, he pointed at the Envy Devil with his index finger.

The Envy Devil, witnessing Aldrian unleash his technique, felt his heart shudder. *What the hell?!* The abomination of heavenly lightning! He could feel the might of heaven and the terror of death contained within that lightning.

"Not good!" He gave up approaching Aldrian and switched to his defensive technique instead. Clapping his hands together, he mumbled a few words before something suddenly emerged from his body. A giant, transparent red avatar materialized, enveloping him. The avatar, clad in armor, resembled a wrathful giant with a frightening, angry face.

Aldrian paid no heed but thought of something briefly before unleashing his lightning at the Envy Devil. The Envy Devil, seeing the lightning slithering toward him, braced himself. Finally, the lightning struck the avatar enveloping his body.

Rumble! Crash!

The Envy Devil gritted his teeth as his body trembled in pain after the black lightning struck his avatar. The lightning didn't pierce it instantly, but he could sense his avatar gradually losing its durability. He was shocked as the armor seemed to weaken with each passing second, chipping away at his avatar's power.

"This won't do."

From his avatar's palm, he cast another curse seal, and the giant hand slammed down toward the lightning and Aldrian. This death curse was designed to instantly affect the soul, turning the victim into a living dead. It tormented their soul relentlessly until they finally succumbed to their own pain.

Aldrian saw the incoming palm and released even more lightning from his body. His surroundings had already transformed into a garden of destructive lightning. With his full power, he redirected the strike toward the approaching palm. The lightning collided with it, and within seconds, the palm shattered. The Envy Devil spat a mouthful of blood as his technique broke, but he had successfully distracted Aldrian.

He instantly retreated, and Aldrian appeared to pause his attack, looking at the Envy Devil with curiosity.

"Were you a Buddhist monk in the past? Some of your techniques resemble those commonly used by monks of the Buddhist sect. The chant you mumbled was a Buddhist chant, and that avatar technique—isn't that the Narayana Battle Form? Although it lacks the holy energy of the Buddhist sect, I'm certain it's the Narayana Battle Form. Did you betray the Buddhist sect in the past?" Aldrian asked.

Aldrian had read about the Buddhist sect in the past. When he saw the Envy Devil's information earlier, he noticed techniques commonly associated with Buddhist monks. However, the Narayana Battle Form was a technique that could only be comprehended by monks of high status within the sect. Although Aldrian was genuinely curious about the devil's past, he knew he still had to kill him—after all, he *is* a devil now.

The Envy Devil didn't answer but looked at Aldrian solemnly. Truthfully, he hadn't used that technique in so long, as there had been no one capable of forcing him to unleash that battle form. With his combination of the curse domain and his flames, he had been able to overpower every opponent he had faced until now.

But since he couldn't use his domain for some time due to the damage it had caused to his soul, he had to rely on his other trump cards. The Narayana Battle Form was one of them.

"It seems it's true that you are a traitor of the Buddhist sect. To think that a monk from the Buddhist sect would fall into the abyss of envy is truly ironic, especially when you should know that Buddha taught mankind should not be consumed by envy or jealousy. Now, I will represent the Buddhist sect to cleanse the stain of the past and sever your karma with the Buddha."

Aldrian could sense a change in the Envy Devil's mind when he mentioned the Buddhist sect, confirming that the Envy Devil truly had a past with them.

Aldrian then channeled the power of the Ivory Empire domain and the Forgeheart Kingdom domain into his body. The aura and pressure he exuded now were unlike before; the combined might of the domains felt like the presence of a higher being in the eyes of the Envy Devil. He fought to maintain his composure, resisting the sudden surge of reverence that arose deep within his soul.

He then decided to use his most powerful attack. He knew that if he hesitated and didn't cast his best technique, he would be done for. He forcefully released his domain, and at the same time, his giant avatar conjured a long red sword. Pain surged through his entire body and soul as he pushed himself to his limits to release the domain even though his soul was already injured, and prepared for the strike using his avatar.

"Not enough!"

To make his strike more powerful, he decided to use his devil form. His body transformed, becoming bulkier and much larger. His skin turned red, and his face grew more frightening. He now resembled a Dharmapala, striking terror into anyone who saw him.

Aldrian knew that the Envy Devil would strike with his most powerful attack. He then took out the Eternal Spirit and instantly assumed a stance. Inside the Envy Devil's domain, the properties of the domain tried to influence him, causing chaos in his mind. Even his karma with his surroundings seemed to be affected. The Envy Devil's domain seemed to force nature to abandon him, but how could the Envy Devil's domain make nature leave Aldrian? He was one with nature itself when inside his domain.

