

Black Plain 1691

Chapter 1691 Making Agreements

The leader of that faction then said. "Your faction has a lot of room to grow. So if we ally now, we can help you gain more influence within the Church with less difficulty and, in return, reap the fruits of that once the Black Plain Empire becomes stronger."

"So my group is an opportunity for yours? Do you intend to help us now so we can help you in the future?" Gloria asked.

"You can see it this way." That man nodded positively.

Another person in that group, a bald but young-looking man, said. "We can see it as one hand washing the other. Our faction has connections with several smaller church groups that we can direct to your side.

You could easily gain alliances that way and even manage to absorb some of these groups.

We also have access to information that your group may not have, things that just numbers and cultivation levels are not enough to achieve certain paraments."

A black-haired woman added. "We have some authorizations that your group could take decades to get if no one tries to make things difficult for you. So we can use that to help you at this time that you don't have such a thing yet in exchange for future support."

"And what would that support look like exactly?" One of Gloria's allies in her faction, level 79, asked.

The group leader looked at that woman from Vogel's post and said. "There are several ways to support a group within the Church.

The point of factions is to control the power of the Church. This is done through appointments to relevant positions, administration of territories, etc.

For the moment, your group only has influence by being part of the Black Plain Empire and having members with much potential. But one day, you will become more actively involved in Church politics and get positions within the Church that will give you more power.

That's what interests us most!"

A Church member could pursue a career within that organization. One day they would be young disciples, but one day they could become elders.

Depending on their contacts, talents, and merits, this person could reach a position that would give them rights and powers over others, such as the possibility of giving recommendations.

They could appoint someone to observe an area or manage a group of outposts in the Church, which would put the appointee directly in touch with many resources.

This would benefit the appointee, so those who reached these positions would also benefit in return for these appointees.

In short, all that mattered was the resources one could obtain, and a group like Gloria's had great potential to become influential and be able to appoint people to relevant positions within the Church.

These people judged that as promising as the Black Plain Empire was, they had a better chance of advancing with Church resources. So what interested them most was not the resources of this state but the influence it could achieve to appoint positions within the Church.

Gloria understood what these people wanted and didn't mind because no gratuitous favors existed in the cultivation world. One would always want to benefit from the other, so saying this openly was best.

Pretending to want to help another without exposing one's interest in receiving future benefits was a mistake that would only make everything more difficult. So hearing from these people that they wanted to exchange favors, she was more than satisfied.

"That can be done. Obviously, I won't promise what kind of indications I can make in the future. It will all depend on what we can achieve and what has been made possible because of your support." She said as the group on the other side enjoyed what they were hearing.

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A few days passed after Gloria's agreement with that other Church group.

In the meantime, she confirmed her agreements with that and other groups that came to Dry City during the period, gaining important support for the future.

Her faction was growing in numbers and influence, something that would not change so much in the short term but had the potential to transform the power relations of that faction in the future.

On the other hand, Minos had confirmed his Soul Contracts with the previous Spiritual Sages, having already introduced them to the Spatial Kingdom and determined their functions.

Some would cultivate in that shrine to become stronger for the sake of the empire's future. But others would position themselves around that state to maintain the imperial family's presence in all the cities with local assemblies.

In addition, some had to stay to protect Dry City, and others would join Oswald in developing the network of local wormhole ports.

And so, as the church visitors returned to their posts and Bridget's group was already away from this state, slowly, the empire began its journey of peace and development that would lie ahead.

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For the next few months, nothing troublesome would arise to torment the lives of the local leaders, allowing Minos and his family a peaceful period that would extend indefinitely.

But eventually, the day of the imperial wedding of Minos and Isabella would come, a feast long awaited by the local powers and those of the Flaming Empire.

Then, amidst ever-increasing continental tension, the day of Minos' wedding would arrive, with high-level Spiritual Saints and low-level Spiritual Sages from different parts of the continent coming to Dry City.

On the eve of Minos' wedding, leaders from more than 50 organizations were already in Dry City when a level 72 winged tigress landed at one of the entrances to this capital city with a young red-haired woman on her back.

This beauty had Gloria's hair and Minos's eyes and soul cultivation at level 57.

This was Emperor Stuart's eldest daughter, Sarah, who had just returned from weeks of travel outside the capital!

"Your Highness, you were almost late. The wedding will take place in a few hours!" One of the imperial guards in charge of Sarah shouted this when he saw her, feeling relieved that she was not late for the wedding.

"I know that," Sarah said while having a not-so-happy expression on her face.

She had grown used to the idea that her father had several women, but she didn't like the idea of having her free time disrupted by a wedding...

In any case, she was afraid her father would punish her, so she returned to Dry City at short notice.

"How are the preparations going? What about the guests? Have they arrived yet?" She asked as she climbed down from Maida.

Even though she didn't like being interrupted, she was looking forward to seeing some relatives and friends again, so since she had to go through the wedding anyway, she decided to take advantage of the situation.

"Everyone is already in the city..."

She continued walking towards the interior of the capital as she listened to that man's words.

Chapter 1692 Reunions

In the imperial palace of Dry City...

Many nobles of the empire could be seen in the corridors of the first level of the local government headquarters, from those directly subordinate to Minos to those more distant.

Lee and Alison were there with their family, as well as Peter and Mia, many of them taking the opportunity to see again people they hadn't seen in years.

With the development of the Black Plain, some of Minos' most trusted people had spread throughout the empire to take care of state affairs.

Because of this, some of them had not seen each other for years, and on this occasion, they couldn't help but greet their old friends and companions who had walked the journey here with them in the most difficult times.

Old Joey saw Peter, Barbara, Milton, and Robin again, the people he had met during the time of slavery they had spent together.

Old Joey was currently at level 65, while Milton, who had come to the Black Plain only later, was at level 67. As for Robin, Peter, and Barbara, these three were younger and had been at Minos' side longer, so they were all already Spiritual Saints.

Barbara was at level 74, and Robin was at level 72. As for Peter, he had recently advanced to level 74.

While these old acquaintances were encountering, some were beside their spouses, some alone, but many groups were meetings like this in other corners of the imperial palace.

Elen, Elena, and Eduard, those natives of the Stone Island who had been at Minos' side the longest and had more recently been living apart, met again in one of the palace's courtyards, smiling as they saw each other again.

