

# **The Shining Star Above The Heaven**

## **#Chapter 421: Arrived - Read The Shining Star Above The Heaven Chapter 421: Arrived**

### **Chapter 421: Arrived**

Duke Schmidt did not understand how two figures had managed to appear behind their lines without anyone noticing! Based on what he had just felt from the sword's slash, he could easily tell that the attacker's strength had already reached the peak Emperor stage—strong enough to split the flying fortress in half!

Rumble!

The flying fortress crashed to the ground, followed by a tremor and a rumbling sound that echoed for kilometers. Thick dust rose from the debris, obscuring the sight of many troops from the second prince's faction. Their formation already fell into chaos as soldiers scattered in an attempt to evade the falling wreckage.

Yet, despite all of this, Duke Schmidt did not seem to pay it any mind.

He focused his gaze on one of the figures wielding a sword. The man wore a black robe and a mask that covered his entire face except for his eyes. Beside him stood an old man whom Duke Schmidt did not recognize.

Feeling threatened and unsure of the stranger's origins, Duke Schmidt shouted to the Emperor and King stage experts in his group.

"Retreat!"

Hearing the duke's command, they snapped out of their shock and immediately flew toward him, including Adel. The members of the Rosalind family did not pursue them, instead turning to approach their lord.

Baron Rosalind rushed to his daughter, offering her a healing pill to treat any wounds and restore her strength.

After taking the pill, Elena felt much better. She then turned toward the two mysterious figures. Though shocked by their sudden appearance, she could not mistake that power, aura, and energy.

*"It's him!"*

she thought.

Although he wore a mask and a robe to conceal his features, how could she possibly mistake him? Who else could it be if not Aldrian? But who was the person beside him?

"Who are you?! State your identity! How dare you interfere in the second prince's faction's affairs!" Duke Schmidt shouted.

He was unfamiliar with Aldrian, so he demanded an answer. Deep down, tension coiled in his chest, and fear gnawed at him. This figure's strength was beyond anything he had expected, yet he needed to know the identity of the one who had suddenly intruded upon their battle.

Their losses were devastating—the flying fortress was gone, and rows of cannons lay in ruins on the ground. At the very least, he wanted to know who was responsible for this disaster.

Forcing himself to appear strong, he put on a front of bravado. But he knew the truth. If a battle broke out, he would inevitably lose. How could he possibly stand against someone capable of unleashing such a technique?

He prepared to take out his escape talisman, but then he noticed the figure looking in his direction. His body tensed as he tried to reach for the talisman hidden beneath his arm armor.

Aldrian, seeing his intent, paid it no mind. He could try to escape, but as the strongest among the enemy forces, the man had already become his primary target. Moreover, Old Man York had informed him earlier that this man, Eugene Schmidt was the patriarch of the Schmidt family, a family with a longstanding hostile relationship with the Rosalind family.

The Schmidt family was also the main suspect behind the poison incident that had forced Old Man York to resign and leave his family.

Duke Schmidt was already within his domain, which now stretched 40 kilometers. He created this domain earlier upon his arrival. Thanks to Old Man York's navigation and his continuous teleportation, he had reached this place in less than 20 minutes.

Aldrian then trapped Duke Schmidt within his spatial lock, freezing him instantly. Not only the duke but all the Emperor and King stage cultivators behind him were also ensnared. Within the power of Aldrian's domain, they had little to no chance of escape unless they could overcome its overwhelming force.

Duke Schmidt was horrified. He couldn't move his body—not even his lips. His hand that so close to the escape talisman, strained to reach it, but no matter how much he struggled, it was impossible.

His heart turned cold when, suddenly the masked figure appeared right in front of him—as if he had teleported.

He finally saw the clear blue eyes beneath the mask. In that instant, he recalled the defining features of the new city lord of Caritas, one of them being his striking blue eyes, as clear as the surface of pristine water.

At last, he realized who the man behind the mask was! How could he have not recognized him sooner? The one who had effortlessly destroyed a flying fortress with his sword, just as the news described, how could he have missed it?

If he had figured it out earlier, he would have used his escape talisman immediately instead of lingering here and foolishly demanding his identity.

Now, all he could do was curse his own stupidity and regret his hesitation. He could only watch as Aldrian placed a hand on his forehead, delving into his memories.

No one dared to interfere. The troops from the second prince's faction had already retreated toward their camp—or more accurately, they were fleeing. None of them stopped, as if their only intent was to escape the battlefield entirely.

After more than a minute, Aldrian finished his search and tapped the duke's cheek a few times.

"You're truly an evil bastard. Birds of a feather flock together—no wonder you're part of the second prince's faction."

What Aldrian uncovered in the duke's memories was a past filled with countless atrocities he had committed under the guise of nobility. From underground dealings to harming, killing, kidnapping, and raping, there was no crime he wouldn't commit, no matter the scale, as long as it served his purpose.

His cruelty was truly remarkable and the only reward he deserved was death.

Surprisingly, the duke also did not know the details of the so-called "Plague" plan that targeted him. It seemed that only a very limited number of people knew exactly what the plan entailed.

Aldrian looked at Old Man York and made him move closer. The old man, floating due to Aldrian's energy and will, slowly approached. Once the old man was beside him, he asked,

"What do you want to do with this guy? Personally, I'd like to kill him right now. He's really getting on my nerves."

Old Man York was momentarily stunned but then let out a sigh.

"Truthfully, I have already made peace with my situation and buried my desire for revenge, as it was beyond my ability. But since the patriarch of the Schmidt family is now in young master's grasp, I will simply follow your decision. That alone is enough to fulfill my wish."

Aldrian nodded with a smile.

"Good."

Without even glancing at Duke Schmidt, Aldrian waved his left hand, now cloaked in sword will. At first, nothing seemed to change. Aldrian simply turned his head toward Elena and the people standing beside her below. From the looks of it, the man beside her was likely her father, Baron Rosalind.

"For the survivors, consider yourselves lucky. You may leave after this," Aldrian said.

He then descended to the ground alongside Old Man York. The old man was momentarily confused by what Aldrian had done, as the captured enemies still remained suspended in midair. But then, he noticed droplets of blood falling.

A split second later, headless bodies crashed to the ground, followed by several severed heads. They belonged to Duke Schmidt, the other Emperor stage cultivators, and eight King stage cultivators.

Once Aldrian released his spatial lock, the decapitated bodies instantly fell. The only thing keeping their heads and bodies intact had been the lock itself. They hadn't even realized they were already dead until that moment, a testament to the sharpness and precision of Aldrian's slash.

He had deliberately spared four King stage cultivators to spread the tale. Wasting no time, the survivors fled at full speed the moment they were freed.

Baron Rosalind and Elena, followed by a few others, walked toward Aldrian. When they reached him, the baron extended a handshake. Elena had already told him that this masked figure was indeed Aldrian, recognizing him by his energy and aura.

"Welcome to Rosalind City, young master. Thank you for helping us," Baron Rosalind said.

"I just came to fulfill Miss Elena's invitation and lend a small hand. With Baron Rosalind's strength, I believe you all could have survived this attack," Aldrian replied, shaking the baron's hand.

"You're too humble, young master. How can you call this 'lending a small hand' when you—" Baron Rosalind glanced at the massive destruction caused by Aldrian's slash before continuing, "—caused all of that? You have truly helped us this time."

"No, I'm serious. You all could have survived this attack because you have a divine-grade sword. With Baron Rosalind's strength, it would have been enough to hold the ground for some time," Aldrian replied.

Baron Rosalind sighed. "Well, maybe I or the Rosalind family could have held out for a while, but the denizens of the city would have suffered. Many would have lost their lives if we didn't get out of this situation soon." He glanced at his sword before continuing, "Besides, this sword is my last resort. I can only draw it if our family is in a truly dire situation."

He then looked back at Aldrian. "Anyway, let's move to a more appropriate and private place for conversation. We will serve you to the best of our ability." With that, the baron gestured toward the city, signaling, *after you*.

## **Chapter 422: Reunion With His Past Lord**

Swoosh!

A figure flew as fast as possible, his surroundings blurring in his gaze. After being released by Aldrian, Adel escaped as far and as fast as he could. Right now, his only thought was to put as much distance between himself and Aldrian—nothing else crossed his mind. There was no trace of a swordmaster's composure in him at this moment; instead, he resembled a frightened cat.

*"Fuck! He's truly a monster! I've only heard stories about him and the traces he left across the continent, but seeing him in action firsthand... he's absolutely terrifying,"* he thought.

He already knew that Aldrian was the real deal and not just an exaggerated rumor when he first felt his sword will in Balin City after the Hydra incident a few years ago. He knew that someone like that was a swordsman with far greater attainment than himself, judging by how profound and powerful the sword will Aldrian had left behind at that time.

Even now, Aldrian's remnant sword will still lingered there, turning the place into a sacred ground that sword cultivators from across the continent had to visit at least once to deepen their comprehension.

Whoosh!

He had no idea how far he was from Rosalind City. His face was already drenched in sweat, but he didn't hesitate to pour all his energy into increasing his flying speed.

Luckily, he was one of the King Stage cultivators spared by Aldrian. He didn't know if it was merely a coincidence or if Aldrian had deliberately chosen to let him live—but he didn't care. The only thing that mattered was that he still had his life intact.

After nearly exhausting his energy, he decided to stop and look behind him. No one was following him, which filled him with relief. It seemed Aldrian had truly kept his word and allowed him and the others to leave.

This was the first time he had ever felt this way. Usually, he was the stronger one, the one who decided whether to grant mercy.