The Envy Devil trembled upon seeing the sword in Aldrian's hand, as he now confirmed that Aldrian was indeed the same person who had caused chaos in the Devil's plans across the continent. He was the mysterious swordsman, the one who had killed the Greed Devil and the Lust Devil.

His eyes were bloodshot as he endured the pain in his soul while trying to unleash his technique. The Narayana Battle Form raised the sword with both hands. The giant sword, standing tall as if it wanted to split the clouds, was truly intimidating. The thick devil energy he released from his body even created a vortex around him, attempting to overwhelm Aldrian's domain with its dark power.

The curse rune and purple flame also covered the sword in the avatar's hand, and the pressure it exuded tried to compete even with Aldrian's. The red clouds of the Devil's territory were pushed away by their mere aura.

Finally, the Envy Devil completed his preparation and instantly brought the sword down in a chopping motion. The space couldn't withstand the strength of the sword and began collapsing in its wake.

Narayana's Sword of Destruction

Aldrian, seeing the giant sword coming at him, finally unsheathed his own sword and pointed it at the incoming strike.

With the Envy Devil's technique combining destructive power and curses, Aldrian had the perfect technique to counter it. Suddenly, the sword illuminated with golden light, and just as the giant sword almost reached Aldrian, the Eternal Spirit released a golden pillar that collided with the giant sword, causing it to stop in its tracks.

Pillar of Heaven's Judgment

Their clash caused the space to collapse even further, creating a spatial storm. The entire fortress was razed to the ground as the clash instantly destroyed it. The Envy Devil gritted his teeth as he struggled to push the giant sword forward, but he could feel the sword being pushed back instead.

Not even three seconds after their techniques clashed, the giant sword suddenly shattered, and the golden pillar shot toward the avatar's body. The avatar's massive form held for only two more seconds before it too shattered. The golden pillar didn't stop there—it pierced through the Envy Devil's domain, creating a hole before shattering it completely.

The continued impact of his technique and the breaking of his domain finally struck the Envy Devil hard, severely damaging his soul. His vision blurred, and he felt as if he could faint at any moment. He couldn't move his body at all. It was clear to him that he was done for. In that moment, he suddenly remembered his past, when he had lived peacefully with his master in the mountains. There were no complex problems in his mind back then—only the tranquility of life with his master.

He couldn't maintain any of his techniques anymore, nor even stay afloat, so he plummeted from the sky. Aldrian then canceled the Pillar of Heaven's Judgment and instantly teleported to the Envy Devil's body. He grabbed his head with one hand while still holding the Eternal Spirit with the other. Aldrian closed his eyes as he attempted to read the Envy Devil's memories.

In an unknown place, an old monk walked, wearing his simple kasaya. People around him passed by without even touching his body. He seemed invisible, yet at the same time still visible. He walked with his hands clasped, but then suddenly stopped. He sighed, sensing something in his soul, and said to himself,

"Amithaba, our karma in this life has finally come to an end. I hope you have another chance to atone for your sins in the next life, and that you are not led astray by your own feelings."

Chapter 259: The Situation in the Capital

While Aldrian was dealing with the Envy Devil, the situation in the capital grew increasingly chaotic. After discovering the underground base, they also found numerous artifacts belonging to various noble families from the northeast territory. The imperial family also found evidence of movements by members of these families within the capital.

All of these families were part of Grand Duke Gouvard's faction, causing a massive commotion. From this, the imperial family realized that many members of these families were already lying in wait within the capital for something significant to happen.

From the imperial family's perspective, this kind of trickery seemed more like an attempt by these families to initiate a coup. Martial law was finally declared as the situation grew more serious. The imperial soldiers were dispatched to every part of the capital to search for them. The sight of imperial knights moving back and forth caused panic among the city's residents, who wondered what was happening in the capital.

Some of their questions were answered when commotion broke out as imperial soldiers arrested several individuals. These scenes occurred in many places across the city, and some even escalated into fights. The number of infiltrators from the noble families was quite large, reaching thousands. Not all of them could be arrested at once, creating time gaps that allowed some to escape.

Even though the imperial family had already closed off the city, they were not fast enough to cover such a large area instantly. The good news is that the imperial family discovered these infiltrators early, before they could finish their preparations, preventing the situation from reaching devastating proportions. Most of the clashes could only be seen as desperate struggles.