Elena was one level below these other two, while Elen and Eduard were at level 73.

"Eduard, I heard that you got married. Is that true?" Elena looked at Elen's former bodyguard, interested in this rumor she had recently heard.

That member of the Imperial Guard, a force separate from the army and whose sole purpose was to protect the imperial family, smiled and said. "It's true. I had the grace to meet my wife in Albano..."

They continued to chat, while in another part of the imperial palace, Abby's parents played Kendrick while she finished preparing for the wedding of Minos and Isabella.

"Your family is getting bigger once again, hein..." Mona, currently at level 70, said, joking with her friend as she helped her get ready.

Abby, still at level 75, smiled as she saw the meaning in Mona's eyes, who was telling her that she didn't expect to see this family increasing in this way.

Given Minos' luck in making children, she and others close to the Stuart family were already hoping that another baby would come into the world to increase the size of this imperial household.

To Minos' wives, they were not so lucky. But from other people's point of view, the emperor already having two children under the age of 50 was an impressive achievement!

She then said. "The chances of the family getting bigger will increase exponentially now..."

Abby's father, Eliot, level 73, didn't like hearing these details and made an ugly expression, imagining that his daughter was saying she and Minos were trying much.

But Nicole, level 72, understood that differently and said. "Haha, with Isabella coming and the peace ahead of us, I'm sure more babies will be crawling around this palace soon."

She looked at Kendrick and said. "What do you think of that, little Ken? Do you want to have more siblings?"

"Uh? Will my father make more children?" He asked, still not knowing where babies came from and why his parents needed to make more. "But doesn't he already have the big sister and me?"

"To strengthen the family, little one," Eliot said, teaching his grandson the importance of family. "A family can only be truly powerful if its most important members carry the same lineage.

Otherwise, any mishap can destabilize an ill-founded home.

So it is your parents' duty to have as many children as possible so that you can maintain the family's power in the future."

"So the big sister and I will also have to procreate?" He asked, still curious about how to do that.

"Right, when you find people you love, you will help your family by making children, and one day they will do the same." Eliot ran one of his hands over his grandson's head. "But you don't have to worry about that for now, haha."

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While Kendrick was learning the importance of a big family and having more siblings, Sarah entered the imperial palace as everyone greeted her.

"Your Highness, you look more beautiful than ever..."

A few nobles of similar age to Sarah tried to approach her, but she quickly ignored them, going to where her grandfathers and aunts were.

Given how large the Black Plain Empire had become and those involved in today's ceremony, even Gloria's parents had left the Temple of Payton to come to this wedding.

So, soon after arriving at her family's residence, Sarah saw both sides of her family interacting in a large living room.

Her great-grandparents, Oswald and Patience, were in that place, both still at levels 80 and 79. At the same time, Maisie and Angelica were next to them, one at level 79 and the other at level 76.

They were talking to Margot and Joseph, Gloria's mother at level 78 and her father at 79.

Next to them, Emperor Edwardstone and his two wives were there too, looking forward to Isabella's wedding.

With the Spiritual Sage of the Gray Clouds Sect taking care of the Flaming Empire, Harold had made time to come to this momentous occasion in Dry City.

His wives wouldn't miss Isabella's wedding either, so they were by his side, smiling and looking more beautiful than ever in their best dresses.

"Haha, Oswald, you look much better with that new look." Emperor Edwardstone said to this former vassal, seeing him for the first time since the advancement of Minos' grandfather to the 9th stage.

"That's nothing! I'm just getting started, my friend." Oswald said, smiling in satisfaction at his current position. "But you should see the others from the Gray Clouds Sect. Two more of us have advanced to the 9th stage and experienced even better improvements than mine..."

While they were talking, Sarah walked into that place and went over to her family members to hug them after being away for so long.

"Grandparents!"

Chapter 1693 Converging Intentions

While the strongest of the family were in the residence of Minos and their wives, nobles from all over the northern region were in the vicinity of the first level of the imperial palace.

There, the leaders of the assemblies from each of Minos' territories, from Vogel, the Snow area, and Stone Island, were standing around, chatting as they awaited the moment for the wedding to begin.

The brothers of the Stone family were around while Lorelei could not attend this ceremony, as she was leading the empire's efforts for the maritime expansion of the Black Plain.

But former King Stone and his younger brother were around, both at level 68, a level weaker than their sister.

They were in a circle of regional leaders, where Adam Snow and Ambrose Snow, both at level 66, stood next to former King Carline and his two wives, all of them at level 65.

But Raynard, Diana, and the Cromwell area leader were not mixed with these other regional nobles since, after the development of the Black Plains War of Independence, their families had moved far apart from each other.

They even did business with each other but avoided each other for other things!

The members of the Walker family, former sovereign of the Kingdom of Waves, were also around. Still, their members were talking to the distant relatives of the Goddess of Life, with whom they had been interacting a lot in recent months.

In this reunion atmosphere, Rosser, Albano, and Blackrock sovereigns were also around, observing the situation while laughing about the recent past.

Only a few years ago, they were enemies of various people in the surrounding area, patriarchs of families, and sect masters of the Flaming Empire.

But in such a short time, everything had changed, and they were all now partying under the same roof, all on Minos' account.

And seeing the amount of Spiritual Sages in the surrounding area, more than 10, counting the relatives of the Goddess of Life, the members of the Gray Clouds Sect, and the Edwardstone family, some of these leaders were silent, seeing fate.

'It looks like the Black Plain Empire really is the future.' The King of Blackrock, level 79, thought to himself, thinking about the current tense situation in the rest of the continent.

As the leader of a state that bordered the Evergreen Empire, he was one of the most worried in this place about the future, fearful about what could happen if the southern and western regions started a war.

If that happened, his capital city, which was close to the border with the Evergreen Empire, would be in great danger!

Noting how the Black Plain Empire seemed to be the only place on the continent that was currently calm, this leader couldn't help but consider whether this was the future for him and his people.

"We may have to associate with the Black Plain Empire more deeply in the future." He commented to his men as he saw the many cheerful people in the surrounding area eating and drinking.

"Your Majesty, what do you mean?" The man closest to King Blackrock asked, frowning at the possibility behind his sovereign's words.