Beneath him stretched a vast expanse of dense forest, with nothing but trees visible all the way to the horizon. He sighed and decided to land to rest and replenish his energy.

He landed on a sturdy tree branch and retrieved a communication artifact from his storage ring. After taking a deep breath, he spoke into the artifact.

"This is Adel Schwertwächter. We have a situation in Rosalind City."

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Back in Rosalind City, Aldrian had already been escorted to a luxurious guest room, where a drink had been served to him. He simply took a seat, with Old Man York sitting beside him.

Aldrian had removed his mask, leaving Baron Rosalind astonished. He had heard rumors about how young the mysterious swordsman was, but seeing him in person was something else entirely. Could someone this young truly be the same figure who had shaken the entire continent multiple times?

Baron Rosalind couldn't help but sigh, feeling how the heavens favored certain individuals. With the talent and strength of this young man, how could other cultivators, those who proclaimed themselves or were hailed as geniuses dare to raise their heads? They would be completely overshadowed by him. He doubted that there had ever been a figure like Aldrian in the history of the continent, at least as far as he knew.

Baron Rosalind and Elena sat across from Aldrian, but then the baron's gaze shifted to Old Man York, who kept his head lowered. He wondered what had happened to the old man before turning his attention back to Aldrian.

"Young master, if you don't mind me asking, who is this gentleman?" he asked. For some reason, the old man felt strangely familiar to him.

Aldrian simply smiled and glanced at Old Man York.

"Do you want to say it, or should I?" he asked.

Old Man York, feeling a nervous weight pressing on him, let out a sigh. He could no longer hold it in. Lifting his gaze, he looked directly at Baron Rosalind.

"It has been so long, my lord."

Baron Rosalind narrowed his eyes as the old man spoke. Although he felt a sense of familiarity, he couldn't immediately place his identity. Then, at last, a memory surfaced—someone from his past with the same intonation when addressing him that way.

Back then, that person's face had been much younger, but now, as he recalled it, he saw the resemblance in the old man before him.

"Head Cook York... is that you?" Baron Rosalind asked unconsciously, calling him by his old title. His eyes widened in shock.

Old Man York felt an overwhelming urge to cry but held himself back. His lord still remembered him, even after thousands of years. It touched him deeply.

"Yes, it's me, my lord."

Baron Rosalind instantly stood up and walked around the table. Old Man York, already aware of what the baron intended to do, also rose to his feet. Before he could say anything more, the baron pulled him into a firm embrace.

"I'm sorry that I couldn't truly protect you and your dignity back then. I was a terrible leader for failing to do more and allowing those bastards to trample over us," he said before finally releasing his hold.

But before he could step back, Old Man York bowed deeply at a full ninety degrees, without hesitation.

"No, my lord! You did everything you could to protect my dignity and the family's honor at that time. In fact, I have long blamed myself for failing to watch over the food properly, allowing those who sought to harm you and the family to take advantage of it," he replied.

Baron Rosalind was deeply moved and placed a reassuring hand on the old man's shoulder.

"Then, let's just consider it our shared failure—that we allowed those families to harm us with their tricks."

Old Man York smiled, his eyes glistening with unshed tears, but he simply accepted Baron Rosalind's words. He knew the baron didn't want them to dwell on blame endlessly.

Baron Rosalind returned to his seat and began introducing Old Man York to Elena. Since earlier, she had been wondering who this old man was and why he was with



Aldrian. From the time she had followed Aldrian's group to the church territory, there had been no old man among them—yet her father clearly recognized him.

Upon hearing his identity, Elena was astonished. Without hesitation, she instantly stood up and bowed her head toward Old Man York.

"It's a pleasure to meet you, Sir York. Father has told me about his former head cook who always amazed him with his cooking and followed him long before he was forced to leave due to the cunning schemes of hostile families," she said before straightening her posture.

As a noble young lady, she felt no shame in lowering her head to an old man who had once been the head cook of her family.

"The pleasure is mine, young miss. I have only heard of your greatness from many people. The last time I saw you, you were just a baby, and now you have grown into a fine young lady. You have truly continued Lord Raz's legacy and elevated it even further. Seeing you up close now—there is nothing that could bring me greater happiness," Old Man York replied warmly.

Watching their interaction, Aldrian simply smiled and took a sip of his tea.

"By the way, young master, how did you meet Head Cook York? After he resigned from this family, he was never seen again, and I never knew his whereabouts," Baron Rosalind asked.

"Ah, you could say it was pure coincidence—though I believe it was fate that I met Sir York in that place," Aldrian replied before recounting the story of how he encountered Old Man York.

Baron Rosalind listened intently, and when Aldrian finished, he could only sigh in amazement.

"This is truly fate—truly fate. When you planned to visit this place, you ended up meeting someone from this family. It must be destiny," the baron said, taking a sip of his tea.

"Anyway, young master, I must apologize. You came to visit us, yet you were dragged into this civil war. As your host, I am truly ashamed that your arrival happened at such an unfortunate time."

"But if I may ask, young master—why did you insist on coming here now? You could have chosen not to visit us. I can't imagine that our legacy artifact is important enough for you to risk making the entire Second Prince's faction your enemy."



"Well, from your Excellency's point of view, it may seem that your legacy artifact isn't worth involving myself in this civil war. However, I must say that this artifact might be a crucial clue to a certain problem of mine—one I cannot explain to you. So, its value is certainly high enough for me to justify my involvement in this conflict."

"And even if I had no plans to visit you, I would still have been drawn into this civil war because of my business with the Church—" Aldrian then proceeded to tell the baron about his pursuit of Cardinal Carsius.

Of course, he didn't reveal his true relationship with the Church to the baron. He simply told him that he had a special connection with the Church and that they had requested his help in capturing the traitor.

After hearing about Cardinal Carsius, Baron Rosalind stroked his chin in thought.

"So, the Second Prince is harboring that traitor, huh?" he muttered before looking at Aldrian. "Then, young master, if the Second Prince were to hand over that traitor to you, would you stop involving yourself in this civil war?"

Aldrian smiled at the question.

"What do you think?"

## **Chapter 423: Looking at the Legacy Artifact**

"Well, if young master's main purpose is to catch him in the first place, then I thought you would return to the church's territory and no longer involve yourself in this civil war. After all, I wouldn't be so arrogant as to assume that you would continue to participate after you've seen our legacy artifact." Baron Rosalind said.

"And besides, we still don't know if our legacy artifact will be of any help to the young master's problem."

Aldrian nodded.

"Your Excellency, your opinion is reasonable, but my answer is this—I have my own problem with the devils, and I cannot stand their existence. Whenever I discover them within a territory, I make sure to uproot them," he said.

"Now, why did I bring this up? The church has already announced that the traitorous Cardinal Carsius was involved with the devils. From Your Excellency's perspective, why did he choose to flee to the Atria Empire and seek the second prince's assistance? Even amidst a civil war, the second prince still accepted him. Why Cardinal Carsius not choose another empire?"

Baron Rosalind pondered for a moment before looking at Aldrian.

"I don't have enough information, but I guess the second prince still dares to harbor the traitor without fearing the church's wrath because Cardinal Carsius has something he wants, something that forces him to keep Cardinal Carsius under his wing. Or perhaps their interests align, leading them to work together—or, in this case, use each other."

"Yes, that could also be the answer, but Your Excellency, what do you think even after the church announced Cardinal Carsius's connection to the devils, the second prince still wants to keep him? The topic of devils is taboo, and even those with the slightest connection to them can end up on the execution platform. So why would the second prince still choose to harbor someone like that?" Aldrian asked again.

Baron Rosalind thought for a moment before something clicked in his mind. His eyes widened slightly.

"So, are you saying that the second prince is also connected to the devils? And because of that, Cardinal Carsius chose to escape to him, seeking asylum, and the second prince accepted him without hesitation due to their shared connection with the devils?"

"Exactly."

Hearing Aldrian's immediate response, Baron Rosalind and Elena were astonished, and the baron's expression turned solemn.

"Do you have any proof of the second prince's involvement with the devils, young master? If we can prove his connection, it could change the course of this civil war. Even other empires might get involved! There's no way someone tied to the devils can be allowed to rule an empire! Vindas Empire and the Buddhist sect wouldn't stand for it—they might even help us!"

However, he saw Aldrian shake his head.

"I don't have any proof of the second prince's involvement, but I do have evidence against Cardinal Carsius. I came to this conclusion because it's the strongest theory explaining why the second prince is harboring that traitor, and I believe it's close to the truth."

Baron Rosalind frowned at this but then sighed.

"Yes, I think so too, young master. But this is still just our assumption. Without solid proof, the other territories won't take action either."

"Correct. But why must we involve other empires in this matter?"

"Well, because—" Baron Rosalind stopped mid-sentence, his eyebrows slightly raising.

"Do you mean...?"

Aldrian nodded. "Returning to Your Excellency's question about what would happen if the second prince handed that traitor over to me—would my job in this empire be done? No, absolutely not. How could I simply leave someone who dares to harbor a person connected to the devils roaming freely, let alone ruling an empire? I cannot allow that."

"The second prince's fate was sealed the moment he involved himself with someone he was never meant to protect. Your Excellency knows how I act when it comes to the devils, based on my past. Once I find them or anyone connected to them, they will have to face me."

"That is my answer to your question."

Baron Rosalind and Elena couldn't help but feel ecstatic. Aldrian truly sounded arrogant, implying that there was no need to involve other territories because he alone was enough! What an overbearing character.

