

The Shining Star Above The Heaven

Chapter 831 - 831: Drowned

[1,502 words]

Aldrian had already returned to his real body and given back the avatar's consciousness. Munez, Godard, and Sir Ferix truly did not expect him to come here, nor did they understand how he could arrive instantly.

They were certain that no one was tailing them, and in the environment of the Poison Valley, it was impossible for anyone to follow without being detected. Speechlessly, they could only look at the figure who was now observing the red crystal in his hand.

What he held was a devil stone, an energy stone that had been exposed to devil energy for a very long time, causing the properties within it to change. While normal energy stones stored the natural energy of heaven and earth, a devil stone stored devil energy instead.

However, devil stones could also be enriched by devils pouring negative energy into them. For example, if one were placed in an area filled with death or destruction, the stone would absorb the thick negative energy there as time passed.

In Aldrian's hand was a rather large devil stone, big enough to fill his entire palm. From how dense the devil energy inside it felt, he guessed that the stone must have been stored for tens of thousands of years in a negative environment.

"The devil stone... and it's quite big, filled with dense devil energy. You, who know how to use this platform, must have quite detailed knowledge about the devils, huh, Patriarch Barevisk?" Aldrian said as he looked into Munez's eyes.

He then released the spatial lock on Munez's lips so he could speak.

Sensing that his lips could move again, Munez's trembling lips parted.

"I... I..."

"Tell me, Patriarch Barevisk—ah, I'll just call you Munez from now on. Well then, Munez, would you like to tell me how you have a connection to the devils? And how close that connection is for you to know about this platform and operate it, hm?" Aldrian asked again.

Munez truly did not know how to answer the question without exposing many secrets about himself and the Valroy family. If he told the truth, then the Valroy family would be

dragged into this. But if he said nothing, he would have to endure Aldrian the Great's torture.

"Come on, Munez. You better tell me the truth. I know what you were thinking, and I could just search your memories and be done with it, but I want to hear it from your lips. How do you have a connection to the devils? How do you know about this place?" Aldrian asked, putting his hand to his forehead.

Munez's lips trembled and he seemed about to speak, but then, as if remembering something, he gritted his teeth.

"I have my little brother's wife as a hostage. I could answer your question, but you have to give a guarantee that you would—"

"Shh. shh. shh, wrong answer, Munez. Do you mean the men you sent to Sir Ferix's manor just now? What a funny threat. The only thing you will get from that manor is not Sir Ferix's wife but your men's corpses," Aldrian cut him off, which made Munez's eyes tremble.

'He knew about the men I sent to Ferix's manor?!' he thought. 'Impossible! The only ones who knew about it were the ones I personally assigned to visit Ferix yesterday!'

At this moment, the outside had already fallen into night. The moon of the Akares star shone beautifully, and countless stars filled the sky. In one part of the world blanketed by the peace of night, Sir Ferix's manor glowed with light from its windows, illuminating the surroundings.

However, amid the light that touched the ground outside the building, six silhouettes were closing in. The figures seemed to be using a concealment technique, hiding within the darkness of the plantation surrounding the manor. Their auras were so well hidden that no one could detect them, even if someone passed right by.

They halted their careful steps and observed the manor for a moment. All six wore black robes that concealed their entire features, leaving only their eyes visible.

The strongest among them was at the middle pseudo-immortal establishment stage. His eyes calmly scanned the manor before he sent a voice transmission to the others.

"Alright, spread out and follow the plan. This should be easy, and I expect we can finish without any trouble."

The voice came from Elder Ignar, the same elder who had visited Sir Ferix yesterday.

The others nodded, but before all of them could disperse, Ignar finally realized that there was another black silhouette in the darkness not far from them. From the silhouette, he could clearly see two blue eyes that seemed to glow in the dark.

Those calm eyes were looking directly at them, and he instantly knew that this figure was someone outside their group, and that this figure could see them!

The others also immediately turned to look in the same direction as Ignar and were stunned to see someone standing there. They hadn't sensed anything, even now, though they could see the silhouette, which sent chills down their spines.

It could only mean that this figure was far superior to them in concealment technique, or much stronger.

Ignar narrowed his eyes as he looked at the silhouette and sent a voice transmission to the others.

"Attack on my mark. This guy is dangerous."

The others could only prepare as they carefully readied themselves to attack. They gathered the surrounding energy as they watched the figure, who did not seem to move and only looked at them with those calm eyes. However, they suddenly felt their surroundings change.

In an instant, they appeared underwater, unable to breathe normally. Beneath them was darkness that stretched endlessly, as if they were in the middle of a deep ocean.

Shocked by the sudden change, they reacted quickly, using their energy to protect themselves and to help them breathe underwater.

However, they soon realized that they still couldn't breathe, even though they should have been able to. Cultivators at their level should easily be able to breathe underwater using this method, yet they still felt suffocated, as if they were actually inhaling water.

They couldn't understand where they were or why they couldn't breathe, even though they were already using the same technique they always used underwater. They tried to swim upward toward the surface, but soon discovered that they seemed to stay in the same place, even though they could feel themselves swimming.

The surface was visible above them, yet they could not reach it.

They realized that something was wrong with this place. All of them were cultivators at the Immortal Transition Realm, experienced and well-trained. They forced themselves to calm down before observing their surroundings.

They finally sensed a strong illusion law, which made them instantly understand that what they saw and experienced at this moment was an illusion. A powerful illusion that could affect all of their senses to the point of distorting their perception of reality.

They could only try to break the illusion by force.

"Break!" Ignar shouted inwardly, his aura flaring. He tried to gather the surrounding energy, but he couldn't. It was as if something was blocking him. He kept trying to shatter the illusion, but nothing happened. He was still trapped underwater, and as time passed, his breath grew shorter.

The others faced the same situation. Those who had comprehended water laws tried to control the surrounding water to create space for them to breathe, but the water did not move at all, as if it were something beyond their control.

After what felt like hours, one of them finally ran out of breath and opened his mouth, trying to take in air. However, what entered was only water. Panic filled him as he struggled to breathe, and moments later, he drowned to death.

One by one, the others began to lose their breath and met the same fate. The last one was Munez. When he finally opened his mouth to take a breath—

'No, no, I... I...'

Blubububub...

Air bubbles streamed from his mouth as he tried to breathe, blocking his vision. A moment later, his body went stiff as his soul sank into the underworld, drowned by the illusion. Silence followed as their lifeless bodies drifted, as if swept by ocean currents.

Suddenly, the scenery changed once more. Their surroundings returned to Sir Ferix's manor grounds. At that moment, all of their bodies had already collapsed, no longer breathing. Their corpses bore the signs of death by suffocation, as though they had drowned, which was quite funny considering they lay dried on the ground.

At this moment, a figure that was obviously Aldrian's avatar was touching Ignar's forehead and released him after he died. He had just looked through Ignar's memories for anything useful and nodded in satisfaction.

He had, of course, easily trapped all of them within his powerful illusion, an illusion capable of affecting reality itself. Although they felt as if they had been underwater for hours, in truth, only a single minute had passed.

During that time, the avatar had already gone through Ignar's memories before he drowned within the illusion.

The avatar looked at the corpses and sent a voice transmission to Aldrian.

"Done."

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Chapter 832 - 832: The One Behind Him

[1,462 words]

Aldrian, after receiving the message from his avatar, looked at Munez with a smile. The avatar also sent its memories to Aldrian, showing what it had seen from Ignar's memories.

While the avatar was sending its memories to Aldrian, Munez tried to think about how he could get out of this situation. He tried to understand why Aldrian the Great was here in the first place. Was it because Aldrian the Great had come to punish him for what he did in the past?

Was his guess correct, that Aldrian the Great might already know about his involvement?

But something felt strange about Aldrian the Great's sudden appearance here. Even if Aldrian the Great knew everything, how did he know that he was in this place, in the deep core region of Poison Valley, the most dangerous forbidden zone of this world?

Munez's gaze then shifted to his little brother and the man who had become his guardian beside him.

Suddenly, he understood something. Despite his dire situation, his mind worked quickly as he connected the dots of past events on his own.

'Var's disappearance, Ilona's report, Aldrian the Great's attention to the Barevisk family, the strangeness of Ferix's condition, Ferix who seems different, his unknown guardian... I see, so that's how it is,' he thought.

He finally understood that all of it was connected, and he couldn't help but glance at Aldrian the Great, his little brother, and his guardian, who was Aldrian's avatar.

Now he knew that he had already been doomed from the start, ever since he sent Var's group to infiltrate the Barisan Continent. From that moment on, he had unknowingly been played by Aldrian the Great. Even the Valroy family might not have known about it.

"You... you've been working with Aldrian the Great since earlier, haven't you? Ilona, you, Aldrian the Great... I suppose that guardian of yours is also someone Aldrian the Great sent," Munez said as he looked toward his little brother.

