

# The Shining Star Above The Heaven

## #Chapter 541: The Grandfathers' Demands - Read The Shining Star Above The Heaven Chapter 541: The Grandfathers' Demands

### Chapter 541: The Grandfathers' Demands

Aldrian walked toward the two grand dukes, while the two of them simply watched him approach. Once Aldrian stood nearly in front of them, he stopped and offered his best smile to his grandfathers.

"I know you have many things to ask and say, so why don't we talk about it inside, grandfathers?" Aldrian said, causing the hearts of the two grand dukes to tremble slightly.

They had just been called *grandfather* by the very man they already regarded as standing far above them. This was the same man who had done so much for their families and for the continent—it all felt surreal.

Aldrian didn't wait for their answer. He walked past them and entered the tent. Seeing Aldrian go in, the others began to follow, but the two grand dukes still stood in place, caught in the strangeness of the moment. They looked at each other and couldn't help but sigh at the same time before they entered the tent.

Now that everyone connected to the matter had gathered inside the tent, the atmosphere felt noticeably more alive. The two grand dukes sat facing each other, seated close to Aldrian, who took the center chair. It was as if everyone present had silently agreed that the center seat belonged to Aldrian.

None of them found it strange. All of them felt that Aldrian was indeed worthy of that position. After all, this matter involved him and his parents as the main figures, and he had the right to speak on their behalf.

Aldrey and Irene sat at his right and left, while the others filled the remaining seats on both sides of the table.

After a brief silence, Aldrian finally began to speak, turning his gaze toward Grand Duke Flamecrest and Grand Duke Rivas.

"To my grandfathers—my family, which means your family is also my family—I know the relationship between your two houses hasn't been good for a long time. Both sides have held onto their pride and their grievances, and the animosity still lingers after all these years."

"Now, I don't want to dwell too deeply on the past or how you've felt about each other as the patriarchs of two noble families. But what I truly want to ask, from my grandfathers here, is this—please speak about my parents, your son and daughter as their fathers. How do you want to resolve this matter? Please, give us your thoughts, not as patriarchs."

The others nodded inwardly. By asking them to speak as fathers, Aldrian had deliberately touched the softest part of both grand dukes—their feelings for their children. Speaking as a father was easier, and more sincere, than speaking as the head of a noble house.

If they spoke in their capacity as patriarchs, it would never end—each would defend the views and pride of their respective families, shaped over generations.

Aldrian turned his gaze to Grand Duke Rivas first, and the grand duke understood he had been chosen to speak first.

"To be honest, this still feels surreal," he said, looking at Aldrian with a complicated gaze. "Suddenly, I learn that my daughter had a secret lover—and even a son, who turns out to be you."

"However, although I felt betrayed at first after learning that Irene had a secret lover behind my back—and with *him*, no less," he said, glancing at Aldrey, "after thinking it through more carefully, I realized this is something that already happened. I can't change it, no matter what. The milk is already spilled."

He then turned to Aldrian.

"You are their son—their blood—and you carry my blood as well. After everything you've done for us, I don't even feel I have the right to say whether Irene should or shouldn't have done what she did. In fact, it can be said that, because of Irene, our family was saved from even greater losses. But still—"

He turned to Grand Duke Flamecrest, narrowing his eyes.

"I just couldn't let it go. This bastard's son touched my daughter without my permission. How dare he lay a hand on someone I've treasured so much? I needed to cool my head, so I rushed to the Flamecrest Grand Duchy without much thought—just to demand responsibility from the Flamecrests and to beat this old man for failing to control his son. Well... I won't deny I also wanted to beat Aldrey, too."

"But I think many who saw me yesterday misunderstood, thinking I lost my mind after finding out Irene had children with him. Well, it can't be helped—people did see me acting like a madman when I confronted Irene, using the Ice Maiden Pill, which finally made it clear to me that she was no longer a virgin... and that *he* was the one who took my daughter's innocence," Grand Duke Rivas said, looking directly at Aldrey.

Aldrey and Irene both blushed slightly at how bluntly Grand Duke Rivas described the situation.

"The rumors must've come from one of the mansion's staff who overheard the commotion between me and Irene and spread it from mouth to mouth. When I dashed toward the Flamecrest Grand Duchy, my family's cultivators followed, thinking I was about to rampage. So that's the truth behind yesterday's events."

