

The Shining Star Above The Heaven

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Chapter 71: The Undercurrent in the Night

Yu Ruomei trembled upon hearing Aldrian's offer. Rebuild her family? Was the young master joking? But he seemed serious. How could he rebuild a family that was now just her and her son? Did he plan to go against the entire City Lord's Manor? Besides their immense power, they had significant influence over the surrounding forces.

Yu Ruomei couldn't understand how Aldrian intended to accomplish this, but she hoped he wouldn't push himself to the point of no return, opposing numerous demonic cultivators. If something big happened here, the Piercing Heaven Sect would surely hear of it, especially with devils involved in the mess.

"What? How?" she asked, bewildered.

"First, we must clear your family's name. I will find a way to unveil the truth and make the City Lord's Manor pay for their actions. Once the main obstacle is removed, the following steps will be much easier," Aldrian explained.

"But how will we do that? We don't even know how they contacted the devils. Catching them off guard and finding evidence will be difficult," Yu Ruomei said.

"For others, that might be difficult, but for me, I can bring that proof by tomorrow at the latest—if they act according to my prediction. You don't need to worry," Aldrian assured her.

Looking at Aldrian's confidence, Yu Ruomei was somehow convinced to trust him. Could he really pull it off? The image of her dead family resurfaced, and the vision of confronting the City Lord to finally serve justice was the future she desired most.

"When this is all over, can you take care of the children in this manor? I will send all the children I've freed from city guards here. This will be the second step in rebuilding your family, after your name is cleared," Aldrian said.

"Of course, young master. Even though I don't have resources at the moment, now that I return to my prime even stronger than before—I will find a way to provide for them. I

still have some connections among the nobles and other powers, after all," Yu Ruomei replied.

"Good. I will help you as well, so you don't need to worry about resources," Aldrian said with a satisfied nod.

"I'll be staying here with this 'Heavenly Rock.' You can return outside; there's no need for you to accompany me constantly. After checking the entire manor again with my special sense, I have to say—the City Lord's Manor is truly arrogant. They've left this place completely defenseless, with no measures in place," Aldrian remarked.

After establishing his domain, he scanned the manor once more to ensure he hadn't overlooked anything.

Did the City Lord's Manor truly believe no one would dare snatch what they coveted? Even the devils? Well, the devils and the City Lord were at each other's throats but maintained a fragile balance to pursue their own goals. For now, he doubted the devils would turn on them.

Yu Ruomei bowed before leaving him alone. Aldrian sat cross legged, immersing himself in a session of deep comprehension. Now that something new and relevant to him had surfaced, he intended to take full advantage of it.

Reflecting on the day's events, he realized today was special, it was the first time he fought opponents much stronger than himself in cultivation, outside of his domain. When facing the City Lord's men, he also tested his battle prowess, assessing his ability to combat enemies who were more than four minor realms above him.

That kind of combat power was absurd. He had even reached mind-boggling levels, contending with enemies up to seven minor realms higher than his own—and he hadn't even been pushed to a desperate situation. What was his true limit? He didn't know. Only real combat experience could determine the boundaries of his cross-level battle capability.

For now, he cultivated without worry, momentarily forgetting the problems outside.

The sun was already sinking toward the western horizon, making way for the night to take its place. In the world of demonic cultivators, things weren't so different from the orthodox cultivators—the activity continued to bustle even as the sun disappeared from sight. In some parts of the city, nightfall was actually the prime time for their endeavors—such as the brothel.

Cultivators frequented these establishments most in the evening, seeking entertainment after a long day and indulging in worldly pleasures to release the beasts within them.

In one of the largest brothels in Dual Horns Peak City, a place often visited by the Skull of Dual Horns group, there was a room where a beautiful woman sat, her legs crossed on chair.

Her black hair resembled the night sky, her sharp eyes accompanied by a pointed nose and red lips. The wickedness in her sharp features left an impression on anyone who looked at her. Her loose red robes were designed to entice, revealing her cleavage to fuel the imaginations of many men.

At this moment, she was writing something. Once finished, she folded the paper and placed it in a small container. Attaching the container to the leg of a black pigeon, she sealed it with a formation before releasing the bird. She watched the pigeon fly away for a brief moment, then turned her gaze behind her, where a figure clad entirely in black stood.

From the figure's curves, it was clear that the figure too, was a woman.

"How?" asked the woman who had just released the bird.

"They've split into two groups. The ones in the Yu Manor haven't made any moves yet," the woman in black reported.

"Keep watching," the woman in red replied.

"Yes, ma'am."

The black-clad woman vanished without a sound, leaving the woman in red to gaze at the darkening sky.

"Who are these people, capable of all this, yet the City Lord's Manor hasn't reacted? What are the City Lord's Manor waiting for? And what are these strange newcomers planning?" she pondered silently.

In the City Lord's Manor, the city lord listened intently as one of his men delivered a report. He frowned at its contents before dismissing the messenger. Pondering for a moment, he turned to the man standing by his left side.

"What do you think? Killing my men without trouble, healing that woman, and not even bothering to erase his traces. It seems reckless, but I'm not sure. Their actions don't show any significant movement yet. And from what we can tell, after entering the Yu Manor, that man hasn't made any moves."

The man beside him tapped his fan lightly on his palm and smiled.

"As long as they stay inside the Yu Manor, we can control them easily. Thanks to that man, we finally have a way to the 'Heavenly Rock.' After ransacking the entire manor and coming up empty-handed, that woman will lead us to the treasure."

"Exactly. Those damned devil bastards—they nearly wiped out the entire Yu family. If we hadn't stopped them in time, the treasure could've been lost for good, and we'd never have known it," the city lord said.

"For the past year, the devils have grown anxious, pressuring us to be more proactive in aiding them. They're speeding up whatever plan they have because of some unexpected factor in the Ivory Empire. And now because of that, the Piercing Heaven Sect's dogs have started sniffing around the demon territories. If not for them catching wind of something strange here, I could have dealt a big blow to those rats causing havoc in my territory," he added, frustration evident in his voice.

The man with the fan silently observed the city lord before smiling and replying,

"We need to keep unexpected factors, like those people, in check. We don't want to end up like those devils. If we want to draw them out or eliminate them to prevent future trouble, why not force them to show their weakness?"

"What do you mean?" the city lord asked.

"Simple. Use the children to make them come to us voluntarily. These orthodox cultivators love to preach about justice and righteousness—let's force them to choose between their so-called justice and their own lives," the man with the fan replied, a sly smile on his face.

"You want me to take those kids and use them as bargaining chips? Easier said than done. I don't want to make any bold moves right now. We can't afford to attract the attention of the surrounding territories. If anything happens, even the Piercing Heaven Sect might get involved."

"We don't have to act directly. Let the devils handle it. All we need to do is sit back and wait for the results. Let me manage this. We'll keep our hands clean while they do the dirty work."

The city lord pondered the plan for a moment before sighing. "Fine. I'll grant you authority over this operation. Make sure they know—no one can mess with us in this city without facing the consequences."

"I'll bring you good news soon," the man said, bowing his head before leaving the room, a creepy smile spreading across his face.

"Finally it's time."

Chapter 72: The Night of Judgment 1

The moon was nearly at its highest point in the sky, casting its pale light over Dual Horns Peak City. Most of the city's residents carried on with their usual nightly routines, but in one part of the city, there was an unusual movement. Silhouettes darted through the streets, heading swiftly toward a long-abandoned area, devoid of activity.

Dozens of figures moved using advanced movement techniques that silenced their footsteps, making them as quiet as owls in flight. Despite their numbers and the occasional passerby, they remained undetected as they glided through the city.

They continued running until they reached the outskirts of an abandoned building, where another figure was already waiting for them.

"How is it? Any movement?" the newcomer asked.

"No, still nothing, sir. They're holed up inside that building, like turtles in their shells," the other figure replied.

"Good, now we only need to take the—" he wants to say 'the child' when he saw someone get out from the abandoned house. He is middle age man which they thought it might a disguise with a sword on his waist.

The man was Xin Haotian in disguise, his sword's scabbard wrapped in black cloth. The fame of the Illumination Sword had already spread, and he didn't want to be recognized for now.

Xin Haotian looked around, counting the people who had gathered in the area. Earlier, Aldrian had contacted him, instructing him to be prepared.

"Tonight will be full of action." Aldrian had said.

Xin Haotian shrugged at the memory, his gaze shifting to a particular direction.

"I assume you're the leader here," he called out calmly.

"I suggest you abort whatever plan you have for this place, or anything involving my group. Consider this a warning—I'd prefer to avoid unnecessary complications."

His voice was steady, his expression serene. To anyone unaware of the situation, it might have seemed like Xin Haotian was speaking to thin air, as if he'd lost his mind. But those who understood the circumstances knew the area surrounding the building had already become a massive trap, leaving little chance for escape.

No response came after his warning. The silence lingered, but suddenly, something small and fast shot toward his forehead. It was so tiny that most wouldn't have noticed it until it was too late.

Without flinching, Xin Haotian tilted his head slightly, dodging the projectile with ease. He glanced toward the source of the attack and then observing the small, needle like object embedded in the ground. Its tip glistened with liquid, likely poison, he guessed.

"Well, it looks like you don't want to keep this civilized, then—" Xin Haotian said calmly before vanishing from his spot. In an instant, he appeared behind one of the silhouetted figures, a man clad in black clothing and a mask. Before the man could react, Xin Haotian struck him in the neck, causing him to faint instantly.

He disappeared again, reappearing beside another man, and repeated the process over the next five seconds. By the end of it, a dozen of them had been taken out without a sound.