"You are good, brother. You actually managed to fool me. I have to commend you for that. But don't think that just because you caught me, you can take the patriarch's seat so easily. You will face opposition from the populace and the elders. Even if you gain support from many, you still won't be able to sit as patriarch. There will be chaos and resistance from my faction."

Sir Ferix, who heard those words, knew that they were true. Yet he couldn't help but smile as he looked at Munez.

"Well, that might be the case if this were a normal situation, but you still do not understand what kind of situation you are in," he said. Munez wanted to frown but could not. His gaze then turned to Aldrian, who had suddenly gone silent. Aldrian only looked at him with a smile, and Munez knew this man was what made his little brother so confident. He did not deny it. With Aldrian the Great's reputation, it would be a game changer for Ferix.

Clap, clap.

"All right, gentlemen, it's time to continue what we left earlier," Aldrian said to Munez and Godard as he clapped his hands.

"I know you must be thinking hard about the current situation, but first I have to tell you about the dead men you sent to Sir Ferix's mansion. I have to say, your plan to send them to the manor was quite amusing."

"Let's see, trying to kidnap Madam Elysia, planting false evidence in Sir Ferix's manor, framing Sir Ferix for possessing devil's artifacts. Truly interesting." Aldrian said as he leaned closer.

He could see Munez's eyes trembling. What Aldrian said came from the memories his avatar had just shown him. Munez must be thrown into chaos now that his plan was known.

"Now let's continue. How do you have connections to the devils, enough to know some of their secrets? Even for you to have visited this place," Aldrian asked.

"You better tell the truth, Munez, while I am still giving you leniency. If I were not being patient, I would already be torturing you for repeatedly trying to screw my empire and for even sending a group of assassins to kill me."

"Or are you hesitating because you worry about the Valroy family? ck, ck, ck, believe me, that would be the least of your concerns if I decided to torture you for fun. I like to make my enemies suffer," Aldrian said with a chilling smile that made Munez's and Godard's hearts tremble.

Munez's trembling lips finally opened after hesitating for a moment.

"It's because of the young master of the Valroy family, young master Randolph," he said at last.

"Explain," Aldrian said calmly.

"I know this place, and the reason I know the devils' secrets is because of the young master of the Valroy family. Before I explain further, I have to go back to the time when I was still competing for the patriarch position against Ferix."

"Young master Randolph approached me and said he would help me take the patriarch's seat as long as I remained loyal to him and became his hand, doing the things that kept the Valroy family's hands clean," Munez answered.

"One of the young master's orders was to keep some of the devils' remains that we had already killed. But first, I need to make one thing clear, I did not know much about the devils or have any connection to them before I built a relationship with young master Randolph. Everything I know now came from the information he provided through his own means."

"This place was once one of the devils' main hidden bases, though it has long since been cleansed of them. We of the Barevisk family attacked this place with young master Randolph's help. I didn't even know there were devils here, but young master Randolph knew it as if he had seen it himself."

Sir Ferix narrowed his eyes upon hearing this. To think that the Valroy family was involved in this matter.

"I never asked about his source of information or anything regarding his abilities. What I do know is that young master Randolph's capability is the real deal, and everything he said always turned out to be true and helpful to me. Every one of his plans was precise and successful."

"Thanks to him, the devils' presence in this world was suppressed to the point that they no longer dared to appear openly. Many of their former territories were seized, and countless devils were killed. Each time that happened, the Barevisk family was tasked with cleaning the scene, and I was ordered by young master Randolph to keep some of the devils' belongings. That devil stone is one of them."

"Anyway, the point is that I learned about the devils and kept their belongings because young master Randolph ordered me to do so. As for why he needed me to store those things, I don't know. I only did what he commanded, according to our agreement."

Hearing the answer, Aldrian nodded. Munez was not lying, and Aldrian was not surprised that Randolph knew so many details about the devils or that he had the capability to track and kill them easily. With his system assisting him, he possessed many strange and unknown abilities that could aid him in various tasks.

He then looked at Godard.

"Who is this man to you? Is he one of your subordinates, or does he hold some kind of status?" he asked.

"He is one of my men, a master of poison laws from outside the family. He also knows about the devils because he was part of my cleaning team," Munez answered.

"I see," Aldrian nodded. Then, without warning, he swung his hand to the side, toward Godard's neck. At first, nothing seemed to happen, and the others wondered what Aldrian had done. But once he released the spatial lock, Godard's body collapsed lifelessly. His head was instantly severed from his body as blood flowed on the platform.

Munez's eyes trembled as he saw Aldrian kill one of his trusted men without the slightest hesitation. He thought that Aldrian the Great must have considered Godard useless and ended his life without a second thought.

A second later, Godard's body vanished. It reappeared above the poisonous river where the group had previously encountered the water beast. The blood immediately drew the creature from below. A giant mouth burst from the surface, swallowing both Godard's body and head in one sweep before diving back into the depths, leaving nothing behind.

Munez did not understand where Godard's body had gone, but his attention quickly returned to Aldrian.

"So, I suppose the story of the Celestial Angel Flower is a lie then?" Aldrian asked as he turned his gaze back to Munez.

"No, the story of the Celestial Angel Flower is real. That miraculous herb truly exists in this region," Munez answered without hesitation.

Aldrian raised an eyebrow.

"So, where is the Celestial Angel Flower?" he asked.

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Chapter 833 - 833: His Plan and His Jealously

[1,671 words]

"This information about the flower also came from young master Randolph, and he said that the Celestial Angel Flower is located much deeper in the core region. The flower lies in a still unexplored part of the valley. Well, most parts of the core region remain unexplored," Munez said after releasing a sigh.

"However, no one, not even the strongest cultivators since ancient times, has ever truly explored the entire core region. The deeper we go, the poison becomes truly too dangerous even for those at the peak of the pseudo-immortal stage."

"Any kind of poison resistant pill or material will also be useless. There were many cases in the past where some crazy cultivators at the peak pseudo-immortal stage entered the deeper core region, but they never came back."

"Young master Randolph also said that the deepest part of the core region is the most dangerous place, and even he does not yet have the means to enter it. It is truly befitting its name as the most dangerous forbidden zone in the Akares Star."

"As for the exact location of the flower, if we look from space and at the area pointed out by young master Randolph, it is estimated that the distance is five hours from this place if we fly at high speed and somehow move directly toward the destination area. If we were to walk from here...well, maybe we could reach it in two days."

"That is all I know about the flower, and I just took advantage of it to lure Ferix here," Munez finally stopped.

After hearing Munez's explanation, Aldrian couldn't help but feel more certain that the Poison Valley seemed more and more like it had been built by something from the higher heavens.

He also couldn't help but remember the words of Kim Seungjin, the Heavenly Demon's son, who once said that there are special places in many worlds where the faith energy of the entire world gathers.

He wondered if the Poison Valley was, in fact, hiding that kind of place. It made sense, since with the strange and dangerous nature of the valley, this place could store a mystery that should not fall into anyone's hands.

'Anyone but me,' Aldrian thought.

He nodded before focusing on Munez again. "One more thing, what were you planning by bringing Sir Ferix to this place? First, you wanted to bring Sir Ferix here and trap him in the Platform of the Devil God's Baptism. Second, you tried to kidnap Madam Elysia and frame Sir Ferix by placing the devils' belongings in his manor?"

Munez's gaze shifted to Sir Ferix for a moment. He could see his little brother's angry expression and disgust toward him. Still, he couldn't help but grit his teeth when he thought about their past and the situation they were in now.

He suddenly felt that he had become the most unlucky man in the world at this moment.

"This is to put the blame on him so your majesty could target him instead of me," Munez answered in resignation.

"I was already highly suspicious that your majesty might have known everything the Barevisk family had done, I mean about Vars and the events that followed. I know that what I did went against you. I was aware of it, but I still did it because young master Randolph ordered me to." He knew it was futile to lie, so he just said it bluntly.

"I believed that my plan would work, but then I realized something had gone wrong with Vars's group and their disappearance. But I was too late to see it and kept going instead. I knew it was a bad idea later, but I could no longer escape from the situation. I had already gone too deep to back out."

"Your majesty, is it true that Vars is in your hands right now? Is it true that all this time you've been playing ignorant even though you already knew about the Barevisk family's movements?" Munez asked as he gazed at Aldrian.

Aldrian just shrugged. "Well, that was obvious. How could I let someone enter my empire and spread information without my knowledge? If they spread it, they did so with my awareness and approval."

Hearing that, Munez sighed, but then he continued.

"I knew that if Your Majesty really knew what the Barevisk family had done, you would eventually come to me, so I planned something to make myself appear innocent. The only thing feasible in my mind was to make Ferix the scapegoat."

"Although he has already fallen from his status and lives outside the central power, some still see him as having influence among certain high-ranking family members. I know they are his loyal supporters, and because of that he is the most suitable for this plan."

"To redirect Your Majesty's target from me to him, I would make him the 'villain', a villain convincing enough to make Your Majesty believe he is the one who had been trying to screw you all this time."

