

The Shining Star Above The Heaven

#Chapter 411: The Two Emperors' Conversation - Read The Shining Star Above The Heaven Chapter 411: The Two Emperors' Conversation

Chapter 411: The Two Emperors' Conversation

At this moment, Emperor Herman is receiving an unexpected guest—one who makes him question whether something is amiss. Sitting before him is Emperor Durand Doria of the neighboring Doria Empire.

They are inside the study, with Prince Claude and Prince Hector standing behind their respective fathers. The two princes look at each other as if they are long-time rivals finally meeting again, an invisible spark igniting between them.

However, their fathers are the complete opposite. Emperor Herman watches Emperor Durand with a strange look, while Emperor Durand, seemingly unfazed, simply enjoys his tea.

"Ah, at least you served me good tea, old man. I suppose my visit here isn't too bad," Emperor Durand said after taking a sip.

Emperor Herman frowned at him. "You always like to beat around the bush, huh? Just get to the point, old man. Why are you here? This isn't like you. The last time you set foot in this palace was before your enthronement," he asked in an irritated tone.

"Come on, we're just a couple of old folks waiting for our turn to return to the embrace of Mother Earth. Let's enjoy the moment and not rush things," Emperor Durand replied before taking another sip, sighing in satisfaction.

Emperor Herman silently watched him for a moment, then decided to sip his own tea, letting himself indulge in its warmth.

"Anyway, I came here to talk about young Aldrian," Emperor Durand finally said after a brief silence.

Emperor Herman raised an eyebrow slightly. "Young Aldrian? Which Aldrian?"

Emperor Durand scoffed. "Don't play dumb with me. I know you've already met him and spoken with him for some time. Who else could I be talking about besides the one who just caused another wave of big news in the Atria Empire? I'm certain he also mentioned me to you."

Emperor Herman fell silent for a moment before asking, "What do you want to talk about?"

"It's about his future. With how boldly and openly he's acting, it's only a matter of time before his true background is uncovered. I believe he knows this and has planned it himself. But you see, he is someone destined for greatness—a member of the younger generation who will replace us old folks. However, because of his origins, this could deepen the rift between our two empires, which are already locked in rivalry. That's why I want to discuss how we should handle this matter."

However, Emperor Herman frowned at Emperor Durand's words.

"What are you talking about? Why would his origins affect our two empires?" he asked.

Now it was Emperor Durand's turn to frown, but then something clicked in his mind.

"This old geezer still doesn't know Aldrian's true family!"

Did that mean Aldrian hadn't told him yet?

Suddenly, he realized he had let something slip that he shouldn't have. He quickly masked his surprise with a smile at Emperor Herman, but inwardly, he was cursing himself. He should have kept quiet! If Aldrian truly hadn't revealed his lineage to Emperor Herman yet, then this was an opportunity. He could use this to bring Aldrian closer to the Doria Empire—to ensure he had a stronger bond with his mother's side.

Unfortunately, he had already let it slip. Now, he could only try to control the damage.

"Nothing. I just remembered that young man won't affect our empire due to certain circumstances. Anyway, I have to go—I still need to—"

He stood up, intending to leave, but before he could finish his sentence, he sensed the imperial palace's protective barrier being raised. The sudden activation shocked many inside the palace. What had happened? Was the palace under attack?

Emperor Herman gripped an artifact used to activate the protective barrier, one designed to prevent anything from entering or escaping the palace. This barrier was strong enough to withstand several strikes from a peak Emperor-stage cultivator! Due to the immense energy required, it was rarely activated. Yet now, Emperor Herman had done so, making it clear just how serious he was.

"You're going to tell me everything about young Aldrian—his circumstances, his background, and anything else you know, old man," Emperor Herman said with a smile, but his expression was rigid. "Until you do, you won't be leaving this place. And if we have to fight like in our younger years, I don't mind."

Inwardly, he felt left out by Aldrian. Aldrian had already told him that he had connections with the sovereign families of every territory he stepped into, but he had never spoken about his own family or origins.

Now, from the looks of it, the old man from the Doria Empire seemed to know the truth. And from the way he spoke, Aldrian's origins might even have something to do with his own empire! Did Aldrian tell this old fart but not me?!

He would trap this old man here until he spilled everything he knew about Aldrian!

Meanwhile, sweat was already rolling down the foreheads of the two princes. If these two truly fought, the destruction would engulf the entire city! They wanted to step in and persuade them to calm down, but before they could, they watched as Emperor Durand sighed and turned back, settling himself on the sofa once more.

"You are truly a decisive and stubborn old relic."

"And you are a cunning old fossil."

They jabbed at each other before Emperor Herman, now sitting upright in a serious posture, spoke again to the emperor in front of him.

"I want to hear about young Aldrian's circumstances and everything about him," he said, emphasizing each word.

Emperor Durand looked at Emperor Herman for a moment before sighing and waving his hand.

"Alright, alright, don't look at me like that. Actually, I figured out young Aldrian's origin because of my sharp mind. I merely put the pieces together after noticing a few hints—ones that came from Hector's investigation and from how a certain someone acted toward Aldrian."

With that, Emperor Durand began recounting the moment he had deduced Aldrian's true origins.

He recounted the sequence of events—how Aldrian arrived at the war, saved Irene Rivas, and so on—all of which pointed to a connection between Aldrian and Irene Rivas. He only shared the key details, but in the end, he had been able to deduce Aldrian's true family origins.

Upon hearing Emperor Durand's explanation, there was no other reaction but shock from everyone in the room. Even Prince Hector, despite his own investigations, had not known the full truth—only Emperor Durand had pieced it together. As for Emperor Herman and Prince Claude, they seemed to have heard something unbelievable.

A son born from the union of the Flamecrest family and the Rivas family's successor?

What kind of twist is this?

But then, Emperor Herman felt a small sense of relief. At least Aldrian hadn't directly told Emperor Durand himself. If he had gathered enough information, just like this old man, he too could have deduced Aldrian's origins. *Yes, that would be the case...*

Yet another thought struck him.

If Aldrian was the son of both the Flamecrest and Rivas families... then which family would he choose to stand with in the future?

Suddenly, he understood exactly what was going through Emperor Durand's mind when the man had tried to leave earlier. His own reaction to Aldrian's potential impact on their two empires made it clear and that old fox had been trying to escape before revealing too much.

This old man wants to take advantage of the situation himself!

If Emperor Herman had remained unaware of Aldrian's origins, he would have lost his momentum in the future when the truth inevitably came to light. Once Aldrian's true family was revealed to the world, that cunning old bastard would have made sure Aldrian leaned more toward his mother's side than his father's.

A knowing smile crept onto Emperor Herman's face as he took another sip of tea. Somehow, it tasted even more delicious than before.

"Ah, what a nice tea. Don't you think so, old man? You truly are a cunning old fox," he said, setting his cup down with a smirk.

Emperor Durand gritted his teeth at his own foolishness. If only he hadn't jumped to conclusions and mentioned Aldrian's origins to this old bastard!

"Anyway," Emperor Herman said, shifting the conversation, "before we discuss Aldrian and our two empires, the bigger concern is how these two families will react. Given their history, once the news breaks that Aldrey and Irene have a son born outside of marriage, I can already imagine the storm that will follow."

Emperor Durand sighed. "That's true, but I believe I understand what kind of plan young Aldrian has in mind to prevent any major setbacks and that is his reputation."

Emperor Herman tilted his head for a moment before realization dawned on him.

"Ah, yes. With him being the famous 'Mysterious Swordsman' and one of the strongest cultivators on the continent, I doubt anyone would dare object to Aldrey and Irene's

union. Perhaps the only issue now is how those two old men from Flamecrest and Rivas will react."

"Yes, Grand Duke Rivas and Grand Duke Flamecrest have firm personalities, but I think with someone like young Aldrian, they will have no choice but to agree to the union of their descendants. The only real problem is how they will react when Aldrian has to choose which family he will inherit."

"What are you talking about? The choice is obvious."

"Ahahaha, yes, that is—"

"Flamecrest family."

"Rivas family."

They spoke simultaneously, falling into silence immediately after.

"What do you mean? Of course, it has to be the father's family—"

"No, that would be too arrogant of you to—"

They engaged in a heated debate, each throwing out arguments to support their case. Prince Hector and Prince Claude could only facepalm at their fathers' relentless bickering, but they also understood the weight of the discussion. Aldrian's choice would determine the future of their respective empires, whichever side he chose would rise to unprecedented heights!

While the two emperors continued their debate over Aldrian, in another location, news of the Mysterious Swordsman had also reached a different audience. At this moment, a man and a woman sat face to face, seemingly engaged in conversation after hearing the latest reports from the Atria Empire.

Chapter 412: Reaching His Parents (R-18)

A middle-aged man read the scroll and looked toward the woman in front of him.

"What do you think? He's making another big wave and this time in the Atria Empire. His story is always grand and causes a sensation across the continent," he said.

He was Grand Duke Rivas, sitting in the garden of the Rivas mansion, admiring the scenery with his beloved daughter, Irene. After hearing the full report about her son, Irene couldn't help but feel proud. However, worry quickly followed—Aldrian had essentially declared war on the second prince of the Atria Empire and involved himself in the civil war.

"Why does my opinion matter? I truly don't know what's going through his mind or fully understand what he wants to do," she replied.

Grand Duke Rivas looked at her strangely but still accepted her answer. Ever since he parted ways with Aldrian, he had continued to hear about his achievements and strength in the Vindas Empire. The chaos following the purging of devils after the Larson family incident had also left him astonished.

He had heard that Aldrian slew a massive, unidentified beast with a cultivation at the high emperor stage in a single slash and helped the fallen Duclan family seek justice.

All of this had also prompted the Avandi imperial family to launch a large-scale purge of the devils—something he believed had the young man's hand in it as well.

He had long realized that Aldrian was the mysterious swordsman, after the repeated, obvious hints from the past while the young man was still in the Doria Empire. This only added to his amazement.