Some high-ranking cultivators from noble families were involved, but they were swiftly dealt with by the imperial army. They couldn't withstand the imperial forces, who came fully prepared. Additionally, there was one individual personally overseeing the operation and even assisting the imperial army.

Emperor Durand observed everything from the skies above the city. His senses extended to their maximum, covering the entire city. He could feel the movements of his men as they maneuvered throughout the city. While his face remained expressionless, anger boiled within his heart. Never in his lifetime had something like this occurred, some nobles daring to think they could dethrone him with their power.

However, all of these events began to form a complete puzzle in his mind. His curse, the war, the poison, and now this bold effort by the nobles—all of them were interconnected. He imagined what would have happened if he were still under the curse. He would have had little choice, and his family might have collapsed, plunging the Doria Empire into a devastating civil war.

"Those traitorous bastards! Wait until I clean up this mess and set everything right in this empire," Emperor Durand thought.

He had just returned to full health after being in the cursed state for so long and hadn't had the chance to focus on solving the empire's problems. But it seemed that after dealing with the capital and Hector's condition, he would need to show the entire empire that such tactics would bring nothing but their own destruction.

He still had many things on his mind, but the most urgent matter now was to heal Hector's condition. Not long before this, he had suddenly sensed a powerful aura and the sounds of battle. He immediately made his way to the source of the battle, only to find that the person responsible was the Envy Devil, who had attacked Aldrian's mansion. Lorenzo, still at the mansion, then informed him that Aldrian had suddenly appeared and disappeared again with the Envy Devil.

However, Aldrian had told him that he would visit the imperial palace after taking care of the Envy Devil, so he could only hope that Aldrian would deal with the Envy Devil quickly. Hector's condition was already critical and could worsen at any moment. As he anxiously waited for Aldrian, he suddenly saw a soldier running toward him.

"Your Majesty, I come to report some news."

Emperor Durand lowered his altitude so he could face the soldier and hear the report.

"Speak," he ordered.

"We have received a report that the dead body of Wei Zhi, one of the Seven Devils of Annihilation, was found hanged in Rivas City. The identity has been confirmed, Your Majesty."

Emperor Durand widened his eyes. This news came out of the blue. Wei Zhi, that bastard who had truly given the empire a headache, died? How was that possible? But then, suddenly, he remembered something from when he had checked the underground base. There had been many traces of lethal poison and even signs of Gu techniques from the fight that broke out there.

He knew that there was one expert among the devils skilled in Gu and poison, and that was Wei Zhi. He frowned because this didn't make any sense. If the dead body in Rivas City was Wei Zhi's, then who had fought here? If these two were indeed the same person, how in the world could Wei Zhi's body have even reached such a far location?

These questions added to the many already swirling in his mind. But if that body really was Wei Zhi's, it would be great news for the empire—and for the entire continent.

At this time, at the northern gate of Rivas City, people had gathered to look upward. The cultivators of the Rivas family had already created a sterile zone to make space for the investigation team to examine the scene. What they saw above the gate was a body hanging by the neck. The condition of the corpse was miserable, with only the upper torso remaining visible to the onlookers. There were no eyes in the empty sockets, blood stained the face, the nose was broken, and there were no ears.

On his body was also a sign, with large letters that read:

"Wei Zhi, one of the Seven Devils of Annihilation. May his death ease the pain of the people he has hurt."

The people were shocked by the identity of the corpse. Wei Zhi's name was already infamous because of his heinous acts with poison and Gu. It seemed that karma had finally caught up with him, and he had died a horrible death. While no one knew how he had died, the miserable state of his corpse gave the onlookers a sense of satisfaction.

"Make way, make way for Grand Duke Rivas!" The people were stunned by the sudden arrival of a group from the Rivas family, and they could see that Grand Duke Rivas was also part of the group. It seemed the grand duke wanted to examine the corpse personally and confirm its identity.

After inspecting the body, he had no doubt that this was indeed Wei Zhi. There was no doubt, as the remnants of the disgusting energy and Gu inside his body could not be mistaken.

"Take his body and burn it. Don't let anyone see this disgusting creature any longer," Grand Duke Rivas ordered. The soldiers of the Rivas family then began to lower Wei Zhi's body. As he watched this, Grand Duke Rivas couldn't help but think.