"There is no better way to be a villain than to be a devil, and that is what I did. I knew I could still use this abandoned devils' base. Making him the villain would be easy since he is nothing with his illness and weak strength. After he is brainwashed on the Platform of the Devil God's Baptism, he will be a villain for real."

"I will put the blame on him, make it seem that everything that happened between Your Majesty and the Barevisk family was his plan, without my knowledge. I could feign ignorance while pointing all the evidence toward him everywhere. His manor is the easiest place to plant proof, and I planned to kidnap Elysia as a bargaining chip to control Ferix if needed."

"With him turned into the villain and Elysia in my hand, everything would be set. The only thing I needed to do was make sure to keep Your Majesty's attention on Ferix, to show that he was the hidden devil all this time and that he came for revenge because Your Majesty killed many devils in the Ancient Blue Gate World."

Munez released a long sigh. Aldrian couldn't help but feel more amused, while Sir Ferix gritted his teeth. His elder brother was truly ruthless toward him, though he was not too surprised after everything that had happened between them.

Still, it hurt him to know that his own blood brother could be that cruel.

Aldrian then turned his head to Sir Ferix.

"Sir Ferix, is there anything you would like to ask this brother of yours?"

Sir Ferix, who had been holding back his anger since earlier, finally opened his lips.

"Is it safe to say that you were the one who cursed me and Elysia in the past? Making me go through all of that and playing with my life?"

"Yes," Munez answered. When he spoke, his gaze did not waver as he looked directly into Sir Ferix's eyes. There was no remorse in them, they were firm, as if what he had done was not something he regretted.

"Why did you have to go so far as to do all of that? If you wanted the patriarch's seat, then I could have just stepped down from the competition at that time. To be honest, I didn't really want to—"

"Do you think it's that easy for you to just drop out of the competition?! Do you think that after you step aside and give the title of successor to me, everything will be fine?! No! Instead, I'll be mocked and become a leader in name only, not in the hearts of the people. They'll talk behind my back and ridicule me!" Munez suddenly lashed out, shouting.

"Do you understand how much of a genius you were at that time, and how I was always compared to you?! You don't understand how I felt! You don't understand the jealousy that always burned inside my heart! Everyone always praised you as the most suitable successor, while I, the older brother, the supposed successor, was mediocre compared to you!"

"Even I needed young master Randolph's help just to keep up with you! I needed his support so my cultivation could improve enough to reach the same level of genius as you!"

"YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND THAT AT ALL!"

"The only way for others to turn their backs on you was to make you fall from grace—to lose your genius status, to lose your strength! Only then would no one think that me becoming patriarch was unworthy."

After his outburst, his breathing became uneven. It was as if he had said all of that in one breath, leaving him short of oxygen.

Sir Ferix fell silent, unable to refute what Munez said. His elder brother's words were true. He had never understood him at all. Back then, he lived at his own pace, believing everything was normal for him. He was a genius, and there was nothing wrong with that.

But in the end, at that time, he had truly neglected one important thing—a being ruthless.

Even though Munez was his blood brother, he was still a human being. His elder brother could feel jealousy so deep that it drove him to extremes. At that time, he had still been basking in the glory of his status, too naïve to see the darkness that had taken root in his elder brother's heart.

Only after he fell did he truly learn the harshness of the cultivation world.

Aldrian watched the interaction between the two brothers in silence. This kind of situation was quite common, so he didn't need to comment.

He suddenly stretched his hand toward one side of the hall, and an information crystal flew toward him before he caught it. Munez's eyes widened when he saw the crystal, knowing it must have been used for recording.

He gritted his teeth, realizing he was truly done for if that recording ever reached the public. Even the Valroy family would instantly abandon him, and might even come after him.

"Well, what a nice answer. Thank you for your cooperation in answering all the questions," Aldrian said with a smile as he stored the information crystal in his storage ring.

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Chapter 834 - 834: Desperate Act

[1,523 words]

Looking at Munez's shocked eyes, Aldrian smiled.

"What? Do you think we would just let you say all that without recording it? Your confession is the key to bringing Sir Ferix to the patriarch's seat," Aldrian said with a smile.

"What I care about is your confession. Oh well, I thought I would have to torture you to make you confess, since I assumed you were the kind of psychopath who arrogantly shows no fear of death even in front of me. But I guess I was wrong. I'm glad you're at least sensible enough not to make things more difficult."

The information crystal had already been placed much earlier, right after their group entered the hall. When he estimated the time it would take for the pill to take effect by calculating its composition, he determined that it should start working in this hall.

At that moment, Aldrian silently took out an information crystal, activated it, and teleported it to the side of the hall. The crystal had already been recording everything Munez had said earlier, without any of them knowing.

With this recording, the transition of the patriarch seat would be easier. Munez or anyone who supported him would have no way to defend themselves.

"I will have to slightly alter the recording so the Valroy family does not suffer too much backlash. With this recording alone, the Valroy family could collapse, and I do not want that now. I still need them for my plan to instil a crack between those invaders," Aldrian thought.

Seeing that his doom was certain with the recording, Munez finally made a decision. Initially, he wanted to buy time by cooperating and answering Aldrian's questions while thinking how he could keep his life even after being exposed.

Maybe Aldrian would show leniency, giving him a chance to escape. He could hide indefinitely until Aldrian gave up looking for him.

However, the recording in Aldrian's hand was a different matter. That recording was a certain death sentence for him, and everyone would be looking for him. Unless he went somewhere far away where no one knew him, he would most likely be caught by someone.

But he doubted that once the recording was released to the masses, he could even leave the planet. He would be spotted before he could even enter an interstellar vessel.

Munez's mind then returned to the current situation. All of that would only matter IF he could escape from Aldrian first and the recording was released to the outside world. He doubted Aldrian would let him go, and he doubted even more that he could escape from him.

He could not run, and he could not hide.

Sighed

Aldrian saw Munez sigh before Munez looked at Sir Ferix.

"You win, brother. I guess I'm really done for," he said.

"I don't have any chance or future anymore." His eyes seemed calm, as if he no longer cared. "Then you can die with me—"

Whack!

Aldrian suddenly punched Munez in the gut, forcing him to spit out saliva. His body still could not move because of the spatial lock, so he could not even express his pain. While still reeling from the sudden blow, he felt his strength fading as the flow of energy inside his body disappeared.

Aldrian sealed his cultivation after that punch.

"He tried to commit suicide by detonating his dantian. Truly firm," Aldrian said. "But unfortunately for you, I will not let you do that. If you want to die, then you can only die after I deem you useless. You might die alone, but don't drag anyone else down with your pathetic life. Oh well, except for those who helped you, I suppose."

Sir Ferix widened his eyes in astonishment. If his brother had blown up his dantian, everyone inside this place would have died. In fact, every being within a radius of a hundred kilometres would have been obliterated by the explosion.

Suicide by detonating one's dantian caused a far greater degree of destruction due to the massive explosion from the condensed energy within the dantian. For example, someone at the Emperor stage could destroy an area of twenty kilometres from the point of detonation. The explosion could even kill much stronger cultivators if they did not defend themselves in time.

This kind of suicide was common when someone was captured by the enemy or when they believed they no longer had any chance to fight back.

There were only two ways for cultivators to prevent another cultivator from committing suicide in this manner. The first was to seal their dantian, or in other words, their cultivation. Without being able to circulate their energy through the dantian, self-detonation became impossible.

That was why, whenever cultivators captured others, they would immediately seal the prisoner's cultivation. Besides preventing escape, it was also to stop them from taking their own life.

The second method was to disrupt the flow of energy within a cultivator's dantian so they could not detonate it. This could be done by keeping them constantly occupied, leaving them no time to focus on self-destruction. For example, by attacking them continuously without pause.

Battles between cultivators were not only about strength but also about speed, especially among high-ranking cultivators where every second mattered. They could not concentrate on suicide if they were forced to move and evade attacks every moment.

When the energy within the dantian was depleted, attempting to self-detonate would not cause as much destruction as usual. After all, the energy's quantity served as the "explosive powder." If it was depleted, then the explosion would not have much power compared to when the dantian still contained energy.

After punching Munez, Aldrian finally released the spatial lock, and Munez's body collapsed. The moment he hit the floor, he showed his pain, clutching his gut.

Aldrian looked at him calmly before taking one knee and flicking Munez's forehead. That single flick was enough to send Munez flying from the platform and crashing into the hall's wall. His body slammed heavily against it before collapsing, and he instantly passed out.

Seeing that Munez was already unconscious, Aldrian turned toward Sir Ferix.

"Sir Ferix, I think it's a good time for us to plan our next move. We already have everything we need to make you patriarch and to show everyone Munez's true colors."

Sir Ferix was stunned for a moment, then nodded.

"I will follow Your Majesty's arrangement. However, I think we should discuss this with Grand Elder Javier. Oh, he is—"

"I know who he is," Aldrian interrupted.