"Groups 1 and 2, keep that man in check! The rest of you, capture the children and kill everyone else!" the leader barked, realizing the dire situation. From his tone, it was clear he understood they might not make it out in one piece.

The remaining men quickly moved into a battle formation not far from Xin Haotian. In unison, they raised their hands, unleashing a coordinated technique imbued with darkness element.

A massive veil of darkness surged toward Xin Haotian, aiming to entrap him within its void. The combined power of these Earl and Marquess stage cultivators created a veil strong enough to trap even a middle Duke stage expert, more than enough they believed, to hold this man who by all appearances, was at the peak Marquess stage.

What they didn't know was that Xin Haotian had deliberately masked his cultivation, disguising himself as a peak Marquess. After all, Emperor stage cultivators rarely acted outside their territories, except for the unaffiliated cultivator and he preferred to avoid unnecessary attention.

Xin Haotian watched the incoming darkness with unwavering calm. He raised his hand, channeling his energy and intent, and made a swift slash through the dark veil. The darkness split in two as if it had been cut by a blade. Without missing a beat, he made another slashing motion in a different direction.

The second slash traveled toward the group attempting to breach the house. Most of them were caught off guard, completely unprepared for a peak Marquess to counter their attack from the battle formation so easily.

Several were struck by the powerful slash, their bodies split apart before they could react, leaving them lifeless on the ground. Those fortunate enough to dodge felt their

hearts race, the sensation of death still hanging in the air. Their eyes widened as they stared at the remains of their comrades, bodies severed cleanly. They were deader than dead.

"Sword intent with his hand! Be careful, he's a proficient sword master!" the leader shouted, his voice filled with alarm.

But Xin Haotian showed no sign of stopping. His movements were fluid, each slash a deadly dance as he incapacitated some, killed others. Anyone who dared approach the house was swiftly killed.

Those who tried to obstruct him were crippled. The sound of battle—if it could even be called that—echoed until only five remained, including the leader, the strongest among them with a cultivation at the middle Duke stage.

"I already told you," Xin Haotian said, stepping toward the remaining five, his tone calm. "We didn't have to walk this path. All of this bloodshed could've been avoided if we talked like civilized men."

The five men remained silent. Throughout the battle, they had exchanged few words, only coordinating and shouting warnings when necessary. Now, they stood tense, their eyes trained on Xin Haotian, as they weighed their chances against the formidable sword master before them.

The five men exchanged glances before four of them swiftly swallowed an antidote pill, while the last attempted to hurl a small ball at Xin Haotian. At least, that was the plan. The man who was supposed to throw the ball froze in confusion, feeling an eerie weightlessness in his right hand.

He glanced down and saw that his hand, meant to toss the deadly ball, had already been severed. The ball itself was now in Xin Haotian's hand.

"Argh!" he screamed in agony, the pain surging only after realizing his hand had been cut off. The other men trembled, their strategy to execute Plan B now in shambles before they could even begin.

Xin Haotian examined the ball in his hand, his energy flowing over it to inspect its contents. He glanced at the group.

"You're truly brazen to carry something like this. A poison from Black Venom of the Death Valley? So, are you in league with the devils, or are you devils yourselves?"

Death Valley was a notorious place within the devil's territory, adjacent to the Doria Empire. Its treacherous environment was home to countless dangerous beasts, one of them was the Black Rock Snake. Its venom, known as Black Venom, was a toxin so potent that, in sufficient quantities, it could kill even a King-stage cultivator!

"This is enough proof that you're connected to the devils."

He recalled Aldrian's earlier warning about the city lord's possible connection with the devils and their use of Black Venom became poison ball. Xin Haotian wasn't about to underestimate the risk. So he snatched the ball before it could be thrown.

The five men, still reeling from Xin Haotian's impossible speed. His mastery over the sword intent and speed reminded them of the Sword Saint, but they quickly dismissed the thought. None of them had ever crossed paths with Xin Haotian before, and besides, a figure like the Sword Saint would have no interest in this matters.

As they stood, trapped and out of options, the leader sent a hurried transmission to the remaining members.

"Use the devil form!"

"But we'll jeopardize the entire operation if we do!"

"We have no choice, at this rate, we'll all die. The man in front of us must be at least at the peak Duke stage."

With no other options left, the group began to gather their devil energy, their bodies slowly starting to morph as they initiated the transformation into their devil forms. The air grew heavy with a dark red, malevolent devil energy, causing Xin Haotian to raise an eyebrow. He stood calmly, watching them undergo the transformation.

Once their devil forms were complete, their bodies now grow big with dark red energy, Xin Haotian's face remained impassive.

"So, you truly are devils. Then I no longer need to hold back."

Before any of them could even react to his words, Xin Haotian made a subtle motion with his hand, and in an instant, their heads were severed from their bodies. The transformed devils fell to the ground with a lifeless thud, their enormous frames reduced to nothing more than corpses.

As the silence settled over the battlefield, Xin Haotian surveyed his surroundings, ensuring no threats remained.

"Now my part here is done, I wonder how that man is faring over there." his eyes turning toward the distant twin peaks.

At the foot of the western peak of Dual Horns Peak, many people pass by, gazing in awe at the stairs leading up the mountain to the peak, where the city lord's manor stands.

At this moment, a young man stands not far from the stairs. From his demeanor, it's clear he didn't come to admire the structure but for something else.

Aldrian looks at the stairs for a moment, smiling, before stepping closer, ready to begin his plan for the night.

Chapter 73: The Night of Judgment 2

As Aldrian walked closer to the stairs, many ignored him. It wasn't unusual for people to ascend the stairs to visit the city lord's manor. The stairs were unguarded, so anyone could climb them. The real challenge came at the top of the peak, where you would either be welcomed as a guest or thrown out.

Still, some people couldn't help but wonder who this young man was when they suddenly saw Aldrian disappear from their view. Stunned, they felt like they had just seen a ghost, but after a moment of shock, they simply returned to their business, not caring about Aldrian. Maybe that person using his movement technique, they thought.

Aldrian reappeared halfway up the peak, having teleported to cover the distance. Not wanting to waste time, he teleported again, arriving at the top of the mountain. From a distance, he saw the gates of the manor, and without hesitation, teleported directly in front of the gate, where four Viscount-stage guards stood watch.

The guards were startled when Aldrian suddenly appeared before them. They had seen him briefly from afar as he suddenly appeared at the top stairs, but his sudden reappearance right in front of them was like watching a ghost materialize from nowhere.

After a moment of surprise, the guards drew their weapons—swords and spears—pointing them at Aldrian.

"Who are you? State your purpose!" one of them demanded.

"I want to speak with your city lord. There's something I need to discuss with him," Aldrian replied.

"Do you have an appointment?" the guard asked.

"No, I don't," Aldrian said.

"I'm sorry, but you can't meet our lord without an appointment," the guard insisted.

Aldrian remained calm. "How about this, tell your lord that if he wants to learn about the Yu family's treasure, he'll have to meet with me. I'll wait here, and I guarantee he will grant me entrance."

The guards were confused by what the young man had just said, but if his claim was true, they couldn't ignore it. One of them nodded to another, signaling him to inform the city lord. They waited in silence until the messenger returned.

"You've been summoned by the lord to meet him in the main hall. Let me escort you," the guard said.

Aldrian was then escorted toward the main hall. As he walked, he observed the manor. Inside were vast, with many beautiful gardens, a large pond, and an expansive training field. Combined with the breathtaking view from the mountaintop higher than the clouds. It felt like a place where an immortal hermit might reside.

After walking for a while, they reached the doors of the main hall. Even before Aldrian stepped inside, he could sense the presence of people within, each seated in their designated chairs.

As Aldrian entered and the guard returned to his post, the elders of the city lord's manor fixed their eyes on him, their interest piqued. Some were intrigued by the audacity of this young man, who had caused chaos in the city of Dual Peak Horns, their territory.

Ignoring their gazes, Aldrian focused on the man seated in the center—the one with the most intimidating presence in the room. His cultivation was the strongest, and his demonic energy leaked out in a display of power, attempting to deter Aldrian.

This was the strongest person Aldrian had encountered outside of his domain, yet he didn't feel threatened. Instead, he was looking at the prospect of facing someone who could challenge him, a chance to test his limits. The city lord's aura, that of a Grand Duke, bore down on him like a mountain.

Amidst the pressure, Aldrian calmly assessed the city lord's information.

Seo Kang-Dae

Age : 45.363 years

Race : Human

Cultivation : Middle Grand Duke

Cultivation technique : Three fire's demon scripture.

Attack techniques : Demonic blue fire spear, Demonic green fire sword, Demonic white fire halberd, Pillar of fire, Fire tornado, Spear of three demonic fires, Three demonic fires territory

Defense technique : Fire shield, Fire wall

Movement technique : Breezing demonic wind

Supporting technique : Three demonic fire's armor

The fact that the city lord was already at the Middle Grand Duke stage added even more pressure to Aldrian. The floor beneath him cracked under the immense force that sought to bend his knees, but Aldrian didn't budge. His face remained serene, showing no sign of struggle. The city lord, witnessing this, was astonished by the strength of this young man, who was only at the Low Earl stage.

"How is he resisting my pressure without even flinching?" the city lord thought, perplexed. He had intended to display his power and humiliate Aldrian, but it seemed to have no effect.

"No wonder he dares to act so brazenly in my city—he clearly doesn't care about his life," the city lord mused.

He assumed Aldrian was reckless, delivering himself to his own death. He couldn't believe that, despite some tricks to defeat his subordinates, this young man could pose any real threat to him or the entire city lord's manor.

"You don't need to test me. I'm only here to give you an answer—mine and yours," Aldrian said calmly. His gaze shifted to the side, locking eyes with one of the men holding a fan, who was smiling at him. Aldrian responded with a smile of his own.