His opinion of Aldrian was no longer as biased as it had been before meeting him, and his wariness toward him had also diminished. From what he knew, Aldrian did not share that kind of relationship with his daughter. However, a thought crossed his mind—what if that young man could be paired with her?

Aldrian was the most capable young man he had ever met, and in his eyes, the most worthy candidate to be his daughter's spouse.

Even His Majesty, the emperor, spoke highly of Aldrian every time they met. It seemed as though the emperor was deliberately trying to build a positive image of Aldrian in his mind—and it worked, as he also trusted the emperor's judgment.

He knew what kind of person the emperor was. If he didn't like someone or didn't deem them worthy, he would never speak so highly of them.

This made him wonder—why did Emperor Durand always praise Aldrian in front of him? He even felt that the emperor was subtly pushing him to bring Aldrian and Irene closer together, almost as if he were giving them his blessing to become a couple.

When he thought about it, the idea wasn't actually bad, but he still needed to evaluate the young man's character. Their last brief meeting hadn't been enough for him to truly assess him. He also still wondered about the meaning behind Aldrian's question regarding his daughter and the words he had spoken afterward.

"Your Excellency, between your daughter and your pride, which one is more important?"

"I hope Your Excellency will stay true to your words and remain steadfast in the future."

Even now, he had yet to grasp the true meaning behind Aldrian's question.

While the grand duke was lost in thought, giving Irene a strange look as he pondered Aldrian's words, Irene herself was thinking about the future. From the way things were unfolding, Aldrian was growing bolder, and she knew it was only a matter of time before his origins were revealed. And if he dared to act so openly and boldly, then he must know it too.

At this moment, she felt an overwhelming urge to go to Aldrey, to seek comfort for the uncertain future that awaited them. She was still afraid—afraid that if their relationship became public, their families would oppose their union. She wanted to talk to him, to be reassured. But she also wanted to go to Aldrian, to stand beside her son and calm her anxious heart.

"Do you want to go to the Atria Empire, my dear?"

Her father's sudden question caught her off guard, leaving her momentarily stunned.

"Why are you asking me that? Why would I go to Atria?" she replied, feigning disinterest.

However, Grand Duke Rivas continued to look at her strangely.

"I don't know, maybe to meet him and release some pent-up emotions?"

Irene knew exactly what was on her father's mind, and it frustrated her. But when it came to pent-up emotions, she did agree—just not in the way he assumed. She wanted to meet Aldrian, not for the reason her father imagined, but simply because she missed her son.

"What pent-up emotions? I really don't know what Father is talking about," she answered, maintaining her act.

"I'm really confused by you," he said. "You always speak positively about him and seem to care for him, but at the same time, you don't seem interested in him in that way. So, what exactly do you consider him to be?"

"Don't tell me he's your best friend or something like that. Cut the nonsense. The way you act isn't how someone would describe a friend," he added, waving his hand dismissively.

Irene wanted to pull her hair and shout, "*That's your grandson!*" But, of course, she held back. Instead, she simply smiled at him and replied,

"He is indeed good to me and one of the few people I can trust, but I don't see him in a romantic way."

Grand Duke Rivas could only sigh, completely unable to understand his daughter in this regard. What was the true nature of the relationship between Irene and that young man? To him, it felt like an unsolvable puzzle.

Irene simply kept her smile and chose to ignore her father, letting him continue pondering. She did her best to keep their true relationship a secret—at least until the right time came.

The news that reached the mother, of course, also reached the father. After finishing his daily training, Aldrey read the report and couldn't help but feel proud of his son. With Aldrian acting so boldly and openly this time, it seemed he was ready to make himself more recognizable—paving the way for their reunion as a family once again.

Although he felt a bit nervous, he eagerly anticipated the day when he could finally be together with his small family again.

"Your friend is truly remarkable. His strength is no joke—I'd wager that even if the entire grand duchy's army went up against him, he would still emerge victorious," a voice came from behind him.

Grand Duke Flamecrest approached and stood beside him.

"Building a relationship with that young man could bring great fortune to our family. You'd better make sure to keep that young man as your friend," he said.

"Of course, Father. Even without you telling me, I will maintain our relationship—and even strengthen it," Aldrey answered.

"Well, he is your grandson, after all," he added in his mind.

"Good, good." Grand Duke Flamecrest nodded in approval.

"We need to bring him closer to us. With a mutually beneficial relationship, I believe he will be a great help to us in the future."

The father and son continued discussing the topic for some time.

Similar discussions on this topic were taking place all across the continent. With the mysterious swordsman finally acting openly in front of so many people, his features were starting to become known, causing a sensation among the populace.

As night fell and news of the mysterious swordsman once again spread across the continent, the man himself was occupied with his own affairs. Tonight, his focus was on bringing pleasure to his woman while satisfying his carnal desires.

"Ah... ah... yes... yes... there."

Pak, pak, pak.

The moans of a woman and the rhythmic sound of skin meeting skin echoed within one of the rooms in the Caritas City mayor's mansion. The sounds were so erotic that they could ignite anyone's desires, but Aldrian had already sealed the entire room with a soundproof formation.

He pounded Sylphia in the missionary position while sucking on her neck. Her entire body was truly enticing, and after the changes she underwent after her dream with that mysterious woman, she had become even more mature and irresistibly sexy. It only fueled his desire to keep going until she fainted.

Pak, pak, pak, pak.

"Ah... yes... Aldrian."

"Sylphia, my dear, take my seeds."

"Ah... yes... give it to me... together."

Pak, pak, pak, pak.

Aldrian's thrusts grew faster as he neared his limit. Unable to hold back any longer, he leaned close and whispered in her ear,

"Here you go."

As he released inside her, he sealed her lips with a deep kiss.

"Mmpphh."

Spurt, spurt.

They climaxed together, her womb filled with their mixed essence. With his shaft still buried deep inside, none of it could escape. Aldrian continued releasing for several moments before finally withdrawing his weapon. Feeling satisfied, he collapsed lazily on top of her. He kissed her collarbone, her breasts, her nipples, and finally her lips before letting her rest.

"Your technique keeps getting stronger, dear. At this rate, I really don't know if I can keep up with your tempo," Sylphia said between ragged breaths.

"I'll give you more stamina if you're about to faint, so don't worry," Aldrian answered with a smile, hugging her body before burying his head in her plump breasts.

"Do you want to torture me with pleasure?" she asked in a playful tone.

"Well, maybe," he said while sniffing her neck, making her giggle.

"Anyway, I want to discuss something with you," Aldrian said. "I really want to hear your answer so I can decide my next step regarding a certain matter."

Hearing the slightly serious tone in his voice, Sylphia knew this was important to him. He had mentioned earlier that he wanted to talk about something, and it seemed the time had finally come. She glanced down at his face, which was nestled against her chest, meeting his gaze.

"What is it?" she asked.

"I know you've been talking a lot with Baek Jimin lately. Her boldness must be one of the results of that, and you don't seem to mind her behavior toward me at all. So, tell me, my love, what's on your mind? What exactly did you say to Baek Jimin to make her so open and daring with me?"

Chapter 413: Her Reason (R-18)

Sylphia smiled at him and stroked his hair with her soft hand. She did not answer immediately but continued gazing into his eyes, full of love. She kept doing so for a few moments, and Aldrian did not seem to mind as he patiently waited for her response.

"I just told her everything about you and our interactions, and I also gave her a slight push to help her be more honest with herself and understand herself better," she finally said.

"She is like an open book to me, with her expressions and emotions. It's as if I'm looking at my past self, and I can't bear to see her like that. Her situation is even worse because of the challenge in front of her, namely, you and our relationship. I believe you know what I mean, right?"

"Sylphia, are you sure you want to do this? Do you realize what you're doing?" Aldrian straightened his body and sat up, moving away from her. "You just openly declared that I'm available for Baek Jimin to approach and pursue. You understand what that means, right?" He sat on the bed, looking directly into her eyes.

Sylphia continued smiling as she turned her head to gaze at the ceiling.

"Since childhood, I never really had friends because of my status. All of my so-called friends weren't truly my friends, as my position always prevented me from interacting normally with those my age. Even when they tried to stay close to me, their families would always reprimand them, reminding them that I, as a princess, must be respected. That created an invisible wall between us."

"To get rid of the loneliness and boredom I experienced, I liked going on adventures and meeting new people. In disguise, I could act and speak normally, even forming relationships more naturally."

"However, all of that still felt fake because I had to use a different identity to build those relationships. If they found out who I really was, their attitude would change completely. It's truly saddening, but I can't blame anyone. It's simply my fate—to be a princess of a great empire, where everyone treats me with excessive respect."

Sylphia then looked at Aldrian.

"When I joined your journey, I considered Eleine my friend—don't get me wrong—but I still felt that something was off about her. It was as if she kept a respectful distance from me, even though she tried to be warm and act close. Now I understand why. With her character and upbringing as a retainer of the young miss of the Rivas family, she would unconsciously maintain that distance, even if she tried to get closer to me."

"But then we met Jimin. Although our first meeting wasn't exactly amicable, as time passed, we found common ground and grew closer. Even after she learned my real identity, she wasn't affected by it and continued treating me the same. Maybe it's because she's also the daughter of the matriarch of a great sect, so my status wasn't a problem for her."

"For the first time in my life, I felt what it was like to have a true friend—someone I could talk to without worrying about status. We could joke around, have conversations for hours, and take strolls together like any normal friends. Before I even realized it, she had already become my best friend, and the thought of losing her in the future made me feel reluctant."

"As her best friend after spending years together, how could I not understand what she felt when she saw us in a relationship? How could I not recognize the longing in her eyes?"

"As her best friend, how could I leave her with those feelings while I enjoyed my own happiness? I don't want to lose my friend, so I began to deeply think on this matter."

Sylphia then touched Aldrian's face, stroking his cheek with one hand.

"As an elf and a princess, to be honest, this was quite difficult for me. But I really don't want to lose my only friend—my best friend. After long consideration, I finally decided to

push her closer to you, to help her build her own relationship with you. Because I know she's different from us. After all, she only joined us later. We've known each other for years, and our feelings for one another have been developing for a long time."