"Ah, yes, Your Majesty. We need to inform Grand Elder Javier first so he can spread the news to the others more effectively. At this moment, I don't have much influence among the family members. Only those still loyal to me will listen," Sir Ferix said.

Aldrian nodded. "Well, that was something easy," he said before a figure suddenly appeared beside him.

The moment the figure emerged, Sir Ferix widened his eyes in shock, it was Grand Elder Javier!

Grand Elder Javier also seemed startled before his expression turned to astonishment as he realized he was in a different place, and then he noticed Sir Ferix.

"Ferix? Where am I? What the—" He stopped mid-sentence when he sensed someone standing beside him. His eyes widened again when his gaze fell upon the figure next to him.

He saw a handsome young man with long red hair, dressed in regal imperial attire. The moment he saw Aldrian's face, he remembered that it belonged to someone who should be recognized as an important figure in the central star cluster.

Although he had never seen Aldrian in person, he already knew his face from the many images of him spread across the star cluster. The man who had become the hottest topic in recent months and was now regarded as a living legend.

Aldrian the Great.

"Aldrian the Great!" he unconsciously blurted out. He could not understand how or why Aldrian the Great was here, let alone with Ferix.

Aldrian smiled. "I know Grand Elder has many questions, so first, we will explain what happened here."

Grand Elder Javier did not respond, still speechless in shock, but Aldrian began recounting what had happened. Javier gradually started to pay attention. Although he still did not understand how he had arrived in this place, he listened closely to Aldrian's words.

As time passed, his face showed a range of emotions as he heard the story from Aldrian and occasional input from Sir Ferix—shock, sadness, anger—all clearly visible in his expression.

Aldrian also showed him the recording stored in the information crystal, and once Grand Elder Javier saw its contents, his expression turned explosive.

"Where is that bastard? Where is that traitor!" Grand Elder Javier shouted angrily, his eyes sweeping across the hall. But then he froze when he noticed an unconscious man lying to the side of the hall, someone he instantly recognized as Munez.

He stood still for a moment before the urge to kill surged violently within him.

"Calm down, Grand Elder. He's still useful for our plan. I brought you here to discuss this matter, about the future of the Barevisk family," Aldrian said.

Grand Elder Javier took a deep breath to calm himself before looking at Aldrian.

"So, what does Your Majesty have in mind?"

"To make Sir Ferix the new patriarch, of course," Aldrian replied, causing Grand Elder Javier's eyes to widen.

"What?"

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Chapter 835 - 835: Going Deeper

[1,433 words]

"What?" Grand Elder Javier asked in astonishment.

"That is the important thing that I wanted to discuss with you earlier today, Grand Elder," Sir Ferix chimed in.

"Because this is something I cannot say in front of others."

Grand Elder Javier looked at Sir Ferix, still filled with astonishment. After the shock faded, his face brimmed with excitement.

"Yes, that should be it. That should have happened in the first place. I already knew that Munez was bad news, and now all of it is truly proven. Fortunately, His Majesty Aldrian helped you." He then turned to Aldrian.

"I am truly thankful, and I'm deeply sorry for what my family has done to Your Majesty in the past," he said as he slightly bowed his body.

"No problem, Grand Elder. I also know that not all family members are at fault here. I can still differentiate the right from the wrong, and I don't want to generalize the entire family as long as I am sure that not everyone is at fault," Aldrian replied.

Grand Elder Javier straightened his body and sighed.

"However, to think that my family had been led by someone like him for so long, and I did nothing about it, I just feel ashamed. No wonder the Barevisk family fell from the glory it once had," he said.

"No wonder he took on this kind of mission and offered the benefit to Ferix. I never thought he would be generous enough to give something that valuable to his little brother. The Celestial Angel Flower in this place? I believe that was also his lie. Bringing along people loyal to Ferix into the Poison Valley must have been just a cover to avoid suspicion." He looked at the unconscious Munez with an angry expression.

Aldrian did not comment on that, and Sir Ferix also did not say anything about the Celestial Angel Flower.

After that, they discussed how to proceed in the future. Aldrian wanted this problem to be resolved and for Sir Ferix to become patriarch as soon as possible. Next week, he had already prepared for departure to the Fallen Star Cluster, and he hoped that by then, he could already see Sir Ferix in the patriarch's seat.

After an hour of discussion, they finally decided on their next course of action. Aldrian then said to them,

"I will send back my avatar, Grand Elder, Sir Ferix and Munez to the safe zone outside the core region."

Sir Ferix nodded but then looked confused. "What about you, Your Majesty?"

Aldrian smiled. "I still have something to do in this Poison Valley."

Sir Ferix and Grand Elder Javier did not ask any further, as it seemed to be Aldrian's personal matter.

A moment later, Aldrian had already teleported them to the safe zone, leaving himself alone in this place. He observed the surrounding hall for a moment before disappearing.

Suddenly, the hall trembled violently. In fact, the entire base shook before the hidden place completely collapsed. No space remained, as the mountain buried the entire hideout down to the smallest gap.

The abandoned devils' base was completely destroyed and buried without anyone knowing. No one would ever discover it unless they specifically searched for traces of the hideout here, but that would be difficult in an environment like this.

At this moment, Aldrian was already in the upper atmosphere of the Akares Star, looking down at the Poison Valley region. The region was truly vast, and he could clearly see how it was divided into three danger levels. The differences in the thickness of the fog could even be seen from space after all.

He ignored the outer and inner regions and focused on the core region. The ground of core region was an area he could not see from his current position. It was covered by thick white fog that, from where he was, looked more like dense clouds. The poisonous fog could even be sensed from the upper atmosphere.

At the center of the core region, the fog was at its thickest, and its color appeared slightly darker than the rest of the area.

Without any hesitation, he descended toward the center of the core region. Just in case, he covered his body with golden energy.

As he descended, he finally entered the clouds and immediately felt the strong mixture of poisonous gases surrounding him. He continued his descent as the surroundings grew darker, until he could no longer see anything at all. The region had already fallen into night, and with the thick clouds, not even a speck of light existed in this place.

As he kept approaching the ground, he finally entered the poisonous fog and instantly understood that even a peak pseudo-immortal cultivator would die the moment they stepped into this place. The poison here was potent enough to harm even an immortal.

'No wonder the Poison Valley covers such a vast area. The core region alone contains poison this deadly. With poison like this, it's certain that something from the higher heavens exists here. To create a poisonous area capable of harming an immortal should be impossible in the First Heaven,' Aldrian thought.

'Moreover, this poison... I see. No wonder it feels so chaotic and strange.'

He also took note of another fact when he sensed the poison and recognized it.

'This is Hydra's poison, the high-stage Hydra poison from the higher heavens.'

Only after he descended to the central part of the core region did he become truly confident about what kind of poison this was. When he first entered the core region, he was not entirely certain, as the poison's properties could have come from many sources other than the Hydra. But now, he was sure that this was indeed Hydra's poison.

He could not extend his senses too far, as the powerful poison corroded them. Deciding to be cautious, he stopped descending and began creating his domain in this area. He did not know what might be waiting on the ground.

There could be a powerful being below, and if such a being existed, it would have to be strong enough to withstand poison of this level. That would mean it was one of the strongest existences in the First Heaven.

After creating his domain, he could immediately sense everything within it. There was no living being, but he could detect many herbs that had managed to grow in this harsh

environment. Most of them had poisonous properties, but one among them did not, it was located near the edge of his domain.

That was the Celestial Angel Flower. The flower grew on a giant boulder, and there were actually more than ten of them. Thanks to the deadly poison in the area, no one had been able to pick them yet. Even Randolph, with his system, still had no means to reach this place.

There was another thing that made Aldrian truly satisfied and happy, he had confirmed his earlier guess about this place.

'This is faith energy, and all of it flows in this direction.'

The faith energy was flowing far below, toward the surface. Without hesitation, he teleported to the ground beneath. As his feet touched the ground, he could not see anything, it was completely pitch black.

However, he could still clearly sense his surroundings, even underground thanks to his domain. At this moment, he was standing beside a tall mountain with a large cave entrance. The deadly poison was actually coming out of the cave, which meant the source lay within.

The faith energy was also flowing into the cave, which meant the place where it gathered was inside. He could sense deep within and instantly knew what lay ahead. His eyebrows rose slightly after realizing what it was.

Without a word, he walked into the cave, which was clearly man-made. The walls were too clean and smooth to be natural. As Aldrian kept walking deeper for a few minutes, he finally reached the end of it.

There was nothing in front of him except the cave wall, and there was no sign of a secret path or anything beyond.

However, he kept walking forward, confidently letting his body collide with the wall, and as he did, his body passed right through it. The moment he stepped through, the cave transformed into a wide, dark hallway.

'Illusion law barrier,' he thought.

Suddenly, the dark hallway lit up on both sides with illumination crystals, and statues along the corridor became visible. The statues of hydra heads embedded into the walls, and there were also murals on both sides depicting a nine-headed hydra.

