

Black Plain 1701

Chapter 1701 Great Funeral

Hours after the death of the supreme elder Edwardstone, Minos and his family arrived in the capital of the Flaming Empire along with the body of this old expert.

Upon arriving at the local wormhole port, Minos' group appeared at that place where several members of the Edwardstone family forces were already waiting for them on the outskirts.

There, imperial guards, members of the imperial lineage, and the emperor himself were already profiled, awaiting the arrival of this procession that had departed from Dry City moments ago.

When they saw six men from the Black Plain Army walking with a golden and silver coffin on their shoulders, the people in the surrounding area were silent as they noticed that there was no mistake in the information.

Some still had expectations that it was all just a bad dream. In contrast, others hoped there had been some miscommunication, even though they knew the low probability of that happening.

But seeing the coffin containing the body of the supreme elder of the imperial family, everyone in the surrounding area sighed sadly, with the last hopes of some fading from their minds.

Amid this, Minos and his family walked behind those men carrying the coffin, all dressed in black, with neutral expressions on some faces and sad expressions on others.

The coffin-carrying men walked up to one of the imperial family's guard groups, which was to take the body of the supreme elder to the burial site.

As these men of Minos delivered the coffin to the imperial family, he and his family approached Emperor Edwardstone and the rest of the imperial family.

"Harold, I am sorry for your loss," Minos said as Isabella cried once again, already embraced by her mother.

Minos looked in the direction of the coffin and said. "He and I were not friends, and we had some problems over the years. But I sincerely wished the best for him.

Until a few days ago, I believed he would advance to the 9th stage... Unfortunately, it didn't happen."

Harold nodded positively with his head to Minos as he sighed. "I thank you for your words and for bringing him back. He really had a negative history with you, but I assure you that he regretted many things at the end of his life."

As the two talked, Oswald and Patience were already giving their regrets to old acquaintances in the surrounding area, while Isabella and her harem sisters were near the empress and second wife of the emperor.

"It's all right, dear. He lived long and left cultivating, not in a war or murdered." Isabella's mother consoled her while Gloria spoke to the empress.

"I am so sorry for your loss, Your Majesty. Unfortunately, there was nothing we could do to help him."

"I know... But thank you for caring and coming here from Dry City. I'm sure the supreme elder would greatly appreciate the gesture if he knew about it."

Conversations continued in the surrounding area until the funeral procession began, departing from that wormhole port to the imperial palace.

At the imperial palace, the supreme elder's body would be on hand for the next few hours for family members, allies, friends, and acquaintances to stop by to say goodbye to him.

Minos and his family would attend this event alongside the Edwardstone family, avoiding conversations regarding his state and business with the sect masters who would come to the event, focusing only on the present situation.

The next day, the supreme elder's funeral would end after thousands of local experts had seen his body and sighed at the end of someone so powerful.

By local standards, level 79 was the peak for more than 99.9% of people, so the death of someone at that level was sad and reminded everyone of their mortality.

Even powerful experts would die one day!

When the funeral was over, once again, the local imperial family would move that man's body, this time taking it to the family tomb, where only experts and members of the main lineage could be buried.

In that place, the old supreme elder would be reunited with his dead family members, finally being left in peace by the living two days after his death.

This would not end the ceremonies in memory of this man, something that would last a whole week, with those who had not been able to attend the event joining the one still mourning the death of this expert.

In the meantime, Minos and his family would return to the Black Plain, with Isabella much less bad off than before but interested in participating more in the affairs of her new state to occupy her mind.

Minos and the rest of the family would help her as best they could while they returned their attention to the empire, which had many points to evolve in the current peace.

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While some were still mourning the death of the supreme elder Edwardstone and others were beginning to move on, Lorelei Stone was on the high seas along with a large group at this very moment.

After months of working for the future of the Black Plain Empire's maritime expansion, this woman's group had finished building the foundations of the first submarine outpost of Minos' forces!

At a point further northeast in the Ancestral Sea, an underwater base capable of hosting up to a thousand humans was already operating 20 kilometers deep in the first of the three underwater zones.

But in this area, there weren't any beast groups around, so even if these people sent by Minos wanted to, they could set up posts in the zone of darkness or even on the ocean floor.

There wasn't even a single beast for tens of thousands of cubic kilometers!

With so much space to be explored without worry, the group already settled in this underwater base was starting their mineral extraction operations.

But they continued to expand their area of control daily, as new groups came in from the mainland bringing more people to work on the construction of Minos' marine empire.

Amid this, the great shark that had been serving Minos was serving as the group's chief explorer in its spare time and as a security guard for these groups most of the time.

It lived in fear of the proximity of this place to the North Sea, but with no options in front of it, it had been doing its job as best it could.

Luckily, more and more people were joining it and its group, which gradually made it less fearful about this area.

In any case, this place was just beginning its operations after months of preparation and would soon become an important outpost for the entire Black Plain Empire!

Chapter 1702 Growing On All Fronts 1

In the blink of an eye, a whole year had passed...

Since the death of the old supreme elder of the Edwardstone family, few things have changed in the Central Continent.

The situation between the Southern and Western regions was still bad, with powers still standing for or against the sides of the invisible confrontation that currently existed on the continent.

Low-level people continued to migrate northward from the more tense areas, going not only to the Black Plain Empire but also to places like Albano and Rosser, states relatively further away from danger.

Blackrock and the Flaming Empire had not been benefiting from these moves, as they bordered the Evergreen Empire, a place that could soon become a battleground.

But even at a disadvantage to their fellows further north, these two states were not in as bad a situation as places like the Flowers Kingdom.

As unpromising as their position was, they were still allies of Minos, and most of their territories were far from the focus of tensions!

Therefore, even without receiving migrants during this period, these places were not suffering as much from the tensions on the continent, and their populations continued their lives without much change.

Only a few cities closer to their borders with sensitive states had undergone considerable changes in this period.

Vico and Maximillian had not yet started the actual fighting. Still, throughout the continent, everyone considered that the current tensions would not last much longer.

Soon what prevented a war from spreading out of control further south on the continent would no longer withstand the pressures!

Meanwhile, the Black Plain Empire was still at peace, with no problems related to Maximillian and what Minos had done, with the local forces continuing their development while dealing with the new immigrants.

The marine expansion of this state had been very successful due to the lack of opposition to them caused by the lack of beasts in that area of the Ancestral Sea.