The city lord's face darkened in response to this display of insolence. Yet, his curiosity about Aldrian's identity and purpose grew.

"Now, you'd better spit out the truth about the treasure. Otherwise, I'll make sure you beg for death," the city lord warned, his voice filled with menace.

"You will hear the absolute truth tonight, and I will achieve my purpose. Do you wish to hear my story, my lord?"

"What—" the city lord wanted to ask, confused about what Aldrian was talking about, but he was cut off by Aldrian.

"There was once a noble family, they stood strong for millions of years. Many revered them, speaking of their rare chivalry and noble principles."

The elders, who had been watching in silence, now exchanged confused glances at this unexpected turn of events.

"Unfortunately, one day, that noble family fell into ruin at the hands of an unknown group. As if their misfortune wasn't enough, they were slandered and accused of having ties with devils." At this point, everyone in the room immediately understood what Aldrian was implying and recognized the family he was referring to.

"What are you trying to say, young man? We already know what you're getting at, so just get to the point!" said one of the elders seated far from the city lord, indicating his lower rank within the council.

"Be patient, I'm almost at the interesting part," Aldrian replied calmly, his eyes locking onto the elder before continuing his tale. "After they were falsely accused of collaborating with devils, the family's reputation was destroyed, and their deaths were justified in the eyes of some."

"Perhaps they were guilty? But here's the intriguing part, the devils themselves watched all of this unfold with amusement from close distance, treating it as a game of chess they were playing," Aldrian said, a faint smile tugging at his lips.

Several of the elders frowned, and tension began to mount in the room. Some of them started to feel uneasy, sensing the direction the story was heading. A few elders discreetly began circulating their energy, preparing techniques in case things took a darker turn. Aldrian noticed this and found it amusing before he resumed his narration.

"The truth is, the devils were actually grateful. They were rid of a family that had been compromising their operations. And they offered their 'thanks' to their collaborators, not the devils by the way—those cultivators who coveted something from the fallen family."

"Presumptuous! Are you accusing someone here of betraying us and conspiring with the devils?" the same elder from before shouted, his face red with fury. Aldrian simply smiled at him.

"It seems not everyone here is involved with the devils," Aldrian thought.

Before any of the other elders could berate Aldrian for his bold accusations, the entire hall suddenly shook. The city lord's aura exploded with even greater intensity than before, and the overwhelming pressure now focused entirely on Aldrian. The weight of the Grand Duke's power was far more intense than earlier, bearing down on him like a storm.

"You are truly brazen to slander us by accusing us of collaborating with devils. If you don't kneel and apologize now, I will consider it an insult against all demonic cultivators. You will be punished by death, regardless of any information you have about the treasure," the city lord declared.

Despite his outward composure, the city lord was anxious. How does this young man know about the devils' involvement? He had taken great care to leave no trace, contacting the devils through secret means that even the Piercing Heaven Sect struggled to detect. So, how could Aldrian possibly know there were collaborators among them? Could there be a traitor?

He couldn't afford to dwell on it. The young man had to be silenced, especially now that it seemed he knew about the Yu family massacre. The city lord also needed to find out how Aldrian had acquired this knowledge.

The treasure known as the "Heavenly Rock" no longer mattered. If word got out that they had collaborated with devils, their family would be doomed, even the Piercing Heaven Sect would hunt them down.

The city lord cast a glance at the man with the fan and gave him a slight nod. The man understood the signal immediately. He tapped his fan lightly, and the manor's defensive formation was instantly raised, enclosing the entire estate.

Some of the elders were stunned by the sudden shift in the atmosphere. turned to the city lord, questioning his extreme action.

"Why has the defensive formation been activated?" one of them asked.

The city lord slowly rose from his seat and began walking toward Aldrian, his steps deliberate and menacing.

"To prevent a certain someone from escaping," he said coldly.

Chapter 74: The Night of Judgment 3

Under immense pressure, Aldrian finally released his aura. With a stomp of his foot, he broke free from the City Lord's suppression. Golden energy seeped from his body, filling the entire hall for all to witness. The feeling in the presence of the mighty being, radiating a golden aura that demanded reverence from all, stunned the people inside.

It lasted only for a moment, but that brief instant was enough for Aldrian to make his first move. He conjured a towering wall of fire that shattered the roof of the hall, creating a massive pillar of flames visible from afar.

The pillar continued to grow until it struck the defensive dome, which was designed to protect the manor through a formation. The dome trembled under the pressure of Aldrian's technique but held firm.

Some of the elders instinctively distanced themselves, as the heat emanating from the fire pricked their skin, and they weren't confident in their ability to withstand it. Aldrian then spread his arms, causing the pillar of fire to expand. Elders below the duke stage immediately used their movement techniques to escape the hall, sensing that touching the flames would result in fatal injuries.

The expanding fire obliterated everything in its path. The City Lord gazed solemnly at the approaching inferno and summoned his energy, forming a green, sword-shaped flame. The flaming sword hovered momentarily before flying toward the expanding fire. When the two techniques collided, they canceled each other out.

Now, the City Lord and Aldrian stood facing each other once more, but with the surrounding buildings reduced to rubble. Rage boiled in the City Lord's heart as he stomped the ground and launched himself at Aldrian with tremendous speed.

Aldrian then coated his arms in golden energy, forming gauntlet-like armor around them, and summoned a sword made of pure energy. Meanwhile, the City Lord unleashed his own technique, manifesting a blue, spear-shaped flame—the Demonic Blue Fire Spear—and thrust it toward Aldrian.

Not wanting to face the attack head-on, Aldrian used his movement technique—teleportation—to appear behind the City Lord in an instant and slashed at his body. The City Lord, stunned by Aldrian's teleportation, narrowly dodged the incoming strike and channeled his demonic energy into his other hand, conjuring a Demonic White Fire Halberd to counterattack.

Aldrian saw the halberd coming and parried it with his flaming sword, creating a deadly zone where the two kinds of fire clashed violently. The heat from their battle could be felt from a great distance. By this time, the elders had already retreated to the edge of the manor, about a kilometer away, though still within the defensive formation.

"What are you doing just standing there? We must help our Lord suppress this man!" A man holding a fan shouted at the elders. They snapped out of their reverie and, without hesitation, moved closer to the battle.

Though some of them were confused as to how the situation had escalated so quickly, they took their positions and formed a battle formation. From it, a massive avatar appeared—a demonic figure wielding a sword.

The City Lord, still trying to suppress Aldrian, glanced at the elders for a moment before retreating using his movement technique. Aldrian, seeking to maintain the upper hand,

noticed the giant demonic avatar and also attempted to gain some distance. He teleported toward the City Lord, hoping to prevent the avatar from striking recklessly.

The City Lord had anticipated Aldrian's teleportation and made a series of quick movements to maintain distance, giving the elders an opportunity to land a blow on Aldrian. By now, he had realized that Aldrian's battle proficiency was exceptionally high, and his power could match his own, though Aldrian clearly lacked the same energy capacity.

As the City Lord kept his distance, he parried Aldrian's incoming sword attack. At the same time, the demonic avatar's sword descended upon Aldrian. The towering blade exuded such overwhelming power that the air itself seemed to tremble. Aldrian, seeing the incoming strike, attempted to teleport once more but was startled to find his foot stuck.

He glanced down at his right foot and saw a black chain wrapped around it, trapping him. With a swift slash of his golden energy, he broke the chain. Although the chain held him only briefly, it was enough for the demonic avatar's attack to reach him.

Aldrian had no choice but to defend against the attack, which carried the power of a High Grand Duke. The elders had formed a battle formation with a Low Grand Duke Grand Elder at the head, along with 12 Duke stage and 6 Marquess stage cultivators. Together, they harmonized their energies, creating a force equivalent to that of a High Grand Duke.

Aldrian channeled nearly all of his golden energy from his middle dantian, preparing to unleash a weaker version of the 'Slash of the End.' However, without a physical sword and only one created from his energy, the concentration and energy consumption were immense. He had to form his sword's will, channel his energy into the blade, and maintain its shape to release the attack.

The situation was turning against Aldrian, forcing him to make a critical decision. He had to use most of his energy for a decisive move. His golden energy surged, displaying its full might as it was released. His slash met the sword strike of the demonic avatar, and the resulting clash sent a deafening sound through the air. The golden energy shattered the sword strike, and though weakened, the remaining slash energy continued toward the demonic avatar.

The onlookers were shocked by the result of the clash. Although the slash's power had diminished, the elders didn't underestimate it. They quickly moved the avatar into a defensive stance as the slash energy approached, feeling their bodies tremble under its pressure. The sword slash attempted to cut through the avatar, but the massive construct was strong enough to withstand the weakened attack.

Taking advantage of the brief opening, Aldrian teleported away to create some distance. His breathing was labored, sweat dripped down his face, and he looked visibly

exhausted. His energy reserves were down to 25%, and his recharge rate was much slower, far slower than it would have been within his domain.

The enemy forces had suffered little damage, and the defensive formation surrounding the manor was sturdy enough to withstand the full power of a Low Emperor. The situation looked grim for Aldrian, with death seemingly at his doorstep.

Yet, despite the dire circumstances, he felt as if he had been brought back down to earth. From this battle, he had gained a clearer understanding of his limits. Unbeknownst to him, a smile crept onto his face. The feeling of growing stronger, of discovering his boundaries, stirred something inside him.

He now had a better sense of how to prepare for the future.

"It seems they're still too much for me,"

he thought, closing his eyes.

The elders of the City Lord's manor were already prepared for the next attack. As for the City Lord himself, he stared at Aldrian, who appeared to be in a pitiful state. Guards ranging from Viscount to Earl stage had surrounded the entire perimeter of the manor as the support, sealing off any possible escape routes.