Looking at them, Aldrian could not help but remember his past again.

'Speaking of hydras, I remember the one that was often seen with Long Shentian, the first hydra in existence. I wonder what his fate is now?' he thought.

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Chapter 836 - 836: The First Hydra

[1,531 words]

There are many stories about the Hydra and how they came to be in some worlds. They might differ, but Aldrian remembered the very first Hydra that came into existence, born from the mutation of Long Shentian's energy.

They then grew in number until they became one of the most famous races in the universe—one of the strongest and most feared.

Aldrian remembered the first Hydra that often followed Long Shentian everywhere, as if Long Shentian was its leader. The moment Long Shentian introduced that Hydra to him, it instantly prostrated in submission before him.

He could see in one of his visions at that time that the Hydra sometimes visited him when it was not with Long Shentian.

That Hydra's solemn and pious character, combined with the idolizing expression whenever it met him, was truly quite funny, and Aldrian couldn't help but smile as he remembered it.

As Aldrian kept walking deeper, he observed the head statues and murals. Some of the murals showed the mightiness of the Hydra, while others depicted their reverence for Long Shentian.

However, when he almost reached the end of the hallway, the murals on both sides showed many Hydras prostrating in one direction.

That direction was toward the end of the hallway, where the double doors could be seen. Above the double doors was the symbol of the absolute ruler, his symbol of authority.

Aldrian finally stopped right in front of the giant double doors and observed them for a moment. He placed his hand on the surface and tried to inject his energy into it. A

moment later, mechanical sounds resounded, and the ground trembled slightly as the doors slowly opened.

After waiting for about thirty seconds, the doors finally opened, revealing what was behind them, a giant hall with a massive statue erected in the center. It was the complete statue of a nine-headed Hydra.

At the center of the Hydra's body, a large blackish-golden crystal was embedded, exuding a poison so strong that even an immortal would not dare to approach it. In front of the giant statue stood a stone pillar, and he could sense that the faith within the hall was entirely gathered in that pillar.

'It's just like in the Ancient Blue Gate World,' Aldrian thought.

Still, his attention remained on the large crystal embedded in the Hydra's statue. That was actually the core of the Hydra, and it belonged to the very Hydra he had just remembered.

Aldrian couldn't help but sigh. Once again, he could only commend their combined effort to make his life easier by creating this place. His past followers had also chosen their places to remain close to one another. They had left their traces everywhere so he could find them easily.

However, after seeing the core, he did not immediately think that the Hydra had already died at this point. The Hydra in his memories, even in his past life, had already reached the divinity level. At that stage, a Hydra could grow one more core, making them a rare race capable of possessing two cores within their bodies.

Moreover, from the size of the core here, he knew that it was not an entire core, but rather a small fragment of one. Aldrian realized that if the complete core were placed here, the entire Akares Star would likely be covered in deadly poison strong enough to kill even a god.

'Maybe that guy just slashed a small part of his core and reduced the effect further so he could place it here?'

Aldrian then walked toward the pillar first and saw the same words inscribed on the stone pillar as the one where he met Kim Seungjin.

To the lone star that shone over all the universe, may your journey always be followed with glory.

Without hesitation, he touched the pillar and closed his eyes as he injected his energy into it. He could feel his energy triggering something within the pillar, and soon he sensed his surroundings begin to change.

When he opened his eyes, he was already in the familiar white realm. However, the first thing he saw was the giant nine headed Hydra. Its behemoth body, large enough to rival an imperial palace, was truly intimidating, making Aldrian appear like a speck of dust in comparison.

Even from afar, Aldrian's body would be invisible next to the creature's enormous form. However, despite its immense size, the Hydra had lowered all nine of its heads toward Aldrian. The sight was somewhat funny, since each head alone was already many times larger than him.

Aldrian blinked when he saw the Hydra, then couldn't help but smile.

"Herias greets the absolute ruler, the great emperor of all heavens. Congratulations on your return," the central head of the Hydra said. Although he tried to sound as respectful as possible and soften his tone, his deep voice was still terrifying. The space itself trembled.

Still, Aldrian kept his smile and nodded.

"Long time no see, Herias. To think I could meet you here, even if it's only your will," he replied.

Suddenly, the entire body of the giant Hydra shone with light before that light began to shrink, taking the shape of a human. When the light faded, a tall figure appeared, a man with long black hair and tanned skin. His handsome face bore symbol-like tattoos on one of his cheeks, giving him a unique charm.

He wore a black robe that matched his hair, adding to his mysterious yet intimidating presence. However, despite all those imposing traits, his expression at this moment showed the complete opposite. His eyes glistened as he struggled to hold back tears, and the sight made Aldrian find it really funny.

He had to look up to meet Herias's gaze, as the man was much taller than him. Yet, despite his imposing stature, the Hydra was showing a sentimental expression.

"I'm glad that I could see you again, Your Majesty," Herias said.

Aldrian nodded with a smile. "So, tell me, how are you? I mean, your real body?"

Herias wiped his eyes before answering. "I can still sense my connection with my real body, so it should still be alive somewhere. Although I don't know its current situation."

Aldrian nodded in understanding. "So, you were the one who created the poison region on the Akares Star?"

"Yes, Your Majesty. I don't know the current situation outside the region, but at that time, Akares Star was still undeveloped, and this world had no place to gather faith. So, I thought I could build one here," Herias replied.

"It's also because the Ancient Blue Gate World already has many traces connected to the five Divine Overlords, so I thought a nearby star wasn't a bad idea. Well, Lord Tian Lian also said this would be a good place, so I just built it here without much thought." His expression then turned emotional again.

"To think that you actually came here and even remembered my name, it's truly my honor, Your Majesty."

"Well, I have to say that fate brought me here. With all of your collaborative efforts and the traces you've all left across many places, it was only natural that I'd eventually find you or someone else from the past," Aldrian replied.

"Anyway, since I finally met you here, I'd like to ask you something. It's about your race."

Herias nodded. "Please, ask, Your Majesty."

"Was there something wrong with the Hydras that you remember from the past, after the invasion from the other universes? I'm asking because I've found that the followers of Tarius have been using your race as one of their summons several times."

Hearing the question, Herias froze. His expression suddenly twisted with fury as he gritted his teeth.

"To be honest, I never wanted to speak about it. Every time I think about what those invaders did to my descendants, my blood boils and rage burns within my heart. However, since Your Majesty has asked, I will tell you," he said in a low growl.

"Many of my descendants were captured, and those invaders actually created real clones of them! They created clones of my descendants, Your Majesty! They defiled the dignity of my race with their filthy hands! And with those clones, they attacked us!"

The space trembled as if it could sense Herias's wrath.

Aldrian narrowed his eyes. Fury rose within his heart as well, but he did not let it show as killing intent or in his expression.

'I see. So that's how it is. That's why there were clones of the Golden Phoenix and the great Peng, like Aurelia and Reiss,' he thought.

'No wonder Aurelia suddenly called me "Your Majesty" when she sensed my energy for the first time. Although she was only a clone, she might have been made from someone who knew me in the past. She still carried her true body's innate memories.'

He finally understood the situation with the clones. He took a deep breath to calm himself, then looked at Herias solemnly.

"I will make sure they pay dearly for tarnishing my people's dignity, every single one of them. You have my word, Herias."

Hearing the solemn voice of the man he regarded as a god, Herias could not help but feel his spirit burn. Even as a will, he still had feeling.

Then Herias's expression changed. He narrowed his eyes and looked upward.

"Your Majesty, it seems we must end our conversation here."

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Chapter 837 - 837: The Invaders Problem

[1,536 words]

Aldrian raised his eyebrows at Herias's sudden change in tone.

"Those bastards seem to have detected my karmic connection to the real body and are trying to reach this place," Herias said, then quickly looked at Aldrian.

"Your Majesty, there are many treasures outside, and you can take them all. You could even use my core for whatever purpose you wish. I hope that with that, it will help in your journey. I will wait for Your Majesty's return to the Highest Heaven, just like in the past," he said.

Aldrian knew that time was tight here, so he nodded.

"Thank you," he said.

Hearing that, Herias couldn't help but smile. He suddenly bowed deeply toward Aldrian.

"It is the honor of my life that I could help in Your Majesty's journey to greatness once again," he said, full of piety and solemnness.

Herias straightened his body and spoke one last time.

"May the Great Emperor of all heavens continue to reign sovereign!"

After that, the entire white realm crumbled to pieces before Aldrian's eyes, turning into complete darkness. But just before the darkness completely consumed his sight, Aldrian sensed an invisible force sweeping through, strong enough to slightly push against even the darkness itself.

However, the darkness was still much stronger, and it finally engulfed him entirely.

Goosebumps rose across his skin as he realized that one of the gods had forcefully extended their sense into this place. Even that sense alone was enough to kill or trap him if those gods wished it, for their very sense could serve as a weapon against a mortal.