Through this, more and more members of Minos' forces were occupying that area and shipping ever-increasing amounts of minerals to the continent!

But in the midst of this, the Stuart family continued to grow stronger!

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Minos was still at level 78, rapidly approaching his next cultivation breakthrough. But while he dealt with his local government affairs in Dry City and occasionally went into seclusion in the Spatial Kingdom, Ruth had advanced to level 77.

Gloria and Abby were still at the same levels as before, but Sarah had finally reached level 60, a crucial level for her.

Level 60 was currently a watershed in the Black Plain Empire. Those above this level were among the strongest 5% of this society, so the advancement of Minos' daughter meant a lot.

She could not yet act freely, but she was slowly gaining more freedom and envisioning a future where she could train with Sista's envoys for the competition that would take place in a few decades on Elves Island.

Her little brother had not yet begun to cultivate. Still, he had begun his journey at the Dry City Preparatory Academy and could begin his journey into the cultivation world in a few more years!

Other than that, Minos still occasionally tried to get his wives pregnant, but none of them had been lucky enough to succeed in the months that had passed.

And so each of them continued to focus on their cultivation, strengthening the empire and improving the positions of their groups.

Gloria had her faction in the Church to look after, while Abby looked after the internal affairs of the imperial government alongside Minos. Ruth had been given command over marine expansion, and Isabella dealt with the empire's alliances, in particular, the situation of the autonomous kingdoms.

After these months, Rosser joined Blackrock and Albano as the independent kingdom of the Black Plain. Therefore, this southernmost territory currently had a Spiritual Sage from Minos' army on its territory to protect them.

Isabella was the one who had been handling the empire's relations with these territories, as well as with her family's home state, which was not a subordinate territory of Minos but allied to him.

So on this day, when they were all out of the Spatial Kingdom after weeks of seclusion, they were each taking care of their responsibilities around Dry City.

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"... Your Majesty, we recently received a new update on the situation in the marine domains. Colonel Shark sent the recent figures, and I am happy to announce that we have reached 100,000 men in the two marine bases in the Ancestral Sea."

"Oh? That's really magnificent." Ruth commented upon hearing this at the headquarters of the Black Plain Army. "But how are our fleets in that area? As much as we haven't had any problems in the last few months, sooner or later, something might happen."

"We currently have 50 warships and two Spiritual Sages in that area. But we have more ships being prepared in the End and Waves regions. Some local groups are already preparing to board those ships in the coming weeks."

Ruth liked what she heard but felt she needed to allocate more people to that area.

The amount of resources they had been extracting from there had been very relevant to the entire empire, so they needed to have as much strength as possible there.

"Very well, I want ten low-level grade-4 warships to be prepared to be sent to that area..."

She continued talking about it, giving orders, and hearing some facts relevant to maritime expansion.

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While Ruth was working at the army headquarters, Gloria was receiving representatives of the factions allied to her group in the Church.

Among these people, a Spiritual Sage was there to report to her the results of her group's synergies, which had been growing easier with the information and benefits their allies in the Evergreen Empire were giving them.

"Matriarch, I bring good news from the Evergreen Empire." That man said to her as the two of them stood in the most important office of the Church temple in Dry City.

"We have recently secured the support of the Cardinal in charge of the Flaming Empire. He wishes to be on good terms with our group, so we can soon act much more easily in his domains."

"That... Why would he do that?" Gloria didn't understand. "Isn't he a member of a high-level faction that wished to absorb us just a few months ago?"

"Yes, but currently, the situation has changed a lot. Some members of factions previously unfavorable to the matriarch are now acting alone regarding this.

The future is uncertain for them, and they want at least to have good relations with the forces of His Majesty Minos Stuart, the protégé of Maximillian.

If everything goes wrong, they would still have a final alternative of refuge!"

Chapter 1703 Growing On All Fronts 2

Currently, the Spiritual Church is facing great uncertainty. The future could be both terrible and incredible in case Maximillian succeeded in his projects.

But in both futures, high-level people in the Church would suffer and could range from getting great opportunities to losing everything they had built so far.

The Church would hardly be destroyed in a continental war, but many experts could die in such a confrontation.

The currently powerful factions could lose their power and become decadent groups or even be exterminated.

All members of the Church could be affected in these uncertain times, and as such, the members of the main factions were already beginning to think of what was best for themselves.

With the appearance of Maximillian, the dispute for the position of Church leader no longer made sense, so the positions of a few months ago of these factions had changed.

The Minos and Gloria faction still had great potential within the Church. Still, it would no longer be influential in deciding the next leader of this institution. So, amidst the uncertainty about the future, these factions no longer bothered Emperor Stuart and freed their members to act toward him as they preferred.

Some of these powerful experts saw Minos as someone who would keep growing and the Empire of the Black Plain as a place that would reach a relevant level in the post-war period.

As a place that would at least be at peace in the short term, this was an interesting state to associate positively with!

Because of this, even members of high-level factions of the Church had been accepting conversations with allies and members of the Gloria faction, thinking of a future where they could benefit from being on the good side of the Black Plain.

Among the first to act, one of the Cardinals of the faction to which Gloria's father belonged had already shown interest in improving his relations with this red-haired woman's group.

As for how Gloria's group could benefit from this, well, there were several ways.

Gloria knew that having this person on her side would give her access to virtually every Church post in the Flaming Empire, a crucial information network.

She could reach more people, gain more observers, and get information faster through this.

For now, she and Minos were not interested in obtaining positions within the Church. But when they did, the more Church positions they had on their side, the greater their bargaining power would be!

So upon hearing the words of that ally, she smiled in satisfaction and continued the conversations.

"Well then, let's approach the group of that..."

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Meanwhile, Isabella was at the imperial palace in her residence, receiving envoys from Blackrock.

This woman had already overcome the death of the old supreme elder and was currently dealing with the expansions of the Black Plain Empire's interests across the independent domains of Minos.

Even though they had more power and these territories for themselves had chosen to subordinate themselves to their family, this did not mean that Minos and his women could demand anything they wanted from their inferiors.

They could even try to do this using force. But such a thing would not be interesting, and the best thing to do in the current situation was to gain benefits gradually, making the other side accept agreements that would one day give the empire greater powers over these states.