"I can only pave the way for her to reach you, but in the end, the decision is yours to make."

"I'm sorry for not discussing this with you beforehand, for not considering your opinion on the matter. But I truly believe this is the best way to keep my friend from leaving me in the future—to prevent a crack in our friendship."

Sylphia then released her hand from Aldrian's cheek.

"If you feel offended by my presumptuous actions, you may punish me. I will gladly accept it as I step on you—"

Before she could finish, Aldrian suddenly took her hand back to his face and kissed it warmly.

Sylphia was stunned for a moment before she smiled at him. She let him continue as his kisses trailed from her hand along her arm, up to her collarbone, then to her neck, and finally to her lips. She could only surrender to his touch, feeling aroused once again as Aldrian kissed her so tenderly.

"You are truly a great woman," Aldrian said after kissing her lips. He cupped her face with both hands, pressing his forehead against hers as he closed his eyes. "To think about your friend to the point of being willing to share what is yours with her... And with your status as an elf, it must have been an especially heavy decision. Yet, you still chose this path."

"As for my opinion? Why would I be offended by what my woman did when all she wanted was to maintain a harmonious relationship? I'm not offended in the slightest. In fact, it feels like you're offering me a feast, and I'm grateful for the meal," he said in a joking tone, making Sylphia giggle.

"You're truly a scoundrel. Jimin is not a meal!" she said with a smile.

They remained in that position for a few moments before he finally opened his eyes and looked directly into hers.

"So, I'm asking you one last time for confirmation, my love. Do you truly not mind sharing your man with another woman? This will bind us forever," he asked, his gaze unwavering.

Sylphia, still smiling, nodded without hesitation.

"I, Sylphia Evergreen, as your first wife, have already decided to let you take Baek Jimin as your second. I know this will take time, but please give her a chance and open your heart to her. Maybe, in time, you will come to feel the same way about her as you do about me."

Aldrian's lips curved into a smile, and without a word, he kissed her again. This time, the kiss was much deeper as his tongue invaded her mouth, and she willingly let him explore. She could only try to match his movements as his tongue eagerly sought to claim every part of her mouth.

After half a minute of intense kissing, their arousal grew intense once more, and Aldrian felt like he couldn't hold back any longer. Still locked in their kiss, he positioned his dick at her entrance, preparing to enter her again.

But just as he was about to push forward, her hand suddenly wrapped around his dick, making him shudder. He broke the kiss slightly, looking at her in surprise.

"With Baek Jimin joining me, I won't have to face this beast alone. I don't think I'll be able to satisfy you by myself in the future. When the time comes, Baek Jimin can share my 'burden.'"

Hearing Sylphia's words, Aldrian suddenly imagined himself pounding Baek Jimin's sexy body, her exotic beauty unmatched as she displayed an expression of pure ecstasy. The thought alone made his already hard dick throb even more.

Without warning, he grabbed both of Sylphia's hands and pinned them above her head. His breath was hot with desire as he gazed down at her, eyes burning with lust.

"You're truly playing a dangerous game here, my love. Do you realize that?" he said, his breath slightly ragged as he struggled to hold himself back.

But Sylphia was undeterred. Instead, she moved her naked body seductively, as if deliberately tempting him.

"And what will you do about it?" she asked with a sensual smile.

That was the final straw. Something in Aldrian snapped. In an instant, he flipped Sylphia around, making her back face him. Without hesitation, he thrust into her from behind.

"Ah!" she moaned in ecstasy as Aldrian entered her, his dick stretching her vagina once more.

Like a wild beast, he pounded into her hard and fast, his movements relentless. He pinned her hands behind her back, refusing to let her escape the overwhelming pleasure. His body pressed firmly against hers, keeping her completely trapped beneath him.

Pak, pak, pak, pak!

"Angh... dear... angh... angh..." Sylphia's moans were like fuel to his desire, driving him to keep thrusting at the same intense pace. She wanted to move, to wriggle away from the unbearable pleasure, but she couldn't. Aldrian's grip on her hands, combined with the weight of his body and the force of his thrusts, left her utterly helpless under him.

Pak, pak, pak, pak!

"Ah, Sylphia, my dear, your body is truly delicious," he murmured into her ear, his breath hot against her skin as he continued to thrust into her relentlessly.

"You belong to me, and you'll experience this pleasure forever."

His seductive words sent a shiver down her spine. Her body reacted instinctively, her vagina tightening around his dick, gripping him desperately. A sudden, overwhelming wave of pleasure built inside her, and before she could stop it—

Spurt!

Chapter 414: His Plan for Today

Aldrian kept pounding Sylphia, bringing both of them pleasure throughout the entire night. He sent her to the heavens many times, and by the time morning came, she no longer had the energy to move. Even lifting her fingers felt exhausting, and she remained still in lazy contentment.

Her body was covered in hickeys and bite marks, as if Aldrian wanted to claim every inch of her. Her smooth skin glistened with sweat, and from her vagina, a mixture of his seeds and her own fluids slowly trickled out.

However, despite how exhausted Sylphia seemed, Aldrian showed no signs of fatigue. He simply gazed at her sleeping face with a warm smile while leaning against the headboard. He had already covered her naked body with a blanket and placed a gentle kiss on her forehead. She only hummed softly in response, keeping her eyes closed, wanting nothing more than to rest after their exhausting, passionate night.

Aldrian then stood up, making no effort to cover his bare body—one that could make any woman drool with desire. He cleaned himself in the bathroom and changed into fresh attire before stepping out of the room, ready to execute his next plan for the day. Today, he would loosen his muscles with another "battle," and the destination?

"It's time to visit the Rosalind family," he thought.

The Rosalind family had already invited him through Elena, and today, he planned to visit them. After obliterating the massive army that had marched on Caritas, he had read

Marquess Xavier's memories and learned that the second prince intended to rush the war, aiming for a swift victory on the other side of the empire before focusing his entire force on him.

Unfortunately, Marquess Xavier did not know the details of the second prince's plan or the schemes of that named Grand Duke Donovan in the capital. However, even without reading Xavier's memories, Aldrian already knew the second prince must be plotting something, especially since he had sent an envoy and offered him a high divine grade artifact.

He would be a fool to be swayed by the second prince's persuasion and compensation without considering that man's true nature.

He doubted that the second prince had given him a high divine grade artifact out of guilt or a desire to mend their relationship. It was far more likely that the prince had already prepared a trap, one he was confident would succeed once Aldrian stepped into it.

Aldrian merely scoffed at the prince's efforts to protect that traitor, even after witnessing his strength, the man still did not submit. He truly wondered what made the prince so determined to keep that man by his side, to the point of risking his own position in the civil war.

By the time Aldrian stepped out of the mansion, the sun had already risen fully above the horizon, and the city was bustling with morning activity. In the blink of an eye, he vanished from sight, reappearing inside a restaurant in the city.

Since Aldrian had taken control, the city's economy had not only stabilized but thrived. It was livelier than ever, as this was the first place to be truly safe from the effects of the civil war.

Inside the restaurant, many customers were already lined up, waiting for their food to be served, while waiters moved back and forth, attending to them.

Aldrian had been using a trick he had devised ever since sketches of his face began circulating. Although the sketches were not a perfect match, they still bore a close resemblance to him, making him more cautious about being recognized.

His method was simple, he "bent" the light around himself and masked his presence using the darkness laws. The result was that no one could see him, even if he stood right in front of them. Even if someone were to look directly into his eyes from mere inches away, they would perceive nothing, as if he simply did not exist.

The weakness of this technique was that he could still be physically touched, meaning people could bump into him. However, they would only feel confusion, as there would be no one visible in front of them. Aldrian had already conceptualized a way to fix this flaw, but he had yet to implement it.

Additionally, if a cultivator's senses were powerful and sharp enough, they could still detect his presence, because his technique only rendered his physical form invisible, it did not make his entire existence "disappear."

He then walked toward the kitchen, where the sounds of cooking filled the air. There, he finally spotted Old Man York. The elderly chef was in the middle of preparing a dish while giving directions to his employees, who had returned after the liberation of Caritas. Naturally, Old Man York welcomed them back eagerly, as he needed all the manpower he could get to handle the restaurant's growing crowd.

Aldrian was truly impressed by Old Man York's work. As far as he could see, the man was not only an efficient cook but also a strong leader in the kitchen. He waited patiently for Old Man York to finish cooking and plate his dish before finally sending him a voice transmission.

"Sir York, get ready. We will depart now for the Rosalind family."

Old Man York was stunned by the sudden voice in his mind. He glanced to his left and right, searching for Aldrian, but saw no sign of him. Confused, he wondered where Aldrian could be hiding.

"I'm right at the corner of the kitchen, beside the assistant cook chopping onions, but you won't be able to see me. I'll reveal myself once you move to a more private place," Aldrian added.

Old Man York turned toward the direction Aldrian mentioned, but just as he had said, there was nothing there. Amazed by Aldrian's technique, he quickly composed himself and instructed his most trusted employee—one who had stood by him even during difficult times—to take over his duties for a while. Then, he left the kitchen and headed toward his private workroom in the back.

As soon as he entered, he was stunned to see a figure suddenly appear in front of him like a ghost.

"You truly amaze me, young master. I couldn't detect you at all," Old Man York said, his respect for Aldrian growing even more after learning about his true identity and the feats he had accomplished.

As for today's matter, Aldrian had already informed him about their destination the day before, so he wasn't surprised by the sudden departure.

"Well, it's just a small trick. Anyway, are you ready? I want to depart for the Rosalind Barony right now," Aldrian asked.

"I'm ready anytime, young master. I don't need to bring anything extra since everything I need is inside my storage ring," Old Man York replied.

"Do you want to cover your face since you're returning to the Rosalind Barony?"

"No, I don't think it's necessary. Even if the people who knew me back then are still working there, they wouldn't recognize me. After all, it has already been thousands of years."

"Alright then, I'll take us to the teleportation station."