That man said. "I'm not talking about us becoming part of the empire like the ancient states in the northern region did. But we can become an autonomous kingdom of the Black Plain Empire, less free than we are now, but without as many ties as those northern region territories."

"That..."

Minos' other allied sovereigns also had similar thoughts in mind, not for the same reasons but with the same consequences.

"I didn't imagine that would be so useful..." While holding the medallion that Minos had given her years ago, Iris West commented to Lulu and Joan.

That would entitle her to an application to this empire, so considering that Minos currently had mid-level Spiritual Sages on his side, this woman couldn't help but smile in satisfaction that she had accepted the deal from that time.

"What do you intend to do?" One of her daughters asked.

"I don't think our eastern region will face any major problems because of the situation of the major powers on the continent. But it would help us a lot if we could get a high-level expert from the empire to protect us in case of need..." Queen West said.

Lulu asked. "You want to use this to get one of Minos' Spiritual Sages? I doubt he will leave someone like that with us for long periods."

Iris smiled, shaking her head negatively. "I'm not going to ask for that. I want Albano to become a subordinate kingdom to the Black Plain, which has its independence but will pay taxes in exchange for benefits.

That way, we can get protection and access to some Black Plain resources and markets more easily."

"So that's it..."

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Meanwhile, Dillian and Eda, one at level 73 and the other at 72 were standing next to Minos, helping him prepare for yet another such occasion.

"Your Majesty, you look very handsome. I'm sure Isabella will be very happy when she sees you later." Eda said as her husband finished helping Minos button his clothes.

Now and then, Dillian still offered his services as a butler to Minos, helping this young man he had practically raised since childhood.

Precisely because he had been with this man since the beginning of everything, this man had an extremely happy look on his face, as if he were his own son who was about to be married once again.

"This time, you will marry a princess, so this will open new doors for the family in the future, Your Majesty." He said as he called attention to this matter.

"Hmm, I don't intend to take over the Flaming Empire, but when I have a son with Isabella, he will naturally have rights to that state." He said, imagining that even if Harold and his future heir still commanded that place in the future, it would be done by observing a possible son of his with Isabella.

But he didn't intend to force anything. As much as he had his expansionist interests, with those already under his influence, Minos did not intend to force them but rather hoped they would ask to join his empire.

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While he was talking this over with Dillian and Eda, Ruth and Gloria were with Isabella in another part of the palace, finishing helping this new harem sister of theirs.

"Ready?" Ruth asked that level 77 woman.

Isabella was blushing, her eyes watering, but still, she smiled and said. "Yes, more than ever."

"So shall we go then?" Gloria asked, showing one of her hands to help Isabella.

Harold and Isabella's mother was already outside that room waiting for her, so right after getting up, Isabella went towards them to start this unique moment in her life!

Chapter 1694 The State Of The Continent

After a few moments, the wedding of Minos and Isabella unfolded, with the bride being led down the aisle by Harold while the groom waited for her along with Patriarch Frost and the groomsmen and bridesmaids of the wedding.

Abby, Ruth, and Gloria also attended the ceremony, as this was no ordinary wedding but the union of an emperor with a princess in a family that followed polygamy.

After the bride arrived, the future husband and wife would exchange vows and receive the seraph's blessing in front of hundreds of people important to the empire.

After the groom kissed the bride, the post-ceremony celebrations would take up the rest of the day until Minos and Isabella would leave for their honeymoon, where only the two of them would be together to enjoy themselves for the next few days.

Some participants in this historic moment for the empire would remain in the capital after their departure, for there were many opportunities for conversation with so many local and regional leaders.

But many others would return to their towns soon after the departure of those two, happy for Minos and Isabella but more interested in returning home to take care of their own problems.

In the midst of this, Minos and Isabella would have fun in the Spatial Kingdom for the next three days, with her finding out about what she didn't already know but focusing on using as much time with him as possible to get pregnant...

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While things were going well for the Black Plain Empire, the rest of the continent was experiencing the tension of war and its problems.

When a war was about to start, the powers that would be involved in the conflict prepared themselves by calling back their men, reducing external interactions, and also some of their consumption and sale of resources.

With this came the recession, lack of products, and the increase in the cost of various services.

Because of the expectation of a war starting soon, even states less related to what might start soon were already suffering.

In the last few months since Maximillian's resurgence on the continent, this man had fully updated himself on modern times, gained support within the Church, and begun to revise his plans for expansion.

The old plans needed to be adjusted to the current conditions on the continent, so he had been doing this alongside the men from the Blood Triangle Pirates group and Emperor Evergreen's faction.

But several things had happened in the meantime, even though the war had not yet begun.

With his update on the situation on the continent, Maximillian had communicated with Vico regarding the Crown Prince of the Eastern Empire and his bodyguards.

He had not freed those three, but he had assured Vico that their safety was guaranteed as long as their forces did not dare to leave the domains of their own state.

But even though that ancient man had not freed those three, a fight between Maximillian and Vico had not yet taken place.

Besides the relationship between these two, several continental powers were already positioning themselves in favor of one side and against the other, leaving few neutral states left on the continent at the moment.

The Flowers Kingdom had accepted Minos' recommendations, and after several conversations with Maximillian's group, Queen McBride had taken a position in favor of this man's group.

Her status was between the Eastern Empire and the Western Empire. Still, he had always been closer to the Church than to the Travisani family. So Hannah had chosen those she had more affinity with to avoid being neutral between two enemies who might soon use her territory as a battleground.

Amid this, the Supreme Pontiff of the Spiritual Church was yet to make a stand, not knowing how to stop the conflict between Maximillian and Vico.

Duncan did not agree with the plans of this Church ancestor. Still, against someone so powerful and who already had a group of followers to support him, his powers were limited.

Even elders outside the Emperor Evergreen faction liked Maximillian's expansionist ideas, so for someone near the end of his life, preventing this impending conflict had been very difficult for Duncan.

The more tempers flared, the more difficult it became to stop it from happening as more and more powers came out in favor or against, further encouraging each party to take matters into their own hands.

Thus, this man had been having headaches trying to extend peace over the continent as much as possible while everyone around him seemed to think only of war.

But while Vico and Maximillian were estranged and Duncan was stressing himself out in search of peace, Emperor Quinn was worried about the chaotic future that might come from the North Sea.