"As for how we should settle this matter... I don't ask for much. Just let me beat Aldrey—and have him married into my family. With the continent's situation as it is, dragging up the past between our families would be foolish."

With that, Grand Duke Rivas fell silent—but his demand made a vein bulge on Grand Duke Flamecrest's forehead.

Aldrian then looked at Grand Duke Flamecrest, and the grand duke understood it was now his turn. He took a breath and calmed himself before speaking.

"I hate to say this, but I share the same thoughts as this bastard," he said, glancing at Grand Duke Rivas. "The truth is, I experienced something similar. I started investigating Aldrey's secrets back when he was trapped in the Everlasting Silent Forest—specifically, his connection to Irene."

"In the end, I discovered that he had been trapped in the same place as Irene. I could more or less guess what kind of relationship had formed between them."

"When I confronted him, all of my suspicions were confirmed. And after that... well, it was the same as this bastard's experience and intentions. I wanted to beat this old man for letting his daughter seduce my son to the point that he fell completely for her."

He paused, then added with a sigh, "But my family misunderstood my reaction and ended up making the whole situation even bigger than it needed to be. So yeah, that's the truth."

"I also won't dwell on the past. What happened between Aldrey and this woman has already happened, and no matter how angry I get, it won't change anything. After everything you've done for our family, there's no way I can just ignore Aldrey and this woman's role. Because of you, our family was saved—and we even gained the reputation we have now," Grand Duke Flamecrest said, pausing for a moment.

"As this bastard said, considering the current situation on the continent, it wouldn't be wise to drag this out or let it escalate any further. So, what I want to resolve this matter isn't too much. I'm not so low as to beat a woman that far weaker than me—so just have her marry into my family, and we'll call it a day."

After that, Grand Duke Flamecrest fell silent. His demand was more or less the same as Grand Duke Rivas's. In the end, they both still had their own interests—after all, whoever marries into their family will gain more prestige.

Aldrian understood this, but he couldn't help smiling inwardly, feeling fortunate that these two grand dukes could reach a compromise. His role had truly played a big part, just as he expected.

Their willingness to overlook the fact that his parents were secret lovers was largely because of the huge favor he had done for their families—one they would find difficult to repay. They had no choice but to take a step back.

In a normal situation, Aldrian imagined it would not be this easy.

Now, his task was to find a middle ground that satisfied all parties. Each side wanted their descendant to marry into their family, so there was a possible solution.

"Well, we've already heard the grandfathers' opinions and demands. More or less, your requests are quite similar. But let's hear what father and mother think. For me, what they want is the most important. I hope the grandfathers will listen to their opinions and grant their wishes. Whatever father and mother want, I want as well," Aldrian said.

To solve this problem, he had to be firm and leave the decision to his parents. If he left it to the two grand dukes, the issue would only drag on, as neither side would want to yield. Once his parents made their choice, he would support it, and even the two grand dukes would have no choice but to accept.

All eyes then turned to Aldrey and Irene, who became the center of attention. Aldrey and Irene had not expected Aldrian to place the decision in their hands and declare that he would prioritize whatever they wanted. Both felt deeply thankful and smiled at Aldrian, who returned the smile.

Aldrey and Irene exchanged a voice transmission for more than a minute before finally reaching their decision.

Aldrey opened his lips.

"After thinking it over, Irene and I have decided that—"

## **Chapter 542: Next Topic**

"After thinking it over, Irene and I have decided that we will still marry, but we won't marry into each other's families. We'll keep our own names. Also, we will hold the wedding in neutral territory, and after that, we'll live in a neutral territory as well," Aldrey said.

Hearing this, his father and Grand Duke Rivas both frowned, clearly displeased with Aldrey and Irene's decision.

"Son—"

"Father, this is the best way to avoid making either side feel disadvantaged. I can still be the successor of Flamecrest, and Irene can still be the successor of Rivas. I know that as noble families, you and Father-in-law have your own interests, and we believe this is the middle ground that best serves our cause. No one is harmed. No one is at a disadvantage," Aldrey cut off his father's words, causing Grand Duke Flamecrest to fall silent.