However, Baron Rosalind did not see it as recklessness or think of Aldrian as a mere arrogant fool. After witnessing his strength and hearing of his feats over the years, he knew that Aldrian could truly stand against the second prince's army on his own. As long as nothing unexpected happened, Aldrian was an unstoppable force.

Baron Rosalind sighed again, but this time, it was a sigh of relief.

"I see. We are truly grateful if you are willing to lend us your hand. It's not just me, but all the families who oppose the second prince—whether they are still standing or not. With your help, young master, we can finally breathe and launch a counterattack."

Aldrian nodded. "Since I have already killed some of the heads of noble families in his faction, I can imagine that the second prince's forces will weaken significantly. Their families will have to handle succession matters, meaning they won't be able to focus on the civil war for quite some time. However, I will not stop there, as the second prince can still mobilize a large portion of the noble families' armies to other parts of the empire." He said before taking a sip of his tea.

Baron Rosalind did the same.

After putting his cup down, he looked at Aldrian with a smile.

"Anyway, now that we've discussed the war, it's time to move on to the main topic. I know the young master is curious about our legacy artifact, and I am as well. Even though it is our own legacy artifact, there is very little information about it, and it is closely tied to our past. I believe Elena has already told you about our ancestor—we want to uncover his true origins and perhaps unlock the full potential of our technique that has been passed down for generations."

Baron Rosalind then stood up.

"Follow me, young master. I will take you to the place where the legacy artifact is stored."

Aldrian nodded and started following Baron Rosalind, but suddenly, the baron stopped in his tracks and looked toward Old Man York, who remained seated, showing no intention of following.

"Why are you still sitting?"

Old Man York was momentarily stunned but then shook his head and waved his hand.

"I'm not someone worthy of looking into a legacy artifact I know nothing about. I thought this should remain a secret between the interested parties."

However, Baron Rosalind tilted his head.

"You are with Young Master Aldrian, so it wouldn't be right to leave you here alone. You should come with us—this is a rare chance for you to see our family's legacy artifact."

Old Man York hesitated before glancing at Aldrian. Truthfully, he was also curious about this legacy artifact. Even in the past, when he served as head cook for the family, he had never seen it. He had only heard rumors that the family possessed a legacy artifact, but that was all.

Old Man York looked at Aldrian, who met his gaze with a smile and simply nodded. Seeing Aldrian's approval, he sighed, stood up, and followed them.

With Old Man York now joining them, Baron Rosalind resumed walking, leading them toward a secret vault hidden underground. To reach it, they had to enter a concealed passage inside a solitary building, separate from the main mansion. The passage was protected by a sealing formation and its complexity leaving Aldrian truly amazed.

The sealing formation could only be opened by the family's leader using his energy signature. If any other energy was injected into the formation, it would trigger traps and a warning.

Aldrian was certain that this formation had been in place since the time of the Rosalind family's ancestors.

They then walked deep underground, taking several turns and carefully avoiding the trap formations before finally arriving at the double doors of the secret vault. The vault had more or less the same formation as the entrance to the secret passage.

After Baron Rosalind opened the vault, a surge of powerful aura and energy swept over Aldrian. He raised his eyebrows—he knew this energy and aura well. What else could it be but divine energy?

Then he saw it—a beautiful, transparent scarf, just as Elena had described when she told him her story in Larson City. It was displayed inside a glass case, carefully arranged to showcase its full length of two meters.

Though the scarf transparent, it had a faint red hue.

"Young Master, this is the legacy artifact we wanted you to see," Baron Rosalind said, glancing at Aldrian. However, he noticed that Aldrian's gaze remained fixed on the scarf.

Baron Rosalind nodded in satisfaction, pleased with Aldrian's reaction. This was their legacy artifact, an artifact worthy of admiration, even if its full potential remained unknown.

Yet, unbeknownst to the baron and the others, Aldrian stared at the scarf with a strange sense of familiarity, as if he had seen it somewhere before!

#### **Chapter 424: The Heavenly Scarf of Divine Phoenix**

"According to our records, this scarf is called the *Heavenly Scarf of Divine Phoenix*. We don't know why it was named that way, but it is said that our ancestor already possessed it when he first moved to this empire. Along with the *Valiant Spirit Sword*, which I use in battle, these are the two divine-grade artifacts our ancestor had at that time," Baron Rosalind explained.

Elena's eyes glimmered beautifully as she gazed at the scarf. Even though she had seen it before, she was still amazed by its beauty. To her, it was the most exquisite scarf she had ever laid eyes on, and as a woman, she was tempted to use it as an accessory.

Old Man York's heart trembled as he beheld it for the first time.

*"So this is the Rosalind family's legacy artifact?"*

Truly astonishing and beautiful! It was an artifact he could only admire, never hoping to see—let alone possess—if not for Aldrian. Its aura was truly remarkable, making him feel as though he stood before someone mighty.

Aldrian kept his focus on the scarf, his mind reeling with a sense of familiarity until he finally remembered.

*"This scarf... it was always worn by the first ancestor of the Phoenix!"*

A deep sigh escaped him as an inexplicable nostalgia washed over him—one he couldn't quite grasp. To be honest, he had seen the woman, the true first ancestor of the Phoenix, many times in his visions over the years.

The first time he saw her was when he cultivated beneath the World Tree of Evergreen City, where Alice, the spirit of the Evergreen city's World Tree, resided.

"If you wish to approach it or inspect it, you may, young master. Wait, let me open the glass case," Baron Rosalind said, pulling Aldrian from his reverie.

He followed the baron into the vault. The interior was simple, devoid of any decorations, but Aldrian could sense numerous formations embedded within the space. As they walked, the baron casually released his aura, deactivating the formations with ease.

When they reached the glass case, Baron Rosalind placed his hand on it and injected his energy.

A soft *click* echoed before the glass case opened on one side, allowing onlookers to touch the artifact.

Baron Rosalind then turned to Aldrian. "Go ahead, young master. You may inspect it—take your time."

Aldrian nodded without hesitation, reaching out to touch the scarf and bringing it closer to him. It felt incredibly soft in his palm, yet at the same time, remarkably sturdy.

He had no idea how this artifact had been created—it was still beyond his understanding—but he couldn't help but admire the craftsmanship behind it.

After stroking the scarf a few times, he finally decided to check its information.

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### **The Heavenly Scarf of Divine Phoenix**

**Description:** A scarf created by the Absolute Ruler as a gift to the first ancestor of the Phoenix. This artifact can function as both a defensive and offensive weapon. It can change shape and protect those bound to it. Over time, it has become the signature feature of the first ancestor of the Phoenix.

**Level:** Peak Divine Grade (Sealed).

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As expected, this scarf had indeed belonged to the first ancestor of the Phoenix. With her fiery beauty, the scarf only enhanced her elegance and charm.

He closed his eyes, as if trying to sense the scarf's uniqueness. From the information he had just read, he knew that the scarf was created by the Absolute Ruler—a title that, unbeknownst to many, belonged to him all along. It was a reminder that, in his past life, there was a time when he had ruled as a monarch.

Activating his karma laws, he sought to feel his connection to the scarf. He could sense that the bond between them was weak, which wasn't surprising—this was the first time he had touched the scarf in this life. However, there was a way to delve deeper into its history.

Thread of Origin.

The voice of that enigmatic figure echoed in his mind, the same voice he had heard when he first comprehended a fragment of the thread of origin.

*The thread that connects everything—everything tied together, transcending time and space and I'm the only one who can control this connection.*

He wanted to see the thread of origin connecting the scarf to him. He wanted to glimpse his past with it—to know what he had done, what he had been like. He wanted to see everything this scarf, said to have been created by his past self, could reveal to him.

At last, he sensed the thread of origin intertwined with the karma thread. As he focused on it, his vision shifted, pulling him into a scene.

At one point in his past life, he sat atop a towering cliff, rising far above the clouds. The vast sky stretched endlessly around him, and the world below felt distant and insignificant. It seemed to be the highest point in the world—no structures, no other objects could compare to its height.

He sat beneath the dark sky, where countless stars stretched across the vast cosmos. They shimmered beautifully, and he seemed to enjoy the sight, his eyes reflecting the endless expanse above.

Aldrian felt that if he wished, he could move the stars at will, repositioning them to form breathtaking constellations.

And so he did. Slowly, the stars shifted, forming a new constellation—one he found even more beautiful than before. But he didn't stop there. With effortless ease, he created new stars, shaping them with a mere thought. At his command, distant galaxies emerged billions of light-years away.

Aldrian, watching "his" actions from the past, felt a shudder in his heart. Although he knew that his past self had already reached the level of the universe itself, this was the first time he had witnessed such a display of power.



He could do that?

He was like a god, shaping the cosmos at will. Moving stars, creating galaxies—it all happened with nothing more than a thought, and the universe simply responded.

What kind of level is this?

Can all divine beings do this?

He felt an overwhelming urge to become like his past self flared once more, to wield that kind of power. If he had such strength, he would be unstoppable. With that power, he would no longer have to worry about the higher beings who sought to descend upon the Barisan continent. He could protect the continent with nothing more than his will.

He could build a family with his loved ones, free from worry, without the constant threat of harm. With that level of power, no problem would ever trouble him again.

After "he" finished arranging the stars, galaxies, and everything within the cosmos, he paused and suddenly smiled. Although Aldrian couldn't see his own face, as he was witnessing the scene through "his" eyes, he could easily imagine the smile.

"Go up. You don't have to wait for my permission," he said.

Not long after, a red-haired woman appeared gracefully behind him and immediately kowtowed.

"That would not be appropriate, Your Majesty. The heavens and earth would reprimand me for it," she said before straightening her upper body again. She was now seated, her smile radiant, and her beautiful face truly captivating.