Maximillian's situation worried him, and he had been paying attention to it, preparing himself for the war that might start in a few more years. But with each passing day, he believed more in Minos and Grant's concerns.

After months of investigating the situation in the North Sea, this man had lost some subordinates dead in that area, and others were missing.

Even a Spiritual Demigod was missing after entering that region to investigate!

This emperor had not received any update from his men sent to the North Sea, so he had been suffering from the thought that powerful forces were gathering at that remote point.

With Grant's absurd ideas and the concern that even Minos had about the future of the continent in that area, Henry had reached a point where he had no more doubts about the danger of that area.

He had already informed his companions in the western region about these concerns and had even warned Vico about the risk of the prophesied catastrophe coming from that region to the north.

Unfortunately, his ideas seemed absurd, even though he was so powerful and had used the deaths and disappearances of his investigators.

Everyone was more concerned about the Maximillian threat and felt nothing in the North Sea could threaten them more than this peak cultivator.

At most, what was in the North Sea was at level 99. Otherwise, the entire Spiritual World would be aware of such a thing.

Therefore, even with a level 98 man worrying, the powers of the western region had not taken his feelings seriously and were leaving him alone regarding investigations and actions in the North Sea.

In this way, the Central Continent was approaching its worst crisis in a long time. At the same time, some feared the uncertain future to the north, others wished and feared war, and a few experienced a temporary peace that no one knew how long it would last.

Amidst this, each power was moving around thinking the best for itself!

Chapter 1695 Contrary To The Orders Of The Ancestor

While things were tense in the Central Continent, the group of beings sent by one of the leaders of the City of a Thousand Races that Minos had passed had finally reached their goal.

After months of traveling, the group of sea beasts arrived in the Divine Continent and made their way to the area they had been appointed.

In that place, they investigated the whereabouts of the distant relatives of Henricus Longus and finally found this group hours ago!

After millions of years, since this man passed through the Spiritual World, his family still lingered!

Upon arriving at the headquarters of the current Longus family, that group of underwater beings soon got permission to enter this headquarters hidden among a great forest.

Being guided by half-breed Spiritual Sages, the envoys from the City of a Thousand Races couldn't help but notice this relevant fact.

'It seems the Longus family has mixed with land beast races...' One of the sea beasts in this group looked at the hybrid bodies of those men guiding them.

'Even powerful families would subject themselves to that? I highly doubt it. This was probably a desperate way out to maintain their own power.' One of them thought, imagining that the Longus family had faced great problems and allowed part of their members to mix their bloodline with beings of other races.

Even as a beast, these newly arrived creatures in this forest did not see mixing races as a positive and could not help but see this place negatively.

None of them would say anything, but they all felt a particular disgust toward the descendants of that powerful man.

'Tsk! Would senior Henricus Longus accept that?'

Amidst the prejudiced thoughts of some of those underwater beings, the man leading them stopped in front of a tree that had a trunk so thick that they could not see its limits.

"The elder who will receive you is inside that tree. Please come in." He indicated where there was a door, surprising those beasts.

If one did not look very carefully, one would not be able to see that there was a door in that trunk!

Those beasts passed by and were soon inside what looked like a huge estate, where, by the quality of the decorative furniture, there could only be one of the most important members of this group.

"So you came from the City of a Thousand Races, huh?" A voice reached the ears of these beasts, who were watching the surroundings with interest.

Upon hearing that, they all looked up, sensing this voice had come from there.

They only saw the ceiling but knew the one who had spoken was waiting for them on another building floor.

They quickly walked up to the 5th floor of this property, arriving at a cultivation area where only one man was waiting for them, sitting on the ground in a lotus position.

"You are searching for my family because of the ancestor Giordano Longus?" This meditating man with closed eyes asked, surprising those beasts by quickly identifying what this was about.

The leader of those beasts observed this level 91 Demigod for a few moments, noting that he was a human with no racial mixtures, so he was silent for a few moments.

'It seems that not everyone used race mixing...' He thought before answering. "Yes, that is the reason for our visit."

"Did someone appear in the City of the Thousand Races of the Ancestral Sea and manage to turn the key of the ancestor Henricus Longus?"

"Yes, someone did, but we don't know who." That beast said, wanting to ask that man what had happened to this family but knowing it was none of its business. "Anyway, we are here to warn you about it, just as we have promised in the past.

Someone turned the key left by senior Henricus Longus a few months ago. We don't know what happened to him afterward, as it wasn't our responsibility to identify him and bring him to you."

That man opened his eyes, knowing this was not part of the old agreement between these beasts and his family.

But since he was aware of some important facts concerning the emergence of this person who could turn such a key, he couldn't help but become more serious.

'That person has the Spatial Kingdom and the best resources that the ancestor left behind to prepare us for the worst.' He thought about it, feeling this was the alternative for his family to recover.

After millions of years since the end of Henricus Longus' journey in the Spiritual World, the Longus family had not had another God and decayed over the last million years.

They still had Spiritual Demigods, but these experts were all low-level.

They had only been able to preserve their powers because they had run away from trouble twice in the last million years and still allowed part of the family to mix their genes with that of beast races.

This allowed them to protect some of their powers and live better in the Divine Continent. Still, it had also taken away some possibilities.

After so long, the Spatial Kingdom that Henricus Longus had left to them had been totally exhausted and no longer existed today.

Spatial Kingdoms needed to be taken care of, undergo repairs, and not have their full potential used up for long periods. There was a limit to the number of people that could live in such a place, and at least level 99 Demigods had to repair their structures every thousand years.

The Longus family had faced problems that had caused them to exceed the limits of their Spatial Kingdom, something that had killed that place more than 500,000 years ago.

As such, this family no longer had access to a cultivation sanctuary, nor did they have plantations of valuable medicines.

Hearing about the emergence of Henricus Longus' final heir, that high-ranking elder of the Longus family couldn't help but think this could be the salvation of his house!

'That person must not be powerful... If we can get close to him and take his Spatial Kingdom, we can strengthen ourselves for the hard times approaching!'

He knew that if Minos had appeared, the threat to the Spiritual World prophesied by Henricus Longus was close to happening. But he felt that their chances would be much better if his people led the way instead of following their ancestor's chosen one.

So even though he knew the last wishes of Henricus Longus, this elder intended to go against the orders of that God!