As for Grand Duke Rivas, a vein bulged on his forehead the moment he heard Aldrey already calling him *Father-in-law*. He badly wanted to beat this man who had touched his daughter without permission and shout—

*"Who are you calling Father-in-law?!"*

However, he had to admit that this was the most just decision to resolve the issue. Since neither he nor his daughter would be involved in matters concerning their marriage or their life afterward within their respective family territories, it would not provoke a negative reaction from either family—at least on the surface.

Still, in normal circumstances, this decision would have drawn opposition from those who saw it as a sign of weakness, especially the old-fashioned elders. In this case, however, all those voices had vanished from the surface—because of Aldrian.

He was the deterrent force that made those voices fall silent. The last thing they wanted was to turn Aldrian into an enemy, and the same went for him. As far as he was concerned, Aldrey and Irene's decision brought no harm to the family. And if he were not stubborn, he might earn a better image in his grandson's eyes.

He smiled, then opened his mouth.

"If this is what Irene wants, then I have no objections. I also believe it's the best course of action in this situation," he said, drawing raised eyebrows from the other leaders in the room.

That easy? They had expected debate, maybe even negotiation—yet this proud man had simply agreed?

Grand Duke Flamecrest was also stunned as he looked at Grand Duke Rivas. But when he saw that smile—one that reeked of cunning—he finally realized something. He glanced at Aldrian and almost berated himself for carelessly trying to negotiate Aldrey's decision.

That cunning fox must have wanted to present himself as a fully understanding and much wiser man! He would earn a good image in front of everyone—especially Aldrian—which would make Aldrian see that old fox as someone easier to talk to than him!

He gritted his teeth inwardly, realizing he hadn't thought it through before attempting to negotiate. That fox was truly clever. To salvage the situation, there was no other choice but to go along with it.

He sighed.

"Alright, I agree. If this is what you want to do, then what can I say? As your father, I can only support you and bless your marriage," he said to Aldrey, then turned to Irene.

"Irene, I hope you and my son have a good life—a blessed life—and all the good the world can offer. I also hope you'll give me another grandchild besides young Aldrian," he added.

His face appeared sincere, and his voice sounded convincing. He glanced slightly at Grand Duke Rivas and saw the man's face darken, nearly revealing an ugly expression. He smirked inwardly.

*"You want to build your image? I also can build mine even more, even though I made a mistake. You may be cunning, but I'm cleverer than you."*

The others looked at him in astonishment. This man was far more shameless—and far more flexible—than they had imagined. Of course, they understood that Grand Duke Flamecrest was trying to do damage control, and they were genuinely impressed by how quickly he adapted to the new development.

Still, it wasn't entirely surprising. If he didn't have this kind of ability, he would have been outplayed by other noble families long ago, and Flamecrest would have fallen into decline years back.

Aldrey and Irene, who hadn't thought that far ahead, were stunned to hear it—but then, they smiled with happiness. Irene blushed, especially after hearing that Grand Duke Flamecrest wanted more grandchildren besides Aldrian.

She glanced in Aldrey's direction, which made him look at her as well, and they smiled at each other. They were already adults, yet in that moment, they looked like young lovers just entering the spring of their romance.

Then, their eyes turned to Aldrian—their pride. It was all thanks to him that this matter had been resolved so smoothly and so quickly.

"So, Father, Mother, I assume you've already chosen the place, right? The place for your marriage—and where you want to live afterward?" Aldrian turned his head and looked at his parents.

Hearing Aldrian's question, Aldrey nodded.

"Yes. We'll hold the wedding in the Heavenly Direction Church's territory. And as for where we'll live—" he glanced at Irene again, smiling.

"We want to return to the secret realm where we were trapped before. With the changes in the Everlasting Silent Forest, I believe we can live there without worrying about being trapped again." He then looked back at Aldrian.

Aldrian raised his eyebrows, then smiled. It wasn't surprising—after all, that place held many memories for them. A place filled with peace, and a good place for cultivation as well. With its rich energy, both his father and mother would be able to cultivate more quickly, as they had before. Although, due to her pregnancy, his mother had fallen behind.

Aldrian turned to look at his grandfathers.

"So once again, I ask both Grandfathers—do you agree with my father and mother's request?" he asked.