Hearing her response, "he" turned his head to look at her. She was the first ancestor of the phoenix, yet Aldrian immediately noticed a difference. She appeared much younger than in his previous visions, and she did not yet have the scarf.

"You've successfully broken through to the next stage. Congratulations. I'm truly proud of you," he said, his tone carrying the warmth of an elder speaking to a junior.

The woman's eyes lit up with ecstasy, and she instantly kowtowed once more.

"Thank you for your compliment, Your Majesty."

Even Aldrian, merely witnessing this scene, could feel the sheer joy radiating from the first ancestor of the phoenix—just from receiving "his" praise.

But then, he saw "his" hand stretch forward with palm open.

What happened next stunned him.

From "his" palm, a brilliant congregation of multicolored energy appeared, shimmering and shifting. The light hovered above his hand, coalescing as if solidifying into a form.

Within seconds, the swirling energy took the shape of a long piece of fabric. As the final traces of light dissipated, a scarf was revealed.

This was the same scarf that had now become the legacy artifact of the Rosalind family—the very artifact he was touching in his real body at this moment.

Aldrian's mind reeled at how effortlessly "he" had created it. It was as if "he" were performing a simple trick, something casual and insignificant. Yet the result? A peak divine-grade artifact even while sealed.

"He" had created an artifact stronger than divine grade with nothing more than a single hand.

Aldrian's eyes were truly opened by this method—something far beyond his comprehension. And he wanted to understand it.

"As a gift for your successful breakthrough, I will give you this scarf," he said, placing it gently on her shoulders.

The phoenix ancestor's eyes brightened as she gazed happily at her new scarf. She stroked it a few times, savoring its softness, before looking up at him.

"Thank you, Your Majesty. I will treasure it with all my heart. This is truly the best gift I have ever received." she said, kowtowing once more.

"This is a special gift just for you, and I believe I have found the perfect name to match your grace," he said.

Her eyes sparkled with anticipation as she lifted her head. "What is it, Your Majesty? What will it be called?"

"The Heavenly Scarf of Divine Phoenix."

## **Chapter 425: The Past**

"The Heavenly Scarf of Divine Phoenix." The woman repeated softly, her eyes glimmering before she smiled brightly.

"Yes, I like it, Your Majesty. Thank you." She kowtowed again. She had already done so multiple times since arriving, but she didn't seem to care. Lifting her head, she gazed at her new scarf, stroking and playing with it, her face full of joy.

He nodded, maintaining his smile as he watched her. She was so delighted with his gift that she no longer paid attention to how she behaved in front of him. Like a child who had just found a new toy, despite being a refined and beautiful lady who could captivate any man under the heavens.

He then turned his head and gazed at the sky again. His serene eyes remained calm, without a ripple, as he looked at the stars and the vast expanse of the cosmos.

The woman, watching him, grew curious and asked,

"Your Majesty, do you like watching the stars?"

He did not answer immediately, remaining silent for a moment before finally speaking.

"Yes. To me, the stars are the jewels of the cosmos, a reminder of how vast the universe truly is. Without them, the sky would be bland, stripped of its beauty. Without stars, people would lack the drive to reach for the heavens, for there would be nothing to aspire to. Without the stars, living beings would have no foundation to stand upon. Their existence is essential to the universe."

The woman also looked up at the sky. Her eyes reflected countless stars and galaxies, shimmering with their beauty. She seemed entranced, and without realizing it, she voiced a question.

"Is there a limit to the cosmos? No matter how far I fly between universes, I have never seen its end. When I first realized that we were inside just one universe, I flew beyond it, only to discover that there were countless others, all forming an endless cosmic system."

He smiled and looked at her.

"They are endless. They are infinite. They will always expand. Even if you find what seems to be the edge of the cosmos, you will realize it is not the end. There will always be another horizon, an endless journey toward the true edge—toward nothingness."

"Then, can Your Majesty just make the cosmos stop expanding? I've seen how you enjoy creating many things in the sky and managing them like a chessboard. Wouldn't it be easier if the cosmos weren't so vast?" she asked.

Still smiling, he answered,

"Why would I stop it? Why would I halt the spread of creation's magnificence? Let it continue expanding, filling the nothingness, allowing life to thrive. It is far more interesting that way than having a bland, empty void. No matter how vast the cosmos becomes, I will gladly watch over it or even manage it, simply because I enjoy it. I like beautiful things."

The woman nodded in understanding. They continued watching the sky together until he suddenly sat down and took out a guqin.

She was stunned for a moment before her face lit up with joy. He was going to play! This was one of her favorite things to experience when she was near him.

"This piece will convey the majesty and vastness of the universe—the beauty of the stars, the heavens, and the earth," he said before his fingers touched the strings. A mesmerizing melody resounded, filling the air with breathtaking music.

The Phoenix Ancestor closed her eyes, immersing herself in the soothing sound that seemed to reach her very soul. But she was not the only one entranced. Even the surrounding nature stilled as if pausing to listen. The effect extended beyond, for the stars that adorned the dark sky shimmered even more brilliantly, as though rejoicing in his music.

Aldrian, witnessing and hearing all of this, closed his eyes, wanting to fully immerse himself in the music. A strange sensation washed over him, he felt as if he already knew this melody. It was buried deep in his mind, forgotten over time, like a song once familiar but left unplayed for too long.

Yet as "he" played, the music resurfaced, awakening a long-dormant memory within him. That was when Aldrian knew, he could play this piece as well.

The performance continued for the next twenty minutes before coming to a gentle stop. As the final note faded, nature resumed its usual rhythm, and the sky returned to its normal state.

The Phoenix Ancestor slowly opened her beautiful eyes and smiled at "him". Without a word, she kowtowed once more.

"Thank you for the enlightenment, Your Majesty," she said before stepping back. Then, with graceful ease, she leaped from the cliff, disappearing into the clouds.

Aldrian's gaze followed her descent, and at that moment, a massive shadow emerged beneath the clouds. It was the silhouette of a colossal bird with nine feathered tails—its sheer size so immense that it could easily crush an entire kingdom, as vast as Forgeheart.

For him, this was the largest living being he had ever seen—the first time he had truly glimpsed the sheer size of the Phoenix Ancestor. He felt a hint of regret that he couldn't see her full phoenix form, as it remained hidden beneath the clouds.

Left alone atop the cliff, "he" stood in silence. But then, to Aldrian's shock, he suddenly heard "him" speaking to himself. However, it felt as if "he" was also speaking to him.

"I hope that we finally see the end of it, find the answer we seek, and reach what we intend to achieve."

Aldrian's vision blurred, and the scene before him shifted.

This time, he felt as though he were being held in someone's grasp. As his sight cleared, he found himself gazing up at the Phoenix Ancestor's beautiful face, her eyes filled with a faint sorrow. Confusion swelled within him—this perspective felt strange.

Then, realization struck.

The way he was positioned, the way her body was so close to him... it made no sense. Until it did.

He wasn't truly a living being.

He was the scarf.

At this moment, he was seeing everything from the scarf's point of view.

In this scene, the Phoenix Ancestor appeared as a mature beauty, yet something about her felt off. Aldrian could see the sadness in her eyes, and her usually radiant complexion was noticeably pale. From his perspective, she looked unwell—perhaps even gravely so.

She was inside a vast hall, seated on a cultivation mat. In front of her rested her guqin, the Spirit of Great Path.

A sudden pang of sorrow struck him as he watched her. The grace, joy, and cheerfulness she had shown earlier on the cliff or in any vision of her were gone. In this place, there was only a heavy, somber atmosphere, one he wished he had never experienced.

"Your Majesty, I really miss you."

Aldrian heard her soft voice, filled with longing, as her hand gently stroked the scarf. The sorrow in her voice made his heart ache. He wanted to tell her that he was right in front of her, but he knew this was merely a memory within the artifact.

Yes, an artifact could have a point of view, and in fact, all things even the smallest existence possessed memories that could only be accessed by him if he had sufficient comprehension of Thread of Origin.

Right now, his comprehension was still lacking, making his visions fragmented, skipping across timelines at random. He could do nothing but watch, though he knew that, according to *that* figure the Thread of Origin was capable of far more than this.

The Phoenix Ancestor kept stroking the scarf when, suddenly, Aldrian heard another voice. This time, it was a man's voice—one he had heard before in his past visions.

"It's time. We must begin distributing our belongings to the denizens of this place, just as prophesized by Lord Tianlian and the Heavenly Demon. After this, all we can do is hope for the best for His Majesty. I believe he will choose the right path," the man said.

From Aldrian's point of view, he finally saw the man as he stepped into sight, approaching the Phoenix Ancestor. He had long golden hair and was strikingly handsome, tall and sturdy also exuding strong charisma. What stood out most were the two dragon-like horns on his forehead.

However, just like the Phoenix Ancestor, this man did not appear to be in good condition. His face was pale, his presence dimmed by whatever afflicted him. The sorrow Aldrian felt upon seeing the Phoenix Ancestor in such a state only deepened as he realized the man was suffering as well.

"We are among his earliest followers, and we must place our trust in His Majesty's future and the path he seeks to achieve. We have to believe that he will succeed and that he will return one day! His Majesty was always destined for greatness—we must have faith in that!" the man declared.

The Phoenix Ancestor sighed upon hearing his words, her fingers gently stroking the scarf a few more times. Then, as if she had finally steeled her resolve, her expression turned firm. She looked at him with unwavering determination.

"Alright."

The scene shifted once again. This time, he found himself in the hands of a man he had never seen before.