Therefore, Isabella, who Harold had educated to deal with politics since she was a child, negotiated monthly with powers from the Blackrock, Albano, and Rosser areas.

They wanted more protection, sometimes investments from the Black Plain. In return, the empire wanted to impose its laws on these areas, take in young talent, and pay lower rates on products and services.

This was something that could benefit both sides and was discussed slowly, as Isabella was doing now with the crown prince of that area of Blackrock.

"Your Majesty, we need more protection over us. As much as we do not face immediate danger, the pressures on our neighbor to the south are increasing with each passing day..."

"Your Highness, it is not that simple." Isabella smiled. "We don't have that many specialists, and some of them need to cultivate for the state to get stronger. We can't just send them all out..."

But there are ways your territory can lessen the dangers about itself. For example, why don't you change the position of your capital? Build a new location near the Snow area. In that area, you will not face any problems."

"Change our capital?" That prince thought about it, considering it would make his most important city practically within the Black Plain Empire.

"Yes, another option is for you to join Queen West and both of you to build a new capital on the border of your territories. That would immediately make the capital of both of you have more Spiritual Sages and more power.

Together you can become much stronger and decrease the need for large numbers of our experts."

With this measure, these two territories could more easily protect their leaders and stronger cultivators. Still, it would also be easier for the state of Minos to influence these people.

This would also strengthen the borders of the Black Plain Empire, something necessary for a future in which Maximillian's words would no longer matter.

That was Isabella's interest in talking about this, to increase her state's defenses and powers of influence!

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Meanwhile, Minos and Abby were in the imperial throne hall dealing with the internal affairs of their state.

Kendrick was at the academy at that time, but Sarah was there to follow her father's work, watching this man's way of governing.

While she stood in the corner of that area watching Minos and Abby, the imperial guards in the vicinity, and some advisors were out there working with their leaders.

At present, Kara Carline's mother and stepmother were there to update the emperor on the situation in the End area, which was closest to the North Sea.

Minos had been paying particular attention to this area ever since he found out about the fears of the leaders of the Western region, worried about the proximity of the calamity predicted by Henricus Longus, which he felt would come from the North.

As such, for the past 20 months, he had been allocating much of his investments around the empire to that region, even placing three Spiritual Sages there to watch the area for him.

"Your Majesties, we still don't have any results from observing the North Sea, but our numbers have been improving considerably recently." Linette Carline, level 69, said as she looked at Minos with a smile on her face.

"Under the command of our leader, Kara, several Spiritual Saints are appearing in our area. Some of them will even join the exploration of the Ancestral Sea commanded by Her Majesty Ruth."

"Oh? That's good to hear..." Minos said, but at that instant, he was interrupted by one of his subordinates who rushed into that hall.

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Chapter 1704 Unexpected Visitor

"Your Majesty, Grant of the Western Empire has just arrived in Dry City. He requests passage to the capital core to speak with Your Majesty!" The man who rushed into the imperial throne hall shouted this as everyone looked at him.

"Grant?" Abby asked as she remembered that man who had been by their side for years and even the Royal Instructor when the Black Plain was just a kingdom.

Minos frowned as he heard that, finding it unexpected that this man who had been living under house arrest in the Western Empire would come to visit him like this.

'Emperor Quinn released him to come here? Why would he do that?'

But he didn't invest much in those thoughts and ordered. "Bring Grant to me immediately."

With those words, some imperial guards in the surrounding area departed from there with the man who had brought this news.

Meanwhile, Lizzie, currently at level 58, said to the End area personnel in the surrounding area. "This meeting is adjourned. Please arrange another time to review His Majesty and continue with your reports."

Abby ignored the movements in the surroundings and approached Minos. "I wonder what that's about? Surely Emperor Quinn is involved."

"Yes, but I don't think that's a threat or anything. He wouldn't risk considering Maximillian's position." Minos replied, not knowing what that might be about.

He and Abby would continue talking to each other for some time until the imperial guards would return to Grant's side and another Spiritual Saint from the Western Empire.

As Grant entered that hall that he had long since not visited, he smiled nostalgically, seeing things that had changed considerably but others that were still the same as their time.

But as he looked at Minos and Abby, he couldn't help but sigh, seeing how strong these local leaders had become.

He had been the highest-ranking person on the Black Plain for a long time. He was crippled, but even so, he had been the only Spiritual Saint in this area for many years.

But now, this city was full of such people, and Minos was already at level 78, near the 9th stage, much higher than Grant had ever reached.

"Your Majesty, it is good to see you again." He said as he smiled at Minos sincerely. "You really have been cultivating fast, haha. I didn't expect you to be at the end of the 8th stage already."

Minos stood up and walked to Grant's side, smiling, before clapping his hands on this man's shoulders. "It's good to see you again too. I heard you were stuck in the Western Empire, so I was planning to visit you in the future... I just didn't expect that you would suddenly appear here."

Grant then said. "Well, that actually happened for a while. His Majesty and others superior to me judged that I was insane, so they decided to limit my liberties so that I wouldn't injure myself on my own.

Anyway, now everyone knows I wasn't crazy, so I was released and sent here."

Grant showed his companion and said. "That's the elder Vince. He who brought me safely here."

"It is a pleasure to meet Your Majesty." That man made a gesture of greeting as Minos looked at him.

Minos shook his head, acknowledging that person's presence. But he would soon turn his attention to Grant. "So your superiors believe your theories? Is that why you are here?"

"Hmm, His Majesty began investigating the North Sea after his encounter with Vico and Willow a few months ago. He associated the catastrophe that will come after the instability in the Central Continent with what we believe is in the north..." That man said in a solemn tone.

"After some investigations and disappearances, His Majesty is more confident that something is wrong in that area. But the other leaders of the Central Continent are not worried about it at the moment and do not believe his theories.

That's why he gave me the mission to come here."

Abby then asked. "What does Henry Quinn want from my state? If even he can't do anything to convince the rest of the continent about the problems to the north, what can we do? We don't have the same resources as you."

That man next to Grant answered the empress. "Your Majesty, it's not that we can't do anything. It's that we are unable to do our best.

With the tensions south of the continent, the strongest in our state cannot casually go out to investigate the North Sea.

So only Spiritual Sages and a few low-level Demigods have been sent to that place to investigate for the time being.

So us not having accomplished much doesn't mean that you won't be able to."