Sweat had already formed on Aldrian's forehead. If they had been even a second late, he would have been done for in the hands of those invaders.

He did not believe that after what he had done to Tarius and everything he had done to the devils, those gods would remain unaware of an existence that could threaten their plan.

The signs were already there for them to act and stop his momentum in the First Heaven. He could already imagine that many cultivators from the higher heavens had started descending into this heaven.

He took a deep breath and closed his eyes to calm himself. The moment he opened them again, he had already returned to the front of the stone pillar. He released a deep sigh.

'Wew, that was close. I wonder if that was Tarius? Or maybe Randolph's god?' he thought. He wiped the sweat that had dripped from his forehead, then smiled widely, feeling more refreshed than ever.

That was because he had successfully made the entire Akares Star his domain.

'Wonderful. Although my cultivation did not increase much, with two worlds as my domain, I can release far more powerful force in my techniques—well, if my body can handle it.'

He looked around and saw that a hidden path had opened on the other side of the hall.

'Well, let's see what this place holds,' he thought before walking toward the hidden path.

While Aldrian was in a hidden place, inspecting what Herias had stored for him, in another unknown place similar to the white realm, an old man sat cross-legged with his

eyes closed. This was the same old man who had helped Tarius weaken the law of causality in the First Heaven.

The First Heaven had already been given to Tarius, allowing him to carry out what he needed according to their purpose of invading the universe. However, support from other gods was still required for them to proceed effectively. One of them focused on weakening the law of causality, while Tarius, besides doing the same, also dealt with the real problems of the First Heaven.

The First Heaven remained an unconquered realm, as there was still much resistance, and the gods could not descend directly. They could only send their followers.

Yet, since the First Heaven had already been given to Tarius under their agreement, only his followers were permitted to go down.

But recently, the appearance of an unknown mortal existence had made even the gods, who reigned sovereign over the universe, feel uncertain.

They believed that this mortal was an apostle of one of the rebel gods from this universe. Yet even then, they still could not comprehend the mortal's very existence. He was too mysterious even for them, and far too powerful.

A mortal capable of fighting Tarius's avatar was something that should have been impossible. No matter how much of a genius a mortal might be, not even an apostle could ever defeat a god's avatar.

But then, this being, what they called the singularity, appeared. Not only did he kill Tarius's apostle, but he also defeated Tarius's avatar, throwing all of their plans in the First Heaven into chaos.

To make matters worse, Tarius was truly furious recently, as he kept losing followers in great numbers. For gods, the number of followers was the same as their supply of power. The more followers they had, the stronger they became.

The loss of followers in such huge numbers was not something a god could simply ignore. Moreover, with that unknown mortal, whose very existence had thrown all of their plans into disarray, Tarius could potentially lose the entire first heaven.

It was not an exaggerated assessment by him, because anyone who could defeat Tarius's avatar in the First Heaven could essentially be called the strongest existence within it. That mortal's strength could rival an immortal's, and not an ordinary one, but a powerful low-level immortal.

According to Tarius, that mortal was only at the low pseudo-immortal establishment stage, something that made no sense even to the gods.

Yet Tarius was not someone who would lie in such a matter. This had become a great concern among some gods, for even with only that level of cultivation, the mortal could slaughter every being in the First Heaven.

Even if they sent cultivators from the higher heavens, those cultivators could still be killed due to the limitations imposed by the law of causality. If that mortal ever reached the peak pseudo-immortal stage, there would be no place left for any of them in the First Heaven at all.

He was unstoppable.

That would be disastrous for the entire force that had come to this universe. They had already spent so much in invading this world, yet even now, they still had not found what they were searching for.

Losing the entire First Heaven would mean losing a large portion of the universe, which was possibly the very place where what they sought was hidden.

Now, the only way for them to contain the existence of this singularity was to continue weakening the law of causality in the First Heaven, allowing them to send more powerful followers there.

They had to act before that mortal could reach the central region of the First Heaven. It was a battle against time.

The old man opened his eyes and released a deep breath.

'Damn, I lost them. This is the closest I've ever been to catching him,' he thought.

He knew that those rebels sometimes communicated with this mortal. Even the monster known as the Heavenly Demon had already spoken with this mortal.

This strange mortal occasionally met those rebels in the secret mind realm, and that was the perfect time for him to track them.

If he were lucky, he might even be able to kill that mortal by trapping or destroying his consciousness, or by sending a powerful karmic attack capable of destroying his mortal body. But they were truly slippery, and he still had not been able to catch this mortal.

The old man narrowed his eyes and released another deep sigh. This was the first time in a long while that he had felt frustration.

'But the good news is, it seems my apostle has already made contact with that strange mortal. At least I have someone who can keep an eye on him,'

However, he couldn't tell Tarius about this matter, at least not for now. If he did that, then Tarius would realize that his apostle had actually been in the First Heaven all this time, and he acting behind Tarius back.

He knew that Tarius would not take it well and would likely fight him on the spot. With that temperamental nature, he could easily imagine such a reaction.

Although what he had done broke the alliance's agreement by infiltrating his apostle and spreading his own influence, he still did not care. They might share a purpose in invading this universe, but he had his own interests regarding it.

His gaze then turned toward one direction as a dark silhouette appeared. It took the shape of a bulky human, and he instantly knew who it was.

"What is it? I thought you were busy taking care of your own problems?" he asked Tarius.

Tarius did not answer immediately. His gaze lingered on the old man for a moment before he finally spoke.

"I am in the middle of that. Some parts of the First Heaven will be quite a mess in the near future because of my followers' decisions. I can only hope that I can overwhelm that mortal with this," Tarius said.

"But I did not come here to discuss that. I came because I have something to ask you."

"What is it?" the old man asked in return.

"Did you do something that I do not know about?" Tarius asked, his red eyes fixed sharply on the old man.

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Chapter 838 - 838: Seed of Doubt

[1,645 words]

Hearing the question, the old man showed a confused expression.

"What do you mean I did something without your knowledge? Why do you think that?" he asked.

Tarius did not answer immediately. His gaze remained locked on the old man's eyes as if he wanted to see whether his reaction was genuine.

After a few seconds of silence, Tarius finally spoke.

"Well, it's nothing. The recent mess in the First Heaven made me think, and after I thought it through, I couldn't help but feel that there was something strange in the First Heaven. Maybe it's just my imagination, but I wanted to make sure."

The old man raised his eyebrows.

"What kind of strangeness? And why am I being suspected by you?"

Tarius did not answer the question and instead asked,

"Where is your apostle?"

"My apostle? He's in the Eighth Heaven, of course. He's still doing his job spreading my influence," the old man replied without hesitation.

Tarius kept looking at the old man.

"Is that so?"

The old man narrowed his eyes.

"Of course. Seriously, why are you suspecting—" he suddenly stopped mid-sentence and frowned deeply.

Seeing the old man's sudden change of expression, Tarius asked,

"What is it?"

"I... I lost control over a part of the heaven near the Ancient Blue Gate World. It's the Akares Star. I can no longer affect the law of causality in that world."

"What? Again?" Tarius said in astonishment.

This was the second time it had happened. The first time, they had lost the entire Ancient Blue Gate World. They could no longer weaken the law of causality in that region of the heaven. They could still sense something from that place, but they could not interfere in any way.

One of the main purposes of the gods in weakening the law of causality there was not only to weaken the "border law" that separated the higher and lower heavens but also to

allow the responsible god to completely control the entire heaven along with its heavenly laws.

They could even impose their own heavenly law if they wished, although the process was not easy. They had to weaken the entire heaven's law of causality as much as possible until they could take over that heaven—in this case, the First Heaven.

The god needed to "become one" with the heaven to control it completely.

However, there was a catch. If they lost control over even a small part of the heaven, it would become impossible to make the entire heaven their own. And that was exactly what had happened at this moment, they had lost control of parts of the First Heaven.

This was also something that had left Tarius confused in the past. The only one capable of pulling off such a feat would be a god who had already reached the level where they could control an entire universe.

The old man nodded seriously.

"Yes, you can sense it yourself. This is really strange. Did those rebel gods make their move? But if they were the ones who did it, how could we not detect it?"

Tarius did not answer. His silhouette slowly dissipated.

"Well, who knows," he said before disappearing completely.

Seeing that Tarius had vanished, the old man frowned even deeper. He was truly surprised that he could not control the part of the heaven around the Akares Star. But he set aside that strangeness and instead thought about Tarius, who had come to question him.

'What does Tarius have in mind, coming to me like this? What did he find?' he thought. Since Tarius already seemed to suspect him and had even asked such a question, it was clear that Tarius had already caught a trace of another god's schemes behind him.

Although Tarius still seemed unaware of his apostle's involvement, which meant he had found no proof of it, this was already a bad sign for him. With Tarius seemingly catching onto something that made him suspicious, Tarius would act accordingly and strengthen his surveillance in the future.