The man had black hair and appeared to be middle-aged, dressed in noble attire. He held the scarf with the utmost care, as if it were the most precious treasure in existence, afraid that even touching it might stain its fabric.

Not far from him, the Phoenix Ancestor stood.

"I hope you will uphold our agreement. If not, you will face the consequences," she said.

There was no softness in her tone, no warmth, only a flat, emotionless voice. It was a stark contrast to any vision Aldrian had seen of her over the years.

Aldrian watched as the middle-aged man carefully placed the scarf inside a box, his movements slow and deliberate. Before the lid closed, Aldrian noticed something else—her guqin, The Spirit of Great Path, and a divine grade sword are resting beside him.

He then saw the middle-aged man kowtowed to the Phoenix Ancestor and solemnly declared,

"I, the patriarch of the Ragius family, swear to the heavens that we will uphold our binding agreement with the goddess. Should we ever break this oath, beyond the curse of the contract, may the heavens themselves send their heavenly tribulation upon us as punishment."

With that oath spoken, Aldrian's vision faded into darkness.

## **Chapter 426: Like a Pet That Had Found Its Master**

Aldrian's mind returned to reality as he grasped the scarf in his hand inside the secret vault of the Rosalind family. He opened his eyes and looked at the scarf, a deep sadness settling in his heart. Remembering the face of the phoenix ancestor and how she had given away the scarf "he" had given her, he felt a sharp pang of heartache.

The information he had just gained from the vision was immense, but he chose not to dwell on it for now. Instead, he injected his golden energy into the scarf to see if it would react. A golden hue appeared on his hand and transferred to the fabric, a sight that Baron Rosalind and the others could clearly see. It was the first time they had witnessed Aldrian's golden energy up close, and they were utterly mesmerized by it.

At this moment, what they felt from the golden energy was warmth and soothing comfort. Was this really the same energy that had unleashed a sword technique capable of cutting down a flying fortress? How could an energy possess such vastly different properties? They couldn't comprehend it—it was beyond their understanding.

Usually, any type of energy had distinct properties that could be clearly sensed. For example, fire energy felt hot and wild, water energy was refreshing and cool, wind energy was soothing yet strong, and earth energy was solid and robust. So on and so forth. Of course, these sensations were based on the fundamental properties of the elements.

However, this golden energy, which they were seeing for the first time from Aldrian, seemed capable of changing its properties according to his will. This was truly beyond their knowledge, as they had no idea what kind of energy it was. It also raised questions about his origins—what family had given birth to such a genius and singularity?

They also sensed the same feeling they had gotten from the aura of the scarf—the very thing that had made Elena want to invite Aldrian here in the first place.

After Aldrian injected his golden energy into the scarf, something unexpected happened—for the first time in Baron Rosalind and Elena's lives, the scarf trembled slightly. Then, all of a sudden, it began to move on its own, slithering like a snake as it wrapped around Aldrian's right arm and up to his shoulders.



Aldrian was stunned, and the others were equally shocked.

The scarf behaved like a pet that had found its master. Aldrian knew it was responding to his golden energy—an energy that must have felt familiar to it. After all, "he" was the one who had created this scarf. Aldrian could sense its intent as it clung tightly to his arm, unwilling to let go.

Baron Rosalind and Elena watched with shocked expressions—this was the first time they had ever seen the artifact move!

For years, they had tried everything to provoke a response from it. They had injected various types of energy, attempted to break it, and even tried to bind it to cultivators, yet nothing had worked.

An artifact that could not be broken, could not be bound by cultivators, and had never shown any signs of movement. The only thing they had confirmed was that, despite its fragile appearance, it was incredibly strong.

And now, for the first time, it responded after coming into contact with Aldrian's golden energy.

Aldrian let out a bitter smile as he glanced at Baron Rosalind and the others, who were staring at him with their mouths agape.

"May I stay here for a while, Your Excellency? I would like to comprehend something," Aldrian said to Baron Rosalind, though in truth, it was merely an excuse to remain here longer.

The baron calmed himself after witnessing the astonishing scene and immediately nodded without hesitation.

"Of course, you may, young master. Take your time," he said.

Right now, he understood that Aldrian truly had a connection to the artifact. If Aldrian could uncover something from the scarf, they might finally learn more about their family's past. And if they could grasp that knowledge, they might even be able to maximize the potential of their already powerful cultivation technique.

After that, Baron Rosalind and the others left, leaving Aldrian alone inside the secret vault.

Once he was alone, Aldrian sat in a meditative position and closed his eyes once more. He decided to meditate to calm his mind after the emotional turbulence caused by the visions he had seen. He needed to regain control so he wouldn't be consumed by them.

At times, he had to suppress his emotions due to the countless visions he received. Each vision evoked different feelings—sometimes, they had little effect on him; other times, they unsettled him but were manageable. And then there were moments like this, when the emotional impact was overwhelming, leaving him deeply shaken and depressed.

If he allowed these emotions to take over his heart, it would be dangerous, he could go crazy or even awaken an inner demon.

After closing his eyes, he exhaled a deep breath. The scarf remained wrapped around his arm, refusing to let go, but Aldrian didn't mind.

He decided to cultivate as well, keeping his mind preoccupied and at peace. Additionally, he decided to build his domain here, after all, this was the place where the faith of not only Rosalind City but the entire Rosalind Barony had gathered.

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While Aldrian cultivated in peace, the situation within the imperial palace was far from good.

When news from the southern front reached Prince Wilmar's ears, his expression was like a volcano on the verge of erupting. He wanted nothing more than to lash out at his troops, who seemed powerless against Aldrian and had suffered yet another crushing defeat.

However, he couldn't truly blame them—not when faced with Aldrian's overwhelming strength.

He had also received new information, the Rosalind family actually possessed a divine-grade sword. This meant with baron Rosalind's strength they could have withstood the attack of that scale even without Aldrian's presence.

This was completely outside his predictions. He had to admit, the Rosalind family had done an impressive job of keeping such a powerful weapon hidden from the many eyes and ears of the empire.

Now that his faction had lost two important checkpoints in the southern region, their operations in the south would be greatly hindered. Even worse, their troops facing Grand Duke Arim's forces in the Arim grand duchy now had a high chance of being caught in a pincer attack from the Rosalind Barony's territory.

Prince Wilmar clenched his fist—this was exactly what he had feared about Aldrian. That man was truly decisive and seemed to never tire of continuous battle. Just a few days ago, Aldrian had crushed his army on the eastern front, and now he had already

appeared in the south, giving the rebel faction room to reorganize and strengthen their forces.

He didn't know if he could keep pushing the troops stationed in the Arim Grand Duchy and still secure victory now that Aldrian was in the south. As long as Aldrian remained unchecked, this pattern would repeat—his forces suffering defeat after defeat until they were completely wiped out and overtaken by the rebel forces.

Now, his only hope was that the "plague" plan would truly keep Aldrian occupied long enough for him to deal with the rebels. He couldn't wait for the coming days.

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Time passed, and night had already fallen.

Aldrian was still inside the secret vault when he finally opened his eyes. Looking down at his arm, he saw that the scarf was still wrapped around him. It hadn't moved even slightly since it first coiled around him. Smiling, he stroked the fabric, enjoying its softness.

He then stood up and made his way outside from the underground chamber. Only then did he realize that night had already arrived, though he wasn't surprised. He had been deeply immersed in comprehension and thinking.

His thoughts lingered on the visions he had saw. He carefully analyzed every detail, trying to fit them together like pieces of a puzzle. After hours of contemplation, the puzzle finally began to take shape—one that answered questions he had been seeking for years.

After he stepped out of the underground place, Aldrian saw Elena sitting in meditation not far from the entrance to the secret path. It seemed she had been waiting for him while cultivating. Sensing his presence, she opened her eyes and looked at him.

She smiled before standing up and approaching him.

"Are you done, young master?" she asked.

"Yes, I'm done, but it looks like this artifact is really clinging to me, so I think I'll have to let it be for some time," Aldrian replied.

Elena nodded while gazing at the scarf, still amazed by the artifact's response.

"I will tell Father about it later," she said. "Anyway, do you want to go somewhere? Or would you like to go to your room? We've already prepared a special room for you to stay in. We really hope that you will stay at our mansion—it would be our honor to host you."

"I will stay here for a while, thank you. There is something I need to discuss with your father regarding your family, but I don't think this is the right time. Let's leave that for tomorrow."

Elena was truly curious about what Aldrian wanted to say. Had he discovered something about her family from the artifact? Her heart pounded with anticipation for the revelation.

"Before you take me to my room, I'd like to visit a place first. I know your family has many plum blossom trees in the back garden—I want to go there."

He suddenly felt an urge to seek out a peaceful place, somewhere he could enjoy the night sky with the scarf still wrapped around his arm.

## **Chapter 427: The Music of the Night**

Aldrian was led to the neatly arranged plum blossom trees at the back of the mansion, where a vast garden stretched out before him. Although it was not the blooming season, and the trees did not display their full beauty, he did not mind.

He decided to sit under one of the plum blossom trees that he thought was good. Since it was not the blooming season, the tree's branches were bare, without any blossoms, allowing him to see the clear night sky even as he sat beneath it. Looking up, he saw countless stars glimmering in his eyes. He liked gazing at the stars, just as "he" did.

*"The stars are the jewels of the cosmos,"* he thought, repeating what "he" had once said.

Aldrian had agreed with everything "he" said back then. Because he loved watching the stars, he felt the vastness of the universe, which often made him wonder, What would it be like to fly to that star? Or how far is it? How long would it take to reach that place?