Grant nodded and said to Minos. "His Majesty believes there is something in the North Sea, but without hard evidence, he will not get support from the rest of the continent. So he seeks Your Majesty's help in getting that evidence."

"So Henry Quinn wants me to go to the North Sea?" Minos asked while his eyes narrowed. "I am not able to do that at present.

That would be tantamount to suicide."

Grant's traveling companion said. "Not now. But in the future.

The Western Empire and the rest of the Western region will probably go through a long period when their leaders cannot get involved with problems other than conflict with the Southern region.

So all His Majesty asks is that you from the Black Plain investigate and get evidence before the inevitable conflict between these regions ends.

If you can do that, you will have the support of the Quinn family and the Western Empire to solve this problem and other things."

Grant looked seriously at Minos, expecting that this man would not decline this request.

Minos and the rest of the people in that area were silent, pondering this.

'A war between West and South would take anywhere from a few years to a few decades to resolve if things go fast... So I'd probably be a strong enough Spiritual Sage by then to go to that place at some point in the meantime.'

"Sigh, I'd have to do it anyway, so I promise to try something. I'm already strengthening my strength and starting movements for it. But it will take a few years for me to get everything ready."

Grant and that man sighed at that answer.

"That's good enough..."

Chapter 1705 Plans

After talking for a few moments, Grant separated from his traveling companion and accompanied Minos and Abby for a walk through the imperial palace.

Sarah was also with them, following silently behind her father, listening to all their conversation.

Grant saw how Sarah had grown into a beautiful woman, already able to be considered a powerful cultivator by local standards, and said. "Your Highness has become quite an impressive woman. I heard some stories while traveling around the empire..."

She must have learned some of what I heard from Your Majesty."

Minos smiled and said. "The truth is, I didn't teach her any of those things... In any case, she is not walking a bad journey."

Grant didn't doubt it, thinking the explanation was in the blood.

'An apple doesn't fall far from the tree after all...'

He then became more serious and said. "But I'm apprehensive.

I've always had my theories about what's up north and how terrible it could be for the continent's future. But I never imagined we would be so close to facing what might be there.

Until a few months ago, I thought we might have decades to solve this. But with the prophecy revealed by Vico Travisani, it seems we don't have that much time."

Minos nodded in agreement. "I was also hoping to have more time to go after it... Anyway, things are as they are. At least we have a high-level Demigod concerned about it.

If the threat is really upon us, we'll at least get some relevant support when the time comes."

Abby clenched her fists upon hearing this, worried about the chaotic future that could endanger her family and her son.

Kendrick was just a child. He didn't deserve to face a calamity right now!

Even in a few decades, he would still be just a weak young cultivator, so most likely, he wouldn't have enough to protect himself.

Thinking about it, Abby couldn't help but fear the future.

"What will we do? Is there anything we can do to improve our chances?" She asked.

Minos and Grant were silent for a moment until the emperor said. "There are some alternatives. They are not 100% safe, but they exist."

"Oh?" Abby and Grant exclaimed in surprise, not expecting Minos to already have things in mind.

"What is it?" The empress asked.

Minos said. "There is a possibility that Henricus Longus left some help for me. Of course, there are some dangers regarding that aid, and it may not even exist anymore, but if it does, I may be able to get some allies.

But I would have to look into that, as I'm not sure where it is."

They knew about the Spatial Kingdom and Henricus Longus, so they knew what Minos was talking about.

He continued. "Besides, we can get more allies in other ways.

Perhaps there isn't much room for us to gather powerful cultivators in the Central Continent, given the tensions between the major states. But we can definitely get allies in the Continent of Beasts, the Divine Continent, and the Marine Empire.

Thus, in addition to going after what Henricus Longus left, we can also visit those areas for support."

"I see..." Grant muttered.

But then Sarah asked. "You want to visit these places? How would that help us? Those places have greater dangers, and there is no guarantee that anyone will join us."

Minos looked at his daughter and said. "There are guarantees. Think of your Aunt Emlyn. In her tribe, we will definitely be able to get something."

Emlyn was only a Spiritual King when she left that place alongside her husband. But now she was a Spiritual Saint and could in some more time become a Sage, the highest cultivation stage her people could reach.

As such, if they went to the Continent of Beasts after Emlyn's advancement to the 9th stage, they could get the support of at least part of the Nine-tailed Foxes tribe, as Emlyn would surely get influence there.

Moreover, every tribe on that continent had relations with other tribes, some even being great allies.

Through these relations, Minos could try to contact other races and thus gather a group on that continent to bring to his side.

Perhaps in one tribe, he would not get enough beasts to make a positive difference to his plans. Still, he could eventually gather a strong enough group by moving around that continent.

Something similar could be done in the Divine Continent and the Marine Empire. In these powerful places, there were even 9th-stage mercenaries, a good option for Minos in case all others failed.

"Other than that, some important events will happen in the next few years," Minos said. "The Ancient Dragon Spatial Kingdom must open its doors on our continent, and then there will be the Continental Tournament.

All these will be opportunities for us to bring talented and powerful beings to our side."

Minos had gotten this information through Gloria's faction, who, with one of their allies in the Evergreen Empire, had obtained this information.

Knowing this, he had several means of trying to improve his state's chances before a venture further north and preparing for the moment when catastrophe would be upon them.

"And when will you be able to pursue these alternatives?" Grant asked.

"Not before I advance to the 9th stage. By then, the dangers will be too great, and I also have to use the peace over my state to strengthen it as much as possible in the short term.

So, for now, I can't go through with either of those plans."

"How long do you think you need to start that?" Grant insisted as he would have to give Emperor Quinn feedback on this.

"Five to ten years. Not before then." Minos said, considering his current cultivation speed and the status of his forces.

It would only make sense to go after the Longus family or Emlyn's tribe once he was strong enough to face warriors at the peak of the 9th stage. Otherwise, the risks would be too great.

Emlyn also needed to become a Sage beast in the meantime, so things were not just about his advancement.

He could even start sorting these things out beforehand. However, his travel to the Continent of Beasts would still depend on her advancement.

Finally, going to the North Sea wouldn't be suitable either if he didn't have enough power to at least counter low-level Demigods.

Grant understood why Minos' deadline and didn't think his superior would find it problematic.

'I don't think ten years is too much for that... Such a catastrophe is supposed to come after the continent is weakened... I don't believe that a confrontation between the Western and Southern regions will end before then.'