The old man sighed once again as he found it a truly troublesome situation. His apostle and any of his followers in the First Heaven would now have much more limited movement.

'Well, at least for now, my apostle can use that singularity to keep Tarius busy and divert his attention from this matter.'

The old man closed his eyes and continued his meditation. He would try to solve the mystery of the phenomenon in the First Heaven first.

In another place, Tarius's body sat within his own realm. He was in a meditative position, and after a few moments, he opened his eyes. He had just sent a part of his consciousness to the old man.

After opening his eyes, he showed no expression, though his thoughts drifted to what had just happened.

'He doesn't seem to have lied, but he's still suspicious and remains on my list.'

Recently, after he sensed that his connection to many of his followers in the First Heaven had been severed—which meant they had died within a short span of time—he began to think that something was wrong.

Most of the followers he lost contact with were from the area of the Central Star Cluster, followed by those from the Fallen Star Cluster, and even some from the central region of heaven. He had now lost influence over the entire Ancient Blue Gate World and lost many of his powerful followers in the First Heaven.

He was certain that it was the work of that mortal. But then although that mortal was certainly capable of such a thing, the question that arose was how that mortal could do it so effectively.

That mortal might be an apostle of one of the rebel gods, but that still did not explain how he could pinpoint every single one of his followers with such ease and kill them. He was like a reaper to his followers with that level of efficiency.

This made him to think about everything that had happened recently, as well as certain events in the past.

He realized he had experienced something similar before, though not on the same scale.

In one of the worlds within the Central Star Cluster, he had slowly lost his influence until eventually losing all of it entirely.

What he found strange was that it had happened suddenly, out of nowhere, and even to this day that world remained off-limits from his influence.

Usually, his followers from other planets would continue spreading his influence despite losing one world, but this particular world seemed to have an incredible defense.

They seemed to know whenever his followers arrived and would eliminate them, which made that part of the Central Star Cluster completely free from his influence.

All this time, he had believed that the world might possess a rare genius capable of holding off his followers. He planned to eventually overwhelm that world once his avatar descended, and then the First Heaven would finally fall.

However, the appearance of that singularity destroyed all of his plans. His avatar was destroyed, and many of his followers perished. He believed that mortal was the strongest he had ever encountered, most likely an apostle of the rebel gods.

He also thought that the mortal was almost certainly the reincarnation of some unknown god from the past. That mortal's comprehension and technique were things that a mortal without knowledge as a god should not possess. Even if that mortal had a system, it still left many things unanswered about what happened to him.

Many things did not make sense and his knowledge did not seem to apply to that mortal!

But then, despite the absurdity of this mortal, he tried to think positively—that perhaps this mortal was truly special.

In the span of the cosmos, there must be inexplicable beings like this mortal, things even gods would witness for the first time. The endless cosmos could still conceal many mysteries unknown even to all gods.

However, not long after, he could no longer sense any connection with the followers in the Ancient Blue Gate World, and soon after that, he also lost control over that part of the heaven. Following that, he lost millions of his followers within a short span of time, which immediately raised his alarm.

He knew that such a thing could only be done by a god—a god who had already reached the level where they could control an entire universe. There were several beings of that level among the rebel gods of this universe, so it would not be surprising if this was their doing.

Forget about that mortal. Even if he had been a god in his past life, he was still a mortal right now.

The problem was, they had detected no movement from any of those gods. They could not sense what had been done to the heaven that caused them to lose control. It was as if, in that region of heaven, the heaven itself had suddenly closed off from all outside influence.

His followers kept dying in quick succession, as if that mortal knew exactly where they were. The heaven had suddenly closed itself off from their influence. Those circumstances made him think of one god, the one that helping him weaken the law of causality in the First Heaven, the old man.

That old man and he had been working together to complete the conquest of the First Heaven more efficiently and quickly. The old man's role was to assist Tarius in weakening the law of causality until Tarius could take over the entire First Heaven.

Logically, that old man was the most suspicious person who could have caused all of this without being detected. With the help of his apostle, such a thing might even be possible, and that was why Tarius had asked about the old man's apostle.

However, he still had no solid proof of the old man's involvement, which kept him from making any excessive moves.

'However, if he really is involved in this matter, then—' Tarius's eyes glistened dangerously.

Unbeknownst to Aldrian, even without him taking any action, the seed of doubt had already been sown among the invaders.

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Chapter 839 - 839: The Rumor

[1,530 words]

Aldrian was still in the hidden place where Herias had built his statue. At this moment, he was observing a room full of treasures, the amount of which could shock anyone who saw it.

For Aldrian, this was just what his past followers normally did for him. They left treasures for his future use. Mountains of artifacts, energy stones, divine stones, talismans, and other items filled the room.

Aldrian nodded in satisfaction. With all the treasures he kept collecting, he could support his family's cultivation for a long time and even help them reach the three highest heavens. As for the wealth, it could keep his family prosperous for generations to come.

After checking the treasures, he returned to the hall where Herias's statue stood and looked at his core for a moment. The core of a divine beast like Herias, even though it was only a "small" chunk, was truly valuable.

It could be used for cultivation, especially for poison cultivators or for creating powerful pills.

Many alchemists, even from the highest heavens, would fight to the death just to get their hands on such a core. Great pills could be made by mixing it with other rare ingredients, and all of them would be invaluable.

After thinking for a moment, Aldrian decided to keep the core in this place. If he took the core, then the Akares star would lose its most dangerous forbidden region.

He thought that this region was still useful for many things, such as for those who wished to cultivate here or to protect the treasures inside the core region. The poison could prevent anyone from approaching it.

After realizing there was nothing else that interested him, he decided to teleport to the upper atmosphere above the sky of the Poison Valley. Once there, he spread his domain sense across the Akares star and tried to look for the existence of devils.

After a few minutes of searching, he raised his eyebrows in astonishment because there were no devils in this world!

'Did Randolph kill every single one of Tarius's followers in this world?' Aldrian thought.

'Tarius would have likely already sensed that something strange has been happening here for a long time. But why did the devils not make a move toward this star? Did he only focus on the Ancient Blue Gate World because of Long Shentian and Feng Xuanyan's existence?' He pondered for a moment before shrugging.

'Well, whatever. The devils might not be in this world, but there are already many people who have become followers of those other invading gods, so it is still the same.'

However, here came the trouble. The invaders' cultivation techniques did not always have the same effect as the devils' techniques. The ones in this world were an example. The cultivation techniques here were not as brutal or violent as the devils.

From what he sensed and understood through observation, the people who used these other gods' cultivation techniques were just like normal cultivators. They could live peacefully and did not create destruction like the devils.

However, for him, that was already the problem. Cultivating the techniques of those invaders was itself an issue, and finding a way to get rid of them was another. There was no difference in character between them and those who cultivated the normal techniques of this universe.

There was no way he could simply kill everyone who seemed harmless just because they practiced a cultivation technique from one of those invaders. It was not entirely the cultivators' fault if Randolph had been the one who spread the technique, and they believed there was nothing wrong with it.

'How am I supposed to get rid of the cultivation technique itself without harming the innocent?' That was the question he needed to answer if he wanted to solve one of the problem caused by those invaders.

After thinking for a moment, the only feasible way was to make all of them cultivate the technique he created. He needed to spread his own cultivation method to those people so they could abandon the invaders' techniques.

But then he shook his head. He would think more seriously about this matter in the future. For now, one step at a time. Moreover, he still needed to keep Randolph close to him. If he took away all of Randolph's god's followers, he would lose the chance to make use of him. That young master would not take his actions pleasantly and might show open hostility.

To make use of Randolph so that those invaders could fight among themselves, he needed to build a good relationship with him instead.

Thinking that everything about the problems in the Akares star was already in order to be solved, he decided to return to his palace. The rest could be handled by his avatar. Moreover, with the entire Akares star already part of his domain, nothing would go wrong.

On the next day, the team that had departed for the Poison Valley returned. All of the family members came back alive, which was truly relieving. However, something had happened inside the valley that left everyone shocked. It was said that someone had attacked the patriarch inside the Poison Valley.

The unknown attacker was said to have killed the person who had discovered the miracle herb.

Naturally, the members of the family were stunned. Who would be bold enough to attack the team led by patriarch of the Barevisk family?

The patriarch returned unconscious, which caused panic among the family members. Even hours after the team's return, he still had not woken up. Not long after, a rumor began to spread among the members of the Barevisk family, leaving them uneasy.

The patriarch had actually been targeted by assassins from the Silent Reaper. Many immediately thought that for someone like Patriarch Barevisk to fall unconscious, the one who attacked him must have been the leader of the Silent Reaper himself.

It had been a long time since anyone had heard of that group's leader taking action personally. For him to make a move himself, and to dare attack the Barevisk family, meant that this was a serious matter.

Many began to question what had truly happened behind the scenes for the leader of the Silent Reaper to attempt to kill the patriarch. Did that man come of his own will, or had someone hired the Silent Reaper's services?