All of these thoughts, even if subconscious, were a form of intent—a driving force that pushed people to reach for the sky. They would strive toward that aspiration, and in doing so, new knowledge would emerge. And to think, it all started with something as simple as gazing at the stars.

Elena had already put some distance from him so as not to disturb him. Ever since Aldrian came out of the underground place, she had sensed something different about him, though she couldn't quite pinpoint what it was. She only knew that, for now, he seemed to want to be alone.

After a few minutes of gazing at the stars, Aldrian suddenly took out a guqin and placed it in front of him. Although it was not the same guqin he had seen in his vision a few hours ago, the Spirit of the Great Path could serve as a substitute for now. He thought that the guqin from his vision was "his" original guqin—the Guqin of Origin.

Under the night sky, Aldrian finally began to play. The strings resonated with each pluck, weaving together a beautiful melody. At this moment, he played the same piece that the phoenix ancestor had once played when she sat beneath a plum blossom tree. It was the music she had said was inspired by "his" guqin playing.

Elena, who had been watching Aldrian's every movement, was initially stunned when he took out a guqin. Can he really play? she wondered. But the moment his fingers touched the strings, her question was answered. A soothing melody filled the air, its beauty undeniable. Amazed by Aldrian's skill, she simply sat, closed her eyes, and allowed herself to be carried away by the music.

Aldrian kept playing, fully immersed in the music. He felt the scarf on his arm tremble slightly, but he continued undisturbed. The sound spread throughout the entire mansion, reaching the ears of everyone inside. Although his music was not at the level of "him," it was already affecting the surrounding nature. The flow of heaven and earth energy seemed to slow in response, and the sounds of animals quieted, as if making way for the guqin's melody.

Baron Rosalind, who was still in conversation with Old Man York in the baron's room, also heard the guqin and decided to seek out the source of the beautiful sound. As they stepped outside of the room, they noticed that all of the mansion's residents had already halted their activities, captivated by the music. When they finally arrived at the back garden, they saw Elena and in the distance, Aldrian, playing the guqin.

The sound continued to spread, reaching even beyond the mansion and into the city. The denizens who heard the guqin's melody were bewildered by its sudden appearance, as if the music had emerged from nowhere. They did not know where the sound came from, yet it felt as if it were playing right beside their ears.

One by one, all activity came to a halt as people paused to listen. Even though they were unfamiliar with the melody, an inexplicable feeling welled up within them as they heard the music.

Aldrian kept playing, and at that moment, he felt as if he were in the presence of the phoenix ancestor. It seemed as though she were sitting beside him on his right, smiling as she listened to the music. The scarf on his arm and the guqin she once played only made her imaginary presence feel even stronger.

As the music finally came to an end, Aldrian opened his eyes and subconsciously glanced to his side before letting out a sigh.

*"What was I expecting?"*

That figure belonged to the past. He had never met her in this life, and he didn't even know if she was still alive.

Shaking off the thought, he decided to continue. He played another piece—this time, a melody once performed by "him," a composition meant to capture the majesty and vastness of the universe—the beauty of the stars, the heavens and earth.

At this moment, his temperament, his figure, everything about him resembled "him". A sense of déjà vu washed over him as he played. The effects of this melody were far greater and more expansive than the one before. The heavens and earth themselves were listening, and his domain resonated with the music. Everyone within his domain could faintly hear the guqin's sound.

Aldrian remained unaware of this, but even if he had known, he wouldn't have minded. He simply wanted to play this piece, one created by "him" in the past that resonated deeply with his heart.

Many sought to find the source of the music and meet the one playing it. However, only a few knew the truth, the Rosalind family or those who had seen Aldrian from the mansion, and his group in Caritas.

Since Sylphia and the others had already heard Aldrian play the guqin before, they were familiar with his style and the beauty he could evoke through his music. Moreover, the Spirit of the Great Path produced a sound clearer and more enchanting than any other guqin they had ever heard, leaving a distinct impression on those who listened. That was how they immediately recognized that Aldrian was the one playing.

Sylphia stood outside on the balcony, listening. The moment the music reached her ears, she knew it was Aldrian. Yet, this piece stirred something different within her—a sudden longing, an aspiration to reach the heavens. She wanted to soar across the sky, to explore the vastness of the universe, to fly freely and witness the beauty of the cosmos.

Baek Jimin felt the same, and in truth, everyone who heard the melody was overcome by the same yearning.

On this night, all beings within Aldrian's domain heard his music. And from that moment on, many would speak of the mysterious sound of the guqin and the enigmatic player who created it.

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By the time the eastern horizon began to show signs of sunrise, painting the sky in shades of purple, Aldrian finally stopped playing. He had performed the piece he had heard from "him" many times, as well as a melody of his own creation that born in his mind when inspiration had surged through him like a tidal wave after he sat beneath the plum blossoms.

Letting out a quiet sigh, Aldrian stood up and stretched. His gaze fell to his arm, where the scarf still clung to him. A small smile crossed his lips as he sensed its quiet joy from having heard his guqin's music, even though he had never bound this artifact to his soul. Perhaps it was because of the strong karmic bond from the past—because "he" was the one who created it.

Aldrian stored the guqin away before turning to his left, where he saw Baron Rosalind and the others watching him in awe. As he approached them, the baron let out a sigh and spoke before Aldrian could say anything.

"Young Master, you are truly talented. I doubt there is anyone like you on this continent. Not only are you a formidable sword cultivator, but you also excel in music. What a masterpiece—a breathtaking melody that even granted me insight into the essence of music. This is the kind of music that allows its listeners to grasp the deeper meaning behind each note played."

Beside him, Old Man York nodded in agreement.

Aldrian smiled at the baron's compliment.

"Is that so? I never expected Your Excellency to hold my playing in such high regard. I'm truly flattered," Aldrian said before turning to Elena.

"I'm sorry for staying out here all night, playing the guqin. I hope—"

"No, no, Young Master," Elena interrupted, shaking her head. "In fact, I'm glad you kept playing. I hardly noticed how quickly time passed while listening to your music, and I felt no discomfort whatsoever. On the contrary, I am the one who should be grateful for witnessing such an extraordinary performance. It is truly a blessing to hear your music." She gave him a slight bow as she spoke.

Aldrian smiled and nodded. "I'm glad you enjoyed it."

He then shifting his gaze to the baron, "Your Excellency, I need to discuss something with you, something concerning your family's past."

## **Chapter 428: His Guesses**

Aldrian was then brought to Baron Rosalind's private study, where they could discuss the matter in private. Only Aldrian, Baron Rosalind, and Elena were present in the room, as Old Man York excused himself, saying he did not wish to disturb them.

After the tea was served and the maids had left, the atmosphere grew tense—at least for the baron and Elena, who were eager to learn what information Aldrian had obtained from the scarf.



Aldrian looked at both of them for a moment before finally speaking.

"I heard that the Rosalind family's ancestor came from outside the Atria Empire, if I may ask, do you know the exact time when your ancestor arrived in this empire?"

This was information he had previously learned from Elena when she told him about the Rosalind family's history during their first meeting at the Larson Grand Duchy.

Baron Rosalind nodded. "Yes, our ancestor came from outside the empire. According to our records, it was sometime after the great war with the devils, around three million years ago."

Hearing the baron's answer, Aldrian sighed.

*"As expected."*

As he pondered the details of the vision he had seen through the scarf, he knew that the phoenix ancestor had given the scarf, the divine-grade sword, and the Spirit of the Great Path guqin to a family named Ragius. It seemed that the phoenix ancestor had made some kind of agreement with that family in exchange for granting them her artifacts and cultivation techniques.

Now he knew that the phoenix Xin Haotian had mentioned in his story about the Everlasting Silent Forest was actually the phoenix ancestor. She had come to this place in the past, seemingly wounded by something. He suspected she had been trying to escape from or hide from something, which led her to arrive here with the dragon.

Xin Haotian had told him that millions of years ago, four guardian families protected the central part of the Everlasting Silent Forest. They had formed an agreement with the dragon and the phoenix. However, these families suffered immense losses, and three of them were completely destroyed during the great war with the devils three million years ago.

Xin Haotian had also told him that his family, the Xin family, was the only surviving guardian family. They had long believed the others were completely destroyed, with no surviving members. However, Aldrian's emergence from the secret realm provided Xin Haotian with a clue—there might still be survivors from the lost families, though it had yet to be confirmed.

But then a question arose: how had all those artifacts ended up in the hands of the Rosalind family? The answer was beginning to take shape, like pieces of a puzzle falling into place as the flow of past events became clearer.

After thinking it through, Aldrian finally concluded that the ancestor of the Rosalind family was actually a survivor of the Ragius family. After the great war with the devils, some members of the Ragius family had managed to escape with their artifacts and

eventually found refuge in the Atria Empire. But why had they become the Rosalind family?

Although he wasn't certain of the exact reason, Aldrian tried to put himself in the shoes of the Ragius family's survivors at that time. They had just endured the great war with the devils—enemies who not only knew their strength but were also aware of their deep connection to the dragon and phoenix residing in the central part of the Everlasting Silent Forest.

For a family that had already lost much of its power due to the war, they needed to find a way to hide from danger. One possible solution, Aldrian thought, was to create a new identity. After arriving in the Atria Empire, they would have forged a new identity for themselves and worked to establish their presence in order to recover.

The entire Atria Empire, which had also suffered destruction from the war, was unaware of the Ragius family's existence. Aldrian imagined that when the imperial family discovered a group of strangers in the southern part of the empire, they had likely assumed they were merely refugees.