"Give up, young man! You can't defeat me, let alone the entire City Lord's manor. Hand over the information about the treasure! I know you got it from that wife of the Yu Patriarch. I'll give you a quick death in return!" the City Lord shouted as he walked toward Aldrian. He assumed Aldrian had already surrendered, seeing him standing there with his eyes closed, seemingly waiting for death.

But Aldrian didn't care one bit. He kept his eyes shut, and as the City Lord approached within 50 meters of him, the entire manor suddenly felt a shift in the surrounding energy. It was as if the flow of energy had been seized by someone and was now converging toward a single point.

The City Lord frowned, sensing something amiss. He glanced at Aldrian, a sudden bad feeling washing over him. Without hesitation, he used his movement technique to instantly appear next to Aldrian, attempting to decapitate him.

However, his strike hit nothing but air—Aldrian had vanished. Confused, the City Lord scanned the area, trying to locate him. That's when he sensed it—Aldrian was floating in the air above.

"He's floating!" someone exclaimed.

"Does that mean he's at least Duke stage?" another muttered in disbelief.

The crowd was shocked, especially those at Earl stage. In their world, cultivators could only begin to float or fly at Duke stage. However, due to the immense energy consumption, most cultivators couldn't fully take advantage of flying until reaching King stage, where they could more efficiently control their energy.

From their earlier battle, everyone was certain that Aldrian was only at the Earl stage, yet his combat power was absurd, matching that of a Grand Duke. The City Lord gazed at the floating young man, an ominous feeling creeping through him, causing unease.

As Aldrian's golden energy surged, it intensified to the point where the very air seemed to thrum with power, making their hearts pounding heavily.

"ATTACK HIM!" the City Lord roared. He unleashed his own technique, combining it with the strength of his *Three Demonic Fires Territory*. All kinds of attacks were hurled toward Aldrian.

But as he opened his eyes, glowing with a golden hue, Aldrian stretched his hand forward and created a crack in the very fabric of space. The spatial rift expanded, swallowing every incoming attack before sealing itself shut.

Aldrian then pulled back his hand, clenched his fist, and punched the space in front of him. The impact caused the space to collapse, and the spatial crack began expanding toward the people below.

The City Lord, sensing the immense power behind the punch, broke into a cold sweat.

"Shit!"

Chapter 75: The Night of Judgment 4

A spatial crack formed, unleashing a storm that created chaotic energy currents, sucking in everything in its path. The city lord and the elders hurriedly summoned a massive energy shield to protect themselves from the incoming punch wave that followed the crack.

However, as the punch wave met the shield, it shattered instantly like glass, continuing forward toward the giant battle formation avatar. The elders tried to raise their defenses, but the avatar collapsed the moment it was swept by the punch, which then struck the heart of the formation.

Pui!

All the elders spat out a mouthful of blood, a side effect of the destroyed avatar. The destruction of the formation, combined with the punch wave, caused all the marquess-stage elders to faint, while the others sustained fatal injuries. Their organs shook, and their energy became unstable—this was the drawback of using a battle formation.

When you link yourself to others in a formation to create combined techniques, your power exceeds what you can individually achieve. But when the technique is broken, the backlash is severe.

The effects were devastating for those at lower cultivation stages, causing them to faint instantly. Even the grand elder, at the grand duke stage and the brain of the formation, suffered greatly. His energy became chaotic, and his internal organs ruptured and bled. The elders were incapacitated, unable to continue the fight.

The city lord had already dodged out of the impact zone when their shield shattered. He witnessed all of this with trembling eyes, but his shock was short-lived as he sensed someone behind him. Instinctively, he swung his green fire sword, but his shock deepened when the energy flow of his technique became unstable.

The technique weakened, and as it approached Aldrian, the young man easily blocked it with a hand coated in golden energy. The city lord was stunned, and before he could react, Aldrian's hand had already clamped around his neck.

Aldrian's grip was firm, and his energy seeped into the city lord's body. After a moment, Aldrian released his hold, controlling the energy within the city lord's body to seal his meridians and dantian, effectively incapacitating him.

For the first time, the city lord felt true dread—it was as if he had been turned into a mere mortal. Powerless, he could only sit there, weak and helpless.

"What did you do to me?" the city lord gasped, but Aldrian didn't respond. With the surrounding elders critically injured and the city lord captured, Aldrian had effectively taken control of the manor.

He turned his gaze to the one person who hadn't done much—the man with the fan, who had merely stood there as a torchbearer, subtly obstructing his movement. The man met Aldrian's gaze with a smile, seemingly unfazed by the earlier display of might.

Aldrian also smiled.

"Looks like you still have a trick up your sleeve."

"What if I am, and what if I'm not? In the end, despite a few mishaps, my plan will still succeed," the man replied.

"Is that so? Then can I ask you something? Why are devils like yourself stationed here? Judging by your cultivation level, you must hold a high rank in the devil territory, Agrin Livan."

The man trembled slightly but tried to suppress it. He was shocked that Aldrian had identified him as a devil and even knew his name. Trying to maintain his composure, he

answered calmly, "I don't know how you figured out that I'm a devil or even my real name, but I assure you, whatever you're planning here is useless. In fact, thanks to your arrival, my plan can be accelerated. I can finally leave this place."

"Was it your plan to capture Yu Ruomei while I was here? To steal the treasure? With all those devils surrounding the Yu manor?"

The man's smile stiffened slightly, though he continued to grin.

"They aren't the only cards I have up my sleeve. I will win in the end."

"Oh? Then you must be relying on the thing beneath this mountain," Aldrian said, pointing downward. At that, the man's smile vanished, his expression turning grave. Without hesitation, he activated his devil form. He no longer cared about the people around them witnessing his transformation—after tonight, the city would be in ruins, and the devils would strike a blow to the demon territory, causing their unity to fracture.

The elders and guards who had been watching this unfold were filled with terror. Realizing that the city lord's manor had connections with the devils, some of the lower-ranking elders turned furious eyes toward the higher-ranking ones.

"What is the meaning of this?! Are we really allied with the devils?!" one of them demanded.

"Grand elder! Don't tell me you're part of this treachery!" shouted another.

As the elders began accusing one another, pointing fingers and blaming each other, the low-level guards trembled. They had unknowingly been working with devils. Their hearts sank, feeling the weight of their betrayal against the demonic cult. Fear consumed them—they worried there was no future for them now, or worse, that their fate was already sealed because of tonight's events.

Amid the chaos, Aldrian remained focused, sensing the powerful entity beneath the ground. Agrin Livan smirked coldly, preparing to act, but before he could, he noticed Aldrian stretch out his hand toward him. Confused, he instinctively dodged as something shot toward him.

He looked back and saw Aldrian had grabbed a spear from one of the guards. It was an ordinary spear, the lowest-grade weapon used by the guards, leaving Agrin baffled by Aldrian's intentions.

No longer caring, Agrin unleashed his power, his aura flaring at the middle grand duke stage. Channeling his devil energy, he summoned a giant devil avatar—a monstrous Rakshasa, terrifying in form, with protruding fangs and an aura powerful enough to instill fear in anyone who faced it.

Agrin formed a massive fireball, its size growing until it resembled a miniature sun, visible even from the base of the mountain. He glanced at Aldrian, who seemed completely uninterested, focusing only on feeling the ground with his hand. Veins bulged on Agrin's forehead, frustration mounting as he felt insulted by Aldrian's lack of attention.

Without hesitation, Agrin hurled the fireball toward Aldrian. The enormous flaming orb blazed through the air, but Aldrian barely reacted. With a calm expression, he shaped a sword out of his energy and, with a single slash, split the fireball cleanly in two. The two halves flew past him, dissipating harmlessly in the air.

Having found what he was looking for, Aldrian leaped into the air, careful not to touch the ceiling of the defensive dome, which towered at a height of 500 meters. Once airborne, he positioned himself as if about to throw a javelin. Channeling both his golden energy and the power of his domain into the spear, he hurled it toward the ground. The spear struck with a booming sound, splitting the earth and causing a massive earthquake that shook the western peak. Everyone lost their balance from the force of the impact.

Agrin stared in astonishment as the spear created a massive hole and sent cracks rippling across the entire manor's ground. He wanted to strike Aldrian again, but suddenly his body became impossibly heavy, almost immobilized.

"This... this is gravity! He can control gravity!" Agrin thought, his eyes wide with disbelief.

"You'd better stay put. I'll deal with this for now," Aldrian said calmly, his focus entirely on the hole he had created. As he concentrated, a loud, ear-piercing shriek echoed from the depths of the darkness below.

The earth trembled violently, each passing second amplifying the shaking. Agrin, sensing the immense presence beneath the ground struggling to break free, began to laugh with manic delight.

"You arrogant fool!" Agrin shouted, struggling to speak under the crushing force of the increased gravity.

"You've provoked my trump card, and now you won't leave this place alive! This entire city will be destroyed!"

Despite the suffocating weight, Agrin grinned like a madman, his eyes gleaming with triumph as the ground beneath them continued to quake violently.

Not long after, the creature from underground surged upward at incredible speed, its massive body moving with surprising agility despite its size. It lunged toward Aldrian, but

he easily dodged the attack, glancing at the beast—a towering serpent-like creature, its body as massive as a mountain.

The beast, unable to stop in time after missing its target, crashed into the defensive dome above. To the horror of those watching, the dome shattered instantly upon impact.

"A Black Rock Snake... and it's at the middle Emperor stage," Aldrian murmured to himself, his eyes narrowing. The snake turned its giant head toward Aldrian, who had teleported to a height above it.