Aldrian pulled up the hood of his robe and put on a mask to conceal his features. Though his appearance might seem suspicious and draw some attention, it wouldn't immediately make people assume he was the mysterious swordsman. After all, many travelers used masks and robes to hide their identities.

Just as Old Man York prepared to move, he suddenly felt his surroundings shift. Before he could even process what had happened, he was shocked to find himself already standing in the teleportation station plaza. The people nearby were momentarily startled by their sudden appearance, but after a brief glance at Aldrian and Old Man York, they quickly returned to their own business.

Old Man York hurried to follow Aldrian, who was already walking toward the station operator. When Aldrian stated his destination, however, the operator shook his head in response.

"We can't establish a connection to the teleportation station in Rosalind City."

"Why?" Aldrian asked.

"It's been more than a month since we last managed to connect with Rosalind's teleportation station. Based on the information we've gathered, we assume that the station there has been deactivated. Perhaps due to the blockade, they've finally decided to conserve resources by cutting off the teleportation station to maintain their stock of energy stones," the operator explained.

Aldrian frowned. This was not good—the situation was more serious than he had expected. It seemed he would have to rush there.

"Where is the nearest place we can teleport to from here that's close to Rosalind City?" he asked.

"That would be Ardima Town, about 5,000 kilometers away from Rosalind City," the operator replied. "But be careful—Ardima is already under the second prince's control. Anyone arriving from this location will be subjected to heavy inspections and investigations the moment they step into town. You might even face prosecution there."

The operator, seemingly aware of what was going through Aldrian's mind, gave him a strange look.

"If you think you can reach Rosalind City from Ardima, forget it," the operator said. "The entire area around Rosalind is blocked off by the second prince's forces, making it impossible for anyone to pass through. If you try to force your way in, it would be the same as directly challenging the second prince's authority—you could be executed on the spot. So you'd better think twice before taking action. Unless you're someone like our new city lord, breaching that city is out of the question." His tone carried a hint of pride.

Hearing this, Aldrian raised an eyebrow before smiling behind his mask.

"Well, this is exactly what I'm looking for—the place where the second prince's troops are stationed," he thought. After all, he could tear their army apart.

"It's fine. Take me to Ardima. And thank you for the information," Aldrian said as he paid not only for the teleportation fare but also rewarded the operator for his explanation.

The man sensed a few peak-level energy stones inside the small pouch Aldrian had given him. Ecstatic, he quickly bowed his head.

"Thank you."

After handing over the energy stones, Aldrian took a seat in the waiting area with Old Man York, waiting for their turn. He glanced at the old man, noticing the concern on his face after hearing about the situation in Rosalind City.

Aldrian simply patted the old man's shoulder.

"Don't worry, Sir York. I'll help the Rosalind family out of their situation, it's also a good way to disrupt the second prince's plans."

Old Man York smiled and nodded.

"Thank you, young master."

Not long after, their number was called, and they finally departed for Ardima.

Chapter 415: Short "Fight"

Like the operator of the teleportation station in Caritas said, once Aldrian and Old Man York came out, they encountered a heavily guarded checkpoint. If a traveler arrived from a territory believed to still be under rebel control, they would be taken elsewhere for interrogation.

Aldrian and Old Man York had to wait in line for their turn. When Aldrian's turn came, a soldier asked,

"Where are you from?"

"Caritas," Aldrian replied.

The soldier tasked with writing the note paused for a moment and looked at Aldrian. He could only see Aldrian's eyes, as his hood and mask concealed his features. He frowned at the mention of Caritas—right now, that place was drawing a lot of attention, and this was the first time someone had traveled from there to this location. Usually, people went to Caritas, but this one had come from there instead.

"Step aside. You will be guided to a separate room for further investigation," the soldier said.

"Can we not make this more difficult? I have business to attend to, and I'm in a rush. Can you make an exception just this once?" Aldrian said in a calm voice.

The soldier's expression darkened. "Are you challenging me?" he asked, then released his aura at the viscount stage, trying to pressure Aldrian. "You will obey the rules here, or you will be instantly apprehended for disobedience to authority."

The commotion was already drawing attention, and people began to distance themselves from Aldrian and Old Man York, afraid of getting caught up in the situation. Nearby soldiers also turned their attention to the scene and started approaching Aldrian. Even a duke-stage cultivator, whom Aldrian assumed to be their commander, was making his way toward him.

"You, surrender yourself and follow us to our designated location," the commander shouted at Aldrian and Old Man York. He approached Aldrian with an intimidating posture and firm strides. Once he stood in front of Aldrian, he grabbed his shoulder, attempting to drag him away—but to his shock, he couldn't move Aldrian's body even an inch!

Seeing that the soldiers were also starting to approach him, Aldrian remained calm.

"So be it," he said.

The commander, still in shock, was momentarily confused by Aldrian's words. Then, a sudden weightless sensation spread through his arm, the one gripping Aldrian's shoulder. When he realized what had happened, his eyes widened in horror. His arm had already fallen to the ground, severed from his shoulder.

"Arrghh!"

The commander screamed in pain as his severed hand fell to the ground. He tried to staunch the bleeding with his other hand while simultaneously backing away from

Aldrian. For a split second, he caught sight of Aldrian's hand, now covered in sword energy, and instantly realized that was what had severed his limb.

Suddenly, his heart began pounding heavily. Before he could comprehend what was happening, he was already trapped in an illusion—one that showed him the horrors of darkness. His heartbeat thundered once more before darkness engulfed him entirely, pulling him into its depths.

In reality, his body collapsed to the ground, unconscious and twitching.

All the soldiers were shocked by Aldrian's sudden attack and prepared to retaliate, but before they could act, they all collapsed to the ground. With his duke-stage senses, Aldrian precisely targeted only the troops from the second prince's faction, sparing the innocent.

Using a combination of karma and illusion laws, he touched every single one of the targeted troops with his karma laws, and trapping them in an illusion that forced them into unconsciousness.

However, not all of them merely fainted. A few with much lower cultivation levels, unable to withstand the horrors of the illusion, unfortunately died from heart failure. Aldrian paid it no mind as he continued spreading his illusion to every soldier he could sense.

His duke-stage senses right now could extend nearly a thousand kilometers, allowing him to cover the entire town in no time! His sensory range was comparable to that of a king-stage cultivator!

His senses swept through everything, detecting every presence in the area. The moment they reached the troops from the second prince's faction, the soldiers collapsed like stringless dolls.

Then, at last, Aldrian sensed higher-level cultivators—several grand duke-stage experts. Though they were also caught in his illusion, their situation was far better. Aldrian could tell they had the ability to break free and immediately moved to assess the town's situation.

There were three of them, and upon sensing Aldrian's probing presence, they began heading in his direction. In response, Aldrian ascended into the sky, floating effortlessly as he prepared to face the approaching grand duke cultivators with his own eyes.

The onlookers, witnessing his flight, initially assumed he was at the king stage. However, when they sensed his aura, they were shocked—he was still only at the duke stage!

To use flight at the duke stage... Was he not afraid of exhausting his energy reserves, especially when he seemed to be inviting trouble?

Now, everyone wanted to know—who was this bold individual?

The three grand duke-stage cultivators, clad in armor, halted their movement atop the rooftops as they spotted a floating figure. Immediately, they assumed he was the source of the disturbance.

Nearly all of their troops had already fainted or died, and the numbers continued to rise as Aldrian's senses expanded even further.

They frowned upon realizing that Aldrian was still only at the duke stage, yet he had dared to attack them and was even using flight. Was there something wrong with his head?

"Who are you? How dare you wreak havoc in my territory? Do you understand what you have done?" demanded the strongest of the three, a high grand duke-stage cultivator.

Although Aldrian was a "mere" duke-stage cultivator, his display of power gave the man a bad feeling. There was something more to this figure than just his cultivation level!

Aldrian did not answer. Instead, his calm blue eyes locked onto them.

Without warning, the three grand duke-stage cultivators suddenly felt an immense weight pressing down on their bodies. They staggered for a moment, but having already been wary of Aldrian, they had prepared for any unexpected attacks.

Their bodies were shielded by protective energy barriers, designed to guard against external influences and techniques. However, they still felt the effects of Aldrian's gravity laws, albeit slightly.

Fortunately for them, this was not Aldrian's domain, so his power was not at full strength. With their much higher cultivation, they managed to resist the pressure.

Still, even though they could withstand the gravity, their movements were slightly hindered—and at their level, even a split-second delay could be fatal in battle.

In an instant, Aldrian vanished and reappeared behind one of the three grand dukes, driving a powerful punch straight into the man's back, precisely where his dantian was located.

The sheer force of the punch shattered the cultivator's armor, which was, in fact, a low heaven-grade artifact! Aldrian's raw strength had reached the point where he could break such an artifact if he focused his full power into a single strike.

The grand duke's dantian was instantly destroyed upon impact, rendering him crippled.

"Argh!" he screamed in agony as his body was sent hurtling through the air, crashing into the ground with a thunderous impact.

The people in the area had already begun fleeing the moment they sensed a battle breaking out. Thanks to that, when the grand duke's body struck the ground, no bystanders were caught in the aftermath.

The remaining two grand duke-stage cultivators were shocked by Aldrian's sudden movement, a clear display of teleportation. Reacting quickly, they launched their attacks, one wielding a sword and the other a spear.

However, before they could strike, their bodies suddenly froze. A powerful force restrained them, and before they could break free, Aldrian had already moved again.

With devastating precision, he delivered another punch—this time to the spear-wielding grand duke, striking directly at his dantian.

Just like the first, the man's armor and dantian were instantly shattered. His body was sent hurtling toward the ground, crashing down with such force that the impact cratered the earth beneath him.

"Break!"

The last remaining grand duke-stage cultivator—the strongest of the three—had taken advantage of the moment Aldrian was attacking his comrade. He successfully freed himself from Aldrian's spatial lock and immediately attempted to flee.

Only now did he fully grasp the disparity in strength.

For someone to shatter a low heaven-grade artifact with nothing but a punch effortlessly, their body cultivation had to have reached at least the king stage!

