

The Shining Star Above The Heaven

#Chapter 341: Another Person to Join? - Read The Shining Star Above The Heaven Chapter 341: Another Person to Join?

Chapter 341: Another Person to Join?

Aldrian's conversation with the Flamecrest family continued for another hour before Luis had to leave to meet with his own group. As an instructor at the Heavenly Path Academy, he secured a room despite the quota being nearly full due to high demand. Many people were still arriving in Larson City to see the corpse of the Cerberus—a beast said to have never been seen before—as well as the traces left by the mysterious swordsman.

Aldrey and the Grand Duke also said their goodbyes, feeling that their discussion was sufficient for now. They planned to visit again in the future.

"Take care of yourself, son," Aldrey said through voice transmission before leaving with Grand Duke Flamecrest.

"I will, Father."

After they left, Aldrian looked at Arthur, who had remained silent throughout the conversation. He was a good listener, and the Grand Duke didn't seem to mind his presence, as there was nothing in their discussion that needed to be hidden. Arthur also understood this and had no intention of leaving—truthfully, he was curious about the contents of their conversation.

"So, are you going to stay at this inn?" Aldrian asked Arthur.

Arthur nodded. "Yes, I already booked a room here. I don't want to stay at the local church to keep my arrival hidden."

"I'm truly confused. Why do you seem to be so discreet about this? Is there something wrong with the Saintess, or is there a reason you don't want the other members of the church to know about you?"

Arthur sighed at Aldrian's question.

"To be honest, this is related to the church's internal situation. The Saintess chose me to come to you not only because I know you, but also because she trusts me. She doesn't trust many people in the church. I'll explain the details once we depart for the church's main territory."

Aldrian nodded. He would find out eventually, so he didn't press the matter.

They decided to return to their rooms, but just as they were about to leave, Arthur saw someone entering the inn. He was stunned for a moment before quickly turning his head to hide his face, trying to avoid being seen.

Aldrian, noticing Arthur's reaction, was puzzled. But before he could ask, Arthur glanced at him and sent a voice transmission.

"There's someone who has been searching for you everywhere. She always appears whenever traces of the mysterious swordsman are found. That person is the woman who just entered the inn—one of the ten great swordmasters of the continent, Elena Rosalind. I don't know why, but she seems obsessed with finding you, and she also appears to know that I have a connection to you. If she sees me here, what do you think will happen? She'll eventually track you down, and I don't know if she'll bring you trouble. So it's better to avoid her, right?"

Aldrian nodded. "Alright, thanks for the info."

He paused mid-step, standing still as he observed the woman who had just entered—without even turning his head.

What he saw was a beautiful, mature-looking woman with a striking face and long black hair tied into a ponytail. Her tight-fitting black robe accentuated her curves, and the stockings visible beneath her robes caught the attention of many men in the room. The black sword at her waist only added to her deadly aura.

Her entrance immediately drew attention and caused a commotion, not only because of her beautiful face but also due to the unique floral fragrance that seemed to surround her. People instantly recognized her, as she wasn't using any disguise or cover.

She swept her gaze across the room, pausing on Aldrian for a moment before shifting her attention elsewhere.

Sylphia also glanced at the new arrival, her eyes widening slightly before she quickly turned her head away to avoid looking at her.

"That is Elena Rosalind, one of the ten great swordmasters of the continent," she sent a voice transmission to Aldrian.

"Yes, and it seems she's looking for me. Let's go back to our room first," Aldrian replied.

He continued walking until his figure disappeared from Elena's view. Arthur also stood up from his seat, intending to return to his own room. However, the familiar floral fragrance drew closer from behind—a clear sign that Elena was approaching him!

"Wait," she said.

Arthur gritted his teeth as he came to a halt.

"Why is her intuition so sharp?" he thought.

"Turn around, please. I want to look at you," she said.

Arthur could only sigh as he sent her a voice transmission.

"Let's move to a more private place. I can't be seen by the masses."

Hearing the voice inside her mind, Elena slightly smiled, realizing that it was Arthur. Her guess had been correct. Without revealing his face, Arthur walked alongside her as they casually made their way out of the inn.

"Well, as expected, you must be in this city searching for that mysterious swordsman. So, have your efforts borne any fruit?" Arthur asked through voice transmission as they walked.

Suddenly, Elena smiled—something that rarely happened. It was a smile so mesmerizing that the men watching her were instantly captivated.

"Well, I've found a huge clue," she replied.

"What clue?" Arthur asked.

"You."

The next day, Larson City was still bustling with activity around the giant Cerberus beast. The process of cutting its corpse into smaller pieces continued, as its massive body couldn't fit inside the storage rings. The area surrounding the corpse became a popular attraction for many cultivators, all curious about the giant beast.

However, the Blue Dragon Battalion had already been pulled back to the capital and dispatched to various regions of the empire. The populace had heard that the imperial family and the nobles had launched a large-scale purge of the devils within the empire's territory. Thanks to the information provided by Aldrian during his conversation with the emperor, the imperial family was able to carry out the operation swiftly and effectively.

Many devils were caught off guard by the sudden attack from the imperial family and the nobles. Since the fall of the Larson family and the destruction of the devils' main base at the energy stone mining site, the devils within the empire had chosen to stand down

and cease their activities. Moreover, their lines of communication had been severed due to strict security measures.

The devils inside the empire were essentially blind and deaf. Without any reliable intelligence, they were sitting ducks—an unfortunate truth proven today as devils across the Vindas Empire were slaughtered. They had not anticipated the sudden assault and could only wait for their inevitable demise.

The news of the execution of the Larson family by the Duclan family also spread like wildfire, and now the populace of the empire knew that the Duclan family had fully made their comeback, with their titles and status reinstated by the imperial family. Many had not expected the imperial family to compensate the Duclan family instead of helping the Larson family, as they thought the imperial family would also share the sentiment that the Duclan family had been in cahoots with the devils.

With the imperial family seemingly acknowledging their mistake by compensating the Duclan family, many believed that the imperial family had been duped by the Larson family, so most did not mind the decision. However, unbeknownst to the masses, only a few knew the truth behind it all.

It was still morning when one of the few people who knew the truth was preparing to leave the inn where he was staying. Aldrian wanted to take a walk to relax his body. He was walking alone because Sylphia was utterly exhausted after the passionate night he had given her, leaving her unable to get up. She could only rest in bed, but Aldrian felt proud of himself for that. In a good mood, he decided to take a walk and enjoy the bustling atmosphere of the city.

However, after walking for some time, Aldrian sensed that someone seemed to be following him. Although the figure trying to blend into the crowd and mask their presence, Aldrian could still sense their gaze fixed on him.

However, he didn't sense any ill intent, so he didn't find it alarming. Since he was now outside of his domain, he couldn't clearly see the stalker with his *Eyes of the Heaven* without turning his head toward them.

Curious about who was following him, Aldrian decided to move into one of the deserted alleys he found. The figure continued to follow him. As he turned a corner in the alley, the figure was stunned when they couldn't find Aldrian. Then, his voice resounded from behind them.

"What do we have here?"

The figure was shocked, quickly turning around and taking a step back from Aldrian, still looking at him in surprise.

"Oh, to think that one of the most famous people on the continent is following me. Why are you tailing me, Miss Elena Rosalind?"

Chapter 342: Hostile?

Elena was truly shocked when Aldrian suddenly appeared behind her. She did not understand Aldrian's abilities, so she had no idea that he could use teleportation. His stealth skills were also very great, making it almost impossible for her to detect him.

Aldrian wore a slight smile as he assessed the woman standing before him.

Elena Rosalind

Age: 12,490 years

Race: Human

Cultivation: Peak King

Cultivation Technique: Rising Petal of Heavenly Garden Scripture

Attack Techniques: Rose of Heavenly Garden, Seven Movements of the Heavenly Sword Garden, The End of Winter, The Start of Spring, Heavenly Garden Covering Heavens

Defense Techniques

: -

Movement Technique: Dropping Petal, Thousand Petals Step

Supporting Technique: Rise of Heavenly Garden

Given her age and cultivation level, she could easily be categorized as a genius among geniuses on this continent. Moreover, her techniques and cultivation methods all seemed to be of the high rank—something only high nobles would have access to.

Noticing the wary look in her eyes, Aldrian sighed.

"Shouldn't I be the one wary of you for following me since earlier? Why are you the one acting cautious around me?" he asked.

Elena ignored his words and instead asked, "Are you the one they call the Mysterious Swordsman?"

"What if I am? What if I'm not? Why does it matter to you?"

"Because I'm looking for him."

"And why are you looking for him?"

Elena fell silent, keeping her eyes on Aldrian. Inwardly, she could hardly believe that the young man standing before her was the one many called the Mysterious Swordsman—the strongest sword cultivator on the continent.

She had always believed in his legend, given his incredible feats and achievements. However, she had assumed he was an old man, someone who had spent centuries honing his comprehension and strength—strength so overwhelming that even Xin Haotian, the Sword Saint, paled in comparison.

Many said that the Mysterious Swordsman was the only one who had comprehended a divine-grade technique, wielding devastating and wide-area attacks that could affect the entire continent. She was one of those who believed it, as every time she followed his traces, his techniques always left a profound impression, showcasing both deep comprehension and immense power.

She came to this place because the Mysterious Swordsman had once again made an appearance, battling something incredible. She had received a crucial clue—some witnesses claimed to have seen a masked figure, said to be the Mysterious Swordsman, standing atop the corpse of a giant beast before vanishing.

Determined to continue her search, she decided to book a room at a local inn for her stay. That was when she saw Arthur.

She was truly glad to have met Arthur by coincidence, as it made her investigation much easier. From there, she could easily find out who communicated with Arthur. After questioning the people around and gathering eyewitness accounts about him, she concluded that this young man at the very least knew the Mysterious Swordsman—or perhaps, he was the Mysterious Swordsman himself.