"Who is the person capable of killing Wei Zhi, and why did they choose Rivas City to hang his body? May his death ease the pain of the people he has hurt? Is it purely revenge?"

"From the state of his body, I can tell that it was a clean cut made with a sharp object. To make Wei Zhi suffer this much... does the person who did this hate him to the core?"

Suddenly, a commotion erupted behind him, causing Grand Duke Rivas to turn around. His eyes widened as he saw his daughter, Irene, walking toward him with hurried steps, her eyes sharp and cold.

"Where is he? I want to see his corpse," Irene said, her voice frigid.

Grand Duke Rivas sighed and pointed at the body already on the stretcher. Irene looked at Wei Zhi's corpse from afar, and her body began to tremble. She bit her lip, trying to hold back her tears, but eventually, she covered her face, unable to suppress them any

longer. As she remembered Cecile's suffering and how it was the Gu that caused her pain, she thought of Wei Zhi, the only devil known to wield such a technique.

Now, she felt a sense of relief, knowing that the person who had caused her friend so much suffering had met a gruesome end. It was an outcome that, at least, eased her heart, even though she had not been the one to kill Wei Zhi herself. She composed herself, stopping her tears, and looked at Wei Zhi's corpse once more. The body was now closer to her, allowing her to examine it in more detail, and it was then that she noticed the letter she hadn't paid attention to earlier.

Her eyes widened as she sensed something from Wei Zhi's corpse. Her mind raced, and a figure flashed through her thoughts.

"Aldrian?"

No data found.

Chapter 260: Treating Hector

The cleanup operation in capital city was still ongoing, with Emperor Durand overseeing it. Suddenly, he sensed a presence in Aldrian's mansion and turned to look in that direction. His eyes widened as he saw Aldrian appear with two other people. The individuals with Aldrian were unconscious, showing signs of depleted energy. Emperor Durand immediately recognized them—they were Master Dan of the Alchemist Association and Grand Duke Gouvard.

Emperor Durand immediately approached Aldrian and asked,

"Young Aldrian, are you okay? I heard you faced the Envy Devil. He is a truly troublesome opponent, and to think he came to your place!"

Aldrian simply smiled and nodded at Emperor Durand.

"I'm okay, Your Majesty. The Envy Devil has already been taken care of, he will not disturb us anymore. Anyway, I brought a gift for you. These men are one of the main reasons the chaos in the Doria Empire happened. I will leave them in Your Majesty's hands, as it is your right to judge them. I will also share the information I obtained from them, which may greatly assist with the investigation," Aldrian said.

Emperor Durand frowned but nodded in response.

"Alright, I will take care of it. I will surely punish those truly behind all this chaos," he said, looking at Grand Duke Gouvard and Master Dan. "Now, can you check on Hector? His condition is critical."

"Yes, Your Majesty. Now that the problem here has been taken care of, I can check His Highness's condition."

After that, they moved toward the imperial palace at their fastest speed.

Inside one of the main bedrooms of the imperial palace, Lewis paced anxiously, biting his thumbnail. His face showed an angry expression, and his hair was disheveled from how many times he had scratched it. His mind was in turmoil, overwhelmed by how the situation had deteriorated so quickly.

"What could be wrong? What happened? Why has the situation turned so much worse?" he thought.

He had followed the plan to poison the emperor at the decided time, but he was initially shocked by the sudden change in plans. However, when he heard the emperor's curse break, he finally realized that this action had to be taken. They needed to act more brazenly and simply wait for the emperor to die before the coup could begin.

Tonight, the combined forces of the nobles under Grand Duke Gouvard will take control of the capital and the imperial palace. By the next day, he will claim the throne as the new emperor. They have already secured many important positions, and with the help of the devils, it should be easy and simple.

But everything was spiraling out of control. The poison wasn't working on the emperor, the underground base had been discovered, and the infiltrating troops of the nobles were being captured one by one. He had also lost contact with the devils who were supposed to provide backup, leaving him essentially on his own.

Even if he had successfully poisoned his elder brother, it wouldn't affect anything in the short term, as the plan was in disarray. He knew that it was only a matter of time before his treacherous act would be discovered, and he would have to face the consequences.

Knock, knock!

He heard the door of his room was knocked, followed by the sound of a maid's voice.

"Your Highness, His Majesty has asked the entire imperial family to gather in the First Prince's room."