Yet the man before him was still only at the duke stage. How was that possible? At first, he thought Aldrian had used some kind of trick to break the artifact, but now he was certain—it was pure, raw power!

Realizing the terrifying anomaly before him, the grand duke didn't hesitate. He turned and fled.

He tried to put some distance between them while reaching for his escape talisman, but he was a moment too late. Before he could activate it, Aldrian teleported again, suddenly appearing right in front of him.

Terror gripped him as he instinctively slashed with his sword, but Aldrian effortlessly blocked it, grabbing his wrist and crushing it in an instant.

"Arrghh!" he screamed in agony as Aldrian's grip shattered his bones. His sword fell to the rooftop, but he barely noticed—his mind consumed by pain.

Then, without warning, a searing pain tore through his abdomen. Aldrian's fist had slammed directly into his dantian.

His middle heaven-grade armor dented under the impact, but it didn't shatter—proof of the difference in strength between artifact tiers. Though his dantian wasn't destroyed outright, a visible crack had formed.

"Argh, wait—" he tried to plead, but Aldrian struck twice more while keeping a firm grip on his wrist, ensuring he couldn't escape. With the final blow, the man's dantian shattered.

Aldrian then released his wrist and turned his gaze toward the onlookers watching from afar.

"To those who still have the heart of liberation! I have already taken care of the second prince's troops in this town! If you still seek freedom, gather their bodies in teleportation station plaza and leave them be! Take everything they had and let the second prince know that this place has been freed from his control!" Aldrian's voice resounded across the town.

Chapter 416: The Situation in Rosalind City

All the residents of Rosalind City, numbering more than a million, heard Aldrian's voice. They stepped out of their homes and establishments. Even those unaware of the events at the teleportation station now realized that something significant had occurred.

At this moment, they saw numerous troops from the second prince's faction lying unconscious for no apparent reason. It seemed to be the work of the one whose voice they had just heard.

Those who had long wished to rebel against the second prince's faction but lacked the courage suddenly found themselves emboldened. They began approaching the fallen soldiers, dragging their bodies toward the teleportation plaza.

After making his announcement to the entire city, Aldrian turned his gaze toward the teleportation station operator, who was hiding behind one of the buildings and cautiously peeking at him.

"Hey, you. Cut off any connection between the teleportation portal and the other cities," he ordered.

The operator was stunned for a moment but quickly followed Aldrian's command.

"Y-Yes, sir," he responded before hurrying to shut down the teleportation formation from the main control panel beside the portals. This control panel allowed the operator to manage all the primary functions of the teleportation formation.

He then cut off the energy supply from the energy stone storage, causing the teleportation formation to lose its power source and become completely disabled.

The people had already begun gathering at the teleportation station, and upon arrival, they finally laid eyes on the mysterious Aldrian.

Old Man York, who had been watching from the sidelines all this time, could only admire Aldrian's decisiveness and strength.

Aldrian looked at the crowd and raised his voice.

"For a while, this city will be isolated from the outside world because we have cut off the teleportation connection. By doing this, we can hinder the second prince's ability to mobilize his army to the southern region of the empire and, more importantly, prevent his retaliation against all of you."

"I can only imagine what would happen if he sent someone here to investigate and found his troops in this state. The punishment on this city would be severe."

He paused briefly before reassuring them.

"However, do not worry. It won't be for long. At most, within two weeks, I will be finished with my business, and we can restore the teleportation connection. Until then, I ask for your patience."

After Aldrian's announcement, murmurs spread through the crowd as people discussed his decision. Most leaned in favor of his plan and expressed their support.

"We'll hold on until then, sir! If it's just two weeks, we still have enough supplies in the city and its surroundings to sustain ourselves."

"Yes! It's far better than being controlled by those bastards from the second prince's faction. They've restricted our lives too much."

"They take most of our supplies and wealth to fund his war. We've been struggling for months, but thanks to your intervention, Your Excellency, we can finally focus on rebuilding our economy and sustaining ourselves."

"Thank you for your help, sir!"

"Thank you, Your Excellency!"

Voices of gratitude echoed through the crowd, and as Aldrian listened, he began to sense their power of faith.

"Your Excellency, if I may ask, what business do you have here?" one of the townspeople inquired.

Aldrian walked toward Old Man York and placed a hand on his shoulder.

"The liberation of Rosalind City," he said before vanishing with Old Man York.

The crowd stood in stunned silence. The liberation of Rosalind City? They all knew that Rosalind was under heavy siege by the second prince's forces. Was this mysterious man planning to take on an entire army by himself?

Crazy!

And yet, they had heard of a similar madness not long ago, in Caritas.

News had spread that Caritas had already been freed from the second prince's grasp and was now under the rule of a new city lord. That city lord was none other than the mysterious swordsman who had thrown the entire continent into upheaval, a man capable of fending off tens of thousands of the second prince's troops with nothing but his sword.

However, some people in the crowd felt something click in their minds. They were the ones who had been near Aldrian earlier when the soldier asked where he had come from, and they had heard his answer—Caritas.

They exchanged wide-eyed glances. Didn't that mean...?!

Aldrian, however, paid no attention to their reactions. He was now inside a grand estate in the wealthy district, which served as the residence of the town lord and the place where he had sensed the faith of the entire town converging.

Aldrian decided to make this entire town his domain. It would become his first domain in this region and his safe haven.

Since the second prince's forces had occupied the town and executed the town lord, this estate had become the residence of the commander overseeing the entire legion stationed here. That commander was the high grand duke stage cultivator whom Aldrian had just crippled.

After realizing that Aldrian was the one whose voice had echoed across the city, the maids and butlers in the mansion simply let him enter, their hearts filled with admiration and respect for the man who had liberated their town from the second prince's forces.

Old Man York didn't know why Aldrian had come to this place, but he remained silent. He simply followed Aldrian into a room where the former town lord had seemingly spent most of his time working.

Old Man York watched as Aldrian stood motionless in the center of the room for a few seconds before stepping out.

His actions were truly bizarre, making Old Man York wonder what he had just done.

"Let's go. We're heading to Rosalind," Aldrian said as he walked past him.

While Aldrian was already on his way to Rosalind, the situation in the city was anything but promising.

Following Baron Rosalind's orders to preserve the city's energy stones, they had cut off the teleportation connection to other regions, effectively isolating the entire population. This self-imposed isolation left them with limited access to information, which was essential for their strategy.

To gather intelligence from the outside, they had to risk lives, sending people through the blockade undetected just to obtain the news they deemed important.

Supplies were also running dangerously low, forcing the people to ration carefully just to survive another day. Economic activity had come to a complete halt—there was no stimulus, and in such dire circumstances, no one was willing to spend what little they had.

It could be said that the situation in Rosalind City was even worse than the blockade in Weimar City.

However, despite these conditions, the people of the city still placed their hope in their leader—the head of the Rosalind Barony. Baron Rosalind was a ruler whom many were willing to follow. His willingness to communicate with commoners and his readiness to help those in need had earned him the trust of the masses.

Beyond his leadership, he was also a formidable cultivator at the emperor stage, which was highly unusual since the highest cultivation level found in most baronial households was the king stage. Typically, those at the emperor stage were found in ducal or grand ducal households. This peculiarity had long raised questions about Baron Rosalind and his barony.

With his strength and his family's past achievements, the previous emperor would have deemed the Rosalind Barony worthy of being elevated to a grand duchy. Yet, the fact that it remained a barony suggested the existence of a secret agreement between the

past emperors and the past Barons of Rosalind, an unspoken pact that had kept its status unchanged all this time.

Many believed that the Rosalind family's leaders throughout history had deliberately avoided attracting too much attention from other noble families, choosing to stay out of political affairs.

However, that very decision led to the city's current siege, as Baron Rosalind refused to take part in the second prince's coup. When the second prince invited him to join his cause, Baron Rosalind rejected the offer without hesitation, declaring that the Rosalind Barony would remain neutral.

That refusal did not sit well with the second prince. To him, a powerful neutral force like the Rosalind Barony was still a potential threat to his authority. Viewing their neutrality as a risk, he designated the barony as a hostile force.

From that day on, whether they wished it or not, the Rosalind family was dragged into the civil war, aligning with the opposition faction.

In the center of the city, a hill covered with lush trees overlooked the surroundings. At its peak sat a grand mansion where the baron himself resided. With its vast gardens and dense greenery, the mansion had a refreshing and serene atmosphere, undisturbed by the city's commotion.

The mansion's employees could be seen diligently carrying out their tasks, occasionally pausing to converse about their future.

"I heard that Lord Raz had to cut another expenditure to preserve the energy stone reserves."

"Yes, I heard that too. Since we need to repair the city barrier after the last battle, he had no choice but to make that decision."

"Sigh... I truly wonder if we can survive this ordeal. At this rate, the barrier will last at most another month before it collapses. I can only imagine Lord Ivan's headache right now, worrying about the city's fate."

"Yes, me too. I just hope we can find a way out of this."

The maids spoke in hushed tones as they walked through the garden toward the mansion, careful not to let others overhear them. However, unbeknownst to them, the very lord they spoke of could hear them clearly from afar as he stood inside his room.

He let out a sigh and turned to the woman standing behind him.

"Are you sure you want to do this? It will be quite dangerous."

Chapter 417: Incoming Battle

A woman clad in armor, exuding both beauty and a deadly aura, was Elena. Her hair was tied in a ponytail, and despite wearing armor, her elegance did not diminish. In fact, it only enhanced her charm in some way. She truly resembled a battle angel who had fought through a thousand wars.

"I'm sure, Father. I will try to ask for his help. From our last conversation, he seemed interested in our legacy artifact—at least from my perspective," Elena answered Baron Rosalind.

Her father, a middle-aged man with black hair and a tall posture, looked her with a serene gaze. However, his voice betrayed his expression, carrying a slight tone of worry for his daughter.

"However, are you sure he wants to help us? According to the last report we received before losing contact with our scout, he was still staying in Caritas. I thought his hands might already be full with his own battle against the second prince's force," Baron Rosalind said.