She needed to confirm it for herself.

"Before I tell you that, show me your energy," she demanded.

Aldrian tilted his head.

"And why would I do that?"

Elena didn't answer but suddenly attacked Aldrian with her quick movement. Her sword was almost at his neck when Aldrian teleported to a location quite a distance away.

He looked at her expressionlessly, though truthfully, his heart skipped a beat.

"She almost got me. It's still too much to face an opponent of her caliber outside of a domain. I need to enter the nearest domain or create a new one," he thought.

Elena, seeing her target disappear, looked around and spread her senses to the maximum until she found Aldrian on the rooftop, looking down at her. Without a word, she dashed toward him with incredible speed. She attacked him with her sword again, this time with even greater speed. However, Aldrian was able to evade it by a small margin, using teleportation.

However, Elena kept tailing him, striking every time he appeared in one location. Aldrian, who could only evade at this point, noticed something different when he observed Elena's fast movements. He was still outside of his domain, so his strength and capabilities were much more limited.

But somehow, he noticed that Elena's movements slowed for a fraction of a second. Thanks to this, he was able to evade her attacks by a small margin each time they almost reached him. In that moment, he realized he had already comprehended something, without even realizing it. But what kind of laws had he comprehended?

As time passed and his strength grew, he began to perceive even stronger opponents' attacks as much slower in his eyes than before. However, facing someone at the Peak King stage, like Elena—who was one of the continent's geniuses—was still too much for him while he was outside his domain.

But he seemed to notice that her attacks slowed for a fraction of a second, allowing him to evade them. He knew this was the result of having comprehended something, though he didn't know when or how he gained such an ability.

"It looks like I need some time to figure out this new comprehension. Well, thanks to her, I can feel something I've never experienced while battling inside my domain," Aldrian thought.

He continued dodging Elena's attacks, which only frustrated her more. No matter how quickly she increased the speed of her strikes—whether it was a stab, slash, or chop—she couldn't land a hit on Aldrian.

Moments like this were when Aldrian could measure his limits outside of his domain. Based on his past battles outside his domain, he estimated that, at his current low Marquess stage, he could battle against a Peak Grand Duke stage or even a low King stage—using some tricks, of course.

Although Elena was irritated because none of her attacks could touch Aldrian, she was also shocked. She could sense that Aldrian was only at the low Marquess stage! With that level of cultivation, it shouldn't have been possible for him to dodge all of her attacks. Their cultivation gap was too wide—no matter how much comprehension he had or how much stronger he was, he was still a Marquess!

There was no way he should be able to outrun her in a battle of speed, even with his comprehension of space laws and teleportation technique.

The people nearby could only sense the energy from the attacks and catch fleeting glimpses of two figures, disappearing and reappearing in an instant. Many wondered what was happening and who was battling, especially with so many people from all parts of the empire gathered in the city.

"If you keep dodging, then—" Elena thought before attacking the space around Aldrian with a series of slashes.

When Aldrian was about to teleport again, he paused for a split second and then teleported into the sky, floating mid-air.

Once again, Elena was shocked. She hadn't expected Aldrian, at the Marquess stage, to be capable of floating in mid-air!

Aldrian looked at Elena with a calm expression, but he was also impressed by her quick thinking.

"She cut the space itself, preventing me from teleporting. If I keep pushing myself to teleport, I'll get caught by her slashes." he thought.

Elena, however, didn't stay stunned for long. She quickly attacked Aldrian while he was still mid-air. Aldrian teleported again, and Elena attempted to cut the space around him. However, Aldrian simply teleported to a location safe from her slashes, causing her to increase the speed of her attacks, now combining them with slashing space around him.

"You're truly impressive, and to be honest, I'm quite surprised that you can dodge my attacks and fly even though you're only at the Marquess stage. How did you do that?" she asked, all while continuing her relentless attacks.

Aldrian didn't answer her, staying focused as he dodged, knowing he couldn't afford to lose his concentration even for a split second—her attacks were precise and incredibly quick.

"If you can only dodge and dodge, then I don't think you're the one I'm looking for. You're too weak for someone who's supposed to be the mysterious swordsman. The mysterious swordsman must be someone else," she said, trying to provoke him with her

words. She knew that with Aldrian's unusual abilities, he would likely reveal something even more interesting.

At this point, it seemed Elena had momentarily forgotten her objective of uncovering the mysterious swordsman's identity. Instead, she seemed to be enjoying the act of attacking Aldrian. Her curiosity now extended beyond the name of the mysterious swordsman—she was genuinely intrigued by the true strength of this young man.

She had expected Aldrian to be affected by her provocation, but instead, she saw him maintaining a composed expression as he continued to dodge and teleport further away from her. This only heightened her desire to test his limits and see how he would handle this situation.

After a few more seconds, Aldrian suddenly stopped dodging, and Elena seized the opportunity to strike at his body with a slash.

Ting!

However, a spatial shield suddenly erected between her attack and Aldrian, causing a tremor in her hand. She hadn't expected such a powerful spatial barrier to appear so suddenly, blocking her strike! Elena was truly shocked. A Marquess stage cultivator had just blocked an attack from a King stage cultivator!

If it were anyone else, the spatial barrier would've shattered instantly, and the slash would've fatally wounded the target.

"It's only fair if I return the favor, right? Now, it's my turn," Aldrian said.

He then drew a peak Heaven-grade sword, and his aura and bearing shifted dramatically.

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Chapter 343: I Finally Find What I'm Looking For

Elena frowned at the sudden change in Aldrian. His bearing and aura had become much stronger, exuding a pressure that should not belong to someone at the Marquess stage. She felt shaken—why would a cultivator at his level emit such an overwhelming and stifling presence? It was beyond her comprehension.

What she didn't know was that she was already inside one of Aldrian's domains—one he had established upon arriving in this city, days before he attacked the Larson family. As a precaution, he had created several domains, and one of them happened to be here, just outside the city walls, where few people ever passed.

Aldrian lured her here not only because this was his domain, but also because he was curious about Elena and wanted to face her personally.

Aldrian suddenly disappeared from Elena's sight, making her eyes widen in shock. However, she quickly lifted her peak Heaven-grade sword and blocked the sudden attack coming from her left.

Tang! Whoosh!

The clash of swords echoed as a gust of wind swept through the surroundings. Elena had successfully blocked Aldrian's attack, but she gritted her teeth, shocked by the sheer power behind his strike.

"How can a Marquess-stage cultivator have this kind of power?!" she thought before finally channeling her energy into her sword and trying to push Aldrian back.

"Aahhh!!" she shouted as she managed to push Aldrian. However, taking advantage of her momentum, he lifted his sword, forcing hers upward. With a swift movement, he brought his blade down, aiming for her shoulder. If his sword struck its target, her arm could be severed.

Elena did not let that happen. She moved her body with extreme agility, her swift motions accentuating her curves, followed by a quick slash of her sword. Aldrian easily parried the attack and continued his relentless assault. Each of his strikes was powerful, forcing Elena to retreat while keeping her focus on the direction of Aldrian's blade.

His swordsmanship was unpredictable yet beautifully executed, with each movement flowing seamlessly into the next. There was no gap she could exploit, making it impossible for her to launch a counterattack. Forget counterattacking—she had to use a considerable amount of power just to block Aldrian's strikes, as each one was heavy and relentless.

"This can't go on. I will be defeated before I can unleash my technique,"

she thought.

Rumble!

Each time their swords met, the ground beneath them cracked and shattered. The trees nearby were swept by the powerful wind generated from their clashes.

After hundreds of exchanges, Elena finally spotted a small opening and instantly took advantage of it. With a sudden counter, she slid her sword along the ground, kicking up dirt and hurling it toward Aldrian's eyes, intending to blind him.

It was quite cunning, but she had to do something to break Aldrian's momentum. Aldrian simply tilted his head to avoid the dirt, but that was enough time for Elena to put some distance between them. Aldrian didn't pursue her and stood there, watching her with a smile.

"Truly impressive, Miss Elena. You are truly worthy of being called one of the ten great swordmasters of the continent. I have to say, your swordsmanship is exceptional. It must have a great origin, right?" he said.

Elena took a deep breath after the continuous assault by Aldrian, using the brief moment to recover, but she still answered him.

"It is great indeed, but you are truly a monster. Even without exuding your energy and relying solely on your pure swordsmanship and martial arts, you have this much power. And even I cannot find the gap in your attacks," she replied.

"So, mind telling me now, what is your real purpose behind this charade? Why are you searching for the mysterious swordsman and suddenly attacking me without any purpose?" Aldrian knew that, although her attack was full of power and directed toward the fatal parts of his body, which could be dangerous, she harbored neither killing intent nor ill intent.

From what he knew, she was more curious and wanted to make sure whether he was the real deal or not. That was also why he hadn't attacked her with his sword techniques to end the fight instantly. There was no better opportunity for him to have a sparring partner with techniques and movements he was unfamiliar with. She also seemed to have her own objectives, so he only needed to lure her here for a more private conversation.

Elena smiled at Aldrian as she pointed her sword toward him.

"Show me your energy first, and I will tell you."

"Well, since earlier, I never felt the need to release my energy to face you."

Elena felt irritated because Aldrian seemed to underestimate her, and although she hated it, what Aldrian said was true. His martial arts and swordsmanship were already powerful without him having to release his energy, but she, too, was only relying on her own swordsmanship and martial arts. The only time she released her energy was when she tried to create distance from Aldrian, right after their swords first clashed.

"Alright, I will make you take me more seriously so you can show me your real skills," she said before taking a stance.