"All right, I'll pass that on to His Majesty."

Chapter 1706 Border Improvements

Another six months passed in the blink of an eye...

After Grant's passage through Dry City earlier, he returned to the Western Empire with the answers Henry Quinn wanted from Minos.

He had promised to return in a few years to follow closely the final stretch of Minos' preparation to investigate the North Sea. Still, for now, he would stay in the Western Empire.

Minos had seen no problem with this and had left his doors open for this man to return.

After Grant's departure, the empire had lived this short period in absolute peace, with minor problems compared to those that threatened to hit them in the future.

The migrations of people from high-level empires continued, and the arrival of more and more Spiritual Saints in this region increased the demand for products, competition, and some minor conflicts.

But none of this was worrying enough to disturb the life of the imperial family of this state, which had been progressively improving.

With three more brief periods of seclusion in the Spatial Kingdom, Minos had advanced to level 79, having reached the crucial part of this stage in preparing to become a Sage.

Everyone in the empire was looking forward to his advancement, for once he became a Spiritual Sage, his combat proficiency would significantly increase, and the state would benefit immensely.

But amidst the local anticipation of the emperor's advancement to the 9th stage, five more level 79 Spiritual Saints had upgraded in level and became Sages!

Minos' grandmother, Patience King, had managed to advance and reach the same level as her husband.

The others who had advanced were either members of the Gray Clouds Sect or related to the relatives of the Goddess of Life.

Besides them, the imperial family and Minos' army kept getting stronger.

Most recently, the empress had advanced to level 77. At the same time, several of the members of the imperial guard had made advances in this period.

It would still be a while before natives of the northern region could advance to the 9th stage, but many were already approaching it.

For people like Eduard and Peter, this advancement to the final stage of cultivation for them shouldn't take many years.

Most of Minos' subordinates still had Black and Blue grade talent. So for those who had not yet reached their maximum potential, level 69, those of intermediate talent would soon reach their limit stage, the 9th.

But until then, there was still a long way to go, and each person in Minos' forces had been striving hard to improve and reach their maximum.

And so the empire had been improving in these times of regional peace, preparing themselves while the greatest forces on the continent were not looking down on them!

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After the past few months, changes around the Black Plain Empire generated a lot of population movement.

With the situation between the Western and Southern regions, in which no one could say for sure when it would get out of control and when damage would be generated, Rosser, Albano, Blackrock, and even Vogel had moved in the meantime to improve their chances.

Vogel's situation was the least worse because it was within the Black Plain Empire. But that territory bordered directly on the Veora Kingdom, which could soon be at war.

As such, the leaders of the Vogel Assembly were worried.

They had improved a lot since they had become loyal to Minos a few years ago. But even though some of them had even advanced to level 78, something never seen before in these areas, that and the 2 Spiritual Sages stationed in their territory were not enough to keep the local nobles calm.

As such, after finding out about the actions of the West and Blackrock families, this territory's leaders joined Rosser's royal family to repeat the feat of their former allies.

To change the position of their capitals!

Blackrock and Albano had taken Isabella's suggestion. They started building their new capitals on the borders of their territory with that of Minos, where they could unite to defend themselves against future challenges.

The government of Minos had also joined them and started the construction of part of this capital city that would have the seats of two autonomous states.

As such, on the border of these three territories, a splendid city had been built in recent months to receive the leaders of the two states and more men from the Black Plain Army.

As a place on the empire's border, there would be a special army post in this city, something that would be good for everyone involved.

Knowing of this project, the leaders of Vogel and Rosser had come to the same agreement, having already started the construction of their new capital between the borders of their territories.

Vogel belonged to the empire, so this area would not have the involvement of the Minos government in the same way as that other area. However, it would also have a special army post because it was on the empire's border.

So new cities were springing up on the borders of the state of Minos, little by little raising the security of this place and making it easier for the government of Minos to control who passed through these areas.

Over the years, Minos and his government had also reached agreements with various beast tribes in these areas and increased the number of powerful beasts in their forces.

These beasts had been moved to the empire's borders in recent times, where they had to make the entry of irregular immigrants more difficult.

Beasts like Little Green, currently at level 79, had been guarding several areas between the empire, Albano, and Blackrock.

And so, even in these times of migration from south to north, the Minos government had been having quite significant control over the influx of people into their domain.

Amid this, leaders from these areas were increasingly being seen around Dry City, where Minos was taking advantage of the times of peace to train those who were interested.

In peace, there were not many challenges for people like him, so he used military exercises with allies and subordinates to continue his fighting routine, strengthening himself and his people as well.

And so a new match was about to take place after months of training like this in this part of the empire, with King Blackrock, Queen West, Queen Rosser, all at level 79, several individuals at the same level from the local army, and another half dozen Spiritual Sages.

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Chapter 1707 Military Exercise 1

In an area dozens of kilometers above Dry City, more than 40 cultivators between levels 79 and 83 were on the outskirts, floating in the area.

There were Queens West and Rosser, both at the same level as King Blackrock, all three individuals who had taken great advantage of the peace of the past few years to grow stronger and reach their current cultivation.

In particular, King Blackrock was not far from the point where he would attempt his advancement to the 9th stage!

But besides them, several members of the Gray Clouds Sect and guards of the Goddess of Life's relatives, also at level 79, were in the vicinity, surrounding Minos.

Finally, the strongest opponents near Emperor Stuart, Spiritual Sages, were also around, concentrating on this brown-haired fellow.

Minos was quietly in the middle of all these people, who were wisely standing at some distance from him so as not to suffer immediately from his more difficult-to-counter attacks.

Unlike normal people, the worst thing about Minos was not his offensive techniques but his ability to manipulate energy.

Through his innate ability, someone in his vicinity could be weakened and used to strengthen him.

At the present moment, he was at level 79, so if these people were careless, he could easily steal their cultivation bases and reach level 81!

At that level, he would be as strong as someone at level 87, so there would be little hope of even a group of dozens of cultivators like them doing anything against him.

In any case, even distant enough from him not to be immediately affected by this innate ability, Minos was very quiet as he awaited the start of this military exercise.

Even without using this card up his sleeve, he was still as strong as a level 83 Spiritual Sage, stronger than the strongest of his opponents.

This was also why the group in the surrounding area was so cautious, holding their positions in the formation they had been training for days.