They were, of course, discussing Aldrian. The news about the mysterious swordsman was too important to ignore, so their scout, tasked with gathering information, had relayed the report through their secret communication channel. However, not long after, they lost contact with the scout, leaving them blind once again.

With this clue, Elena volunteered to go to Caritas to seek Aldrian's help. She wanted to go herself to demonstrate her family's sincerity. Besides, she had already met and come to know him. They still did not understand why Aldrian was in this empire or why he had antagonized the second prince, but it worked in their favor—after all, the second prince had gained another powerful enemy.

Although they felt bad about asking Aldrian for help, they had no other choice. Their situation was truly dire.

"With his power, I believe the second prince will have to restrain himself from making a move on Caritas and instead focus on other areas. That's why the troops besieging us for months launched such a fierce attack yesterday—they must be in a rush to wipe us out as quickly as possible so they can turn their attention to young master Aldrian later," Elena said.

"With the second prince avoiding Caritas for the time being, young master Aldrian has no reason to worry about it. However, even if he leaves Caritas and the second prince still recklessly decides to attack, there is someone remaining there to stand guard."

Baron Rosalind knew exactly who his daughter was referring to.

"The Sword Saint?"

"Yes, with the Sword Saint guarding the city, Caritas is at least safe when young master Aldrian leaves. As long as the second prince doesn't send a force as large as the one that attacked Caritas a few days ago, the Sword Saint alone is enough to hold the fort," she said confidently.

She was certain of this because she knew how powerful Xin Haotian was. While not as absurdly strong as Aldrian, Xin Haotian was already one of the continent's strongest cultivators, despite his cultivation being "only" at the low Emperor stage.

Baron Rosalind nodded as he considered his daughter's words. They made sense. Although he disliked dragging a man he had originally invited to examine their legacy artifact—hoping he would help uncover their history—into their problems, this was the only option he could think of.

"Alright, you can try to persuade him, but be careful on your way. The blockade is getting stricter. If it becomes too dangerous, use the return talisman without hesitation."

"I will, Father," Elena said, bowing before turning to depart for Caritas.

"My lord!"

Before Elena could step outside the room, a soldier clad in armor suddenly ran in from the hallway, blocking her path. He came to an abrupt stop in front of her, momentarily stunned, before quickly bowing.

"My apologies, young miss, my lord," he said before straightening and turning to Baron Rosalind.

"My lord, we have movement from the second prince's troops! They... they've sent a flying fortress here!"

Hearing the soldier's report, Baron Rosalind and Elena widened their eyes in shock. Without hesitation, they used their movement techniques to reach the city walls, where they had a clear view of the second prince's massive army.

Upon arriving, the sight before them left them astonished. A flying fortress was already visible in the distance. Though it was still quite far, its speed made it clear that it would reach them soon.

The fortress continued its steady approach toward the second prince's encampment.

"I think you should postpone your departure. We need to hold them off now, or we won't last another week at this rate," Baron Rosalind said, his gaze fixed on the approaching fortress.

"Also with the arrival of the flying fortress, I doubt you'd be able to break through their defenses right now."

Elena nodded in agreement with her father. With the flying fortress approaching, security would be at its highest, and the enemy would be ready to attack at any moment.

"Ring the bell! We're about to face another battle!" Baron Rosalind shouted.

The soldiers responded swiftly, sounding the alarm to signal the incoming attack. The citizens, already familiar with the procedure, quickly took shelter in their homes or nearby establishments. Meanwhile, soldiers still in their barracks rushed to arm themselves and hurried to their posts.

The entire city instantly became a hive of military activity, its streets now devoid of civilians.

"I suppose your assumption was correct, my daughter. With the second prince sending a flying fortress here, he truly seems desperate to crush us in one swift strike. I imagine the situation with Grand Duke Arim and Duke Marle is the same. The second prince certainly isn't hesitating to squander his resources on this war."

"Considering how quickly that flying fortress arrived from its main base in the central region, they must have injected a large number of peak-level energy stones to accelerate its speed. And they'll still have plenty left for battle."

Baron Rosalind sighed at the thought. The sheer wealth of the imperial family ran deep and could not be underestimated. Sending a flying fortress showed just how determined the second prince was to end the rebellion as quickly as possible.

Not long after, the flying fortress landed behind enemy lines, and Baron Rosalind watched as it deployed reinforcements—roughly ten thousand additional troops. Moments later, the fortress took off again, this time directing its course toward the city.

Atop the city walls, cannons loaded with explosive projectiles infused with the energy of heaven and earth stood ready to fire, maximizing their destructive power.

While these cannons would have little effect on cultivators at the duke stage or above, the sheer impact of their blasts would still be devastating to the lower-level troops. These weapons were sky-grade artifacts, highly effective for both defense and siege warfare.

However, on the opposite side, the enemy forces had their own cannons—ones far more powerful at heaven-grade.

Those cannons were effective for prolonged attacks on the city's barrier, gradually wearing down its durability. If the barrier was continuously bombarded and its strength dropped to a certain threshold, the enemy army would immediately launch an assault, knowing that a joint technique from their cultivators would be enough to shatter what remained.

However, right now, aside from the cannons, the second prince's forces also had a flying fortress. Its primary weapon, the lightning cannon was capable of unleashing an attack on par with a high emperor-stage cultivator if pushed. With that level of firepower, the city's barrier would break in a much shorter time.

Although Rosalind City's barrier could withstand high emperor-stage attacks, it wouldn't last indefinitely. Right now, its survival depended on the flying fortress's crew and their available resources. If they chose to recklessly deplete their energy stone reserves and fired the lightning cannon three times, the barrier would collapse instantly.

Alternatively, they could fire twice and change the remaining attack to the standard cannons, which would also drastically shorten the time needed to breach the city's defenses.

The troops under Baron Rosalind were already stationed at their posts atop the city walls, prepared for the incoming attack. They watched as the massive flying fortress, accompanied by tens of thousands of troops, advanced in unison, creating a majestic yet intimidating sight.

The low, constant hum of the fortress sounded like the approach of death itself. This battle might very well be their last—the one that would determine their fate.

Baron Rosalind and Elena also saw several figures flying above the fortress, a clear sign that they were cultivators above the grand duke stage. Among them were new faces, the reinforcements sent by the capital to this place.

One was a middle emperor-stage cultivator, a middle-aged man, while the other, at the peak king stage, had a much younger appearance. Baron Rosalind and Elena, however, recognized them both.

The newcomer at the emperor stage was Duke Schmidt, the patriarch of the Schmidt family—a family that had a poor relationship with the Rosalind family.

The peak king-stage cultivator was Adel Schwertwächter. Like Elena, he was one of the ten great swordmasters of the continent.

With their arrival, the composition of the second prince's forces had become more formidable than ever. Four emperor-stage cultivators, more than a dozen king-stage cultivators, and tens of thousands of troops, all supported by a flying fortress. Such a force was enough to make any noble family tremble at its might.

The approaching troops halted five kilometers from the city walls, and Duke Schmidt floated closer so his face could be seen clearly by everyone in Rosalind City.

"Rebels! Your struggle ends today. This battle will be the one that erases it for good!"

Chapter 418: The Strength of Baron Rosalind

Duke Schmidt's thunderous voice resounded throughout the entire city, meant to shake the hearts of its people. However, a calm yet authoritative voice swiftly countered his proclamation.

"End today? That remains to be seen. The people of the Rosalind Barony are fighters—you will pay dearly for stepping onto our land," Baron Rosalind declared.

Duke Schmidt sneered at the baron. Their families had never been on good terms. The Schmidt family had done many things behind the scenes to tarnish the Rosalind family, but the Rosalind family, being quite strong and once supported by the first prince, made it impossible to bring them down completely.

The Rosalind family had already put some noble families on edge. Despite their apparent connection with the imperial family for many years and their considerable power, their low-profile nature made many suspicious. They consider the Rosalind family a threat to their faction aligned with the second prince.

Although they claimed to remain neutral, their closeness with the first prince was something that could not be ignored.

"Is that so? You truly will not give up until death comes knocking at your doorstep!" Duke Schmidt sneered.

As he spoke, the lightning cannon of the flying fortress exuded a powerful pressure, one that the Rosalind troops could clearly feel. Crackling electricity surged around it—a clear sign that the cannon was about to unleash its devastating lightning beam.

"Open the barrier! I will step out myself!" Baron Rosalind suddenly ordered, stunning the soldiers around him.

"My lord!—

"Quick!" The baron's voice carried urgency, making the soldier grit his teeth before swiftly executing his lord's order. He instructed the operator of the city barrier to deactivate it, and instantly, the barrier came down.

Baron Rosalind floated outside, but he was slightly stunned when Elena followed him beyond the barrier.

"You go back—"

"I will follow you, Father," Elena's voice cut him off.

The baron swallowed his words, then looked down at the soldiers below and gave a nod. Moments later, the barrier rose again, sealing off the city and leaving him and Elena outside.

For Baron Rosalind, there was no point in trying to persuade Elena. She had already made her choice, and he knew how stubborn she could be once she decided on something. Yet, he couldn't help but feel proud—his daughter, once a little girl, had grown into one of the great swordmasters of the continent, standing by his side in this moment.

"Stand back," Baron Rosalind said.

Elena nodded and floated a distance behind her father.

Baron Rosalind's demeanor suddenly changed as he closed his eyes. At his waist, he carried a long object wrapped in black cloth, which he had retrieved from his storage ring on the way here.

Slowly, he removed the cloth, revealing a sword. As he unsheathed it, a powerful aura spread through the surroundings—the unmistakable presence of a divine-grade weapon. This was a low divine-grade sword, one of the legacy artifacts of the Rosalind family.

The appearance of the low divine-grade artifact shocked many, even the troops of the Rosalind family. They had never seen their lord wield a divine-grade sword before, nor had they known that their family possessed such a weapon. While they were aware of a legacy artifact within their family, this was not the one they knew of. It was no wonder they were stunned by its sudden appearance.

Elena watched her father wield one of their legacy artifacts with pride. This sword had been safely secured by him for years, never once taken out, simply because they had never needed to. Its existence was known only to the main family members.