"Very well, thank you for the information, envoys from the City of a Thousand Races. When we can, we will send gifts to your leaders." He said as he stood up, satisfied.

'That person will probably seek us out only when he is stronger... Then we'd better start investigating him right away!'

Chapter 1696 Invisible Conflict

A few days after Minos and Isabella's wedding...

After Minos and Isabella's honeymoon ended, the two returned to Dry City, allowing the high-level Spiritual Saints cultivating in that place to return alongside the Elite Squad and the Stuart family beasts.

Kyla and Emlyn had taken advantage of the last few days to move through the Black Plain Empire and have fun while reconnecting with beasts they had not seen in a long time.

The two had been spending more and more time within the Spatial Kingdom due to their current cultivation levels, which demanded more and more of their time cultivating for them to advance.

The mother was currently at level 75, while the daughter was at level 73.

Thus, in the days that only Minos and Isabella were in the Spatial Kingdom, they rotated the northern region of the Central Continent before returning to Dry City that morning to return to their home.

After Minos' return, he sent all those people back to train in the Spatial Kingdom while turning his attention to the rest of his family and the affairs of the state.

Upon sending those people to the Spatial Kingdom, he and Isabella met with Abby, Ruth, and Gloria for a family breakfast before starting their official business.

But even at breakfast, official business came up the dining table of the emperor's residence.

"Minos, I managed a few more deals in the days when you were with Isabella. So now our faction is even stronger." Gloria said with a beautiful smile on her face, delighted with the changes in the winds in her family's favor.

In the past few months, her and Minos' faction had nearly tripled in strength, doubled in membership, and reached at least six alliance agreements with factions of similar size to theirs.

All told, they already had at their disposal half the area of influence of a major Church faction, something impressive for a group that had been born a few decades ago.

At the same time, with the temporary inattention of the larger Church groups to what Gloria and Minos were doing, they now had an easier time in virtually all their actions.

Moving resources and personnel between Church outposts affiliated with them had never been easier, and their faction members were more relaxed than ever about their situation.

Many had several questions in mind before and only stayed in their group because of the resources they received, something they were unlikely to get in other factions. But now, with peace on the Black Plain, each of these members of their faction was twice as sure that this group was the future.

No one in this group, apart from Minos and Gloria, imagined that one day they would wish to vie for the position of Supreme Pontiff of the Church, but many believed that they would one day become big enough that the previous pressure would no longer bother them.

Because of this, too, the numbers of this faction had improved so much recently, even considering that the mergers had not been enough to justify all this advancement.

"Oh? That sounds promising." Minos smiled upon hearing that. "With more support and the recent mergers, members of the Church without a faction will probably join us more easily."

"Yes, the number of new members of our group who have never been part of a faction has been increasing," Gloria stated.

Then Ruth added. "The number of migrations to the empire has also increased in the last few days."

Abby shook her head and said. "With the tension between the southern and western regions and the empire's distance from those areas, people from all over the continent were starting to migrate here."

These are still low numbers, but in the days when you two were in the Spatial Kingdom, over 50,000 people from Sista, Mairin, Lusmait, Veora Kingdom, Eastern Empire, Western Empire, Flowers Kingdom, and Evergreen Empire entered our domain.

Most of them are Spiritual Saints or weaker, but these movements indicate that we may face a large migration of people from these lands to here very soon."

Isabella heard that and was impressed, not expecting that so many people from these high-level states would come to the Black Plain Empire.

Minos had expected something like that, so he was not impressed like Isabella.

"That is as expected. When the war between Maximillian and Vico starts, millions of people from those states will migrate here." He said, feeling that he and his people would have to be careful even in peace.

Receiving many foreign specialists at once had great potential for trouble. So while the war was not starting, he and his people had to prepare for the worst as soon as possible.

When things got out of hand, even if the strongest people in this world didn't keep an eye on them, they would still have a lot of trouble for their domains!

The women of Minos agreed with him, eating and commenting on the subject, sometimes talking about what they should do and about the greatest danger points for the empire.

...

While the imperial family of the Black Plain gathered, each group involved in the rising continental tensions was taking their due precautions for the times ahead.

Wars and conflicts of the magnitude of what was about to happen in this state did not start suddenly.

When states with billions of people were involved in any problem, even the action of a level 99 Demigod alone could not solve all the problems. He needed help to change the scheme of things, and as such, a lot had to be prepared.

Armies needed to assemble, central forces had to move spiritual crystals in the right direction, and blacksmiths and array masters had to participate in the war effort to arm their states' forces.

A large-scale conflict took time, so even with Maximillian's interests and knowledge of them by Vico's group, nothing would happen in the short term.

Both sides were focused on preparing for the chaotic future ahead of them, so at this stage, they were experiencing an invisible conflict, where each side was focused on what was happening in their territories and less on battles.

So even in tension, these states lived a temporary peace, and their leaders did not fight but prepared themselves by arming their forces and forging new alliances.

This would last for a while, but eventually, the time for armed conflict would come!

Chapter 1697 Progress

Another eight months passed in the blink of an eye!

After this long period of tension between the western and southern regions, the Central Continent was still not experiencing an all-out war, but tempers were slowly reaching worrying levels.

This was true for the southernmost part of the continent. However, in the north, things were going relatively well, with peace and development.

Some new Spiritual Sages had appeared in this state during the intervening period, some men from the Gray Clouds Sect and other individuals part of the Goddess of Life family group.

With these new 9th-stage experts, Minos had finally made the final exchanges regarding the Gray Clouds Sect, and now only 2 Spiritual Sages from that sect remained in the Flaming Empire.

All the other sect members now lived in the Black Plain Empire.

Due to these exchanges, there were now 3 Spiritual Sages in the Flaming Empire, the largest number in the entire history of this state!

Other than this state of Isabella's family, Blackrock and Albano had begun their integrations into the Black Plain Empire, and so in each of them, there were already two low-level Spiritual Sages to mark Minos' territory.

Rosser was lagging behind its former companions, so it was the only place still without the presence of 9th-stage cultivators to protect them.

Luckily this state was between the Flaming Empire, Albano, Vogel, and the Cromwell area, each of these places already marked by Minos' forces and with the presence of Spiritual Sages.

But Rosser's royal family was already moving to also integrate into the Black Plain Empire and become an autonomous kingdom of that state.