"Who dares disturb this king's slumber?" a hoarse voice rumbled from the snake's mouth, its sheer power making the air tremble.

Aldrian remained silent but he glanced at the snake's head, noticing a wound. *"It seems the spear couldn't handle my energy and broke before it could pierce deeper,"* he sighed.

With a resigned expression, Aldrian touched his storage ring. "In the end, I'll have to use this."

He then pulled out a bow and an arrow.

Chapter 76: The Night of Judgment 5

Aldrian took out the bow and an arrow, the aura from the artifact spreading as though it demanded recognition from everyone around. He had decided to pull out the divine artifact given to him by Emperor Thonias, his legacy weapon, the Earth Shattering Bow, along with the Wind Slasher Arrow.

This time, he needed to end the beast quickly, or the destruction it would cause would be immense. The Black Rock Snake was one of the most venomous creatures on the continent, but now that it had reached the emperor stage, it could turn entire regions into a no man's land, rendering the land barren and uninhabitable, filled with its deadly venom and poison.

He didn't want to rely on a divine artifact like the Earth Shattering Bow, but he had no choice. If only he had a Heaven-grade sword, then he could use Slash of the End. He couldn't unleash the full power of the Slash of the End with just sword shaped energy. With that in mind, he finally resolved to use the divine artifact, though he wasn't sure what the outcome of its strike would be.

The Black Rock Snake, gazing up at the small figure of Aldrian high in the sky, suddenly felt a terrible aura emanating from the bow Aldrian had just taken out. A surge of bad feeling filled its heart, telling him that if the strike from the bow came down, it would be

the end. His instinct as the emperor stage beast were keen, and he trusted his instinct completely.

"Die!" the beast roared, lunging upward and spitting venom laced with corrosive properties. To its surprise, the venom halted mid-air and then rebounded back toward it. Aldrian had used his water element comprehension to control the poisonous liquid.

Unable to dodge with its massive body, the venom splashed across its own scales. The sizzle of burning flesh filled the air, enraging the creature further. In a fury, it increased its speed, surging toward Aldrian. All the while, its body continued to emerge from the depths of hole, revealing just how massive the emperor stage Black Rock Snake truly was.

Aldrian continued flying upward, using his energy manipulation within his domain until the snake could no longer keep up. His domain extended to a height of 550 kilometers, making it impossible for the snake to catch him if Aldrian chose to ascend to avoid it.

Without wasting any time, he readied the bow, notching the arrow and drawing the string. As he pulled, he gathered energy from within his domain, not just the newly created domain in this city, but also the domain of the Ivory Empire. The air trembled with the immense concentration of energy surging from Aldrian's body, and the divine bow shone with golden energy, exuding a mighty aura.

Agrin felt a deep trepidation in his heart as he sensed the aura from the bow, now amplified by the surge of golden energy. He was certain that a strike from this bow would kill him a thousand times over if it hit.

Unable to catch Aldrian, who was flying high in the sky, the snake finally dropped its upper body to the ground. With a swift movement, it coiled its body and, using all its strength, launched itself into the air. The giant snake finally emerged completely from the hole, revealing the full glory of the emperor stage Black Rock Snake. The sight of the two kilometer long serpent launching into the sky horrified many who witnessed it.

The speed of the giant creature was so great that its movement created a powerful windstorm, whipping up the surrounding clouds. Finally, Aldrian completed his preparation and, seeing the incoming giant snake filled with rage, smiled.

"I call this technique Divine Arrow's Judgment."

As he released the bowstring, a brilliant golden light flared from the arrow. The combined might of the domains and Aldrian's comprehension of archery was unleashed in this single strike. The air along the arrow's path became so chaotic that it generated a thunderstorm, followed by the collapse of space itself.

The fabric of space couldn't contain the arrow's power, resulting in spatial cracks forming along its trajectory. The giant snake, already in mid-air preparing to strike

Aldrian, couldn't evade the attack and was mercilessly pierced by the arrow. It obliterated part of the snake's body and dragged its immense form back towards the western peak.

"NO!" Agrin screamed as he witnessed the strike—a force unlike anything he had ever felt—descend from the sky, leading to what could only be described as a catastrophe.

A minute ago,

At the base of Dual Horns Peak, people were going about their business when suddenly they felt a tremor from the ground. They instinctively tried to steady themselves, confused by the unexpected earthquake. A few quickly looked up at the mountain peak, their faces reflecting terror.

"What is that?"

"That's a giant beast!"

A loud, shrieking sound echoed throughout the city, causing the hearts of the entire populace to shudder. The terrifying aura of the middle emperor stage beast spread expansively, making many stop in their tracks and tremble with fear.

The city guards, observing the beast from a distance, struggled to suppress their own fear as they attempted to coordinate their response. Suddenly, one of the commanders issued an order to stay in position.

"Commander Jin, what are you doing? We need to help evacuate the citizens around the mountain!" one of the battalion commanders shouted.

"We can't send our men up the mountain recklessly!" Commander Jin responded. "My battalion will move toward the northern gate to help organize the evacuation of the citizens."

Commander Jin, having been knocked out by Aldrian, woke up confused in the interrogation room. When he discovered that all the children he had been holding had been released, he was furious and ordered a search. However, shortly after, his master, Agrin Lavin, contacted him with an urgent update about an accelerated plan but provided few details.

Agrin instructed Commander Jin to act as if his battalion was helping the citizens, but in reality, they were to lock down the city to maximize the destruction. Consequently, Jin halted the search and prepared for the night's operation.

When the giant beast suddenly emerged from the mountain, Jin wondered if the plan had been put into motion too soon. He questioned why there had been no prior warning from Master Agrin. Despite these concerns, he knew he had to follow the plan. Without consulting the other battalion commanders, he led his battalion, which was secretly composed of devils, toward the northern gate.

The long-awaited operation to find the 'thing' was about to begin. As they moved swiftly toward the northern gate, they suddenly stopped and looked up at the western peak where the giant beast was. Jin felt an overwhelming aura that made his skin crawl and saw a brief flash of golden light at the top of the mountain before it vanished into the ground.

Inside one of the largest brothels in the red district, the woman in the red robe looked at the mountain with a shocked expression. The appearance of the Black Rock Snake at the middle emperor stage was beyond her expectations, leaving her at a loss. Suddenly, a woman in a black cloak appeared behind her and reported:

"Ma'am, the unknown group has attacked the Yu family Manor!"

The ground continued to tremble from the giant snake's movements, intensifying the situation. The woman in the red robe gritted her teeth as she gazed at the massive beast now atop the western peak.

"We were careless! I didn't expect something like this to be hidden right under our noses!"

She had always kept a close watch on the city lord's manor. Since news of the events in the Ivory Empire spread across the continent, every major power had been strengthening their defenses and intelligence to detect any potential devil infiltrations.

She was one of the agents to monitor the city. Her role as an informant had been crucial in keeping the devils in check, but discovering that the devils had outpaced her made her feel foolish for being outsmarted.

"We must ensure that whatever the devils want inside the Yu family manor is not taken! Send the Rose Garden to the Yu family Manor! As for the rest, let's contain that beast while helping the citizens evacuate!"

"Yes, ma'am!" The black cloaked woman replied and disappeared. The woman in the red robe grabbed a sword from the table and rushed outside the brothel to call for her other subordinates.

Once outside, she was stunned and looked up at the mountain as she suddenly felt a mighty aura. In that split second, she saw a golden light descend from the sky towards the western peak.

A moment later, a scene unfolded that the people of Dual Horns Peak City would never forget.

BOOOOOM!!!!

The Shining Star Above The Heaven #Chapter 77: The Reason Behind All of This - Read The Shining Star Above The Heaven Chapter 77: The Reason Behind All of This

Chapter 77: The Reason Behind All of This

Just before the arrow struck the ground, Aldrian pulled the people from the city lord's manor, making them float near him. When the arrow hit, the western peak trembled violently, and cracks spread throughout the mountain. Aldrian watched as the mountain peak disintegrated and collapsed.

But it didn't stop there. The arrow continued deep into the mountain, its power seemingly undiminished even after the impact. The entire mountain shook heavily, and moments later, it began collapsing from the top down, crumbling inward. The towering peak, which pierced the clouds and reached the sky, was now crumbling before everyone's eyes. Earlier people who had been fleeing when they saw the giant beast stopped in their tracks as they witnessed golden light fall from the sky, causing the western peak to crumble.

The earthquake from the mountain's collapse shook the entire city, far stronger than the tremor caused by the Black Rock Snake's appearance. A mountain that had stood for countless years, with all its history and glory—one that gave the city its name—was falling. Rocks and debris started flying everywhere, but the spatial crack caused by the attack sucked the mountain inward, pulling it into the void.

The arrow finally stopped, buried 300 meters below the ground. A mountain more than 15 kilometers tall had now been reduced to a heap of dirt and rock. Aldrian watched all of this with calm eyes, but inside, his heart trembled.

"What a powerful attack! The combination of my domain and the divine artifact truly makes for a weapon of mass destruction. I need to be careful using this in the future—it can be a double-edged sword," he thought.

He surveyed the aftermath and began controlling the spatial storm by sealing the spatial cracks that had formed along the arrow's path. Fortunately, the spatial storm had helped, sucking the debris and dust into the void, preventing the collapse from

spreading to the surrounding area. This spared Aldrian from having to hold up the entire mountain to prevent casualties.

He spread his senses below and finally located the devil Agrin Livan. He was lying between rocks and debris, half his body missing, but Aldrian could sense he was still alive, though barely. Agrin had reverted to his original form, his devil transformation canceled when he lost all his devil energy and half his body.