If even the troops of the Rosalind family were shocked, then what about their opponents? There was no need for explanation—they were just as stunned.

Duke Schmidt had never heard of the Rosalind family possessing a divine-grade sword. Seeing it now, he realized just how deep their secrets ran, hidden well enough to evade countless eyes and ears.

He gritted his teeth as he stared at Baron Rosalind's sword. How could he not feel envious? Even in his own household, there was no divine-grade sword! While his family did possess a low divine-grade artifact, it was a defensive artifact meant for protecting the family mansion, nothing like a sword, which could directly enhance one's combat strength.

"I have to take that sword!"

he thought, his eyes flashing with greed.

He then turned toward the flying fortress.

"Fire!" he shouted.

Baron Rosalind ignored all disturbances as he held the sword before his face, his eyes still closed.

Rumble!

The deafening sound of the lightning cannon echoed as it fired a lightning beam toward the city barrier. However, standing in front of the barrier was a lone, small figure—Baron Rosalind. Compared to the size of the lightning beam, he appeared insignificant.

The lightning carried the strength of a high emperor-stage attack, making it clear that the crew of the flying fortress had used an immense amount of energy stones to push the cannon's power to its limit.

Suddenly, Baron Rosalind opened his eyes. In an instant, he lifted his sword and slashed downward.

Third Movement of the Heavenly Sword Garden: Heaven-Splitting Void.

The moment the sword descended, the surroundings seemed to lose their color, and the space wobbled for a split second before returning to normal. There was no sound, no excessive movement, even the wind remained unaffected after the slash.

For lower-level cultivators, nothing appeared out of the ordinary after the slash. However, for an emperor-stage expert like Duke Schmidt, the hidden force within the void was unmistakable.

The true shape of the slash remained unseen, its energy traveling through the depths of the spatial void. What made it even more terrifying was its uniqueness—despite its

overwhelming strength, it did not leave behind a spatial rift, yet it was still powerful enough to cut through anything in its path.

The incoming lightning beam suddenly split in half, then continued to divide again and again until it reached the large spherical structure at the front of the flying fortress. The beam dissipated, and the fortress trembled slightly upon being struck by the invisible slash.

As the lightning faded, everyone could clearly see a crack forming on the surface of the structure—a testament to the sheer power of Baron Rosalind's attack. Those who witnessed it were left utterly shocked, their eyes fixed on the faint crack and the floating figure of Baron Rosalind.

Strong! He is so strong!

They could sense that Baron Rosalind was "only" at the low emperor stage, yet he had just unleashed an attack with the power of a high emperor-stage cultivator!

At this moment, they finally understood why so many had placed the Rosalind Barony on their watchlists and even considered it a threat. With a cultivator as powerful as Baron Rosalind, it was no surprise that others felt wary—especially those whose interests did not align with the Rosalind family.

No wonder the second prince had once sought Rosalind's cooperation despite their neutral stance. Talent and strength of this caliber were far too valuable to ignore!

Baron Rosalind released a deep breath after using one of the Rosalind family's techniques. He had chosen to face the lightning beam himself, revealing his true strength to prevent it from breaking the city barrier. With their scarce resources, repairing the barrier would be impossible if it were to shatter now.

At the same time, this display was meant to deter the approaching army seeking to destroy his city. If he could shake their morale even slightly, it might make them hesitate—make them question whether attacking this city, or him, was truly worth the risk.

Duke Schmidt watched this display of strength, his gaze trembling. He looked at Baron Rosalind, who still held his drawn sword, his eyes now fixed upon him.

Slowly, Baron Rosalind pointed his sword at him.

"Come," he said..

Duke Schmidt's face turned solemn. The mocking expression was gone—there was no more underestimation. He had never witnessed Baron Rosalind's full strength before, and he doubted that what he had just seen was the extent of it. One thing was clear: if

he fought with an arrogant mindset, he would undoubtedly die. He had to give it everything he had.

"You've truly surprised me. To think you possess such strength... you've hidden yourself well," Duke Schmidt said as he floated closer to the baron. He unsheathed his sword, a peak heaven-grade weapon. "You are strong, but what can you do when you and your troops are outnumbered?"

The emperor-stage and king-stage cultivators behind him followed, floating forward as well.

Yet, Baron Rosalind remained calm, his gaze steady as he looked at the approaching enemies. Behind him, Elena also began to move, floating toward her father, ready to strike.

From the city walls, an emperor stage and eight king-stage cultivators rose into the air, intent on aiding their lord in battle. The city barrier briefly opened to allow them through before sealing shut once more.

They floated into position behind Baron Rosalind and Elena, their presence reinforcing the formidable stance of their leaders.

Duke Schmidt kept his gaze fixed on Baron Rosalind before finally giving his next command.

"All cannons—fire at the city barrier!" he roared.

Chapter 419: The Fight Between Swordmasters

Boom! Boom!

From behind enemy lines, a series of booming cannon blasts resounded. The projectiles shot toward the city barrier, and once they hit—

Boom! Boom!

Explosions roared as the projectiles struck the barrier, creating ripples across its surface. The lightning cannon on the flying fortress began recharging, crackling with energy once more. Though a crack had formed in its structure, it could still fire a lightning beam—albeit at the cost of further damaging its front section.

Baron Rosalind simply let the cannons strike the barrier; at the very least, he had already blocked one of the lightning cannon's attacks. Based on his earlier estimation, the flying fortress would need three shots of its lightning beam to break through the barrier.

Though he didn't know exactly how many energy stones the crew had brought aboard, he guessed they had no more than enough for three full-power shots.

Additionally, the crack he had created on the surface of the lightning cannon would limit its usage. Firing too many times would weaken its structural integrity, rendering it inoperable. With the lightning cannon out of action, the city barrier would hold much longer, allowing him to focus on pushing back the Emperor-stage enemies.

Without any order or warning, Baron Rosalind suddenly shot forward at such high speed that, to most onlookers, he seemed to vanish. However, to Duke Schmidt, his movements were just barely visible. Even for him, Baron Rosalind's speed was astonishing! Without hesitation, he raised his sword to block the incoming attack.

Ting!

Their swords clashed, sending a powerful gust of wind rippling outward.

Elena and the others had already joined the fray, each picking their own opponents to engage. Though they were outnumbered, they didn't seem to care and launched their attacks without hesitation. The forces of the Second Prince, well aware of the Rosalind cultivator's strength, took them seriously despite their numerical advantage.

Elena now faced Adel Schwertwächter. She didn't hesitate, slashing her sword with lethal intent. Although Adel was one of the ten great swordmasters of the continent just like her, and also she already knew his strength—after all, they had fought before.

Ting!

"You want to be defeated again, huh? Coming here so confidently," Elena said as their swords clashed.

They had crossed swords in the past, and the result? Victory for Elena. Only a few knew about it, but ever since that day, rumors had spread—placing her among the top five strongest swordmasters on the continent.

Hearing Elena's words, Adel didn't grow angry. Instead, he simply kept pushing his sword forward, trying to create distance between them. However, it was clear that he was the one being pushed back.

Despite his longsword and robust physique making him appear stronger, the sheer power behind Elena's seemingly "normal" sword and her muscles could not be underestimated. She was forcing him back, overpowering even his strength.

Yet, there was no panic in Adel's expression. Instead, a rigid smile remained on his face as he struggled to hold his ground against Elena's power.

"Today will be different, Elena. You will fall from grace," he said in a strained voice, resisting her relentless push.

Ting!

Adel swept his sword to the side and stepped back to create distance from Elena. However, she didn't let him retreat. She pursued him relentlessly, but with the space he had gained, he was now better prepared and could defend against her attacks more effectively.

Trang! Ting! Ting!

Their swords moved too fast to be seen clearly. Despite its size and the need to wield it with both hands, Adel handled his longsword with ease, matching Elena's movements. Yet, she didn't relent for even a second, striking with both speed and power.

"You're much stronger than the last time we met—I'll admit that. But it's still not enough," Elena said in the midst of her relentless barrage.

Adel didn't respond. He remained focused on his defense, knowing there was little room for error. At this moment, despite being one of the continent's great swordmasters, he looked as if he was the one being overpowered.

It couldn't be helped—swordmasters like Elena were a direct counter to his fighting style. His longsword was powerful but heavy and slower in comparison, while Elena's attacks were not only absurdly fast but also packed tremendous force. In this situation, he had no room to counterattack.

Still, he searched for an opening. The moment he found one, he didn't hesitate to use his hidden card.

Suddenly, after deflecting one of Elena's strikes, he sprang back to create distance. Without wasting a second, he reached for a pouch hanging from his waist and hurled a fine powder toward her.

Elena, who had been about to pursue Adel, abruptly stopped and tried to dodge. However, due to their close distance and the fast-paced battle, she didn't have enough time to evade it completely. She inhaled some of the powder and instinctively chose to retreat, unsure of its effects.

Glancing at her hands and body, she checked for any immediate changes or abnormalities.

Then, she felt it.

She felt her energy circulation spiral into chaos before abruptly stopping, as if something had blocked her meridians! She frowned, quickly deciding to land before she lost control and fell on her own.

But Adel didn't let her.

He dashed toward her, aiming a decisive strike.

Seeing the incoming attack, Elena activated her protective talisman. The moment Adel's sword struck, a barrier flared up around her, absorbing the blow just before her body crashed into the ground.

Baron Rosalind sensed that something was wrong and turned to look toward his daughter. His eyes widened slightly.

What just happened?

With Elena's strength, he firmly believed that someone like Adel—or even two King-stage cultivators—wouldn't be enough to overwhelm her. So how...?

He had no time to think.

A sword slash came for his head. He swiftly tilted his head to the side, narrowly avoiding the strike, and immediately parried another incoming slash with his own sword.

"You dare to look away in the middle of a fight?" Duke Schmidt said with a grin.

Their battle remained at a stalemate, once again proving just how powerful Baron Rosalind was. This only frustrated Duke Schmidt further—despite his superior cultivation, he still couldn't overpower an opponent who was supposedly much weaker than him!