The two Grand Dukes responded with nods.

"Yes, I agree."

"Yes, absolutely."

They spoke in unison, bringing smiles to those around them.

"Well, as for the wedding venue, don't worry. Just use the main church—I can arrange everything," Pope Claudius said, making Aldrey and Irene visibly happier.

"Thank you, Your Holiness," they said, bowing respectfully to the pope.

"No problem. How could your marriage be something simple? That wouldn't suit your status," Pope Claudius replied. But everyone understood that, regardless of their status, the pope would not normally involve himself in such a "trivial" matter. It was clearly because of Aldrian that he was willing to step in.

Aldrey and Irene truly felt fortunate to have a son like Aldrian.



The others also did not comment, as if they agreed as well. It felt as though their arrival had only been to witness the discussion—a discussion that turned out to be surprisingly easy and fast.

"Alright, then it's settled. All that's left is to choose the right time. This, however, connects to what I want to discuss to you all—something that will unfortunately have to break this happy atmosphere, because what I'm about to discuss will determine whether the marriage can happen or not," Aldrian said, his expression turning slightly serious.

Seeing Aldrian's serious tone, all the leaders looked at him with curiosity about what he intended to discuss. Aldrey and Irene also sensed the shift in atmosphere and glanced at Aldrian with wonder.

Aldrian sighed.

"With the current situation on the continent, I'm afraid the prophesied time is actually much closer than we imagined—so close that we may not have time to choose the wedding date. I want us to prepare for it," he said, causing everyone in the room to grow solemn.

The prophesied time—the time they believe will be the most difficult tribulation to ever happen to the continent—is coming to them. Many predict it will be another great war with the devils, like the one three million years ago. However, with the continent's power much weaker now, they doubt they can hold on as they did back then.

"Young Aldrian, may I ask what makes you say that?" Pope Claudius asked, his expression solemn.

"With the recent movements of the devils, I have a feeling it is connected to the prophesied time. Some of you might not know or might be wondering about the movements of the other seven deadly sins besides those four. But I have already killed three of them—Greed, Lust, and Envy," Aldrian said.

Hearing this, those who hadn't known widened their eyes in shock.

So all this time, the seven deadly sins were no longer seven?

"With three of the seven deadly sins dead, along with their successors, the devils' power is weaker than ever. I have also destroyed their influence in many places, killing many of them and limiting their movement across the continent. But at a time like this—when the devils should be storing their remaining power for the prophesied time—the rest of the seven deadly sins suddenly attacked recklessly with their minions."

"Their objective is unknown, which unsettles me. I can sense that the devil lord is planning something big with this attack, and it has to do with the prophesied time. He



would not have the seven deadly sins move in such a coordinated manner to slaughter many without a definitive purpose."

"But because we don't know their true objective behind these movements, we have become passive, which is a disadvantage for us. Many of us have been killed without putting up much resistance."

"That's why, at this chance where all the leaders of the major territories have gathered, I want us to unite and decide our next move—to save our future, to save our continent."

### **Chapter 543: The Light of Hope**

After hearing Aldrian's words, Emperor Durand asked him,

"So, what do you have in mind, young Aldrian?"

"As most of you know, I intend to unite all the major territories under one alliance to face the time of prophecy. This time, we can't afford to be careless. We can't be caught off guard like during the Great War three million years ago. We also can't remain passive. We cannot just wait and let the devils carry out their plans until their god descends," Aldrian answered.

The others frowned.

"Their god? The devil god?" Emperor Herman asked.

Aldrian nodded and looked at each of the leaders gathered.

"After looking through their memories, their ultimate plan is to summon their god to this land—and only the devil lord knows how to do it. With only him knowing the method, all of Your Majesties must understand how dire the situation is, right? What if the attacks by the Seven Deadly Sins are part of a larger plan connected to the summoning?" he said.

But some of the leaders still seemed to have doubt on their faces.

"Young Aldrian, it's not my intent to doubt your information about the devils trying to summon something, but are you certain it is their god? The being said to exist in higher realm? According to our records, such gods reside in higher realms and cannot descend to the lower ones. Even our realm cannot withstand cultivation that is too high—once we reach a certain stage, we ascend," Emperor Herman said.