Aldrian observed him for a moment before deciding to take him as proof. He then recalled the arrow from deep within the ground, now buried under tons of rock. When the arrow finally returned to his hand, he inspected it and, to his surprise, found that it had withstood the immense power without a single crack. Even the information displayed showed no signs of broken.

"Well, it's not called a divine artifact for nothing, especially one made from the roots of the World Tree."

He teleported part of the city lord manor's people to the ground, amid the pile of rocks, while sending the higher-ups to the Yu family manor. It was one of Aldrian's ability—his power to teleport between two different domains no matter the distance.

He had tested this ability many times in the Ivory Empire, with satisfying results: he could teleport between his domains without expending any energy. However, if he was outside of his domain and wanted to teleport into it, he needed a significant amount of energy. Once, he had tried teleporting directly from Thonias City to the Forest of Despair, and the result was he depleted almost all of his energy in one go.

When Aldrian arrived at the Yu family manor, he saw the corpses of devils scattered around, surrounding the manor. He smiled at their futile attempt to strike the manor while he was away. Unfortunately for them, he had long since set up powerful killing formation traps around the area. Charred bodies, decapitated heads, and signs of poison covered the battlefield—Aldrian had turned the manor into an impenetrable fortress.

Yu Ruomei stood in the garden with Yu Fenglian, both stunned at Aldrian's sudden appearance. Like the others in the city, they had witnessed the collapse of the western peak, and the sight of it disappearing left them speechless. Shock washed over Yu Ruomei again when she noticed the many people Aldrian had brought with him, some of whom she recognized. When her gaze fell on the city lord, her body trembled, and she rushed toward him without hesitation.

With one swift motion, she punched him in the abdomen, striking directly at his middle dantian, cracking it.

"It had to be you! You're the one responsible for my family's downfall!" she yelled, raining blows on him—his face, stomach, and chest—all with no mercy.

With his cultivation sealed by Aldrian, the city lord couldn't defend himself, effectively becoming a living punching bag. As he teetered on the edge of death, Aldrian stepped in, gently holding Yu Ruomei's hand to stop her from killing him accidentally. The city lord was a key figure, after all. Yu Ruomei tried to calm herself down and step aside.

Yu Fenglian watched his mother with tears in his eyes, furious at the people who had brought them to this miserable state. He wanted to strangle them all but knew he couldn't.

Aldrian then injected some of his energy into the city lord, healing him just enough to keep him alive. He also touched the city lord's forehead, probing his memories. After he is done, Aldrian stopped and turned to Yu Ruomei with a sigh.

"Do you want to know what I found?" he asked.

Yu Ruomei nodded firmly, prompting Aldrian to share his findings. Apparently, 15 years ago, when a prophecy from the Heavenly Direction Church had spread internally among the powers on the continent. The prophecy also reached the Yu family and, of course, the city lord's manor. At that time, many factions feared that the prophecy would eventually disrupt the status quo.

Amidst this uncertainty, someone suddenly arrived at the city lord's manor with an enticing offer. He presented something that sparked the city lord's greed, and some of the higher-ups also became collaborators. The man offered the power of the 'Heavenly Rock.' In return, the devils wanted the city lord's manor to open a path for them to access demon territory. The city lord agreed and even appointed one of the devils, Agrin Livan, as his advisor.

The ancestors who brought the 'Heavenly Rock' along with their colleagues to the Yu family manor had no idea that this 'rock' was under the devils' control when they waged war against the entire continent 3 million years ago. When the devils retreated, they left behind the 'Heavenly Rock,' which was later discovered by the Yu family's ancestors.

In recent years, the city lord's manor, already seduced by the devils' whispers, began to target the Yu family. Together, the devils and the city lord's manor devised a plan to seize the rock, which had been in the Yu family's possession for millions of years.

Initially, they intended to execute a seamless plan with precise arrangements. However, the Yu family's escort mission, arranged with a client from Golden Swan Commerce, went awry when the escort team discovered the true nature of their package. Forced into a corner, the city lord's manor and the devils resorted to a more radical and poorly-conceived plan, riddled with flaws.

The events that followed became the history everyone knows. However, the city lord's manor did not fully trust the devils, especially when they almost slaughtered the entire

Yu family without coordinating with the city lord. It became clear that the devils had their own agenda, one that the city lord knew little about.

The city lord decided to keep the mother and son, the only survivors of the massacre under his control, solely for the sake of the treasure. He knew that the two lived for each other, so keeping them both alive was the best way to ensure they would remain useful. It also proved to be a wise decision after the treasure could not be found. The wife of the Yu patriarch must have known the treasure's location.

The only place left unsearched was the Altar of the Heavenly Demon, a sacred site that many, including the city lord, were reluctant to destroy out of faith. Not all members of the city lord's manor knew about his connection with the devils, so he had to act carefully.

If the devils had slaughtered the entire Yu family, the city lord could have potentially lost the treasure, as the devils would have been free to search the manor unhindered. After all, they didn't care about the Altar of the Heavenly Demon. He also had no idea what methods the devils might use to find the treasure—perhaps they already had a way. If that were the case, he would have been a fool to let himself be taken advantage of without resistance.

After Aldrian finished explaining, Yu Ruomei stared blankly into the distance. Yu Fenglian gritted his teeth, overwhelmed by the revelation behind his family's misfortune. Yu Ruomei sighed, glanced at Aldrian with gratitude, and bowed.

"Thank you, young master, for uncovering the truth. Once again, I will repay your kindness with everything I have, but for now, please excuse me." Without waiting for Aldrian's response, she walked away toward the Hall of Honor, her back appearing lonely and filled with sadness.

Yu Fenglian watched his mother for a moment before bowing to Aldrian. "Thank you, young master, for helping my mother and me. Please excuse me." He then ran to catch up with her.

Aldrian watched them leave and sighed. This was just one of many stories in the cultivation world. There were countless others, some perhaps even crueler. He then turned his attention to his 'prisoners,' all of whom were too injured to pose any threat. To ensure their captivity, Aldrian sealed their cultivation. With this, the night's events were concluded—or so he thought, until he sensed the presence of several newcomers outside the manor.

Without hesitation, he began walking outside to meet them.

Chapter 78: Regrouping

After the collapse of the western peak and the tremors ceased, a group of silhouette continued their movement. They paused briefly when they saw a golden light descending from the sky just before the western peak was destroyed. They wondered what it could be, but with their own mission in mind, they pressed on.

When they arrived at the Yu family manor, the first thing they noticed were the corpses scattered around the manor. They were stunned, unsure of what to make of the situation. They had expected a battle upon arrival, but instead found only the dead.

Looking more closely at the corpses, they noticed the same thing.

"They're emitting devil energy!" one of them exclaimed.

Many were shocked by this discovery, and they immediately raised their guard, staying alert to their surroundings. Moving slowly and undetected, they used their movement techniques to inch closer to the front of the manor. Just as they were preparing to barge in, they stopped, looking on the man emerging from the front gate.

Most of them didn't recognize him, but the leader of the group did. The leader, a woman, raised her hand, signaling her subordinates to hold their position. She then stepped forward and approached Aldrian, cupping her hands in respect.

"Excuse us for arriving with so many people unannounced, but you need not worry. We came to protect this place. We mean no harm," she spoke, her voice sweet and reassuring.

Aldrian looked over the group before his gaze settled on the leader.

"I can see that. But are you the ones watching this place aside from these others?" He gestured to the scattered corpses.

"From what I can tell, you're from another power."

The leader was stunned. How could he have detected her from such a distance during her reconnaissance? And how could he distinguish her from the people of the City Lord's Manor? She quickly regained her composure.

"Yes, I apologize if I disturbed you, but it was an order from my superiors. It's also connected to our internal issues within the demonic territories."

"I see. It must be about the City Lord's Manor, right? The devils?" Aldrian asked.

The leader was shocked by his question. He already knew about the City Lord's Manor being suspicious? And about the devils? The other black-cloaked figures were equally

stunned, as they hadn't been privy to this information—they were just following orders. Only higher-ranking individuals, like the leader, had access to insider knowledge. After all, she was close to the pavilion's master.

"How do you know about this?" the leader asked, anxious.

"The first day I arrived in this city, I encountered their people. How could I not know their true nature? So tonight, I paid them a visit to ask them sincerely to repent for their mistakes."

The leader was confused. *What does he mean by 'visited them tonight'?* She hadn't seen this young man leave the manor, so how could he have confronted them? Of course, she was unaware that Aldrian had used teleportation to move in and out, which is why she didn't know he was the source of the chaos at the western peak.

Aldrian simply smiled and turned around. "Come with me."

The leader hesitated for a moment before signaling her subordinates to stay behind and wait for her. As she followed Aldrian into the manor, the sight before her shocked her to the core.

All of the higher-ups of the City Lord's Manor, including the City Lord himself, were gathered here in pitiful conditions. She could sense that their cultivation had been sealed, and their bodies were covered in wounds. Among them, one figure stood out, his condition the most tragic—he had lost half of his body, from his right shoulder down to his thigh.

The wounds on his half-severed body had already started to heal, thanks to Aldrian's first aid. But the most shocking part was his cultivation and the aura he emitted—a *devil at the Grand Duke stage!* Why was someone like this here? The leader's mind was flooded with questions, but now she looked at Aldrian with a different gaze—a gaze reserved for monsters.

A chill ran down her spine. How had Aldrian managed all of this? Weren't these higher-ups supposed to be at the western peak? The peak had just collapsed, and yet, here they were? The absurdity of the situation made her feel like her mind was on the verge of shutting down.

"If I had to guess, you and your group were watching the City Lord's Manor because you suspected their connection to the devils. This task must have come from a power outside the Dual Peak Horns city—well, now it's only one peak. Anyway, you were just looking for proof of their involvement, right?" Aldrian said.