In the midst of this, Dry City was receiving taxes from those two kingdoms already under its protection, which was helping the local forces to continue developing the outer areas of this state.

The areas of End, Snow, Waves, Brown, Cromwell, and Stone Island needed a lot of investment, so any additions to the imperial government budget helped a lot.

But in addition to these acquisitions regarding new accessions to the empire, the population as a whole was growing stronger.

Most of the northern region's more than 2 billion inhabitants were below 60. As such, in just eight months of peace and opportunity, many had improved their levels, some moving up a cultivation stage.

Consequently, the quality of local services was increasing, which also generated better services to serve both the local natives and the immigrants that had been growing in numbers recently.

Because of this, the whole state was developing rapidly, and the good news was arriving daily in the empire's capital.

There were problems, of course. Petty theft, property invasions, misunderstandings, you name it. But in a huge territory with a population in the billions, these incidents were a minority and did not worry the local forces.

Therefore, the last few months have been much more positive than negative!

But the good news did not only reach Dry City. Some of it originated right there, and it spread from this city to the entire empire.

Just yesterday, news had left Dry City to the joy of the billions of local inhabitants.

Emperor Minos Stuart had advanced and reached level 78 yesterday afternoon!

...

At the imperial palace, Minos had already returned to his duties after his last few weeks in seclusion in the Spatial Kingdom.

After his breakthrough, he returned to Dry City to spend some time fulfilling his duties with the empire and his family, so he was temporarily free of his cultivation.

But Minos had celebrated the day before, for upon leaving his seclusion, he had discovered that Gloria had also advanced, having also reached level 78 in recent weeks.

Ruth was still at level 76, and Abby had advanced to this level two months ago.

Several high-ranking members of the Black Plain Army had also improved their cultivation while in the Spatial Kingdom or in Dry City, so Minos had celebrated the day before.

Some were getting close to their cultivation limit. This was the case with the natives of the northern region, who didn't have grand enough talents to go very far.

But those who could go further were taking advantage of the opportunities and becoming stronger, contributing to the strengthening of Minos' forces.

Minos' allies in Dry City were also striving to become stronger in the high-level cultivation rooms of that capital city.

As an example, the Supreme Elder of the Edwardstone family had been cultivating diligently for the past few months, approaching his long-awaited breakthrough to the 9th stage of cultivation.

Unfortunately, he had not yet reached level 80 and was still attempting his breakthrough in the main local cultivation room.

In that place, the spiritual energy was violent, where not only high-level Spiritual Sages were cultivating, but even some Spiritual Sages were in the vicinity.

Currently, there were more than 15 Spiritual Sages in the Black Plain Empire, and even if only 5 of them stayed in Dry City, one or two of them could always be seen in rooms like this.

At the moment, there were two of these experts around. Therefore, the density of spiritual energy and laws there was higher than normal, something that facilitated the advancement of those close to achieving such a thing.

Amidst this, the old supreme elder was meditating in a lotus position, circulating his cultivation technique while sweating intensely.

He didn't have much more time to advance, so he was slowly becoming more anxious about this advancement.

As he forcefully tried to absorb the laws and spiritual energy in the surroundings, he felt his soul inflating in a different way and thought he was about to advance.

But when he heard the cracking sound coming from his body, something that could indicate his breakthrough, he felt something he shouldn't and changed the expression on his face.

'No...'

That was all he could think before his strength rapidly decayed while his appearance worsened significantly.

At the crucial moment of his advancement to the 9th stage, the Edwardstone family's eldest man made a serious mistake and caused a cultivation deviation!

Following this, the first of the catastrophes he would face arrived in the form of spiritual collapse!

...

Chapter 1698 Spiritual Catastrophes

When a person fails to advance a cultivation stage, they would naturally experience catastrophes that would decide their life and death.

If they could endure the catastrophes, that person would live and perhaps even have a chance to try to advance in the future.

This was what usually happened to those who faced a bottleneck for the first time and managed to come out of their failure in one piece, the normal thing to happen.

After something like this happened, these people would become much more cautious in cultivation, so some would spend centuries at the same level, preparing to have the best conditions pre-advance.

But if this person who had to deal with the catastrophes, which came in the same amount as the number of their cultivation stages, failed in at least one of them, everything was different.

Failure in a single catastrophe meant that that person could never advance a stage even if their vitality weren't injured.

Failure in two could mean loss of power and permanent debilitation through spiritual and physical after-effects.

Failure in three would mean that, if that person didn't die, they would be left in a vegetative state with no possibility of improvement.

Above that, death was certain even during the failed breakthrough attempt!

The old supreme elder of the Edwardstone family was at this moment experiencing the first of his eight catastrophes, sensing the trouble he had gotten himself into.

High-level cultivators were more cautious with their breakthroughs because they knew that the higher their cultivation, the more catastrophes ahead of them in failure, making it difficult for them to continue as cultivators.

Low-level cultivators would hardly go through this, and if they did, they had a better chance of overcoming them due to the low number of cultivation stages.

Therefore, that old man made an ugly expression as he sensed what was happening, fearing the problem before him.

'Damn it! My cultivation is too unstable!' He noticed his soul power strangely varying so that he was barely able to use his powers.

But he was only facing the first catastrophe, which meant that the next seven would be much more difficult, and his chances of overcoming them would be dramatically lower!

Because of this fact, this man was already pale, in a cold sweat as he tried to control his powers to overcome this catastrophe.

Amidst the despair of the supreme elder Edwardstone, the people cultivating in the surrounding area slowly realized what was happening.

A cultivation failure was something difficult not to notice. When it happened, the spiritual fluctuations inside and outside of the one who had failed would become chaotic in a unique way, unmistakable to anyone minimally experienced.

There were practically only people like this in that large cultivation room, so while the supreme elder Edwardstone was still facing his first catastrophe, the many cultivators there realized what was happening.

The strongest ones opened their eyes and immediately looked toward that old man, noticing who was going through such a terrible situation.

"Old Edwardstone?" One of the Spiritual Sages there frowned, seeing that old man who was already an expert in the Flaming Empire when he had been born!

This 9th stage cultivator was a member of the Gray Clouds Sect, so seeing that man in such a situation, he felt terrible and said. "Warn His Majesty. Supreme Elder Edwardstone is at a critical moment. He could die any moment now!"