Aldrian knew that Elena would finally use her technique, so he would need to take this more seriously. Elena's aura became more intimidating, and the surrounding air around Aldrian grew fragrant with a sweet scent that refreshed his mind. Her eyes became sharp as she attacked Aldrian again.

She suddenly lifted her sword, and it trembled slightly.

The Start of Spring

Suddenly, the energy around them began to take shape, forming blooming plum blossoms—tens, hundreds, thousands—the number increasing until their surroundings were covered with an overwhelming sea of blossoms, each one carrying a sharp sword intent. Aldrian was amazed by Elena's control, as each blossom held enough destructive power that he would have no hope of protecting himself if he were outside of his domain.

The scenery resembled the bloom of plum blossoms in the spring, a beautiful display of nature. However, behind those blossoms lay condensed power.

"Spread!" she swept her sword down, and as she did, each of the plum blossoms suddenly "exploded." Each petal, carrying sharp sword intent, shot out like projectiles, moving at a speed faster than the eye could catch.

Boom, boom, boom!

Each petal struck at Aldrian with such force that even the ground beneath them shook and cracked. Dirt and dust instantly engulfed Aldrian as the petals fell like rain, all aimed at the spot where he stood. The attack didn't stop until every petal had vanished from the air. The area, extending for about 500 meters, was reduced to dirt and dust, thick with sharp sword intent that could be felt all the way inside the city.

Elena looked at the dust that covered her sight of Aldrian, not letting her guard down as she kept her focus on his position. However, she didn't detect any movement, even after waiting for a few seconds, which left her confused.

"I didn't kill him, did I?" she thought.

Her question was answered a few seconds later when she heard a voice.

"What a powerful technique you have there, Miss Elena. Were you trying to kill me with it? I thought you only wanted to spar with me?" Aldrian said.

As the dust cleared, revealing Aldrian, Elena widened her eyes. The ground around him was utterly destroyed, filled with holes and sword intent, yet a half-meter radius around Aldrian remained untouched, completely clear of any destruction.

From her perspective, it seemed that Aldrian had created a spatial shield to protect himself, and that shield was strong enough to block her attack! She was truly amazed by it, as her attack just now could have injured a low Emperor Stage cultivator. Yet, he had not shown any of his energy, which disappointed her.

At that moment, she was already 70% sure that this young man was indeed the mysterious swordsman.

"Kill you with that? If you had, I would be disappointed," Elena said with a smile.

Aldrian smiled as well but then looked toward the city wall.

"It looks like our spar has already garnered a lot of attention, with many cultivators approaching this place," Aldrian said as he looked at Elena again.

"Then I will entertain your request so we can end this spar on good terms, right?" he added.

Elena tilted her head slightly, her eyes widening as they glimmered with admiration when she finally saw Aldrian unleash his golden energy, enveloping the blade of his sword. The golden energy shone beautifully, but beneath that beauty, Elena could feel the unique power emanating from it. It made her heart tremble, filling her with a deep sense of reverence.

"That's it, I found it," she thought.

She suddenly sheathed her sword and raised her hands in surrender.

"Stop, I finally found what I'm looking for, so can you stand down? I give up," she said.

Aldrian tilted his head.

"Who told you the spar is over?"

Elena widened her eyes.

"You—"

Suddenly, Aldrian slashed his sword, and a golden energy slash flew toward her with incredible speed. She unsheathed her sword, trying to block the energy slash, but she couldn't. The power behind it was too great for her to withstand.

Her sword was thrown from her hands, and the last thing she saw was the slash striking her before her vision turned to darkness.

Chapter 344: Elena's Story

Elena gasped as she opened her eyes and raised her upper body from a lying position on the bed. She checked her body, touching every part to ensure nothing was wrong. When she found nothing amiss, she sighed in relief.

Looking around, she noticed that she was inside a room. She frowned, wondering where she was. When she spread her senses, she was stunned to realize that she was back inside the city, now staying in a luxurious inn—the very same inn where she had met Arthur.

Just then, the door to her room opened, and Sylphia entered with a smile.

"You're awake. Aldrian brought you here after you passed out from getting hit by his technique. He already treated you, so you don't have to worry about any wounds," Sylphia said.

Elena remained silent for a moment before asking, "Then, is this his—"

"No, this is my room, so you don't have to feel uncomfortable. You can rest as long as you want," Sylphia interrupted, as if she already knew what Elena was about to ask.

"Wait, let me call him first. You probably want to talk to him right?" Sylphia added before stepping out of the room.

Elena sighed again as she stood up from the bed and walked toward the window, which wasn't far from where she had been lying. She looked outside, taking in the scenery of Larson City and the corpse of the Cerberus. Parts of its massive body had already been chopped off and cleared from the area. Even from where she stood, the remains of the Cerberus resembled a small hill.

Creak.

The door to the room opened again, prompting her to turn around. This time, she saw Aldrian entering with Sylphia.

"How do you feel? Is there any part of your body that still doesn't feel right?" Aldrian asked.

"No, I'm fine. Thank you for bringing me here, despite the fact that I already did something to offend you," Elena replied.

They then sat at a nearby table, which was designated for receiving guests. Sylphia also prepared drinks for them to enjoy.

"So, Miss Elena, you couldn't have been so bored that you traveled across the continent and tracked me down just to spar for fun, right? I'd like to know your true purpose," Aldrian said as Sylphia placed their tea on the table and took a seat beside him.

Elena, seemingly ready to tell her story, glanced at Sylphia before looking back at Aldrian.

"Ah, you don't have to worry about her. She's trustworthy—she's my lover, after all," Aldrian added.

Elena raised an eyebrow slightly but nodded in understanding.

"Before that, let me explain my origin first. Many people know me as one of the ten great swordmasters of the continent, but few know where I truly come from.

I was originally born into a barony family in the Atria Empire, located in a remote region near the border with the Buddhist Sect's territory.

My ancestors are said to have come from another land, but I don't know which territory they originated from before settling in the Atria Empire—millions of years ago."

"Now, for the main story. My family has a legacy treasure that we have always kept safe. This treasure is actually a piece of a beautiful, transparent scarf that has been with our family since the time our ancestors moved to the Atria Empire.

Although the scarf is incredibly soft and elegant, it is also astonishingly sturdy. At one point, we decided to test its durability. We tried everything to break it, but no matter what we did, the scarf didn't even get a single scratch."

"We don't really know the true purpose of the scarf. Aside from being a beautiful accessory, it could serve as a perfect shield, but it doesn't seem to have been designed for that purpose. In the end, we decided to keep it secured in a special chamber dedicated to protecting it."

"Now, why am I bringing up our legacy treasure in this conversation? Because that scarf emits an aura and a type of energy that is uncommon on our continent—something unlike anything else we've ever encountered."

Elena then paused but kept her gaze fixed intently on Aldrian.

"That scarf emits an aura and energy that, to me, feels the same as yours. Every time you leave behind traces of your energy, I get the same feeling as when I stand before my family's legacy treasure."

Aldrian's eyes widened. The same aura and energy as him? But then he quickly suppressed his excitement.

But still, could this be another clue to his ultimate origin and past?

He hadn't expected it to be exactly like his golden energy. It could be something similar to the Doria Imperial Family's legacy artifact, which actually radiates divine energy—something strikingly close to his own golden energy.

Elena might have mistaken the aura or energy from the scarf as the same as his golden energy because she couldn't differentiate between divine energy and his own. However, another question arose in his mind.

"How can she sense divine energy?"

Even the Doria Imperial Family, who possess the Crystal of Divinity and are surrounded by a dense concentration of divine energy, couldn't perceive it for what it truly was—they simply assumed it to be an exceptionally thick natural energy of heaven and earth.

So how could Elena sense it?

Aldrian narrowed his eyes. To him, there were a few possibilities, but he didn't want to draw any conclusions too soon.

"Now that you've told me all of this, what do you want me to do?" Aldrian asked.

"To be honest, I—no, my entire family—am deeply curious about our ancestors' true origins and how they came to possess such a treasure or artifact. Our cultivation technique and sword technique have also been passed down through generations, originating from our ancestors. Although our family is considered talented and powerful because of these techniques, we've never been able to cultivate them to their fullest potential."

"Because of the inheritance from our ancestors, which seems extraordinary, we want to uncover the truth about our origins. And you—with that same energy as the scarf and such unparalleled strength—are our only clue to unraveling this secret. If we can understand it, we might even unlock the full potential of our cultivation."

Elena paused for a moment before pointing directly at Aldrian.

"What I want is you."

But then, the room fell silent. Sylphia seemed frozen as she looked at Elena expressionlessly, while Aldrian raised his eyebrows. Sensing the strange atmosphere, Elena was momentarily confused, but then she realized what was going on. She blushed and waved her hands repeatedly.

"Wait! What I mean is that you are the only clue I have to uncover the secret of our family's origin and make us stronger. So, what I want is for you to help us in this regard," she said quickly.

Aldrian understood what she wanted. To be honest, he was really interested in the scarf and the origin of her family. He had a feeling that if he visited her family in the future, he would uncover something new about himself. He also had a few questions regarding her family that made the visit worth his time.

He looked at Elena, who was gazing at him with a hopeful expression, and smiled at her.

"Truly an intriguing story. Now you've piqued my interest."

Hearing Aldrian's answer, Elena's eyes brightened as her expression turned ecstatic.

"Then I will—"

"But I will not be visiting your family anytime soon. I still have a promise to keep with some people, so I cannot go to the Atria Empire yet. You'll have to wait until I finish my business," Aldrian said.

Elena was stunned for a moment but then nodded.

"I understand. I will wait for you until you're done with your business." She then stood up.

"I will stay at this inn so it will be easier to communicate with you."

She then stepped out of the room, but just as she did, she saw a man approaching from the opposite direction.