Then another question arose—why was the Spirit of the Great Path guqin in the hands of the Losaris imperial family? His guess was that it had something to do with a secret agreement between the Ragius family and the imperial family.

It was well known that the Rosalind family held a unique position despite being only a barony. Their strength rivaled that of a dukedom—or even a grand duchy—yet the imperial family showed no interest in interfering with their affairs. Instead, they seemed content to let the Rosalinds remain undisturbed in the southern part of the empire.

Aldrian had already heard from Marquess Xavier the envoy about a rumor that the Spirit of the Great Path was a gift from an unknown noble family.

This was yet another coincidence too significant to ignore, allowing him to piece the puzzle together. From his guess, the Ragius family had decided to offer the guqin to the Losaris imperial family in exchange for their non-interference in Ragius affairs. It seemed they had also requested a noble status within the empire to conceal their true identity from the devils at the time.

The imperial family, of course, gladly accepted the gift and granted the Ragius family what they desired. Having suffered great losses themselves, the Losaris imperial family was in desperate need of new strength. Aldrian reasoned that many of the survivors from that time were likely the strong individuals—those who had managed to escape while also protecting their weaker family members.

To the imperial family, taking them in was hardly a loss.

Moreover, unwilling to invite further conflict or problems, the imperial family simply upheld their end of the agreement and respected it—especially since they had already received the artifact.

Another question arose—why did the Rosalind family seem completely unaware of their true history?

Aldrian guessed that the surviving members of the Ragius family hadn't lived long after settling in the empire, leaving their descendants to continue their lives there. They likely hadn't had enough time to fully pass down their cultivation techniques or the true extent of their responsibilities to the dragon and the phoenix.

Their limited time was not enough to engrave that responsibility in their descendants' hearts, leading them to neglect it over time. Moreover, having just survived a devastating war, their descendants likely wished to distance themselves from the Everlasting Silent Forest altogether.

As time passed, their connection to the secret realm of the Everlasting Silent Forest gradually faded. Their identity as one of the guardian families of the forest was eventually forgotten, to the point that no records of it remained.

This would also explain why the direct descendants of the Ragius family—now the Rosalind family—could sense divine energy, even without understanding what it was. As the true descendants of one of the guardian families that once protected the Everlasting Silent Forest, they possessed a heightened sensitivity to divine energy due to their ancestral connection with the phoenix ancestor.

Aldrian knew that the phoenix ancestor had given them artifacts and a cultivation technique, making them a powerful guardian family. Because of this, the phoenix ancestor might have also taught them a thing or two about divine energy, which was likely connected to their cultivation technique. After all, their cultivation technique originated from a higher realm.

The last thing that still lingered in Aldrian's mind was why the contract binding the Ragius family and the phoenix ancestor had not taken effect, even after they had long departed from the forest. He had a few guesses, but he couldn't be certain without seeing the central part of the Everlasting Silent Forest himself.

He needed to see the dragon and the phoenix.

Hearing Aldrian sigh, the baron suddenly grew worried.

"Young master, is there something wrong with our ancestor?"

Aldrian shook his head. "Nothing. I just feel that meeting the Rosalind family is truly fate."

The baron looked confused, but Aldrian continued.

"I already know, more or less, the truth about the Rosalind family's past. But before that, I need to tell you something. Do you know the secret hidden within the Everlasting Silent Forest?"

"Well, what we know about that forbidden place isn't much different from the common knowledge shared across the continent. The forest is shrouded in mystery, and anyone who steps inside is guaranteed to become lost, never to return," the baron answered.

"However, all of that changed after the phenomenon of the dragon and phoenix more than sixteen years ago. Many people who had been lost in the forest suddenly returned. I heard they had actually been trapped inside secret realms," Baron Rosalind added.

Aldrian nodded.

"I see. Then I have a secret to share with Your Excellency. Do you know that, in the past, there were secret families within the forest tasked with guarding the Everlasting Silent Forest?"

Baron Rosalind and Elena widened their eyes.

"Secret families? There were people living in that forbidden zone?" Baron Rosalind asked in astonishment.

"Yes. In fact, there were four families who once lived in that forest. They were the guardians of the Everlasting Silent Forest."

"Wait, young master, my apologies, but before we continue, I must ask—where did you learn this information? For as long as history remembers, the Everlasting Silent Forest has been known as a deadly zone that traps anyone who enters. But now you're saying that there were hidden families living there 'in the past.' How can you be so sure?" Baron Rosalind asked, his expression filled with confusion.

Aldrian smiled.

"Well, it's because of Xin Haotian."

## **Chapter 429: Asking a Favour**

"Xin Haotian? The Sword Saint?" Baron Rosalind asked in wonder. He already knew that Xin Haotian had been with Aldrian's group all this time, as Elena had informed him.

"Yes. Do you know Xin Haotian's origin, Your Excellency?" Aldrian asked.

"Well, his origin has been a mystery for a long time. No one knows anything about it since his rise to the title of Sword Saint thousands of years ago. Many theories have emerged since then—some believe he is a hidden young master from an unknown noble family—but none of them have been proven." The baron answered.

"Theories about his origins are based on the power of his cultivation technique, his swordsmanship, and the sword he wields. He is still young for an Emperor-stage cultivator, and his sword—said to be a divine-grade artifact—is not something that can be obtained just anywhere."

"However, some argue that the Sword Saint might simply be a fortunate man who stumbled upon an unknown inheritance, gaining all of this power by chance."

After hearing the baron's answer, Aldrian turned to Elena.

"Uhm, I only know as much as everyone else. I truly don't know the Sword Saint's origin," she admitted.

Aldrian nodded, but at that moment, something finally clicked in Baron Rosalind and Elena's minds. Their eyes widened.

"Wait, Young Master, don't tell me—?!"

"Yes, you're right. Xin Haotian comes from one of the hidden families within the Everlasting Forest. In fact, he is their young master. You could say he is indeed from a noble family. His family members sometimes blend in with the people of the continent, but due to their secretive nature, no one truly knows about them," Aldrian explained.

He had learned about Xin Haotian's status directly from the man himself during their journey. Xin Haotian had revealed that he was the young master of the Xin family, which explained why his family dared to bestow upon him something as rare as a divine-grade artifact—most likely a legacy artifact.

He was their young master, and a formidable one at that.

Baron Rosalind and Elena were truly shocked by this revelation. Was this the truth behind the Sword Saint's origin? No wonder he seemed to have appeared out of nowhere, sweeping across the continent with his glorious achievements—battling devils and defeating powerful opponents. If he had come from the Everlasting Silent Forest, it made sense that there were no reports of his origins.

"Then... who are they?" Baron Rosalind asked. "All this time, the Everlasting Silent Forest has been known for its deadly nature, trapping anyone who dares to enter. But if there are families living there, doesn't that mean they can enter and leave as they please? Also, Young Master, you mentioned that these families are guarding the forest—what exactly are they guarding?"

"To answer that, let's take a step back and look at the history of the Everlasting Silent Forest," Aldrian said before beginning his explanation.

He told Baron Rosalind and Elena about the arrival of a dragon and a phoenix to this continent, as well as the agreement they made with the four aboriginal families, who later became the hidden guardian families of the forest. He explained why these families remained within the forest's secret realm, upholding their duty for many years.

Aldrian then recounted what had befallen these families during the great war against the devils three million years ago—how only two of them had survived the annihilation. His explanation was based on what he had learned from Xin Haotian and the knowledge he had gained from his visions.

Baron Rosalind's heart pounded loudly as he listened to the story of the hidden families and the revelation that there were actually survivors after the great war. Of course, he was well aware of the war against the devils three million years ago—it was one of the most significant events in the continent's history. The devils had sought to dominate the continent and had nearly succeeded, if not for their sudden and unexplained retreat back to their own territory.

But to think that something like this had happened? That the true reason behind the devils' retreat was the might of the dragon and the phoenix?

Baron Rosalind let out a deep sigh after hearing Aldrian's story. He looked at Aldrian with a solemn expression.

"Then, Young Master, are you suggesting that our ancestors were the survivors of that hidden family? The Ragius family?"

"Yes, your ancestors were actually survivors of the Ragius family who took refuge here," Aldrian answered. "It has been millions of years, and over time, their descendants seem to have detached themselves from the forest and the agreement. It's no wonder none of you knew your true origins or your connection to the Everlasting Silent Forest."

"Your family and the Xin family are the true aboriginal families of this continent, long before the empires were built as they are now, before the arrival of people from other continents. Your true roots lie here, and your ancestors made an agreement with the phoenix. That is the true history of your family."

Silence filled the room after Aldrian's final explanation.

After a few moments, Baron Rosalind stood up from his sofa and walked toward the window, gazing at the scenery outside. The sky was already illuminated by the morning sunlight. His expression remained calm, but the turbulence in his heart was evident in his eyes.

To think that the Rosalind family's history could be like this... He believed Aldrian's words because everything made sense. It also aligned with doubts he had harbored for a long time. Where had their legacy artifacts come from? There were no records of a blacksmith master who had forged them.

There was no way they had simply been found by chance, right?

The imperial family's treatment of his family and the way he had been educated since childhood—to believe that their family was better off as a barony and should remain neutral in the empire's politics—all of it made sense now. They had simply wanted to live in peace, far from trouble.

This was a truly shocking revelation. At last, they knew the true history of their ancestors.

After a few moments of silence, Baron Rosalind turned his head toward Aldrian.

"Young Master, you said that our ancestors gave the imperial family a divine artifact in exchange for a peaceful life and a place to live. May I know what that artifact was?"

Aldrian smiled. "You've already seen it."

Baron Rosalind looked confused for a moment before his eyes widened slightly.