She trembled because *what Aldrian said is true!*

"He must be a high level expert sent by some great power!"

Hurriedly, she removed her mask, revealing her beautiful face, and cupped her hands respectfully toward Aldrian.

"Yes, I apologize for my ignorance regarding your status. You may call me Vanisa. If I may ask, who exactly are you? And your group also incredibly strong. I feel like I've missed something important about this entire situation."

"There's no need to keep apologizing, and no, I'm not from some great power. I'm just an adventurer with my group. You can simply call me Aldrian," he replied with a smile.

Vanisa studied the young man in front of her. *Adventurer?* She didn't believe it for a second, not with his mysterious knowledge. There was no way a random vagabond could gather all these people here, let alone face them head-on.

"He must be hiding his true identity for some reason!"

The people from the City Lord's Manor who were still conscious were equally stunned. *Just an adventurer?*

"If you kill me a thousand times, I still won't believe you're just a random adventurer!" they thought to themselves.

At first, they assumed Aldrian had been sent by the Piercing Heaven Sect. But after witnessing his abilities and sensing his power, they began to doubt. They were certain that he wasn't a demonic cultivator.

Even though they couldn't identify the golden energy Aldrian had used, they were certain it wasn't demonic. Yet, it didn't quite resemble the energy used by orthodox cultivators either. It felt purer, far more powerful.

"Alright then, young master," Vanisa said, glancing at the prisoners. "What do you plan to do with these people?"

"That depends on how your side decides to handle this matter," Aldrian replied calmly.

"Betraying others by collaborating with devils is a grave crime. I'd like to hear how your superiors intend to act before we proceed. We need to coordinate our actions. Once that's done, I'll hand these people over to you and go on my way."

Vanisa pondered for a moment before responding,

"I'll report this to my superior first, young master. Once I get their answer, I'll inform you."

"Good, I'll stay in this manor. You can meet me anytime," Aldrian said. With that, Vanisa excused herself and left with her group, while Aldrian summoned Xin Haotian and the

others to the Yu family manor. He also had the prisoners taken to the manor's dungeon, which usually served as a place for punishing guilty family members.

Half an hour later, Xin Haotian arrived with Eleine, Sylphia, and the children, all safe and sound. Yu Ruomei, who had been informed of their arrival, welcomed them warmly and immediately prepared rooms for them to stay in.

Yu Ruomei was delighted to help care for the children. At the very least, the Yu family manor wouldn't be so silent, now that it would be filled with the sound of children's voices and activities.

Once everyone was settled, Aldrian and his group gathered in the pavilion at the center of the pond. Xin Haotian looked at Aldrian with an expression of disbelief, as if he were looking at an alien.

"Are you sure destroying the western peak on our first day here wasn't a bit of an exaggeration?"

"No," Aldrian replied calmly. "The situation was truly dangerous. If I hadn't acted quickly, don't you think the Black Rock Snake would have caused even more destruction? Better to lose one peak than the entire city."

Xin Haotian nodded. He didn't argue with Aldrian because he also knew the threat posed by the Black Rock Snake—especially one with emperor stage cultivation.

"We'll stay here for a while. There's some business I need to finish," Aldrian said, before telling them the complete story of the today's events, something he couldn't fully explain over the long-distance communication artifact.

Hours passed like a breeze as Aldrian shared what had happened and what was to come. His group listened attentively. The ladies were fully supportive of his actions, standing by whatever decisions he made, while Xin Haotian as usual, tried to irk Aldrian with his sharp tongue. However, despite his jabs, he ultimately followed Aldrian's lead. None of them were in a rush to return to the Xin secret realm.

As the sun began to rise, the Yu family manor had already undergone repairs, restoring parts of it to its former state. The children, too, had been accommodated. For those who wished to return to their families, arrangements would be made later. Aldrian knew he'd need some additional help with that task, and he planned to ask for it in due time.

By the time the sun had fully risen, two women stood at the gate of the Yu family manor, waiting in front of the entrance.

Chapter 79: The Demon's problem

Two women stood in front of the gate to the Yu family manor. One of them was Vanisa, now wearing a tight black-and-white robe that revealed her black hair and accentuated her curves. The other woman wore tight red robes, revealing not only her figure but also part of her thigh and big mounds.

The clothes they wore caught the attention of many passersby, not only stirring men's fantasies and potentially causing trouble, but also making people wonder who these women were and why they were standing in front of what used to be the Yu family manor.

Though many were tempted to warn them not to linger near the manor, they dared not speak up, as the women were surrounded by several guards.

The two women gazed at the gate, which had been cleaned up since Aldrian's first visit. Though there was no new sign for the Yu family yet, the manor already looked much better than the day before. The gates opened, revealing Yu Fenglian, who smiled as he greeted them.

"Welcome to the Yu manor, misses. We've been expecting your visit," he said, bowing slightly.

Vanisa returned his smile. "Thank you for the warm greeting. We'd like to meet with Young Master Aldrian."

"Yes, he's waiting for you. Please, follow me." Yu Fenglian then escorted them inside.

As people saw the interaction, some recognized Yu Fenglian and gasped. Were there survivors from the night of the massacre? Did they really have ties to the devils? Whispers and gossip quickly spread about what might be happening inside the Yu family manor.

Many in the city claimed that yesterday, they saw a group of people entering the Yu family manor. Strangely, the city lord's manor made no move against them. Last night, when the entire city was in chaos because of a giant beast, a few witnesses also reported seeing numerous corpses scattered around the manor, though they were quickly cleaned up.

Now, with the sudden revelation that the young master of the Yu family is alive and well, people began to wonder: Is there some conspiracy at play? With the western peak having collapsed and no word from the city lord's manor, many began to suspect that all these events might be connected.

Inside the Yu family manor, the two women were led to a pavilion in the middle of a pond. When they arrived, Aldrian was already there, calmly drinking tea. In this serene

setting, Vanisa took a closer look at Aldrian's face, though she could sense it was merely a disguise. The other woman, too, studied Aldrian intently, as though trying to unravel his secrets.

"It's nice to see you, Miss Vanisa. And you are?" Aldrian asked.

The second woman stepped forward and cupped her hands in a polite gesture.

"Apologies if our visit disturbs your peace. I am Arin Filaris, from the Thorny Flower Garden. I've been dispatched to this city to act as the Garden's eyes, and I am also the master of the Fragrant Blossom Pavilion."

Aldrian look at her thoughtfully,

Arin Filaris

Age : 29.363 years

Race : Human

Cultivation : Middle Duke

Cultivation technique : The Four-Stage Celestial Flower

Attack Techniques: Garden's Torture Illusion, Demonic Energy Whip, The Eternal Demon's Dream, Silent Night Killer, Demonic Nightmare

Defense Techniques: Demonic Energy Whip, Thorny Flower Armor

Movement Techniques: Light Step, Flower Petal

Support Techniques: Demonic Flower Form

Her soft voice, capable of seducing many men, paired with her wicked yet beautiful face—like a cunning fox—and her flowing black hair that reached her back, made her the epitome of the Thorny Flower. But one thing particularly caught Aldrian's attention.

"Thorny Flower Garden? One of the top three powers in demon territory? That's not what I expected. Please, have a seat, so we can have a pleasant conversation," Aldrian said.

Vanisa stood off to the side as Arin sat opposite Aldrian, replying with a smile, "Perhaps that's an exaggeration. We are a demonic sect that mostly keeps to itself."

Aldrian smiled. "Yet, Miss Arin, your sect's reputation has spread across the entire demon territory and beyond. There's no need to be so modest, especially with the added fact that your sect only accepts female disciples. I'm truly impressed."

"It's thanks to the hard work of our ancestors. We were fortunate to have one of the strongest female demonic cultivators back then."

Aldrian poured hot tea into a glass and handed it to Arin. "This tea has a wonderful flavor. I hope you enjoy it."

Arin smiled, taking the glass. She looked at it for a moment before sipping, letting out a soft sigh of appreciation.

"Now that you're here, Miss Arin, I assume you have the authority to make decisions in this matter," Aldrian said.

"Not entirely, depending on the outcome of our discussion, my sect will still need to approve any decisions."

Aldrian nodded in understanding.

"That's fine," Aldrian said with a smile. "I hope we can find common ground later."

Arin was silent for a moment before asking, "Young Master Aldrian, can you tell me who you really are and where you come from? From what we've gathered, you arrived in this city just yesterday, yet you've already stirred up trouble with the city lord's manor—and caught them colluding with devils."

Aldrian chuckled softly. "I already told you, I'm just an adventurer seeking experience. But if you're asking where I come from, it's the Ivory Empire. You could say I have a special relationship with them."

"Special relationship?" Arin thought, but decided to let it go for now.

"Then how did you get involved with the city lord's manor? Like you said, it's only your first day here, and you've already made trouble with them?" she pressed.

"Hmm, you could call it a chain of fate," Aldrian replied, before explaining how Yu Fenglian had approached him, the man's condition, and everything that had transpired afterward, except for his visit to the city lord's manor last night, which he decided to leave for later.

Arin and Vanisa were stunned by what Aldrian shared. They had been watching the city lord's manor for past year, yet this young man managed to gather all of this information in just one day? Some of what he said also aligned with what they had already uncovered. They felt a twinge of shame at their own shortcomings. All they could do now was verify Aldrian's claims.

Last night, Aldrian had apprehended the higher-ups at the city lord's manor, though they didn't know how he had done it. He had also exposed the manor's connection to the devils. Arin was almost certain that his claims were true. She closed her eyes and let out a deep sigh. When she opened them again, her gaze was filled with newfound respect.