The man looked rather strange. Although his face was expressionless, his presence gave off an unpleasant vibe, as if he were irritated. He noticed her as well but only paused for a moment before continuing to walk past her.

She watched him curiously, feeling as though his gaze was somehow familiar.

Just then, the door she had exited opened again, and Aldrian and Sylphia stepped out. However, they froze upon seeing the man—who, in turn, also stopped in his tracks when he saw Aldrian.

Suddenly, Aldrian grinned at him.

"You arrived quite fast. I thought you'd get here much later. I'll give you applause for your accomplishment," Aldrian said, clapping his hands as if congratulating the man.

The man was actually Xin Haotian in his usual disguise. He gritted his teeth, a vein bulging on his forehead as he recalled what had happened to him yesterday.

Aldrian had actually teleported him to the middle of nowhere—inside the territory of the Doria Empire, near the border of the Vindas Empire! He had to fly to the nearest city with a teleportation station, which was really far, before he could make his way back.

He had only just arrived, and it really pissed him off! Snorting, he ignored Aldrian and returned to his own room.

Sylphia giggled as she watched Xin Haotian—Aldrian had really gotten him this time. Meanwhile, Elena observed their interaction and suddenly remembered where she had seen that gaze before.

"The Sword Saint!"

Chapter 345: Towards the Main Heavenly Direction Church

A few days later, in the morning at Larson City, Aldrian and his group stood in front of one of the city's teleportation stations. However, unlike usual, their group had two new members: Arthur and—

"What are you doing here?" Arthur asked Elena, who was following them, wearing a new robe that concealed her appearance.

"Why can't I? I also have business with Young Master Aldrian, so it's more convenient to follow him," she replied.

Arthur couldn't refute her, nor could he simply throw her out, as she had her own reasons. Besides, the place they were heading to accepted anyone without many restrictions—except, of course, devils.

When their number was called, they finally stepped into the teleportation portal to visit one of the holiest places on the continent.

The Heavenly Direction Church's territory is like any other, with its own hierarchy. However, the difference is that this territory is led by religious authorities, so the country's principles are based on their faith.

The Heavenly Direction Church is a religious group that directly worships the heavens. They believe that the power of the heavens is absolute and that all beings under it cannot be separated from its influence.

Many believe that beings who become cultivators are inherently opposed to the heavens because of their nature—they seek to grow stronger and free themselves from the natural laws that restrain them.

However, for the followers of the Heavenly Direction Church, cultivators are the ones who should abide by the heavenly laws, support the heavens in upholding divine order, and maintain harmony in the world.

The church's followers across the continent number in the billions, with the majority residing in the main territory of the Heavenly Direction Church.

Once Aldrian and the others stepped out of the teleportation portal, they were greeted by many people wearing white robes adorned with the Heavenly Direction's symbol, signifying their connection to the church. The holy aura and atmosphere of piety were almost palpable, leaving some members of Aldrian's group, who were visiting this territory for the first time, in awe.

"Welcome to the capital of the Heavenly Direction Church's territory—or you could call it the Holy Kingdom. This is what it's like in the Heavenly City," Arthur said as they exited the teleportation station.

Aldrian, also stepping into this territory for the first time, was similarly amazed. However, he also sensed something different—something he had never felt before when visiting a new land.

"I feel refreshed and powerful here, and also—" Aldrian walked forward and stopped once he stepped outside the teleportation station's area. He then turned his head toward the most conspicuous building in the city—a grand white Gothic-style structure adorned with the symbol of an eye shining upon the world, the emblem of the church. That was also the place where the pope resided.

"I feel like something is calling me there,"

Aldrian thought.

He felt the same sensation as when he thought about the bones in his vision—those that constantly called him to visit the center of the Everlasting Silent Forest. The pull here was even stronger, perhaps because he was much closer to the source.

"Let's go. I'll bring you to a place where you can stay, but my apologies—since this is a secret visit, I can only arrange accommodations outside the main church area. If this were an official visit, you would be taken to a special place inside the main church," Arthur said.

"It's okay. That's actually preferable since it's much less strict outside," Aldrian replied.

Arthur then led them to a place where they could stay without drawing the attention of church members. There were several inns managed by people outside the church, and Arthur brought them to one of them. Although it wasn't the best inn in the city, it was sufficient for their needs and helped them avoid unwanted attention.

Once they had settled in, Arthur turned to Aldrian and said,

"Let's go. We need to meet with the Saintess as soon as possible. I've already informed her about your arrival."

Arthur and Aldrian walked toward the main church wearing white robes, while the others remained at the inn. White robes were common in this place, allowing them to blend in without drawing attention.

Throughout the journey, Aldrian's eyes remained fixed on the main church, drawn by the mysterious calling he was experiencing.

As time passed and they got closer to the church, the sensation grew stronger, and his curiosity kept rising. Who or what was calling him?

"Before we arrive at the main church, I need to tell you that the church's internal situation isn't looking good right now. Our church is currently divided into two sides, something that has rarely happened in its history. At this moment, there are two prominent figures most likely to succeed the current pope," Arthur said through voice transmission.

"They are Cardinal Carsius Vilanix and Cardinal Daniele Valentino. Each has their own supporters within the church, but from my perspective, Cardinal Carsius Vilanix's side still has the upper hand with more followers. Normally, this wouldn't be a problem—differences in opinion exist everywhere, and the church is no exception. However—"

Arthur glanced at Aldrian as they continued walking.

"You told me that there seems to be a traitor inside the church, right?"

Aldrian nodded in response to Arthur's question. Arthur then looked forward again.

"After you told me that and informed His Holiness, the Pope, he launched a silent investigation under his direct supervision. You know, your words cannot be taken lightly since you are the prophesied one."

"At first, we couldn't find anything, but that changed not long ago when we discovered that one side was engaged in suspicious activities—ones that might be connected to the devils," Arthur said.

"And that side is Cardinal Carsius Vilanix's, right?" Aldrian asked.

Arthur was stunned but still nodded.

"That's right. How did you know?"

"I have my ways," Aldrian replied with a smile.

"Yes, he is the most suspicious right now, but due to his position and influence, His Holiness cannot take any drastic action at that time—which has proven to be a fatal mistake," Arthur said.

"Fatal? What happened?"

"In the near future, we may have to select a new pope—sooner than expected."

"What?" Aldrian frowned.

"His Holiness has suddenly fallen ill, and his condition is deteriorating rapidly. At this rate, it wouldn't be surprising if he passed away at any moment."

Aldrian widened his eyes.

"Since when?"

"More than a month ago," Arthur replied.

"Was it before the news spread about Wei Zhi, one of the Devils of Annihilation, being killed?"

Arthur paused, confused. Why was Aldrian bringing up Wei Zhi? Regardless, he still answered.

"Yes, this was before the news of Wei Zhi's death in the Rivas Grand Duchy. And I think I know who the killer is," Arthur said, glancing at Aldrian.

Aldrian simply responded with a smile.

"I see the bigger picture now. So, the election for the new pope is imminent, and with Cardinal Carsius Vilanix having much larger support, he is the most likely candidate, right? But the pope himself doesn't want that because of the Cardinal Carsius Vilanix's suspicious activities and possible connections to the devils," Aldrian said.

"Yes, you are correct. And I don't think this is just a normal illness. Both His Holiness and I believe that someone is behind this, using some kind of trick to make him fall ill. Of course, our main suspect is Cardinal Carsius Vilanix, but we have no proof of it or how he did it."

"I see. Yes, that's also a possible scenario. Anyway, I'll do my best to help you. To be honest, I already have a clue about Cardinal Carsius Vilanix, and this time, I might be able to catch him."

"Thank you, Young Master. Your help is greatly appreciated."

Arthur then led Aldrian around the main church's wall before entering a hidden underground passage that connected the church's interior to the outside.

"This passage was specially built for the Saintess to use in case of an emergency," Arthur explained as they walked through the dimly lit tunnel.

After walking for more than 15 minutes, they finally reached a set of double doors. Arthur carefully opened them, but not before spreading his senses beyond the door for a moment—he wanted to ensure that no one was on the other side.

Once the doors opened, Aldrian found himself inside a beautifully decorated room filled with holy artifacts. There was also a large bed standing near a giant window that offered a view of the garden outside.

He also caught the scent of a refreshing fragrance, one reminiscent of a woman, mixed with a much stronger holy aura than what he had sensed outside the church.

Arthur continued escorting him through the empty hallway and toward a vast garden filled with beautiful plants and flowers.

In the center of the garden stood a small canopy, providing shade from the sunlight. As they approached, Aldrian finally saw the back of a woman seated beneath it—a woman he assumed to be the Saintess.

Chapter 346: The Saintess of the Heavenly Direction Church

What Aldrian saw was the back of a woman with long golden hair, dressed in an elegant white gown that radiated a holy aura. She was alone, enjoying the garden. In fact, he had not seen anyone else in this area—the woman was the first person he had encountered since his arrival, making him certain that she was the Saintess.

However, he felt something from her— something he had experienced in similar circumstances before in the past.

"I feel a closeness to her, as if she is someone I already know."

There was also another detail that made him raise his eyebrows inwardly.

"She is in a wheelchair."

She was sitting in a wheelchair, which made him wonder if the Saintess was ill or if there was something wrong with her body. Cultivators rarely used wheelchairs unless they suffered from a severe illness that couldn't be easily cured. Such a sickness had to be incredibly dangerous to weaken a cultivator to the point where they struggled to walk.

"Your Holiness, I have brought Young Master Aldrian," Arthur said, slightly bowing toward the Saintess.

Hearing Arthur's voice, the woman turned her head—causing Aldrian to raise his eyebrows for real this time.