Aldrian looked at the others and sensed that some of them shared the same doubts. Others—such as the three sect masters, Emperor Ladwin, Pope Claudius, and Venerable Karma Seeker—seemed to believe him fully without question.

"Then I will show you what I saw. You can judge for yourselves whether that being is their god or not. But I must warn you—do not let fear consume you after seeing it. Do not allow it to plant an inner demon in your heart. Do not let despair make you give up. Keep your mind as strong as possible. Once again—do not let fear or despair consume you," he said seriously.

None of them had ever seen Aldrian like this before. For him to speak this way, it could only mean the matter was truly grave. They then nodded.

Aldrian then closed his eyes for a moment as he created his domain. Using its power, he strengthened his illusion and trapped everyone inside the tent within it.

All the leaders were stunned—they couldn't resist at all. In an instant, they found themselves in a completely different space, unsure whether it was an illusion or reality.

Their surroundings were unmistakably the Barisan Continent—the land where they had spent their entire lives. All of them floated midair, gazing down at the land from the sky.

However, what they saw was not the usual beautiful scenery of the continent, with greenery or mountainous terrain in sight. Instead, the sky was red mixed with black, stretching all the way to the horizon. The land below seemed covered by darkness, which kept expanding until it threatened to engulf the entire continent.

The atmosphere felt suffocating, and the energy was chaotic, filled with negative power. This place seemed more fitting to be called the devil world—there was no way normal living beings could survive in such an environment.

All of this made their hearts tremble, for they had never seen the continent like this before. Then they looked up at the sky and finally watched in horror something they had never witnessed in their entire lives. Their bodies turned cold, and fear nearly overtook them—until Aldrian's voice resounded inside their minds once again.

"Don't let fear consume you!"

They jolted out of their state of fear but still couldn't take their eyes off what they saw. Sweat dropped from their foreheads as they kept staring at the firmament.

What they saw was a huge eye looking at them and the continent below as if they were mere ants or toys. The eye was enormous—almost as if it were the size of the continent itself, visible from every part of the land.

The red iris of the eye and its gaze radiated pure despair, and there was no way for them to fight this thing. Their instincts told them this, and their souls leaned toward giving up rather than fighting it. Their surrender came from the despair they felt—they knew they would never win against it.

This was their fate once that thing reached them: death if they resisted, but still death if that thing reached this continent. There was no escape from it.

Only death.

A split second later, their surroundings changed again, and they found themselves back in the tent. But the atmosphere had shifted—there was no happiness at all. No jokes, no smiles, no positive energy on their faces.

Pale, fearful, and full of despair—that was all that showed on them.

"Now do you understand the situation we're facing if we don't stop whatever the devils are planning?" Aldrian asked, making all of them turn to look at him.

There was only silence. They didn't know what to say. Something like that 'thing' could only be described as a god, just as Aldrian had said—or at least that was how they understood it. They didn't know what kind of being it was, but in the short time they had seen it, they knew they were facing something beyond their ability to fight.

Aldrey and Irene's faces were pale, and fear showed clearly in their eyes. They looked at each other and unconsciously held hands, seeking comfort after the horror they had experienced. Then, they looked at Aldrian.

Aldrian knew about this, yet he had shown no despair all this time. He spoke as if there was no problem. But how could he act like nothing was wrong when that 'thing' might descend and bring doom to the entire continent? Was he just staying calm, hiding his anxiety behind a mask of composure?

Was this something Aldrian kept to himself, knowing that showing it to others would only spread despair?

All the leaders shared the same thoughts as Aldrey and Irene and couldn't help but feel ashamed. Aldrian—someone still a teenager—already carried such a heavy burden and had never shown any weakness.

This made them, the older ones, determined not to lose to him. If Aldrian, much younger than them, could have such strong resolve, then they could too.

"Amithaba, this is truly a tribulation that the entire continent must face, but I still believe we have hope," Venerable Karma Seeker said.

"Yes, although what we saw is terrifying and depressing, I believe we still have a chance—a chance to survive that thing," Emperor Ladwin added.

"Heaven will not abandon us. Even if we face that thing, I still believe we are not entirely doomed. We must not let ourselves be consumed by despair and negative thoughts. The devils will like that and will take advantage of it," Pope Claudius said.