The people in the surrounding area muttered things among themselves as they worried about the situation of this level 79 old man.

Some didn't know him, but they didn't wish anything bad on him, even more so considering that he was a powerful cultivator by the standards of this state.

If he were to advance, yet another Sage would emerge to support the empire!

So his death would be costly, and even the coolest people there felt a little bad in this situation.

Unfortunately, there was nothing they could do to help this old man.

Spiritual catastrophes happened only to those who failed in their step advancement, and even a God could not interfere on the cultivator's behalf.

Only he could save himself, so everyone there watched the situation while keeping some distance from this old man.

They couldn't help him, but this age of cultivation could negatively affect people who got too close to him!

While some were leaving from there to notify others of what was happening to the oldest elder of the Edwardstone family, this old man had made it through the first catastrophe and was already facing the second.

Unfortunately for anyone in this situation, the catastrophes only got stronger as they progressed, so narrowly getting past the first was not something to be happy about. The opposite of this was a worrying sign!

Gulp!

'Will I die here?' He thought as he felt every muscle in his body changing shape due to the physical catastrophe.

'Damn it! Just when things were starting to get better for the empire... His Majesty is finally going to have a child.... Her Highness had gotten married... Just now, this had to happen?' He thought, regretting that he had to go through this now.

He was already old and would die before long. But if he hadn't tried this breakthrough, he might live a few more decades and maybe even seen Isabella's brother grow up, and this woman has a child with Minos.

Thinking of Minos, this man couldn't help but sigh, noting his repeated errors of judgment regarding this boy who had only helped the Flaming Empire over all these years.

Even he had been helped by Minos!

Thinking about this made him feel sadder, noting that he had been a grumpy old man in his last years and had left a bad impression on everyone.

'I hope my last few years on the Black Plain will erase that earlier history...' He thought in his mind as he went through the second catastrophe.

By the time this old man was getting to the third catastrophe, Minos, Isabella, Abby, Ruth, and Gloria arrived at that place after being notified.

When they arrived there, they saw a dark fog covering parts of the body of the supreme elder Edwardstone while an expression of pain was on his little by little drier and thinner face.

Gulp!

Seeing this, Isabella wanted to come closer while the tears in her eyes were already flowing. But Minos stopped her, looking solemnly at that old man.

"Isabella, you need to be strong now. The old supreme elder will not hold."

Isabella heard that and felt as if she had been given a shock, becoming silent momentarily.

Minos said in a low voice to her and his other women. "That dark fog is a sign of death. Unfortunately, there is no escape for him. The next catastrophe will bring him down!"

...

Chapter 1699 Death Of An Expert

As told by Minos, right after overcoming the third catastrophe, the supreme elder Edwardstone failed when facing the fourth, suffering a considerable rebound that seriously injured his body.

With this failure, even if he overcame the next catastrophes, he could never advance cultivation again!

Unfortunately, that was not the most worrying thing for the old supreme elder. Since each catastrophe came stronger than the previous one, failing the fourth would mean failing the fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth!

That would make five leaves in a row, enough that neither he nor anyone else in that big cultivation room had any hope!

As the dark fog over parts of his body increased in intensity, covering more and more of his skin, some of those closest to that old man in the vicinity bowed their heads and let tears run down.

Isabella rested her totem on Minos' chest and cried like a child, feeling that this old man who had always been a reference of power for her would die in front of her without her being able to do anything.

At the same time, Minos' wives had their fists clenched and eyes closed, not liking to see someone close to their family and organization dying before them.

"Sigh... Let's think on the bright side. The old supreme elder lived a long life." Minos said in a low voice. "He overcame the worst time in the Flaming Empire, saw a glimpse of a promising future, and didn't suffer at the hands of an enemy.

I know this is sad, but at least he did not come to the end of his life in a hopeless way, without leaving a body behind, without people to mourn his loss. He did not fail in his missions. He just failed to achieve a breakthrough at the end of his life.

This is no demerit. Anyone else in his situation would fail at such a crucial moment."

The people in the surrounding area who heard this agreed with Minos, feeling that this man had had a good life, had been victorious in his later years and had only reached that point when his family was no longer so dependent on him.

If this had happened a few years ago, he would have left his family in a very bad situation. But now, everything was different!

Amidst this, the supreme elder could not hear Minos' words, much less the cries and wailing in the surroundings. But he knew there were people there.

Failing in his second consecutive catastrophe, he was already bleeding from several orifices in his body, but he managed to say.

"Is everything... Hmm... Cough... Everything is fine. Don't be sad for me." He said in great difficulty, trying to smile even amid yet another catastrophe. "The family will be fine without me... Don't cry. I will join my relatives and ancestors now."

After these sentiment-laden words, something that had made tears in the surroundings flows even more vigorously, the supreme elder Edwardstone could no longer bear it and failed in yet another catastrophe.

At that moment, he could take no more and lost his consciousness, as his body fell backward without strength, along with the gradual disappearance of his spiritual spark.

Within a few seconds, after he plummeted to his death, the last catastrophes hit him simultaneously, destroying his soul and damaging all his bodily structures.

The supreme elder Edwardstone had finally died!

Upon noticing this, the people in the surrounding area fell silent for a few moments, mourning what had happened, while they felt a weight on their consciences for having accompanied this sad moment.

Isabella was the most affected by all this and couldn't stop crying and sobbing in Minos' arms.

Even Abby and Ruth, who knew this old man the least, felt their eyes filling with water at the thought of the sadness of death.

As far as they knew, everyone would die someday. So when thinking about how one day, they might have to see their family members go, or even how one day they might leave Minos and how it would affect him, they couldn't help but feel sad.

Gloria was also moved, even more so because she was the second oldest of this group, second only to Isabella.

She looked at Minos and sighed, then closed her eyes and tried not to shed any tears because they had a long time left.

Minos was the strongest of all there, so he took the reins of the situation after a few moments of collective sadness.

"Humbert, Eduard, collect the body of the supreme elder Edwardstone." He ordered these two imperial guards on the outskirts.

Then he looked at the level 80 Spiritual Sage of the Gray Clouds Sect and said. "Go notify the powers of the Flaming Empire and the Edwardstone family about this. We will take care of everything here in Dry City."