These people normally couldn't stay long in the empire's capital, as they each had their responsibilities throughout their territories.

But once every two or three months, they would meet in Dry City to work together and eventually participate in at least one military exercise with Minos.

This served to improve their joint skills in facing opponents more powerful than themselves, something necessary in the present times.

So these people were not for the first time together against Minos and already had some experience fighting against him.

Unfortunately, certain things were hard to avoid!

When Sarah gave the signal for the start of those people's fight, Minos immediately activated his Space and Time Avatar, making everyone in the surroundings feel how terrible his current powers were.

'Damn it! A single advance, and he's improved so much?'

King Blackrock thought to himself as he made a frown, trying to hold his ground under Minos' pressure.

The last time they had fought in a military exercise, Minos was still a level 78 Saint. So his strength has improved a lot since then!

'Is that His Majesty's current power without stealing our cultivation bases?' The strongest Spiritual Sage there, level 83, wondered, feeling the powerful spiritual fluctuations departing from that gigantic avatar.

Minos' strengths did not look normal!

Even considering his innate power-boosting ability that promoted a more robust cultivation base than others of the same level as him, he still looked more impressive than everyone expected.

'That's the stuff of those giant bones...' One of the Sages of the Gray Clouds Sect thought to himself, considering that Minos had been absorbing a lot of power from those skeletons.

There was still the preserved body of Fah'um of Dunov, which Minos had not yet decided what to do because of how difficult it was to move that thing.

At first, he was thinking of leaving it in the Spatial Kingdom for a while until he was strong enough to split it up and bury it along the northern region.

His goal was simple, to improve the situation of all the spiritual roots in this area!

However, the more time it spent in the Spatial Kingdom, the more that place seemed to benefit. At the same time, his and his people's cultivation seemed better in the presence of that preserved corpse, so the question of what to do with it had arisen.

Anyway, such a thing had been helping him grow stronger, making it possible for his subordinates to feel his strangeness.

The Soul Avatar of Minos seemed more solid than ever, and its spatial and temporal laws seemed to be at their peak, just waiting for the moment of its step advancement to raise the quality of this technique.

But even before that happened, Minos' mastery was already much stronger than before, and now it could further increase the difference in the passage of time between inside and outside of it.

Minos wouldn't take long to show his avatar to those people and soon activated Chaotic Gravity, trying to hinder the actions of the many opponents in his surroundings.

Those people were already trying their best to start their attacks and create some pressure on their leader, but their speed could not compare to his.

When he acted, Minos disappeared from where he was and appeared behind one of the level 79 Spiritual Saints.

When he reached out one of his arms to grab that person, he already had the Devouring Art sucking the energies of that individual so that it was paralyzing him.

In the midst of this, that person found himself in a different place, temporarily losing contact with reality.

'Shit...' He realized the problem of falling so easily into his opponent's clutches and thought casually.

Fortunately for those people, there were Spiritual Sages in the surrounding area. Before he fell completely into Minos' hands, a hand reached across the space and pulled him away from Emperor Stuart.

Minos realized this and used his spatial manipulation skills to punish this daring Spiritual Sage.

Even before that spatial crack of that level 81 cultivator disappeared, one of Minos' hands went through space with his hand closed into a fist.

Minos' Indestructible Body was activated, making his skin as powerful as low-level grade-4 artifacts.

So when that fist struck that Sage's belly, he couldn't help but exclaim in pain as he felt surprised by Minos' movement.

Everyone knew that Minos could manipulate space, but using another cultivator's spatial crack was something challenging to do!

As such, his attack had been unexpected and very effective against that person!

Thus had this exercise begun!

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Chapter 1708 Military Exercise 2

After Minos' attack, his opponents managed to launch a few blows in his direction, with the Spiritual Sages manipulating space to make his situation more difficult and the Spiritual Saints simply launching powerful attacks.

Unfortunately for these people, Minos would not feel any pressure from the attacks of mere Spiritual Saints at the level he was at.

To injure his body, one would have to at least be at the 9th stage!

As such, he simply ignored these many Spiritual Saints' attacks in the surroundings and focused on counterattacking the Spiritual Sages in the area, also using his spatial manipulation skills.

Due to a large amount of Space Laws he had absorbed from the giant skeletons in the Spatial Kingdom, Minos' understanding of space was as great as that of ordinary level 85 cultivators.

So even though he was still at the 8th stage, he could counter the movements of these Sages with relative ease.

He used the space crack of one of his level 81 opponents and forcefully made such a thing close over that person's body.

In doing so, Minos trapped one of that person's arms, making it impossible for him to worry about battling as he had to worry about escaping from that thing and not having his arm crushed.

"Damn it!" That man said as he broke into a cold sweat.

Minos looked at one of the elders of the Gray Clouds Sect, who had already reached level 80, and opened a spatial crack, directing one of his hands to that man's beads.

"Lend me your strength," Minos said, but that man had no chance to refuse.

In the blink of an eye, he was on Minos' side, inside the Avatar of Space and Time domain, where Spiritual Sages, even 100% stronger than that soul projection, could not use their powers over space.

Unable to escape, this person soon began to feel his cultivation level decreasing while Minos' rose.

In the blink of an eye, Minos was no longer at level 79 but at 80!

With this temporary increase in his cultivation base, Minos felt the mastery of his Soul Avatar increase considerably while all his abilities improved in efficiency and range.

His opponents were the first to feel the changes that came with a step advance, feeling even more pressure on themselves.

Those under the effects of the Devouring Art began to lose their energy at a frightening rate so that if they stayed there for more than a minute, they felt they would be exhausted just by doing so.

On the other hand, those under the effects of Chaotic Gravity almost screamed, giving up the match, feeling as if they would be crushed at any moment.

"Unbelievable... And he only increased a single level." Sarah saw this from afar and realized how strong her father already was.

With a single advance, he immediately made even the strongest Spiritual Sages in the surrounding area, who were doing well, despite being pressured, feel overwhelmed!

If he advanced to another level, there would be no escape for any of them!

In a single movement, Minos could probably already finish this military exercise.

Minos' wives were also in the vicinity following this friendly match and smiled in satisfaction at seeing their man so strong.

"His Majesty will probably be as strong as peak Spiritual Sages when he advances." Dillian, level 73, said this as he watched the confrontation develop.