The others watched them and thought the three were simply trying to lift everyone's spirits, which they appreciated. But they finally understood why after that when Emperor Ladwin, Pope Claudius and Venerable Karma Seeker explained their own prophecy—besides the well-known one.

Emperor Ladwin explained the spirit of the World Tree's glimpse of another future, where a savior would come to their race—and Aldrian was the one who fit the description from that future.

Pope Claudius also explained another prophecy by Angelica, which spoke of a messiah who would come to this land and expel the darkness—and Aldrian was the one who fit that description.

As for Venerable Karma Seeker? He simply said that the brightest light that shines will be the one to expel the darkness. Essentially, he was saying the same thing as Emperor Ladwin and Pope Claudius.

After hearing all of that, they looked at Aldrian again—this time with something finally clicking inside their minds.

Is this the reason? No wonder he is so different from the others. There is no one like him. He is the chosen one! With those prophecies all pointing to the same figure, it seemed as if Aldrian was prepared by heaven as the central figure in the prophesied time.

Suddenly, a light of hope appeared inside their hearts. In the bleak future they had seen, there was a glimmer of light shining—a light that might be their way out from the darkness of despair.

Even if it sounded absurd that Aldrian alone could face that "thing," they had no choice but to believe. It was better to have hope than to drown in despair or swim toward uncertainty.

"All right, even though we caught a glimpse of the future, it is not certain. The future depends on what we do in the present. That future is only one possibility among many—depending on what we do or don't do," Aldrian said.

They all found deeper meaning in Aldrian's words. Emperor Ladwin was the first to ask.

"So, do you have a plan to make sure that future—the one where that thing descends—does not happen?"

Aldrian nodded.

"We don't need to stay passive this time. We need to be braver. With the devils planning something big, we can't always be the ones waiting," he said.

"Instead of waiting for the devils to carry out their plan, let's go to them."

The others raised their eyebrows.

"Go to them? You mean—?" King Douwin asked. Aldrian responded with a nod.

"Let's invade the Devil territory."

## **The Shining Star Above The Heaven #Chapter 544: The Alliance Created - Read The Shining Star Above The Heaven Chapter 544: The Alliance Created**

### **Chapter 544: The Alliance Created**

Hearing Aldrian's plan, the others were stunned—it was a bold proposal, but this kind of plan wasn't entirely new, it had been imagined before. However, certain factors had always kept it from moving beyond their minds.

The first factor was the lack of detailed information about the devil territory and its environment.

Many had hesitated to invade the devil territory because they knew so little about it. This hesitation was understandable, given how hostile the environment was—not only because of the devils themselves but also due to the land's very nature.

The place was filled with thick devil energy, devoid of the vitality. Ordinary cultivators couldn't even set foot there without thorough preparation.

Infiltration was also extremely difficult due to several limitations faced by both orthodox and unorthodox cultivators.

Cultivators outside of the devil path were easily exposed there, as they differed in nearly every aspect from devil cultivators. The most obvious giveaway was the lack of devil aura or energy. Any infiltrator who couldn't emit such aura would be immediately detected by those devils.

Even now, the entire devil territory has not been fully mapped through infiltration. Without sufficient information, it would be foolish to attack a place they barely understand.

Moreover, an invasion would require immense resources to mobilize a large army. Once again, due to the harsh environment, even more resources would be needed just to help the army endure the conditions within the devil territory.

If the attack were to fail because of insufficient intelligence, it would only result in wasted resources—something most of the leaders present wanted to avoid.

The second factor was that the continent's power was not fully united. This was also tied to the first issue. Because of differing opinions on how to deal with the devil territory, a large-scale alliance had never been formed.

Some believed that they needed to be braver and move forward with an invasion, even if it meant accepting heavy sacrifices. Others refused to recklessly send their troops into such a dangerous place without detailed information. They didn't want to sacrifice lives needlessly just because they lacked proper intelligence.

In the end, because of all this, the alliance was never created. Those who wished to attack knew they couldn't invade the devil territory on their own. They needed the support of other major territories for any chance of success.

But now, the situation had grown grim enough to force their hand. If they continued to hesitate, they might die to *"that"* thing.