What he saw was a beautiful young face radiating serenity—just looking at her soothed his heart. Her sharp yet tranquil eyes, well-defined nose, and slightly red lips, combined with her simple yet elegant white dress, made her seem like an angel who had descended to the mortal world.

But then, he noticed something unusual.

Although her eyes appeared serene, they lacked focus and were pale in color, making him realize something.

"She is blind?"

If his assumption was correct, then the Saintess must have a special condition that left her both blind and in a wheelchair. What had caused her to end up this way?

Before he could dwell on it further, a soft and soothing voice interrupted his thoughts.

"Thank you for your hard work, Sir Arthur. I truly appreciate your help."

Her voice alone brought him a sense of peace—it was the kind of voice that made him feel as if simply speaking with her would be a serene experience.

"It's no trouble at all, Your Holiness. If there is nothing else, I will take my leave. Should you need anything, just call for me, and I will come to you immediately," Arthur replied.

"Alright," she answered before Arthur took a few steps back. As he passed by Aldrian, he sent him a voice transmission.

"As you can see, she has a special condition. I hope you can help her by keeping her entertained with whatever she wishes. This, I implore you."

Arthur's voice carried a deep sense of hope, to which Aldrian responded with a nod.

"Even if you hadn't asked, I would have done so anyway."

With that, Arthur took his leave, leaving Aldrian and the Saintess alone.

"Young Master Aldrian, my apologies. Due to my condition, I cannot receive you in a more proper manner," the Saintess said.

"It's alright, Your Holiness. I understand, and I don't find it offensive at all. In fact, I don't mind it in the slightest," Aldrian answered.

The Saintess smiled and gestured toward the seat across from her. An elegant chair stood before a small table, where two cups of tea had already been set.

"Have a seat, Young Master. It's not good to remain standing after taking the time to visit this place."

Aldrian took a seat, his curiosity piqued as he examined the Saintess's information.

Angelica Celestine

Age : 357 years

Race

: Human

Cultivation : Middle Duke

Cultivation technique : The Heaven's Blessing of the Chosen One

Attack techniques : -

Defense technique : Heavenly Sanctuary

Movement technique : -

Supporting technique : Heart of Clairvoyance, Heavenly art of Secret Domain, Domain of the Heavenly Judgement, Heavenly Blessing, Heavenly Sanctuary

Her information was a special case—unique, even. Her cultivation speed was extraordinary, yet this was the first time he had seen a cultivator without any offensive techniques. She seemed to be the type of a support cultivator, someone whose techniques focused on aiding others rather than strengthening herself.

"Young Master, thank you for coming to fulfill this lady's request. I hope you find the place I chose for our conversation to your liking," she said.

"It's okay, Your Hol—"

"Please, call me Angelica, Young Master. I would prefer it if we spoke more casually, at least when it's just the two of us."

"Alright then, I will call you Angelica from now on," Aldrian said with a smile, even though she couldn't see it.

"I really like this place. I enjoy places that bring me serenity, like this garden, where I can admire the beautiful scenery and feel the gentle breeze against my skin," he added while glancing around.

"I'm glad you like it, Young Master."

Aldrian then turned his gaze back to Angelica.

"Angelica, to be honest, I'm really curious about the reason you called me here. We've never met before, and you even went as far as keeping this conversation a secret from the other church members. And now that I've seen you in person, I don't think you called me here just because I'm 'the mysterious swordsman.' So, could you enlighten me, Angelica?" he asked.

Angelica, who had maintained her beautiful yet serene smile, look toward the direction where she sensed Aldrian's eyes.

"It's because I always see you in my visions and dreams," she said, still smiling.

Aldrian tilted his head, falling silent for a moment. The atmosphere grew awkward until Angelica realized the cause. Her face flushed a deep red, making her look unexpectedly lovely and endearing. Flustered, she frantically waved her hands.

"N-No! I don't mean it like that! Not in that way!" she stammered. "For me, those visions are signs that come from my special ability."

Aldrian smiled at her reaction, finding the Saintess incredibly cute and innocent. However, he remained focused on the topic at hand and caught the deeper meaning behind her words.

"Your specialty?" he asked.

Angelica sighed, taking a moment to calm herself before nodding.

"Yes, I have a technique that allows me to receive signs from the heavens about events I wish to perceive. For example, if I seek to uncover a secret that someone is trying to hide, I receive signs in the form of visions or dreams. The clarity of these signs depends on how significant or difficult the event is.

However, there are rare instances where I receive signs beyond my control, as if the heavens are showing me something without my intention. When this happens, it usually means that the event is truly important and has a significant impact on the world."

Angelica paused, a slight blush coloring her cheeks as she lowered her head slightly. Then, she continued,

"And I have seen signs of you—not only in my visions but also in my dreams while I sleep."

Aldrian finally understood. Since he had already seen her information, he knew that her technique must be connected to uncovering the secrets of the heavens—including glimpses of the future. He could only imagine the heavy price one must pay to cultivate such an ability. After all, there was no way someone could peer into the heavens' secrets without facing consequences.

"And maybe I know what kind of price Angelica has to pay for her ability," he thought, his gaze shifting between her eyes and her feet.

"I see. Then, what did I do in your visions? I'm truly curious," he said.

Angelica paused for a moment before answering. "I saw you surrounded by a golden light that made me feel really warm and secure. It's hard to describe, but I've never felt anything like that before. I couldn't see your face, but I knew it was you. Every time the tale of the mysterious swordsman appears, I always have these visions. And I also heard from Sir Arthur that you emit a golden light, so I'm confident it must be you."

"Your figure has been appearing more frequently, and it's become much more intense recently. The last vision I saw before asking Sir Arthur to invite you here showed the church in a dire situation—on the brink of collapse. And you were the only one who could save it. That's why I felt the need to bring you here to help us."

"Did Sir Arthur already tell you about the church's current condition?" she asked.

"Yes, he has told me," Aldrian answered.

"Then you must already know that one of the cardinals is involved in suspicious activities and seems to be connected to the devils, putting the church in danger of falling into the wrong hands. This cannot be allowed to happen, especially with the time of prophecy drawing closer."

"Wait, Angelica, there's something I don't understand about this situation," Aldrian said, looking confused. "Isn't your position essentially equal to that of the pope? Some might even regard you more highly. I'm sure His Holiness the Pope must be seeking your cooperation as well. If you were to declare that a cardinal has illicit ties to the devils, many would support you and work to restrain the traitor."

Angelica sighed, but she understood why he was asking that question—after all, that was how things *should* work ideally. But—

"If only it were that simple, young master. The problem is that many within the church know I am close to the pope, and the supporters of Cardinal Carsius Vilanix will not take my words kindly, even though I have already seen the signs about him. We need solid proof to bring him down."

Chapter 347: The Saintess's Past

Aldrian was taken aback. From the looks of it, the position of the Saintess did not necessarily guarantee the church members' loyalty to her words. However, he was not too surprised—after all, in any large organization, there were always factions with their own interests. If the Saintess's words conflicted with those interests, they would hesitate to follow her or even refuse outright.

"You're close to His Holiness, huh? Then just how close are you, for Cardinal Carsius Vilanix's faction to doubt the sincerity of your words on this matter? I would think you must be quite close for them to even question the genuineness of your technique." Aldrian asked.

Angelica paused for a moment, the silence lingering for another minute before her blind eyes seemed to drift into reminiscence.

"He was the one who found me when I was nothing and all alone," she said softly.

"I'm actually not from the Church's territory. A long time ago, I was just a normal little girl who aspired to be a cultivator, like many others in a small village in the southern part of the Doria Empire, near the border with Church territory."

"However, since birth, I have been in this condition and could only admire the stories of cultivators from others. How could someone crippled and blind become a cultivator?"

My family was just a humble farming family in the village, and they did not have the wealth to try and heal my condition. So, I had no choice but to bury my dream of becoming a cultivator. All I could do was admire them, knowing I could never be one of them."

"However, one night, I had a strange dream—a dream that gave me knowledge about my current cultivation. Of course, I didn't understand it at the time. I just thought it was a

fever dream or something. But from that day on, I kept having strange visions and gaining knowledge I had never known before. And it kept repeating for months."

"My parents never gave up on me, even after giving birth to a child in my condition. When I told them about my problem, they tried to find someone who could understand and explain it. Eventually, they came across someone they believed to be a cultivator who truly knew about my condition."

"However, unbeknownst to them, that man was a fraud—nothing more than a bogus healer. Worse, he was actually a member of a notorious bandit group known for their cruelty."

"When that man learned about the 'symptoms' I had, it sealed my fate—and that of my entire family.

At the time, I didn't know that things like this shouldn't be spoken of carelessly. In the cultivation world, extraordinary things sometimes happen, but revealing one's uniqueness can be dangerous. In my case, suddenly gaining vast knowledge from nowhere made me a target.

The man from the bandit group believed I had stumbled upon a great opportunity, gaining comprehension through some unknown means. And the foolish me... I even explained to him what kind of knowledge I had received, only fueling his greed."

"One night, that man's group came to our village and began a mindless slaughter, pillaging everything in sight. Our village, made up of mere mortals, could do nothing—we were like ants crushed beneath their feet. My parents—" Angelica paused for a moment before continuing.

"My parents, who fought so hard to protect me, were also killed by them. Once they were done with their crimes, they kidnapped me, planning to sell me to a slave house." Angelica paused for a moment again, as if trying hard not to remember that past, before she continued.

"Alone, I was consumed by an indescribable guilt. I had lost everything, and I was the only one who survived... All of this misfortune happened because of our ignorance.

I fell into despair, letting myself drown in my own guilt. Inside, I felt as if I had already died."

"However, during the journey to the slave house, I was saved by the people of the Church. That was the first time I met His Holiness, the Pope, and Sir Arthur. At that moment, I felt as if I had been rescued from hell itself, and it was the Pope's hand that pulled me out of that darkness. He protected me and brought me here."