"The guqin?" he asked.

Aldrian responded with a nod.

"The guqin was actually brought out by the second prince as a means to make peace with me. He sent an envoy to Caritas a few days ago, but as you can see, my response to his proposal for peace is that I'm here."

Elena smiled upon hearing this, while Baron Rosalind burst into laughter.

"Hahaha! You are truly courageous, Young Master. I can just imagine the second prince's fuming expression when you simply took the divine-grade artifact without giving him anything in return—and instead, you're here, killing his faction's troops."

Aldrian simply smiled and took a sip of his tea. After setting the teacup down, he looked at the baron.

"Now that you know about the guqin's origins, do you want it back?" he asked.

Baron Rosalind was momentarily stunned, but then he waved his hand dismissively.



"No, Young Master. Although that guqin was something our ancestors gave to the imperial family in exchange for their favor, it is already in your hands. It wouldn't be right for us to ask for it back after the imperial family willingly gave it to you. Moreover, our family does not specialize in musical instruments like the guqin, so it would be wasted on us," he said.

"After hearing you play last night, I believe the guqin is already in good hands. There is no one more suited to wield a divine-grade guqin than you."

Aldrian smiled and nodded.

"Then I must thank you. I've grown quite fond of the guqin and was thinking of keeping it."

"Yes, that is as it should be, and in fact—" Baron Rosalind's gaze shifted toward the scarf still wrapped around Aldrian's right arm and shoulders.

"I can give you the scarf as well, Young Master. It seems far more useful in your hands than in ours. Although it is a divine-grade artifact, we have never been able to make proper use of it. All we know is that it is incredibly strong and soft, but beyond that, its purpose remains unknown. It would be better in the hands of someone who can truly wield its power. Keeping it stored away without purpose would be a waste."

Aldrian's eyes widened slightly. Baron Rosalind was truly too generous! Even if they couldn't use the Heavenly Scarf of Divine Phoenix, they could have simply kept it as an heirloom or even sold it to the highest bidder! This was a peak divine-grade artifact, after all, its value was nearly immeasurable. It could easily be worth billions of peak-level energy stones, making it one of the most expensive artifacts of all time.

However, Aldrian inwardly sighed in relief. To be honest, he would have found it a pity to leave the scarf behind. After all, "he" was the one who had created it in the past as a gift for the phoenix ancestor, and it seemed to react only to him.

"However, Young Master, in return, I would like to ask a favor."

Aldrian smiled at the baron. If he wanted to request something in exchange, so be it. He had already obtained two divine artifacts once used by the phoenix ancestor.

"What is it, Your Excellency?"

"Please, Young Master, when the time of the prophecy comes, I ask that you also help our family or at the very least, protect Elena." The baron said with a solemn expression.

## **Chapter 430: Feel Much More Assured**

"Father!" Elena said, her voice trembling, while Aldrian stood stunned. For Baron Rosalind to make such a request, he must have been seriously considering the future.

Many were still uncertain about what would happen when the church's prophecy come. However, Aldrian knew that after all the signs and chaos of recent years, they already realize that the prophecy was connected to the devils.

Initially, many were still unsure whether it was related to the devils or not, but after all this time, they had to come to the conclusion that the prophecy was about the devils.

The devils' activities in recent years had risen sharply. The continuous wars and skirmishes involving them, strengthened the belief that the prophecy signified an impending great war with the devils. If another great war broke out, they did not know if they would have the same luck as in the last one.

In the last war, the cultivators' levels on the continent were significantly higher than in today's era, with a much greater number of peak Emperor-stage cultivators. The same applied to other cultivators—they were more numerous and at a much higher level than they are now.

However, despite all of that, the continent was still nearly conquered by the devils. If not for the fact that the devils strangely retreated after gaining the upper hand, when they only needed one final push for total victory, this continent would be entirely under their rule today.

Of course, only a few knew that their retreat was because of the dragon and phoenix ancestor.

If, with such a vastly superior number of high-level cultivators, they still nearly lost to the devils, then what about now? They had no way of knowing the full extent of the devils' power, and based on the experience gained from the war between the Doria Empire and the devils, the devils seemed incredibly strong.

With the strength of today's cultivators, if the devils were to declare another great war at full power, just as they did three million years ago, then they would be utterly doomed. The luck they had back then would not necessarily be repeated in the future.

In Baron Rosalind's mind, Aldrian's existence was truly a blessing from the heavens, a beacon of hope for the continent in the face of the coming tribulation. If securing Aldrian's help meant giving him the Rosalind family's legacy artifacts, then so be it. He would do whatever it took to ensure his family's survival.

Seeing the touched expression on Elena's face, Baron Rosalind simply smiled at her.

"The future is uncertain, and the age of chaos seems near or perhaps it has already descended upon us. I can only hope that placing our legacy artifacts in the young

master's hands will be of great help. But as a patriarch and a father, I also hope that, with these artifacts, young master will aid us when the time comes."

"I know I cannot force you to help us, but I sincerely hope that young master will consider it." Baron Rosalind then bowed slightly.

"Father..." Elena's eyes trembled as she looked at her father. She had never seen him bow to anyone other than the emperor before, yet now, with a pleading tone, he bowed before Aldrian.

Elena turned to Aldrian and stood up before bowing as well. Although she did not care about securing protection for herself, she wanted her father's request to be fulfilled, so she lowered her head and said,

"Young master, you don't have to protect me, but I hope you can help my family. Please, fulfill my father's request."

Aldrian gazed at the beautiful, mature woman before him. Baron Rosalind was stunned, but he still smiled while remaining in his bow. She was truly his daughter—one who always put her family first.

Aldrian, watching the two family members supporting each other, could only sigh. Finally, he opened his mouth.

"I have to reject your request."

Hearing Aldrian's answer, Baron Rosalind was stunned. He couldn't help but feel disappointed, though he wasn't surprised. As for Elena, she instantly raised her head, looking at Aldrian with a pleading expression.

"Young master, I beg—"

"Let me finish my words first."

Elena immediately fell silent as Aldrian cut her off.

"I have to reject your request because what you're asking is something I would do regardless. Even if you hadn't asked me, I would still do it. So it can't be considered a favor."

Both Baron Rosalind and Elena were stunned. The baron slowly raised his head, looking at Aldrian in shock.

"Does that mean...?"

"Yes. Even without you asking me, I would help your family survive the time of prophecy if that time comes. In fact, I had planned to discuss this with you today, but I didn't expect you to make such a request. If it's about protecting or assisting the Rosalind family, I've already thought about it."

Baron Rosalind's face lit up, and he immediately bowed again.

"Thank you, young master. We are truly grateful that you will help us in the future. If we survive the time of prophecy, our family will forever stand by your side in support of anything you need."

Elena was also overjoyed by Aldrian's decision. She felt grateful for his kindness—at the very least, her family would have another safeguard if Aldrian chose to help them in the future.

Aldrian waved his hand.

"All right, Your Excellency, please stop bowing. I feel really bad making a noble and elder keep bowing to a young man like me. As for your family's support or anything else, let's save that for the future—if we manage to survive the time of prophecy. Anyway, like I said, I want to discuss the future and how we should face the prophecy."

Baron Rosalind straightened his body and walked back toward his sofa. Right now, his heart felt both at ease and ecstatic, as one of his worries had finally been put to rest.

"So, what is it, young master?"

Aldrian took a sip of his tea before speaking to the baron.

"To be honest, Your Excellency, I more or less already know what kind of future the continent will have to face. In preparation for that time, I have been planning the creation of an alliance with various powers across the continent. As of now, I have already secured some support from the sovereign families of several empires."

"This alliance will make it much easier to provide support to different territories and will also streamline the exchange of information, shortening the chain of communication."

"With this alliance, it will also be easier for me to assist those who need it, allowing us to minimize any detrimental situations that could put us in danger."

Aldrian then adjusted his sitting position.

"What I want to tell Your Excellency is that I hope you will consider joining this alliance in the future. It will be beneficial for the Rosalind family. Because your family is special to me and we still don't know the true leader of this empire, you are the first person I have told about the alliance in this empire."

"I will not recognize the second prince as the rightful ruler, and even if I were to lower my standards and morals to ask him to join the alliance, he would only become a burden—and could even endanger us due to his connections with the devils."

The baron pondered for a moment. So this was what Aldrian meant by offering the Rosalind family help and protection. Aldrian was already planning to assist others in the future, not just the Rosalind family specifically.

However, doubts still lingered in his mind. How could one person accomplish such a feat? How would Aldrian be able to provide help where needed when the chaos of the future would demand support in so many places? There was only so much a single person could do.

But with the alliance, the Rosalind family would no longer have to stand alone when the prophecy time came. If that prophecy was truly about a great war with the devils, then by joining the alliance, the Rosalind family could rely on its strength for support if they ever needed it.

After coming to this conclusion, he looked at Aldrian.

"Actually, I don't mind our family joining this alliance. This is truly a well-thought-out plan to face the unpredictable events of the prophecy time. If young master has already gained the support of some imperial families, then it would be even safer for us to join as well."

Aldrian nodded. It was good that the alliance continued to expand—his goal was to unite all territories under it.

"But then, if there is an alliance, there must be a leader, right?" the baron asked.

Hearing this, Aldrian nodded. "Well, of course. There has to be someone responsible for overseeing the alliance's operations. Without a leader, each territory would act chaotically and without coordination, making the alliance meaningless."

The baron nodded in agreement, then looked at Aldrian with a knowing smile.

"Then, without a doubt, young master must be the one to lead it, right? I would feel much more assured if you were the one in charge."