Hearing that his father had called everyone together, his heartbeat quickened. Did his father already catch wind of his cooperation with the devils? No, it

couldn't be confirmed. It was too soon to conclude that his father knew about his actions. If his father questioned him about it, he could simply brush it off. After all, his act as the useless prince had worked on everyone, including his own family.

Not long after, he finally emerged from his room, but his expression had already returned to what his family was used to—the timid, weak look they were familiar with. Inwardly, his mind remained focused on the future, so he tried to calm himself.

After he arrived at Hector's room, he found his mother imperial consort Veronica, Empress Claudia, his elder brother Alderia, and his father already there. However, there was also one unfamiliar face among them, someone who seemed to be treating Hector. He was a young man, and although he didn't know who he was, when the man turned to meet his gaze, he suddenly saw him smile.

He didn't know why he felt uneasy when he saw that smile, so he brushed it off and remained silent like the others. It seemed that the young man was just another physician trying to save his elder brother. He was confident that there was nothing the young man could do—the poison had already reached its fatal phase, and since Hector was only at the King stage, the poison would kill him more quickly.

He could only hope that the young man wouldn't find anything that pointed back to him.

The young man seemed to continue concentrating on treating Hector, but Aldrian, who knew how Lewis was feeling and what he was thinking, found it amusing. From the memories of the people he had just defeated, Aldrian had finally uncovered the identity of an important collaborator within the imperial family—someone many wouldn't expect to be an actual snake. He would expose this bastard's true nature, but first, he needed to address Hector's condition.

After checking Hector's entire body, Aldrian finally realized just how fatal the poison was. It had already spread throughout Hector's body, severely damaging his dantian and meridians. Some of his internal organs had begun to rot, and his energy was dissipating little by little. The poison's effect was brutal, and if Hector weren't a King stage cultivator, he would have been dead earlier.

After finishing his examination of Hector's body, Aldrian began to inject his energy into him. His fight with Wei Zhi—well, if it could even be called a fight—had given him new insight into his body and golden energy. He realized

that his energy was potent enough to neutralize even the most powerful poison, like Wei Zhi's.

That devil had unleashed all kinds of poison attacks on him, and Aldrian had even allowed some of them to enter his body to feel their effects. However, once the poison entered his orifices or pores, the energy inside his body instantly purified it. No poison, no matter what kind, could withstand his energy.

Because of this, he was now confident that no poison could affect him, and his energy could detoxify any poison, even if it wasn't inside his body.

He continued injecting his golden energy and could sense the poison in various parts of Hector's body starting to disappear. It began from the wrist where he touched, flowing across Hector's body. Each time his golden energy passed over a broken meridian or inner organ, that part seemed like a dried land being nourished by water and nutrients after a long time.

They rejuvenated and began mending themselves as the poison couldn't resist his powerful golden energy. Hector's expression also started to ease, the pain that had been present since he was poisoned slowly fading. His breathing became more stable, and his heartbeat began to return to normal. Everyone watched this development with joy and relief—well, except for one person.

His eyes trembled as he watched this ridiculous development. Who is this man? How can someone like him detoxify a poison that even the best physicians in the imperial family couldn't cure? He had never known someone like this existed. Where did his father find him? Why hadn't he been told about this person? And why didn't the devils seem to know about him? He couldn't believe that such a person existed without the devils knowing. If someone like this were on his father's side, they would surely be planning something else.

After two minutes of silence, Aldrian finally released his grip from Hector's wrist and looked at his countenance, which was now showing a healthy hue. Not long after, Hector's closed eyes trembled, and slowly, he opened them.

Empress Claudia, seeing her son finally open his eyes, immediately approached him with tears in her eyes. Aldrian, noticing this, gave her space so she could be with Hector and then stood near Emperor Durand.

"My son!"

She said, while grabbing Hector's hand. Hector, still feeling as if he were dreaming, felt confused but tried to rise from his lying position. It felt like he had been in a long fight against himself after suddenly experiencing

tremendous pain in his heart and dantian, which almost made him faint in the dining room. He tried to fight the pain that slowly took over his body, but he felt weaker and weaker, eventually losing consciousness.

He felt as though he had almost died, but suddenly a warm sensation flowed throughout his body. He felt comfortable and wished he could bask in this feeling forever, but just as quickly, the sensation stopped, and he opened his eyes. He was now in his own room, leaving him confused about what had just happened.

Seeing Hector finally in good condition, Aldrian glanced at Lewis and inwardly smiled. It was time to clean up the imperial family!