"From that day on, he personally taught me everything about cultivation and how to control my 'symptoms.' It was then that I finally understood—I was the chosen Saintess, destined by the heavens. The Church had come to my rescue because they had received a divine sign that a new Saintess had emerged. However, it had taken them time to finally find me in that desperate condition."

"His Holiness became like a father figure to me after I lost my parents. So, you must know what others might think of that kind of relationship, right?" Angelica said.

Unknowingly, her blind eyes had already turned red, glistening with unshed tears. Realizing this, she quickly wiped them away.

"I'm sorry, young master. I suddenly showed you my unsightly side. It's just... remembering my past, I couldn't help but share this story with you."

Aldrian remained silent for a moment before finally speaking.

"My apologies, Angelica, but... may I hold your hand?"

Angelica, still wiping her tears, was stunned. She hesitated for a moment but eventually extended one of her free hands to Aldrian.

The moment he touched her hand, she trembled slightly. This was only the third time a man had ever touched her directly—besides the Pope and Sir Arthur. Because of her status and position, no other man else dared to touch her, fearing it would be an act of blasphemy.

With her eyes still slightly damp, a soft blush spread across her face, making her look unexpectedly endearing in the eyes of anyone who saw her.

Aldrian, however, did not concern himself with such thoughts. He could feel the softness of her skin, but his focus lay elsewhere.

"I'm truly sorry for unknowingly opening the wounds in your heart. I can't imagine the pain you've been through," Aldrian said, his voice filled with regret. Hearing her story, he didn't know why, but it made his heart ache deeply, and he regretted that she had to endure such suffering.

"I hope you never have to experience such pain again and that your life will always be filled with happiness," he continued, his words full of sincerity and warmth.

Then, gently, he channeled his golden energy into her, soothing her weary heart. At this moment, he wanted nothing more than to comfort her, to help her forget the pain of her past, and to bring her the serenity and happiness she deserved.

Aldrian's hope was supported by the heaven and earth, as his domain responded with a subtle sign—bestowing Angelica with the blessings of their lord. The cultivators within his domain sensed something unusual, but they couldn't quite put their finger on it, dismissing it as nothing more than a fleeting feeling.

The golden energy flowed through Angelica's body, and for the first time, she felt it directly. It was the same golden energy she had seen in her visions and dreams—the energy that radiated warmth and an unshakable sense of protection.

In an instant, her sorrow vanished, swept away like ashes in a strong wind. A deep serenity settled within her heart, a peace unlike anything she had ever known. The sensation was so soothing, so comforting, that she felt as if she could drift into sleep, completely enveloped by its warmth.

She could also feel many sensations from this golden energy, making her start to question what Aldrian truly was.

After a minute of channeling his energy, Aldrian finally stopped and offered her a warm, handsome smile. The sight made her blush as she shyly retracted her hand.

"Thank you, young master," she murmured in a soft voice.

"No problem. I'm just glad I could help," he replied with a gentle sincerity.

"Young master, my apologies if this question sounds rude, but... what exactly are you?" Angelica asked, her voice filled with wonder. "Your energy is so otherworldly. This is the purest holy energy I have ever felt—it's so divine that for a moment, I thought you weren't even human, but higher beings."

"Your energy fills me with so many emotions—reverence, obedience, worship, warmth, protection, affection... and others I can't even describe."

"No wonder the heavens sent me signs that you are the prophesized one, the one destined to save the continent from the looming darkness with your golden light. You are truly amazing, young master. And it is no exaggeration to say that you may be the only one who can save the Church from its predicament regarding the dwindling purity of our holy energy."

Aldrian looked confused for a moment, but then he recalled the issue plaguing the Church—their holy energy had been gradually tainted by foreign energy, weakening its purity and power over time. He had first learned about this from an archbishop he met in the Ivory Empire a few years ago.

"Who was he again? Ah, yes—Archbishop Ravin," he mused to himself.

"I'm just a human with my own unique circumstances and my own journey," he said simply, offering no further explanation.

Angelica chose not to press him for more details, not wanting to make him uncomfortable. Instead, she quietly sipped her tea.

"Angelica, you're the one who received the visions about the prophesized time, right? The prophecy that will determine the continent's fate?" Aldrian suddenly asked.

"Yes," she replied. "I received it without even needing to activate my technique, which means this is truly a monumental event. And those visions... they were the most terrifying I have ever seen." Her expression darkened slightly, a flicker of fear crossing her face.

Without hesitation, Aldrian reached out and touched her hand again. She was slightly stunned by the gesture but soon focused on his serious expression.

"What did you see in your vision?" he asked.

Angelica knew that Aldrian truly wanted to understand what she had seen. Knowing that the fate of the continent rested on his shoulders, she wanted to share it with him, but she hesitated, afraid of the possible consequences.

Sensing her hesitation, Aldrian gave a reassuring smile and spoke calmly. "Angelica, I know what you're thinking. But don't worry—I've already seen the horrors of the prophesized time with my own eyes. You don't have to fear that I'll break down or lose myself."

He met her gaze with a confident look. "I just need to know—are your visions the same as what I witnessed? Or is there more information that I need to understand?"

Angelica widened her eyes in shock. How could Aldrian have seen the future as well? However, after considering the kind of person he was, she could only sigh. He was someone surrounded by mysteries, so it wasn't surprising if he possessed a technique that allowed him to glimpse the future, just like her own.

After hesitating for a moment, she finally gave in.

"Alright, I will show you what I saw at that time."

Chapter 348: What She Saw

Although Angelica said she would show him what she saw, she blushed heavily as she lifted her hand toward Aldrian's forehead.

"Excuse me."

Aldrian simply smiled and even leaned slightly to make it easier for Angelica to touch his forehead. She then placed her hand on his forehead, and they both closed their eyes.

Inside Aldrian's mindscape, he was suddenly transported to another scene. From his perspective, he saw widespread destruction across the land. The sky had turned red, and death was everywhere as far as the eye could see. The aura of death and its lingering energy were so thick that he could almost feel them, even though this was merely a vision from Angelica's memory.

He saw the Doria Empire reduced to ruins, its capital city nothing but rubble. The same devastation had befallen other empires. In the Ivory Empire, the once-thriving forests were engulfed in flames, and several World Trees had already been destroyed, leaving only a few standing. Everything he saw was utterly horrifying, offering no glimmer of hope to anyone witnessing such a scene.

The continent was slowly consumed by darkness, little by little, until finally, Aldrian saw it again. In the sky, he saw *that* thing once more—a giant eye, so enormous that they seemed visible from across the entire continent.

That eye gazed down upon the land as if looking at mere ants. The pressure it exuded was overwhelming, even though the vision wasn't real. Yet, he had a feeling—that *thing* knew he was watching. The eyes seemed to focus directly on him.

He felt the unbearable pressure radiating from the being, and once again, a surge of rage ignited within him, like a spark growing into an uncontrollable fire. Unconsciously, he tried to unleash his golden energy, but before he could, a sudden burst of golden light erupted from afar, spreading at an incredible speed. The radiant light swept across the entire continent, as if trying to illuminate the land and purge all the darkness.

All the people nearest to the source of the golden light were saved from the darkness. The golden light spread across the entire continent, affecting everything—including Aldrian's vision—before he finally came back to his senses and awoke from the vision.

He opened his eyes and saw that Angelica had also opened hers.

She looked at him with a worried expression.

"That was the vision I received back then. Are you okay after seeing it?" she asked.

Aldrian smiled at her.

"That *thing* in your vision? If there is anyone who truly hates it and wants to destroy it, that person would be me. You don't have to worry. After seeing your vision, I can confirm that it is indeed the same *thing* I saw in someone's memory," he said.

When he read the memories of Duke Badin of Forgeheart Kingdom, he had seen the devils showing the duke a vision of the continent's future. For ordinary cultivators, merely looking at that *thing* would bring despair—and even trigger an inner demon—because they had witnessed something far beyond their ability to resist.

The devils took advantage of Duke Badin's negative emotions, amplifying them as they showed him the impending *thing* that would descend upon the continent. It was no wonder he betrayed the Forgeheart Kingdom—he had lost all hope that the continent could survive. In the end, he chose to serve the devils, believing it was his only chance at survival.

Hearing Aldrian's answer, Angelica was stunned but nodded in understanding.

"You are truly incredible, young master. After I saw *that*, I was sick for days and fell into despair for a long time before the second vision came to me."

"The visions I showed you were actually two combined into one. The first was the arrival of darkness, with no hope of retaliation, and the second was the golden light spreading across the land."

"Although I have already spread word about the prophecy and warned of its dangers, I still feel that it is not enough. But when the second vision came to me, that was the moment my hope was reignited. I can only pray that the light will prevail and give the continent a chance to survive."

"So please, young master, save this continent."

Angelica attempted to bow slightly, but she suddenly felt stuck—she couldn't move her upper body. It was as if something was holding her in place, preventing her from bending forward.

"Please don't bow to me—it makes me feel bad. Even if you weren't asking me to, I would still fight for the survival of this continent. I'm one of its inhabitants, after all. Besides, I have a personal grudge against that *thing*, so I'll gladly fight it," Aldrian said.

"Also, you are truly extraordinary for keeping your spirit intact after seeing that *thing*

. Not everyone remains sane after witnessing it."

Angelica smiled.

"Maybe it's because I've already experienced so many terrible things and horrifying visions that my mind is stronger than most," she said.

"Do you know what that *thing* is?" she added.

Aldrian sighed. "I don't know, but whatever it is, that *thing* doesn't belong in this realm. That's all I can say for certain."

Something beyond the comprehension of this world's cultivators, something even the Heavenly Demon had faced only reinforced his belief that *it* was not of this realm. He was convinced that the *thing* came from a higher realm, a being beyond their understanding.