"As expected. Using tricks to fight us—that's all you people are capable of," Baron Rosalind said with a mocking expression. With a surge of power, he pushed against the duke's sword and unleashed his technique.

First Movement of the Heavenly Sword Garden: Heavenly Sword Descend.

Baron Rosalind slashed several times toward the duke. Duke Schmidt reacted instantly, attempting to block with his own sword technique. Their attacks clashed, canceling each other out, but one slash managed to break through his defense, striking his sword with immense force and sending him stumbling back several meters.

A bead of sweat rolled down his forehead as he steadied himself, gripping his sword tightly.

However, Duke Schmidt didn't seem offended. Instead, he merely shrugged.

"Well, in the end, only the result matters. No matter the method, the winner takes all," he said.

Baron Rosalind didn't deny it and simply nodded. "That's true. And the winner has yet to be decided."

He then continued his assault on Duke Schmidt, their battle raging on. Despite his daughter's unfavorable condition, he still believed in her strength.

Meanwhile, thanks to the protective barrier from her defensive talisman, Elena had avoided fatal injuries. Slowly, she stood up from the crater formed by her fall.

She looked at Adel with a cold expression. He had resorted to petty tricks, preventing her from circulating her energy. Right now, she was no different from a mortal. The barrier had already disappeared the moment she stood up, as the talisman she used was a time-limited defense that activated upon being crushed.

Adel floated closer but maintained some distance, his grin widening as if he had already won.

"What are you going to do now? Like I said, today is the day you fall from grace," he taunted. "Right now, you're nothing more than an ant—one I can crush whenever I please."

Elena didn't answer. Instead, she took a stance, inhaling and exhaling steadily. She ignored his taunts, focusing entirely on her sword technique and the target in the sky.

Seeing her futile attempt, Adel's expression twisted into a mocking smirk. But then, he noticed her suddenly slashing her sword toward him, causing him to frown in confusion.

"What are you trying to—"

Before he could finish, a sudden sense of danger washed over him. Instinctively, he tilted his head to the side, narrowly dodging something. An invisible force whizzed past him, grazing his cheek and leaving behind a thin line of blood. His eyes widened in shock.

He reached up, touching his cheek, and felt the warm trickle of blood. His gaze trembled as he looked down at Elena, who still stood firmly on the ground, unable to fly due to her current condition.

"You—what was that?!"

Chapter 420: Still Powerful

"You—what was that?!" Adel exclaimed in shock.

What he sensed was a split second of sharp wind infused with sword intent. The force of the wind alone was enough to sever his forehead if it had passed his head. His eyes trembled as he stared at Elena's power and technique. How was she able to send a strike strong enough to kill him without even circulating any energy?

He had already thrown a special poison powder called "Mortal's Experience," which was designed to halt all energy circulation in a cultivator's body for a certain period, depending on how much they inhaled. Mortal's Experience was sometimes used by assassins to render their victims helpless before killing them, depending on the circumstances.

The powder's effectiveness is determined by its composition and the target's cultivation level. To make it effective against a king-stage cultivator, the attacker must prepare Mortal's Experience with a precise mixture of ingredients potent enough for that level. If a dose meant for a duke-stage cultivator were used on a king-stage, it would have little to no effect.

This powder is heavily regulated and can only be obtained or possessed by physicians for medical purposes. Anyone found in possession of it without authorization faces severe punishment. However, since Adel was using it, he must have received permission from the second prince.

And Elena knew this.

"Father, be careful! They have Mortal's Experience powder!" Elena shouted at a normal volume. She couldn't amplify her voice with energy since it was blocked, but she believed her father would hear her.

True to her thoughts, Baron Rosalind heard her and narrowed his eyes as he looked at Duke Schmidt. He then turned to his men and sent them a warning about the powder through voice transmission. Fortunately, their opponents had yet to use it against them—or at least, not yet. Or perhaps Adel was the only one in possession of the powder, meant specifically for her.

After warning her father, Elena suddenly raised her sword, blocking Adel's attack as their blades clashed once again. Her hands trembled under the force of his strike, and she was pushed back several meters.

Adel was truly shocked—she could still defend herself, and even without energy circulation, she still possessed overwhelming raw strength!

"How—"

"You're shocked by this? Then you will never defeat me in your lifetime." Elena's words cut off Adel's as she struggled to hold her ground, refusing to be pushed back any further.

Adel gritted his teeth. He couldn't understand how she was able to withstand his strength without energy circulation—unless her raw physical strength could match his strength at this time, which was truly incredible.

Elena simply smiled at his expression. He had no idea that she, or the Rosalind main family as a whole, cultivated a technique that allowed their bodies to be as strong as those of pure body cultivators. Their cultivation technique was a divine-grade inheritance, passed down through generations.

The cultivation technique originated from their ancestor, serving as proof that their lineage was anything but ordinary. Although they could no longer fully comprehend the divine-grade technique, even grasping half of it or simply following its energy circulation granted the Rosalind family a significant boost in both raw strength and energy.

This was why the battle prowess of Rosalind family cultivators could never be underestimated.

Elena didn't need to explain any of this to Adel. Instead, she swiftly used her trick—she slid to the side, causing Adel's sword to slip past hers, then immediately delivered a kick to his abdomen.

Adel tried to block, but her foot was faster, striking directly against his armor. His body was sent flying, but he managed to stabilize himself before hitting the ground. He looked at Elena with an irritated expression.

Even after using underhanded tactics, she still had a stronger physique! That incredible strength compensated for her lack of energy circulation, allowing her to match his attacks up to this point. He truly wondered what kind of cultivation technique she had practiced to achieve such a powerful body—even her raw sword swings could generate slashes of wind infused with sword intent strong enough to kill him.

Steeling himself, Adel took a stance and raised his longsword in front of him. The surrounding wind gathered around the blade, forming a raging tornado that spiraled into the sky. Then, with a fierce downward slash, he unleashed his attack toward Elena.

Tempest Wrath.

The tornado, filled with destructive power capable of endangering even a low emperor-stage cultivator, hurtled toward Elena. Though her expression was solemn, there was no panic in her eyes. She inhaled deeply, then exhaled as she took a stance with her sword. Fixing her gaze on the massive tornado approaching her, she let out a sharp cry and swung her blade in a powerful slashing motion.

"HAA!"

Her sword strike unleashed a sharp gust of wind infused with her sword intent, cleaving the tornado right down the middle and shattering Adel's technique. The raging winds dissipated almost instantly, and the surroundings returned to normal.

Adel was once again shocked by Elena's power and couldn't help but feel envious of her strength. Although his cultivation technique also trained his body like a body cultivator's, it still didn't grant the kind of overwhelming physical strength that Elena possessed.

While Adel was filled with envy, Elena herself was not in good condition. Her breathing was unsteady, sweat dripped from her beautiful face, and signs of exhaustion had already begun to show. The last exchange had drained a significant amount of her stamina. Pain and soreness spread through her arm muscles, forcing her to stab her sword into the ground for support so she wouldn't collapse.

She gritted her teeth at her own weakness. Although the *Rising Petal of Heavenly Garden Scripture* cultivation technique granted her incredible physical strength, it still had its limitations—and those limitations lay within her own body.

If she relied solely on raw muscle strength to unleash powerful sword attacks, she would inevitably drain her stamina and overstrain her muscles.

Right now, after executing a slash strong enough to cut the tornado in half using only her raw power, she had nearly exhausted her stamina and pushed her muscles to their limit. Pain spread through her arms, making every movement agonizing.

She felt weak, on the verge of fainting, but she forced herself to stay conscious. She tried to steady her breathing, but her lungs refused to cooperate, demanding oxygen as quickly as possible.

Seeing Elena in her most vulnerable state, Adel decided to end it. Without hesitation, he dashed toward her to deliver the final blow.

Elena, completely exhausted, tried to lift her sword, but her hands refused to obey—her weapon felt unbearably heavy. She still had one defensive talisman and one escape talisman left, so she didn't feel truly threatened even in her current state, but there was a bitter taste in her heart.

"It looks like this is my limit," she thought.

She reached for the escape talisman or rather, the return talisman that would teleport her to a designated location inside the city. She had prepared it earlier with her father before setting out for Caritas. Her fingers grasped the talisman, tucked beneath the plate armor on her arm where she had stored it.

Adel, seeing Elena reach for another talisman, immediately prepared to unleash his technique to stop her from activating it.

"No, you don't—"

Just as he was about to strike, he suddenly sensed a massive surge of energy and an overwhelming presence of sword will behind him. His body froze, and he instinctively turned to see what had happened. In fact, it wasn't just him, the entire battlefield, including those on the city walls, turned their attention in the same direction.

What they saw left them utterly shocked.

A colossal sword slash, radiating immense energy and sword will, was hurtling toward the flying fortress from its right side. The sheer force of the attack tore through the ground, annihilating many troops from the second prince's faction, most of whom were positioned in the rear lines. Even the cannons stationed on the ground were destroyed in an instant.

The flying fortress, having just finished recharging its lightning cannon, prepared to fire—but before it could, the sword slash finally struck.

In an instant, the fortress was cleaved in two as the slash passed through it. The energy dissipated shortly after, as if it had expended all its power.

With its structure severed right down the middle, the fortress began to plummet from the sky. The two halves, like a sinking ship in the middle of the ocean, tumbled downward in ruin.

The lightning cannon, already in its final phase of charging, finally fired—but because the flying fortress had lost altitude and its front half was tilting toward the sky, the beam shot upward instead of striking the city barrier.

A massive pillar of purple-white lightning streaked into the heavens, visible from hundreds of kilometers away.

Meanwhile, the second prince's troops had fallen into complete chaos, shaken by the sudden attack from behind. Baron Rosalind, Duke Schmidt, and the others had already halted their battle, their eyes fixed on the unfolding scene in utter shock.

What the hell just happened?!

They finally spotted two floating figures a few kilometers behind the second prince's faction troops. No one knew when they had arrived, but they were certain these figures hadn't been there earlier—at least, not before the battle began!