If it was the latter, then the situation was far more severe. For the leader to personally take action and openly attack the patriarch in the Poison Valley meant that whoever paid the Silent Reaper must have immense influence.

The question was, who?

The Valroy family was the strongest in the Akares star, but they had no conflict with the Barevisk family. In fact, the Barevisk family these years was more like a vassal to the Valroy family, thanks to the current patriarch.

Many also guessed that perhaps someone from another world. Some speculated that Patriarch Barevisk had recently offended someone with great influence, someone powerful enough to make the leader of the Silent Reaper personally take the job and dare to attack a patriarch supported by the Valroy family.

Still, those were only guesses from those who heard the rumors. Yet with such talk spreading, and the fact that the patriarch still had not woken up, uncertainty began to grow among the family members. Many supported the current patriarch, and they feared that if anything happened to him, the family would fall into instability.

Although the current patriarch already had a successor, it was still too early for him to take the reins. He did not yet have the strength to control the family's power. He was still at the pseudo-immortal establishment stage, and he needed at least pseudo immortal stage to be worthy of the patriarch's seat.

This became the talk that unsurprisingly spread beyond the family and eventually reached the leader of the Silent Reaper himself. After hearing it, he was confused.

How had he suddenly been dragged into this?

At this moment, he was walking through a city where he could see the floating land where the Barevisk family's manor was located. He and many of his men had come with a single purpose.

To kill anyone in the Barevisk family who knew about the relationship between his group and Munez.

After thinking it over thoroughly, he finally decided to take the gamble and do exactly what Luvier had suggested.

To kill Munez and all of his men who knew about their connection.

He knew he could not massacre the entire Barevisk family because that would attract too much trouble. The powers of this world could unite against his group if the Silent Reaper were seen to slaughter a great family like Barevisk without clear reason.

That would be interpreted as a threat. The Silent Reaper could and would not hesitate to destroy an entire family if someone used their services.

No matter how great he was, that would be the worst-case scenario. There was no way he could contend with the united powers of the whole world.

He knew he had to execute the plan with perfection and without error. He had to make sure they were all dead in one sweep tonight.

No mistakes, no survivors, no witnesses.

But not long after he arrived, he heard a rumor that left him both interested and confused.

What was happening inside the Barevisk family?

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Chapter 840 - 840: Behind the Darkness of the Night

[1,420 words]

The master of the Silent Reaper was walking along the busy streets of the city. He was in disguise and looked like a normal citizen, not attracting any attention. Then suddenly, someone came beside him from the crowd. The man walked side by side with him as the master received a voice transmission.

"The news seems legit. They actually came to Poison Valley yesterday, but the people did not know for what purpose. I got this information from our informant in the Adventurer Guild, that the Barevisk family indeed knew about the miracle herb and kept the news to themselves so they could claim the herb first."

"The patriarch of the Barevisk family was also seen unconscious when their group returned from Poison Valley, which strengthens the credibility of the information. From what the inspection team gathered, the rumor about the patriarch still being unconscious seems true."

"Many elders and other family members have been talking about it, and they seem quite restless regarding the patriarch's condition. His state appears strange, which makes them unsettled."

Luvier stopped his report as they continued walking. The master glanced at the floating land for a moment before he asked.

"How about the rumor that I attacked Munez? Where did that come from? Why is there such a rumor?"

"We don't know the details. But we received information that the rumor itself came from Ferix Barevisk, the younger brother of Patriarch Barevisk." Luvier answered.

The master thought about Ferix, the one and only younger brother of Munez. Of course, he knew how Munez treated his brother. He knew that Munez never liked his little brother even a bit and always kept him away from the central power.

Because of that, he was quite surprised that Ferix got involved in this matter. Why did Munez bring his younger brother along to Poison Valley?

He did not think Munez had suddenly become a caring brother and decided to take Ferix to gather the miracle herb. Also, why did Ferix suddenly bring up the Silent Reaper in this rumor? He knew that the story about the Silent Reaper attacking Patriarch Barevisk was nonsense.

There was no member of the Silent Reaper who had taken any action against the Barevisk family at that time. Moreover, he had never given any order or mission related to the Barevisk family.

The master couldn't help but smell a conspiracy here.

"How about the security and the grand elders? Is there anything we need to pay attention to inside the manor?" he asked.

"The security is tight given Patriarch Barevisk's condition. The grand elders are all inside the manor. With the news about Master attacking Patriarch Barevisk, they also seem wary of your arrival."

"And the younger brother of Patriarch Barevisk is also inside the manor; they did not let him go for now. I think the higher-ranking members from the patriarch's faction are preventing him from going outside as a preventive measure against any movement from him," Luvier replied.

The master thought for a moment before he finally made his decision.

"We will move at midnight. We will strike while they are busy with Munez's condition."

"Yes, master." Luvier answered before he walked further away from the master.

The master continued walking under the afternoon sunlight that slowly moved toward the western horizon. He only needed to wait for midnight to start the action, and after that they would hide at another hideout that even Munez did not know.

Time flew by, the sun had already sunk, and the moon replaced it in the sky. The Akares Star had two moons, one large and the other small, with the larger one positioned above and the smaller below.

The unique sight would amaze anyone who came from a world with only one moon, such as the Ancient Blue Gate World. The two moons, accompanied by countless stars, created an incredible scenery.

When both moons reached the highest point of the sky at midnight, many people would still look up to admire the view.

However, within the beauty of the night, there were some who were not there to enjoy it. Some used the darkness as the time to begin what they had planned during the day.

More than fifty silhouettes approached the floating land where the Barevisk family manor was located. Their movements made no sound, left no trace, and went unseen by anyone. From one rooftop to another, they moved like blurred shadows. Not even the wind was disturbed by their passing, as if the silhouettes were shadows themselves.

After a few moments, they finally arrived near the teleportation formation that connected to the floating land. The formation was guarded by five guards, one of them being the strongest, at the peak of the pseudo-immortal establishment stage. He was the one responsible for overseeing anyone who entered the floating land.

The silhouettes blended into the darkness of the night as they stopped moving. There was no movement for a few seconds until, suddenly, several shadows darted out from the darkness and approached the guards. Their movements were swift and undetected.

The guards realized nothing as the shadows passed them, reappearing right behind each of them. The shadows suddenly turned corporeal, taking on human form. The guards barely sensed something was wrong, and before they could react, the figures behind them grabbed their throats and strangled them.

They squeezed until the guards lost consciousness, then dragged the bodies into the shadows. One of the figures approached the teleportation formation, lowered to one knee, and began activating it.

The moment the teleportation formation became usable, the rest of the shadows waiting in the darkness finally made their move.

Ten shadow figures stepped onto the formation and were teleported to the floating land. Then came another ten, and another, until all of them had been teleported.

Once the last group arrived on the floating land, the shadows already hidden in the darkness began to move again.

In front of the manor gate, a team of shadows had already incapacitated the six guards stationed there. These guards not only protected the gate but also kept watch over the teleportation formation.

From their position, they could see the teleportation formation, which was why the first group of shadows had been tasked with disabling them as quickly as possible upon arrival. After getting rid of the guards, they entered the manor grounds by leaping over the high walls.

Without a word, the shadows separated into several groups and spread in many directions around the manor. Their movements were perfectly coordinated, as if every step had been planned in detail beforehand.

Without making a sound, many of them bypassed the guards and evaded the detection formations.

Each group of shadows moved toward its designated target. One such group was heading toward one of the most heavily guarded places in the manor, a separate building watched over by dozens of patrolling guards, with even two pseudo immortal cultivators sensed nearby.

This group of shadows stopped not far from the building, observing the situation from the darkness. There were many trees and plants surrounding the structure, and the shadows concealed themselves among the branches.

After a few moments, one of the shadows sent a voice transmission to the other five shadows that followed it.

"The security is truly tight. It seems the rumor is true, and I think even now, that Munez is still not awake. I can sense the familiar presences inside that building, they are all our targets," said the master of the Silent Reaper.

"Start now," he ordered before the shadows moved toward the building.

Elsewhere, in another part of the manor and separate from the main building, there was a vast, isolated pavilion complex.

Inside this complex stayed Sir Ferix and Aldrian. Their place was guarded by many cultivators, the security quite strict. It was as if Sir Ferix were some kind of prisoner.

Sir Ferix already knew the reason why the higher-ups from the other faction were keeping him here. With Munez unconscious, he might do something that could destabilize the family, for example, he could ignite a rebellion if he were allowed to return to his own manor.

Moreover, he was an important witness, and he knew that some even suspected him of being involved in the attack on Patriarch Barevisk. Because of that, he could not leave until everything was cleared up. He had to stay in this place for an indefinite time, or at least until the patriarch woke up.

At this moment, Sir Ferix was still awake, cultivating in the garden of his pavilion. Aldrian stood not far from him, gazing at the two moons.

As he observed the beauty of the night sky, he suddenly sensed something that made him smile.

'So they have already started.'

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