"Yes, Your Majesty."

Those people soon began to move, while the silent observers in the surrounding area continued to watch the situation for the most part.

Some had lost the mood to continue training and were already planning to go out to eat and drink. But others would stick around, just waiting for the body of the old supreme elder to be collected and the curious people there to leave.

Sad as it was, not everyone was so close to the old supreme elder, and many there were close to his advances.

To see someone fail to advance was a troubling thing that would leave some in doubt about their situation. But this was a very private incident, and everyone there knew their circumstances too well to fear the same would happen to them.

Amidst this funeral atmosphere, with some departing slowly and others silently observing the situation, Minos said to his wives. "Let's go back home. We will soon have to go to the Flaming Empire for his final farewell..."

"Hmm, let's get the children ready," Abby said as Gloria nodded.

Isabella was inconsolable, so Minos picked her up on his lap, not lingering any longer in that place where everything had happened.

"You heard his words, Bella. Don't be sad." Minos said in one of his wife's ears. "I'm sure he left in peace. And who knows, maybe he is together with the rest of his family now."

Part of the Spiritual World population believed that there was something after death. Some believed that this something was a new life, a reincarnation. Others felt they could live on a new plane alongside their family members.

Many felt that having such strong souls was not only good for battling and living for a long time. To them, this was something that could perhaps be of more use after death, on a special plane where one had to have a minimally strong soul to reach.

Since 8th stage cultivators could be considered experts in the Spiritual World, everyone judged that someone like the old supreme elder would surely reach that place if such a thing were real.

Isabella believed this, and upon hearing Minos, she felt less sad, although she was still quite touched.

Chapter 1700 Before The Funeral

After the death of the old supreme elder of the Edwardstone family in the main local cultivation room, the news spread slowly throughout the empire.

Amid this, Minos and his family took the next few days to settle the matters of the death of this expert so close to the local high ranking.

The old supreme elder was not only a level 79 cultivator in these forces. He was a member of an important ally of the empire, a relative of one of the emperor's women, and one who deserved the presence of the local imperial family at his funeral.

As such, on this occasion, Minos and his family would take three days away from their responsibilities to deal with the death of that member of the Edwardstone family.

In the midst of this, after leaving his wives to prepare to go to the funeral that was to take place in Payton, Minos separated from them and went to the Dry City Mausoleum.

He visited this place occasionally to 'talk' with his friends and close acquaintances who had fallen throughout the years of his empire.

On this occasion, finding a free moment after his conversations with his wives, he decided to revisit his dead.

Arriving at that dark-laden place, where cultivators below the 7th stage rarely entered unaccompanied, Minos walked to the graves of Viola and Mirya, mother and daughter he had been so close to in life.

More than a decade had passed since their deaths. In fact, it would not be long before the anniversary of their deaths would be 20 years.

Minos was only at the end of the 7th stage when they died defending Dry City against Abe Vogel's group.

But now he was close to reaching the 9th stage, a long way from there.

As he stopped in front of their graves, Minos couldn't help but close his eyes and be silent momentarily, remembering the last few times he had been with them.

'Time does pass quickly...' He thought silently, imagining that they would be Spiritual Saints by now if they were still alive.

"Viola, Mirya, I'm here again. Today someone else died in my state, but his death was less terrible than others like you..." He commented in front of the graves of these women.

"I wonder, will there be a day when this place will stop growing? Perhaps the deaths of my people will become more peaceful over time, and most will have a chance to grow old?"

He paused for a moment, listening to the silence of that area while the darkness of this place did not bother him.

The Dry City Mausoleum was not an open cemetery but a large square building with several levels. As such, inside this place, there was no way for one to see the sky, nor were there any winds to frighten the most sensitive.

But each level had its own characteristics, which could certainly momentarily fool those there into thinking that this was not a building but an open mausoleum.

Minos knew every corner of this place, and his features even matched those of this area, so the sensations in the surroundings would not fool him.

He stayed silent, not to wait for a sign or to notice what this area would make him feel, but wondering what those women would say to him.

After considering that they would probably say something positive about the future, he talked about less negative things, about the good news from his families and the empire.

As he left those graves with some new flowers, he would spend the next few minutes visiting the graves of Pyke, Angela, Gavin, and Dumas, all those close to him who had died in conflicts involving his forces.

All of these individuals could have achieved incredible things had they not died prematurely, giving their lives to the empire.

So as someone close to them, Minos paid respect to their resting places, even if some of them didn't leave a body to be buried there.

He did something similar to what he had done at the graves of Viola and Mirya, talking to them for a while, leaving new flowers, and then saying goodbye, promising to return in the future.

As he departed from there, the guards in the area watched him from afar, once again noticing that their leader did not forget the dead, even if his difference from those people was already so great.

Pyke was only a Spiritual King when he died, but even so, Minos still visited him, as he had done relevant things in life and helped the state.

Knowing how their leader was, those people in the surrounding area couldn't help but think how good it was to belong to the local forces, where their sovereign cared about his people and valued the sacrifices of his men.

Nobody wanted to have to sacrifice themselves, but if they were brought to that point one day, they would rather do it by a state that valued them, would take care of their families, and would not forget what they had done.

They knew that the state had cared for every one of those people's families very well. Every time they saw Minos there, they reaffirmed their positive thoughts about him and the empire.

While several people were thinking how dedicated Minos was towards his people, he left this place and left back to his palace, from where he intended to head very soon to the Flaming Empire.

A wormhole port in that city was already connected to Payton, so they could go there in a few minutes.

The body of the supreme elder Edwardstone was still being prepared to be taken away, but that would not take long to be finished!

...

Meanwhile, the news about the death of supreme elder Edwardstone had already reached the Flaming Empire!

The sects of that state had already received this sad information, and their leaders were already moving to the capital to join the imperial funeral and give their words of comfort to the family.

In the imperial family, Harold and his people had been the first in the state to hear such a thing from one of Minos' men and were naturally devastated.

Everyone knew that that man was old and had little chance of advancing to the 9th stage. But nobody expected his death to happen so suddenly while cultivating in Dry City.

As such, upon receiving this news, the core of the imperial family immediately declared a month-long mourning throughout the state and announced a large funeral to take place in the next two days.

As one of the greatest experts in the empire, the old supreme elder deserved a grand funeral!