Minos would not steal the cultivation base of another of his opponents even if he had the chance to do so. This was a military exercise, not a real battle.

Part of the purpose of this was to make those around him stronger and able to unite against a higher-level opponent. So as not to lose the chance to train his men and allies, Minos would not put any more pressure on them.

As they saw this, the people watching the battle near Minos' family couldn't help but agree with the butler Dillian.

'With His Majesty's advance to level 80, I believe that only Demigods will be a danger to him.' One of the men from the Goddess of Life's family group thought this over with himself, noting how right his superiors' decision had been to join this state.

Minos would still have trouble with Spiritual Sages, who had Golden-grade technique sets like his. But there were few such people in the entire Spiritual World.

Many 9th-stage experts reached that stage and got techniques of that quality, but to do so, they had to switch techniques and didn't get the best results.

Only those who had learned techniques of this quality from the first moment could compare themselves to Minos.

Since few had such a possibility, even though many high-level individuals had techniques of this quality, most of them were only 'fake' cultivators of Golden-grade techniques.

So both Minos and those in the surrounding area watching him fight knew that his combat proficiency would be compared to that of high-level 9th-stage warriors, even considering those higher-quality techniques.

"If that is the case, when will His Majesty leave for his plans outside the continent?" Eda asked her husband, curious about Minos' next steps.

Dillian said. "That I do not know. He won't be able to start some things right away when he reaches level 80. For example, Emlyn will take longer to get to that level. He probably won't reach the 9th stage until His Majesty is already at level 82.

So he won't be able to travel to the Continent of Beasts before then.

As for the people of the Longus family, I think he will be able to investigate them a little sooner."

He paused to think for a moment and said. "Perhaps His Majesty will go to the Marine Empire first and then investigate the situation of the Longus family in Lusmait."

Abby then said. "In any case, we will certainly stick around for another five years or so before we venture off the continent."

Gloria then said. "On this next Minos trip, I will stay in Dry City. I won't be able to put my duties aside for as long as I have in the past."

"That will be good," Isabella commented. "It will be an important part of the family stays to defend the state in his absence."

"Well, I will go with him, as I will not leave Kendrick in the Spatial Kingdom alone," Abby commented as she looked at Ruth.

"Fine, I will stay to take care of your duties." That black-haired woman said that.

Previously it was possible that they all went with Minos on their journeys and left Dry City with Dillian. But with the strengthening of the empire and the constant arrival of migrants from the south, the near future would not be so simple.

The empire needed the royal family to stand on its own feet in Minos' absence!

So these women decided how they would split up on Minos' next journey as they watched him finish that friendly battle.

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Chapter 1709 Distant Enemies

After a few moments, everyone in the surrounding area of the group participating in the military exercise finally stopped to take a breath after several minutes of intense battle.

Looking at these men and women in the surroundings, Minos stopped using his skills and said. "Very well, I think this training has been productive.

Soak up what you have learned and return here in three months so we can train again.

I will be available to help you with training like this for the next two years. After that, I don't know when I will again perform this kind of battle."

The people in the surrounding area indicated that they understood, and before leaving there for their responsibilities, they each thanked Minos for the pointers.

Now and then, during battles like these, Minos would show his opponents' weaknesses, which helped them greatly prepare them for the future by strengthening those weaknesses.

As such, even though they lost to him by a large margin this time, these people were more than satisfied with this friendly match.

Among them, some could not help but look at Minos and sigh, remembering when this emperor was no more than a promising young man.

This was the case with Iris West, who had heard of Minos still when he was a Spiritual Emperor and criminals from her kingdom were invading the Black Plain.

"Sigh..."

'The difference between our talents is really big...' She sighed as she left.

On the other hand, seeing all his opponents leaving, Minos approached his family and local government members.

"Congratulations on another victory, Your Majesty," Dillian said as he saw the emperor's wives offering him water and fruit.

Minos smiled and said. "That was not a fair fight for them. Anyway, winning is always good."

"Father, when will I be able to fight with you? You rarely train with me." Sarah said, taking the lead from her mothers to talk to Minos.

Minos laughed. "Become a Spiritual Sage, and then I will train you a little. Until then, train with your instructors."

Sarah clasped her hands together and turned her back to Minos.

That would take a long time!

By then, he would probably be a Demigod!

Gloria ran one of her hands through her daughter's long, red hair and said. "Don't worry about it, Sarah. I will train you a little when Minos leaves to solve our problems.

I will have some free time then."

"But..."

"You can't demand that much of your father. He is a busy man who must care for billions of people." Ruth commented to Sarah. "Give him some time to deal with the problems of the state. Then, when times are quieter, he will surely teach you many things."

Minos looked at Abby and the other women there and then said. "I heard what you were talking about... Well, I don't disapprove of what was said. As for my plans, I intend to follow through with what Dillian said.

I will travel to the Marine Empire and then see the traces of the Longus family. I will do that after I become a Spiritual Sage."

"I will go with you!" Isabella said before anyone else, making a point of not leaving him so soon.

Minos smiled and nodded positively to her.

"Anyway, don't worry about that for now. We'll work it out little by little over the next few years.

I won't advance that fast to level 80."

With that said, they would soon return to Dry City, some of them going to the Spatial Kingdom to cultivate and train their techniques.

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Meanwhile, on the Divine Continent...

Somewhere in this great continent, the Longus family continued their routine of living in seclusion, waiting for the day when they would show themselves to the world again.

Some local powers knew of its existence, but most of them had no idea of the connection of this house with Henricus Longus since his passage through the Spiritual World had happened a long time ago.

So this power lived in relative peace, without problems because of its glorious past.

But in the middle of another ordinary day for the members of this organization, the current patriarch of this family was at the family headquarters, receiving information from a group he had sent months ago to the Ancestral Sea.

After finding out about the appearance of the final heir of Herincus Longus in the City of a Thousand Races, the patriarch of that family ordered a trusted group to go and investigate that person.

He wanted the identity and whereabouts of such a person, something that the beasts of that underwater city had not given him.

Since they were after the human who managed to turn the key to the statue of Henricus Longus and not the person who had discovered the location of the Seraphim Ancient Sarcophagus, they had not yet discovered who Minos was.

If he had associated him with the person who freed Maximillian, these people would already be searching for Minos in the Black Plain Empire!

However, they had not yet reached that information.