"To be honest, I was sent here by the Thorny Flower Garden a year ago, following the incident in the Ivory Empire. However, it's actually a joint operation between my sect, the Piercing Heaven Sect, and Black Dragon Pavilion." Arin revealed.

Aldrian raised an eyebrow. The Piercing Heaven Sect and Black Dragon Pavilion were involved? After a moment's thought, it made sense. The devil's infiltration into the Ivory Empire would undoubtedly have implications for the demon territory as well.

The structure of the demonic cults was not like that of an imperial family, where a strict hierarchy governed each region. In the demon territory, each area managed itself independently, without needing to answer to a higher authority from another region. Only strength determined one's standing in the demonic hierarchy.

Many consider the Piercing Heaven Sect to be the de facto leader of the demonic cults because of their overwhelming power in the demon territory. As a result, the various regions within the demon territory are wary of them and respect their decisions to some extent, though that respect only goes so far.

The Dual Horns Peak held special significance, as it was autonomous and home to the teleportation station. Strategically located in the northern part of the demon territory, near the Ivory Empire, this city was the primary gateway for outsiders who wished to visit or transit through the demon territory.

It was easy to imagine that if devils wanted to infiltrate the demon territory, they would begin here. With no unified chain of command across the demonic cults, infiltrating one region would make it difficult for others to detect their presence. Add to that the internal rivalries among the various powers within the cults, and the situation became even more complex.

The only thing that united the demonic cults was their shared faith in the Heavenly Demon—a supreme being from the past whose legend continued to live on to this day.

"The Piercing Heaven Sect doesn't want any instability within demon territory, so they approached us and the Black Dragon Pavilion to create an intelligence network across

the region. Long story short, we successfully established the network in a short time, and the Dual Horns Peak became one of our primary targets due to its strategic location and some oddities in the city," Arin explained.

"We quietly bought out the entire brothel and turned it into our base. The information we've gathered over time only strengthened our suspicions about the city lord's manor, but we never managed to find any concrete evidence linking them to the devils," she continued.

Aldrian sipped his tea, processing Arin's explanation. After a moment of silence, Arin spoke again.

"Now, regarding the higher-ups of the city lord's manor and the devils you have in custody—what do you plan to do with them, young master?"

Chapter 80: Unexpected Question

Arin looked into Aldrian's eyes, waiting for his answer. Aldrian also met her gaze.

"To be honest, I'm the type who will kill if there's no advantage to keeping enemies alive—especially if those enemies are devils. If it weren't for the fact that I need the demon territory's cooperation for the future, I would've already killed most of the City Lord's Manor and the devils in this city, not just the Black Rock Snake."

Arin and Vanisa heard Aldrian's answer, and suddenly something clicked in their minds. Kill not only the Black Rock Snake? Did he just admit that he was the one who destroyed the entire western peak, causing the city to lose its Dual Horns? As they reached this conclusion, their eyes widened, realizing they were sitting in front of an ultimate expert.

To collapse an entire mountain, 15 kilometers high, leaving only a pile of rocks and dirt... He'd need to be at least at the Emperor stage to achieve that. But considering they sensed the giant Black Rock Snake at the mid-Emperor stage, did that mean this young man was beyond even that?

Their minds went blank. Hadn't he just claimed to be an adventurer? What adventurer has that kind of power? Could he come from a powerful family, exploring the world on his own? But which family? He looked young, but appearances could be deceiving.

Aldrian sensed their thoughts but continued without pause.

"Alright, don't think too deeply about it. I don't need those people. I've already gotten what I wanted. You can have all of them, but I have a few personal requests."

Arin quickly nodded, listening intently.

"I'm listening."

"First, I want the Yu family's name cleared of all the slander they've faced over the years. That's my primary request.

"Second, I need you to cover my tracks and my location. I also want you—or your sect, in this case—to give me a warning if anyone starts looking for me.

"Third, if there's any incident involving devils within the demon territory, I have my own way of dealing with it, and I want the demon territory, or at least your Thorny Flower Garden, to support my decisions in the future.

"Fourth, I expect no interference from demonic cultivators. If they disturb me, I'll retaliate as I see fit. And I will act accordingly."

Arin and Vanisa thought the first and second of Aldrian's conditions were easy enough to agree to, but the third and fourth presented challenges. What kind of actions did he plan to take in the future? What if his actions caused massive upheaval in demon territory? Was he threatening all demonic cultivators?

"I know I can't avoid interacting with demonic cultivators in this territory," Aldrian added, sensing their concerns. "Not every demonic cultivator I meet will have a 'mature mind.' I can't waste time dealing with every problem that comes my way, so sometimes those looking for trouble will need to face consequences severe enough to stop them from bothering me."

"Even if you don't agree with the third and fourth terms, that's fine. I'll still hand over the prisoners to you, but I'll act on my own if I sense trouble."

Arin finally understood what he meant, but it still felt abstract. He seemed completely unfazed by the demonic authorities in their own territory! She pressed him for more clarity.

"What kind of actions would you take if trouble arises?" she asked.

"At the very least, I'd slap them in the face. At most, I'd kill them. If that's not enough, annihilation," Aldrian said calmly.

A cold chill ran down Arin and Vanisa's spines. They were unsure how to respond.

"I think, for your third and fourth conditions, I'll need to report to the sect. I can't decide that on my own," Arin replied cautiously.

"Good," Aldrian nodded. "I'll wait. You can start with the first condition, and as a sign of goodwill, I'll let you take the higher-ups of the City Lord's Manor, except for the City Lord himself. But be warned—not everyone in the City Lord's Manor is an accomplice. I won't

interfere with how your demonic cultivators handle them, but I'm telling just for you know."

He then took a sip of his tea, finishing it.

"Oh, and one more thing," Aldrian added. "There are still devils in this city, and their numbers are quite large. I have all the information here, so take it and do whatever you need to do."

Aldrian handed Arin an information crystal. She took the crystal and examined its contents. After she was done, she sighed.

"I'll look into it. Thank you for your help, young master," she said, standing up and cupping her hands in respect. "Now, I'll excuse myself. I've already taken up too much of your time."

"No worries," Aldrian replied with a smile. "I'm glad I could help. You can follow Yu Fenglian to the dungeon to retrieve the prisoners." Yu Fenglian had already appeared from a distance and now stood nearby. Arin and Vanisa cupped their hands again before heading on their way.

As they passed the pond, they sent each other voice transmissions.

"We can't underestimate his demands, Even if we could ignore them, his nonchalant expression gives me a bad feeling if we reject them." Vanisa said.

"I feel the same, we need to find a way to convince the higher-ups. With his power, I doubt they'll dismiss his demands easily. It's better to build a good relationship with him." Arin agreed.

They both glanced at the distant eastern peak, now standing alone after the destruction of the western peak and the City Lord's Manor. There would undoubtedly be a debate among the three great sects about who would replace the City Lord, adding even more complications. They sighed in exasperation at the troubles ahead.

As they walked, they suddenly encountered a woman, an elf to be precise, who was staring at them intently. They didn't know why, but they felt a piercing gaze from her stare. The elf then passed them, heading in the direction of where Aldrian was. They had no idea who the elf was, but it was clear she was in disguise.

Aldrian, now alone, sat by the pond. The serene atmosphere refreshed his mind, offering a welcome escape from external troubles. Sylphia hesitated as she watched him enjoy his solitude but eventually decided to approach him.

Sensing her presence, Aldrian smiled and looked at her. She had already dropped her disguise, revealing her beautiful face and golden hair.

"Do you want to enjoy the scenery?" he asked.

Sylphia nodded and sat across from him. Silence settled between them as she continued to watch Aldrian's face, observing his expression. She noticed how different he seemed compared to earlier when he had spoken with Arin. His demeanor now was more relaxed, showing that he treated strangers and those close to him differently—and that made her happy.

Aldrian smiled at her.

"If looking at my face makes you happy, I'll let you see it anytime."

"Stop it! You and your sweet talk," Sylphia blushed, feeling flustered. She couldn't believe how effortlessly this 13-year-old could charm her with his words. Sometimes she forgets that the young man in front of her is more than ten times younger than her.

Aldrian's smile remained, enjoying the chance to tease Sylphia. Moments like these, when it was just the two of them, felt perfect for such lighthearted exchanges.

"Aldrian, are you ever afraid?" Sylphia suddenly asked, her tone shifting to something more serious.

Aldrian's eyes met hers for a moment before he turned to gaze at the pond.

"Afraid, huh? Of course, I've felt fear," he admitted.

"When my parents left me, I was scared for the future. What would I do without them? What would happen to me? What happened to them?" His words were genuine. The fear he had felt back then was intense, though now his feelings had hardened. The constant visions that appeared in his mind had shaped his personality and maturity into what they were today.

"But I knew I had to move forward with my life," he continued. "There's so much out there in the world waiting for me to explore, and I don't want to miss any of it."

"And I also want to uncover the truth about my uniqueness, about where my power really comes from," he thought to himself.

"You have such a strong and determined spirit," Sylphia said softly. "I admire you for that. And I know you're powerful, but I just wish you'd take better care of yourself. I'm worried that you'll end up getting hurt because of your own recklessness." She looked at him with genuine concern.

"Thank you for your concern," Aldrian said with a gentle smile. "But even though it might seem like I act recklessly, I always measure my limits and have a plan B in mind."

Sylphia sighed softly. He really couldn't help but make her worry.

Aldrian poured himself some tea and then filled another glass. He slid the second glass closer to Sylphia, and she accepted it, staring at her reflection in the tea's surface for a moment.

"Tell me, Aldrian, do you like that type of woman?"

Urgh!

Aldrian almost choked on his tea. Why such a sudden question?