"I see," Angelica said.

Aldrian took a sip of his tea, savoring the taste before turning his gaze back to Angelica.

"Anyway, let's talk about something else. The prophesized time can wait—we should focus on the more immediate problems first. How is His Holiness, the Pope's condition?" he asked.

Angelica sighed. "His condition is worsening each day. Even though I have been using healing techniques on him, there has been no improvement at all. He is already under observation by our best physicians, but according to their examinations, his body seems to be rejecting holy energy. His dantian is leaking energy, and he cannot replenish it.

There are no other abnormalities—no signs of poison or anything unusual detected in his body. This is truly a bizarre condition, and even I cannot understand it. This is the first time I have encountered something like this," she said.

Aldrian frowned. From the symptoms, it resembled what Emperor Durand experienced when he was cursed. However, if it were a curse, Angelica's techniques should have been able to break it.

If it wasn't a curse or poison, then what was happening?

"I have to check on him myself," he thought.

"Angelica, can I visit him? I want to check on him myself—maybe I can do something about His Holiness's condition," he said.

Angelica's eyes brightened for a moment, but then she frowned.

"I think that will be quite difficult. The Pope's chamber is heavily guarded, and your arrival here is supposed to be a secret. If your presence becomes known to other members of the church, it will cause trouble for you—especially with people from Cardinal Carsius's faction. One of the reasons I invited you secretly was to avoid drawing his attention.

If I invited you openly, he would come up with a thousand reasons to make things difficult for you. That would be detrimental to both you and us," she explained.

Aldrian could sense the frustration in her voice, but he still smiled. For him, this kind of problem wasn't something that bothered him.

He then closed his eyes and decided to establish his first domain in this *Holy Kingdom*.

Truthfully, he had been curious about this territory ever since he arrived—especially after entering this place. He felt fresher, stronger, as if he had received an invisible boost from somewhere. But how? He hadn't even established his domain here yet, so why did he feel this way? That was the question he wanted to find the answer, and perhaps his domain would help him uncover the truth.

As soon as he formed his domain, a surge of power rushed into him, sharpening his perception. True to his suspicions, there was something special about this land—something different from any other place he had been. The moment his domain took root, he felt a surge of power unlike any other he had experienced before.

"*Why is this one different?*" he wondered.

Intrigued, he wanted to explore it further, but he knew that would have to wait—there were more pressing matters to deal with.

He expanded his senses throughout his domain, which now encompassed the headquarters of the Heavenly Direction Church, and began searching for the Pope. It didn't take long. He soon located a chamber guarded by church knights. From their emblems, they seemed to be a different group of knights from the Paladins led by Arthur.

Inside, he found an old man lying on a luxurious bed, sweat dripping from his forehead. Though his eyes were closed as if trying to sleep, his face occasionally twisted in pain.

When Aldrian examined the old man's information, he confirmed it—this was indeed the Pope.

"You don't have to worry, Angelica. I can visit his place without anyone knowing," he said reassuringly.

Angelica tilted her head in confusion, but before she could ask anything, she suddenly felt a shift in her surroundings. A strange sensation washed over her, and when she spread her senses, she was utterly shocked—they were already in the Pope's chamber!

She now found herself beside the Pope's bed, with Aldrian standing next to her.

Sensing the sudden presence of others, the Pope's closed eyes slowly opened, his gaze falling upon the two figures before him.

Chapter 349: The Real Cause of the Pope's Illness

Aldrian finally saw the Pope in person. Many stories had been told about the current Pope.

Pope Claudius Maximus was a man full of compassion and love. His generosity toward the weak was well known, as he frequently gave to the poor and interacted with them. Because of this, he was popular among the populace and admired by many, including nobles.

Among the nobles, he also had a good relationship with many across the continent. Although, not all nobles had a great relationship with him due to differences in their principles, but he was still respected for his great leadership in the church.

Moreover, he was also one of the strongest cultivators on the continent, which was enough to earn respect from the masses, regardless of their background.

"Angelica?" The Pope's hoarse voice resounded as he looked at her. Then, his gaze shifted to the figure standing next to her.

"Who is this?" he asked, trying to get up with difficulty.

"Be careful, Father. Don't push yourself too much," Angelica said, wanting to help. However, Aldrian had already stepped forward, supporting the Pope by holding his upper body.

Once the Pope was settled against the headboard, he continued looking at Aldrian, who bowed slightly.

"This one here is named Aldrian, Your Holiness," he said.

"Father, he is the prophesied one! He is the one who will shine his light upon the continent!" Angelica said, her tone filled with encouragement.

Pope Claudius widened his eyes. When he looked at Aldrian again, he instinctively tried to stand, but Aldrian gently held him down, ensuring he remained in bed.

"Don't, Your Holiness. Don't push yourself just because I'm here. You can simply consider me a normal guest visiting you," Aldrian said with a smile.

"How can I do that when the one who bears the burden of the entire continent stands before me? If not for my condition, I would gladly assist you personally for as long as you remain in this territory."

"Your Holiness, if I may ask, what happened to you? How did you end up like this?"

Pope Claudius was stunned for a moment, then let out a sigh.

"I myself do not know. Suddenly, I felt a wave of weakness wash over my body, and before I knew it, I had fallen ill like this. It feels as if my body is being torn apart from the inside, and I can't circulate my energy, which prevents me from cultivating. Each day, it worsens, and I can feel my cultivation foundation beginning to weaken. It would not be surprising if my cultivation suddenly collapsed at any moment... and killed me."

"Father..." Angelica's voice carried both worry and sadness, while Aldrian frowned.

"Did you consume anything suspicious before you fell ill?" Aldrian asked again.

"No, I don't think so. I spent most of my time in seclusion before suddenly falling ill, and I didn't consume anything—not even a single drop of water. So, I don't believe the source of my condition comes from something I ate or drank." Pope Claudius then looked at Aldrian.

"Do you already know about the current situation in the church regarding the divided factions?"

Aldrian nodded.

"Then you must know that there is someone I have been keeping my eye on. Though I have no proof, I cannot help but suspect that he is behind this, using some trick to cause my condition. If we think about it logically, there is no one else who stands to benefit from my illness as much as he does."

"I understand, Your Holiness. I have already obtained proof of his involvement with the devils, and I plan to help the church cleanse the filth that clings to it," Aldrian answered.

Pope Claudius and Angelica widened their eyes.

"That is good. If you already have strong proof, then I will assist you to the best of my ability. I will summon Arthur and the Paladins to support you. Among the church's knightly orders, the Paladins are the most trustworthy, as they serve directly under Angelica and me. I will grant you command over them to aid in this mission."

"That is reassuring, Your Holiness. I will make sure to resolve this problem as soon as possible," Aldrian responded.

"For now, let's focus on treating your condition, Your Holiness. If this was caused by Cardinal Carsius Valenix, we cannot allow him to succeed," he added.

The pope let out a sigh.

"That is also what I want, but the problem is that my condition is truly bizarre and cannot be explained. I believe Angelica has already told you about the state of my body and how strange my illness is."

"Yes, Your Holiness, but let me examine you myself. I believe I might find something that no one else has noticed."

The pope smiled and slowly moved his thin, fragile hand toward Aldrian.

"Then I will leave it to you, young Aldrian. But if you don't find anything, you don't have to feel discouraged." He had already prepared for the worst anyway, and he would not be disappointed even if Aldrian couldn't cure him.

Aldrian simply smiled and touched the pope's hand. At first, he spread his senses throughout the pope's body, examining him inside and out. True to what the pope and Angelica had said, he did not find anything abnormal within his body. However, he noticed that the pope's dantian was in a damaged state and constantly leaking the energy he had stored for so long. His meridians also appeared dry, as no energy was flowing through them.

"Your Holiness, can you try to draw in the energy of heaven and earth right now? I want to see what kind of strange effect is preventing you from doing so," Aldrian said.

The pope nodded and did as Aldrian asked. Though his body had already deteriorated, he could still attempt it.

When the pope tried to circulate his cultivation technique, Aldrian clearly saw the energy of heaven and earth begin to approach him. However, once the energy entered his dantian and transformed into holy energy, it instead began "attacking" his dantian and meridians. The sudden assault made the pope grimace in pain, forcing him to stop his cultivation immediately.

Seeing this abnormality, Aldrian frowned, while Angelica, worried, gently touched the pope's leg—still covered by a blanket—in an attempt to comfort him. Aldrian then turned his gaze toward the pope.

"Your Holiness, did you know that when you try to draw in the energy of heaven and earth, and it enters your dantian, the moment it transforms into holy energy, it begins attacking you? Essentially, your own energy is harming you."

Hearing Aldrian's words, Pope Claudius and Angelica were shocked. Seeing their expressions, Aldrian found it understandable that they had been unaware of this. After all, the "attacking" energy was nearly undetectable without a level of sensitivity as high as his. At this moment, within his domain, no one possessed greater sensitivity to energy than he did.

To others, and even to the pope himself, it seemed as though he was plagued by an unknown illness that prevented him from cultivating. Such a condition could have been caused by poison or a curse, yet neither was detected within the pope's body.

However, when Aldrian examined him, he sensed something strange. Although he couldn't determine the exact cause of why the pope's own energy was attacking his body, he felt an odd sensation deep within his heart and soul as he spread his senses through the pope's body.

"It feels like I'm scanning something, yet I cannot see it,"

he thought.

"If that's the case, then..." Aldrian activated his karma laws and observed the pope once more. What he saw made his frown deepen, and he was inwardly shocked.

"This is some kind of curse! A curse so powerful that it has essentially turned the pope's entire body into the curse itself."