"Patriarch, we have managed to trace some potential destinations of the person we are looking for to 4 locations in the central Ancestral Sea area.

If we follow these paths, I believe that in no more than a year, we will have the location and identity of our savior." A voice came up on the patriarch Longus' communicator.

"That's great. Divide your group and investigate these 4 locations simultaneously. Once you guys get his identity, don't hesitate. Bring him to headquarters immediately." This level 91 man said, satisfied and extremely eager to enter that other Spatial Kingdom his ancestor had left.

"What if we can't? I mean, there is a possibility that he has powerful people on his side." The same voice asked. "What should we do in that situation?"

"It's unlikely that he has that kind of help. According to the sea beasts in the City of a Thousand Races, this person was weak. Considering his riches, I doubt he would allow strong people near his secret.

But if the unlikely happens, do nothing. Track him down and keep an eye on him. I will decide what to do when you inform me of his circumstances."

"We will do our best."

After this brief exchange of messages, the patriarch turned off his medium-level grade-4 communicator while clenching his fists.

'Soon... Soon I will have the greatest wealth in this world under my possession!' He thought, wondering what he would do with Henricus Longus' heir.

'If he's smart and knows his place, I can keep him alive. He must be quite talented... But otherwise, it will be better to just kill him once and for all!'

Chapter 1710 There Will Be Light Again

A few weeks later...

In the Evergreen Empire, Maximillian was at the headquarters of the Blood Triangle Pirates, where he had been operating since returning to his home state.

After several months in this place, he had gathered great forces on his side, gained the support of noble families in the empire, partnerships with the Flowers Kingdom, and strength among the Cardinals of the Church.

In a way, his plans to become the leader of the Church and start a war of conquest were going very well.

However, Duncan had been making things difficult for him, which was why the conflicts had not yet escalated.

For the time being, Duncan had managed to manage the tensions and prevent the outbreak of war between the South and the West.

But the Supreme Pontiff could not do this forever due to Maximillian's growing influence and his advancing age.

Duncan was not far from the end of his life, so sooner or later, he would have to leave the affairs of the Church to others to decide.

He would go into cultivation to try to advance or would die of old age.

In that case, his actions couldn't last much longer, and Maximillian was quietly biding his time.

While doing this from the headquarters of this organization funded by the Evergreen family, he received news from the Black Plain Empire.

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"Oh? So young Minos has reached level 79? His cultivation speed is awe-inspiring!" Maximillian commented to the men in the surrounding area, looking mainly at Darren.

Darren, this level 99 sea beast, was still standing next to Maximillian.

Maximillian intended to use this sea beast in his expansion once he got over some issues in the Central Continent. But because of the differences between him and Duncan, he kept this creature by his side for a possible fight against Vico and Willow.

He feared that old Duncan would make a desperate move to finish him off before he went into seclusion and acted to help these historical enemies of the empire and the Church.

So he didn't want to be alone, while Duncan didn't go into seclusion and kept this whale by his side.

"Hmm, I hope you won't regret saving him in the future," Darren said in a low voice, showing its grudges regarding Minos.

Maximillian heard that, but there was no way he could think about the possibility of Minos becoming a problem for him. "Aren't you ashamed of it? We are level 99 Demigods, and you bother with a child?"

"That child grows up too fast..."

"Tsk! You say that because you were humiliated by Minos back there." Maximillian laughed.

For him to worry about Minos' cultivation speed, that youngster would have to be at the 10th stage already. But that was far from happening, and Emperor Stuart was still only an 8th-stage cultivator.

To Maximillian, if one day Minos became a Demigod, which there was no guarantee that would happen, he would already be a God then. So at most, that young emperor would become his subordinate in the northern region!

With this thought that was primarily grounded in the Divine medicine that Duncan would use to try to advance, this man was unconcerned about Minos.

Darren was not taking his words so seriously either, as he really hated Minos as such a young man had managed to trick him and, in a sense, beat him.

"By all means, put Minos aside," Darren said. "I want to know when we will start this fucking war for real. How will we fight if we wait for the Supreme Pontiff to go into seclusion? Don't you intend to deal with him at that time and secure your position?"

Maximillian had already explained what he would do against Duncan to those closest to him.

He then said to the few individuals in the vicinity. "Don't worry. When the Supreme Elder goes into seclusion, it will take him over a decade to begin the crucial part of the advance. That will be the time we will have to act against our enemies.

After that period, I will enter seclusion to become a God."

"And when will that happen? This old man will get in our way as much as possible." Darren said.

The leader of the Blood Triangle Pirates then said. "It probably won't take the Supreme Pontiff long. He cannot delay because of the preparation time for the actual attempt to advance to the 10th stage, or he will have a 100% chance of dying during the advance attempt."

A high-ranking Cardinal then said. "I believe that he will make his decision in less than ten years."

"Good. That's not much to look forward to." Maximillian said in a satisfied tone.

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While Maximillian was making his plans, Duncan was meeting with his disciple of this generation.

"Forrest, I will not be able to continue to keep the peace in the empire for long. I will have to retire in a few years to begin my seclusion, so you should prepare yourself." The Supreme Pontiff said to that level 92 man while having one of his hands on one of his shoulders.

"What will happen, master?" Forrest asked, full of uncertainty in his heart.

"Sigh... It's complicated. Maximillian can still be considered young and has a lot of power." Duncan took a deep breath, trying to imagine what would be the best path for his disciple and group. "All I can tell you is not to oppose him. But do not participate in any action commanded by him.

If he desires war, let him wage it alone. If I return successfully, I will resolve everything at that time. But if that doesn't happen, you should remain neutral.

If the Black Plain group strengthens, perhaps you and the rest of our group should look for them.

In any case, you should prepare yourself. Difficulties that even I have not faced in my life will arise to threaten you and the rest of the group."

Forrest clenched his fists, feeling pressured by all this calamity he would have to face.

"As the most talented disciple I have had, it will be your duty to lead our group into a new day. No matter how long the darkness lasts, eventually, there will be light again.

That is your duty, Forrest!"

"I will do my best, master!" That man said after clinging to his resolve, believing that one day he would be strong enough to at least try.

Duncan looked pausingly at his pupil, who he believed could one day reach level 100.

'After me, you were the most talented one to come along in the last 20,000 years, Forrest. So don't screw up. Eventually, you'll get your chance!'