What Aldrian saw shocked him—strange black threads were wrapped tightly around the pope's entire body, entangling his meridians and dantian. It was a deadly curse, so complex and powerful that even his comprehension of curse laws couldn't fully grasp it. This made him wonder—who could have placed such a curse on the pope, and how?

A curse that couldn't be detected, one so strong that even the Saintess's techniques couldn't break it...

"No wonder the holy energy inside His Holiness is attacking his own body. The energy sees its own host as a threat—because his body itself has become the curse."

"There is someone with a curse technique even stronger than the Envy Devil... But who?" Aldrian thought solemnly before thinking of one person.

"The Devil Lord?"

His expression turned serious as he looked at Pope Claudius.

"Your Holiness, I now know the exact cause of your illness. You have been cursed—an extremely powerful curse at that."

Hearing Aldrian's words, both the pope and Angelica were stunned.

"A curse? Are you certain, young master?" Angelica asked, her voice filled with disbelief.

"Yes. It's incredibly subtle—to the point that without a deep comprehension of karma laws or curse laws, it would go completely undetected. Fortunately, I saw it clearly when I used my karma laws. And my apologies, Your Holiness, but because of this curse... your body itself has already become the curse. It's no wonder your holy energy is attacking you."

The pope's eyes widened in shock before narrowing as he let out a weary sigh.

"If this is truly a curse—an exceptionally powerful one, so strong that even Angelica's techniques couldn't break it—then there is no way to remove it with our current methods. The only way to lift it would be for the caster to undo it themselves," he said in a tired voice.

"Father..." Angelica's eyes reddened slightly, sorrow welling up as she listened to his tired voice and the unfortunate fate that had befallen the father figure before her. She looked at Aldrian, about to ask if he could help the pope, but before she could speak, she heard Aldrian's voice.

"Don't be discouraged. Who said this curse can't be broken?"

Chapter 350: The Battle of Karmic Nature

The pope was stunned, but then he finally realized the subtle meaning behind Aldrian's words.

"Can you break the curse?" the pope asked, his voice trembling.

Angelica also looked at Aldrian with a hopeful gaze, causing his heart to soften. He felt strangely affected by her expression, unable to stop himself from thinking about her.

"There must be something about her that keeps affecting me." As he reflected on his experiences, a thought crossed his mind.

"Have we met in a past life?"

The idea seemed plausible, given how unusual his emotions had been since meeting the saintess. However, he pushed those thoughts aside for now and focused on the problem at hand.

"I will try my best, Your Holiness. Since I can see it, I will make sure to break it," Aldrian said reassuringly.

He then injected his golden energy into the pope's body. As the energy began to spread, the pope felt an incredible sensation coursing through him. A warm, comforting feeling enveloped him, making him momentarily forget the pain and weakness that had been plaguing him.

The pope's eyes trembled as he sensed the golden energy beginning to spread through his vital organs, especially his dantian. He could feel it attempting to heal the damage in his dantian and meridians, but he also noticed something unusual—something he had never felt before.

Each time the golden energy touched certain points in his vital organs, he sensed a subtle tugging sensation. He knew this was something invisible to the naked eye, reacting upon contact with the golden energy.

True to his guess, Aldrian, using his karmic laws, observed the threads of the curse binding Pope Claudius's body as they were being attacked by his golden energy. However, unbeknownst to the pope and Angelica, Aldrian was inwardly shocked when the curse made contact with his golden energy.

"The curse is actually trying to bind me and corrupt my golden energy!"

This curse wasn't just alive—it could spread to anyone who tried to destroy it. As Aldrian continued channeling his golden energy into the pope's body, he glanced at Angelica. She didn't seem to be affected by the curse, even though she had said she had already tried using her technique on the pope in case he was afflicted.

Yet now, the curse was actively attacking him, trying to ensnare him as well.

"Why is it attacking me? What makes me different from her?"

"Is it feeling threatened by my golden energy and deciding to strike back?" Aldrian wondered. But then, inwardly, he scoffed.

He increased the intensity of his golden energy, and the threads wrapping around the pope's organs and body finally began to break apart little by little. The curse had no hope of resisting—his golden energy was a force that could subdue anything in its path.

The golden energy continued to destroy the curse at a considerable speed in Aldrian's eyes, but he didn't relax. Instead, he kept pushing his golden energy further, determined to eradicate it completely.

At the same time, in the Devil Territory, the Devil Lord was in the middle of his cultivation. With his eyes closed, he sat on his cultivation mat, an altar-like structure surrounding him.

Suddenly, he opened his eyes and frowned, sensing a disturbance in his soul. But then, his expression shifted—his eyes widened slightly in astonishment, a rare sight from him.

"Someone is destroying the Anathema Laws in that old man!"

Closing his eyes once more, he began circulating his devil energy, channeling his power into the Anathema curse he had placed on the pope. Though it drained his energy—since such a high-level curse was beyond his natural ability—he still persisted, injecting more of his power to reinforce and strengthen the curse.

Back to Aldrian—just as he was happily destroying the curse inside the pope's body, the "purification" process suddenly began to slow down. The golden energy's momentum was being hindered, as if something was trying to stop it.

Aldrian frowned at the unexpected resistance. But when he observed the threads of the curse connected to the void and saw foreign karmic energy empowering it, he immediately understood the cause.

"I see... So you noticed the curse being destroyed and decided to fight back. Do you want a battle? I'll give you the battle."

With that thought, he intensified the flow of his golden energy. A radiant golden hue began emanating from his body, illuminating the surroundings. Angelica and Pope Claudius looked at Aldrian in amazement, awed by the divine brilliance enveloping him.

At this moment, what Angelica and the pope felt from Aldrian was the aura of a higher being—an overwhelming presence that demanded reverence. Their hearts trembled as they sensed the change in his golden energy. Unlike the earlier warmth and compassion, this energy now carried an undeniable sense of authority and divinity.

The golden energy radiated a message of absolute supremacy, as if declaring that Aldrian was someone to whom all should bow.

Pope Claudius, sensing this shift in both the energy and Aldrian himself, immediately realized that something happened in the process of dispelling the curse. However, seeing that Aldrian remained composed and had not shown any signs of distress, he chose to remain silent and observe rather than react hastily.

Aldrian himself, while battling the other side, was gaining new comprehension and experience. For the first time, he was engaging in a battle of karmic nature, and to him, this was an invaluable opportunity. He realized that someone was actually capable of resisting him in this regard.

His golden energy was overwhelmingly powerful—normally, any curse would be instantly obliterated without much resistance. But now, for the first time, he could feel a real counterattack from the other side.

At this moment, he was certain—the one opposing him was the Devil Lord. He had no doubt about it.

Many claimed that the Envy Devil was the strongest curse user among the devils, but Aldrian disagreed. This curse was far beyond anything the Envy Devil could conjure. No, comparing them was absurd—it was like comparing heaven and earth. The sheer malice and strength of this curse were on an entirely different level.

From the events of the Cerberus, Aldrian had already begun to doubt the Devil Lord's origins—or his true identity. But after this encounter, he was certain: the Devil Lord was connected to something, or someone, beyond the realm of this world.

If the Devil Lord possessed an ability strong enough to slow down his golden energy, then he had to be more powerful than anyone on this continent had ever expected.

Yet, Aldrian was not discouraged. Instead, he smiled. He found this situation truly interesting. He felt an intense curiosity, eager to uncover the Devil Lord's secrets.

All of the Devil Lord's knowledge and abilities, which surpassed common understanding of this realm, only fueled Aldrian's desire to face him as soon as possible.

However, he pushed down that kind of thinking as quickly as it came. Underestimating the Devil Lord was the same as inviting his own defeat. A being who had lived far longer than him, armed with all kinds of unknown tricks, was nothing short of dangerous. The last thing Aldrian wanted was to be caught off guard because he had underestimated the Devil Lord.

Aldrian continued injecting his golden energy, forcing the curse to retreat. Even with the Devil Lord's empowerment, the curse still couldn't overpower the relentless golden energy attacking it.

"Maybe I can give the Devil Lord a little shock therapy with this," Aldrian thought with a smirk.

He then channeled all of his domain power into his body. His aura and presence became even more overwhelming, and those closest to him—Angelica and Pope Claudius—were the ones most directly affected by the change.

Now, what they sensed was something beyond human. Standing near him, they felt as if they were unworthy, as though Aldrian was a being that should not exist in this world. The transformation was extreme, yet they steeled themselves, reminding themselves that this was the man of prophecy—the one who would decide the fate of the continent.

After fully connecting his domain across the continent—something he rarely did—he could feel that the sheer magnitude of his power was far greater than before. The last time he had done this was during his battle against the Greed Devil, but now, he had grown much stronger, and his domain already covered nearly half the continent.

If he were to unleash his full power upon someone, he could only imagine the sheer destruction it would cause.

At that moment, he decided to use it to strike the Devil Lord—launching a karmic attack empowered by the full force of his domain. He was eager to see what kind of reaction the Devil Lord would have.

"Break!"

He pushed his golden energy forward, merging it with his karmic attack. Instantly, the curse was obliterated, and the pope was freed. Aldrian watched as the black threads were completely destroyed, and when he saw his karmic attack creeping through the threads connected to the other side, a wicked smile formed on his lips.

"I hope you like my gift, Devil Lord."

At that moment, the Devil Lord was still trying to empower the Anathema technique he had placed on the pope when he suddenly opened his eyes and shouted,

"BREAK!"

He suddenly felt something in his mouth—blood spilled from the corner of his lips. He wiped it away with his finger, his eyes glinting menacingly.

"What a terrifying karmic attack. If I hadn't severed my connection with the Anathema in that old man, I would have died instantly. A direct attack on my soul with that much power would have been the end of me," he thought.

"It's him. It has to be him. There's no one else on this continent who could break the Anathema laws."