"Looking at the situation, I agree with invading the devil territory. We must be more decisive in times like this. This now concerns the survival of the entire continent," Emperor Raymond said.

"I also agree. This isn't the time for us to be divided."

"I agree—"

One by one, the other leaders voiced their agreement, and Aldrian was satisfied inwardly. With this, he had achieved what he wanted from them—

For the major powers to unite.

Aldrian then looked at Xin Haotian.

*"Does your family want to join the alliance? Maybe this is the time for the entire continent to learn that a hidden family resides within the Everlasting Silent Forest,"* Aldrian said through voice transmission to Xin Haotian.

*"Well, actually this is something my father and I have discussed for some time. If a situation ever forced us to reveal ourselves to the world, we wouldn't hesitate. I believe this is that moment. I'll inform my father about the situation later, so on behalf of my family, I will join,"* Xin Haotian replied.

"Good," Aldrian said before turning to the others.

"Your Majesties, before we proceed, there's something important you need to know about another power that will assist us in this plan." he said to the others, then gave a subtle signal to Xin Haotian to step forward.

The others turned their eyes toward Xin Haotian with curiosity. They knew him as the Sword Saint—but what power was Aldrian referring to? Surely, it wasn't just about the Sword Saint himself right?

"You all know me as the Sword Saint, but none of you know my origin. So let me make it clear—"

With that, he began to reveal the existence of the secret family hidden within the Everlasting Silent Forest. He explained who are they, why they remained in hiding, and the purpose behind their continued existence.

The leaders were truly shocked as they listened to the history of the Xin family—their past, their connection to the divine dragon and phoenix, also other things.

Among the listeners, only Aldrian and one other person remained composed. Venerable Karma Seeker, seated quietly, showed no surprise. Instead, he seemed to finally understand something and simply nodded in silence.

Xin Haotian then spoke about what he and Aldrian had been doing for the past two weeks within the core of the Everlasting Silent Forest. Of course, he left out the possibility that Aldrian might be the reincarnation of a mighty being.

That was something others would have to discover for themselves. A truth like that could only be fully understood through experience.

He only told them that Aldrian seemed to have been chosen long ago by divine beings to shoulder the burden of the entire continent.

He described what they had found, what they had faced, and every part of the story left the others even more stunned.

To think that all this time, the deepest part of the forest had been hiding something like *that*. The revelation forced everyone to reassess who Aldrian truly was.

As for Aldrey and Irene, they looked at their son as if they had finally begun to understand something.

The phenomenon of the dragon and phoenix at the time of Aldrian's birth—it had been a sign. A sign that the destined one had been born. The one who would become the pillar for the prophesied era.



Was this truly their son's fate?

Aldrian met his parents' gaze and gave them a reassuring smile—a smile that brought them quiet comfort.

It was as if he was saying,

*"I'm your son. Your incredible son. I'm not someone else."*

After Xin Haotian finished recounting everything that had happened in the Everlasting Silent Forest, silence fell across the room.

Most of the leaders then let out a quiet sigh.

"To think that something like this existed on our continent," Emperor Ladwin said.

"Yes, and for young Aldrian to be chosen by divine beings... it truly feels predetermined. I'm at a loss for words," Emperor Durand added.

"So the dragon and phoenix phenomenon back then really was a sign tied to young Aldrian's birth. It all makes sense now," Emperor Herman said.

With this, the puzzle in their minds was complete.

Once again, they could only come to one conclusion—Aldrian was their hope in the prophesied era.

"Now that we are all on the same boat and agree on our next course, I hope all of your majesties can begin preparing your armies. We will start the attack as soon as possible. The people across the continent also need to be prepared for the worst, so I trust your majesties will take care of this," Aldrian said

"I'm afraid that even now, the devils might still be doing everything they can to summon their god," he added, prompting nods of agreement from the others.

"Speaking of those bastards—the Seven Deadly Sins members who appeared in my territory—Wrath suddenly ceased his activities the day before yesterday. Has anyone else noticed the same?" Emperor Ladwin suddenly asked.

Emperors Durand and Herman exchanged stunned looks.

"That's the same for me. Sloth stopped her activities and hasn't been seen since the day before yesterday," Emperor Durand said.

"The same goes for me. I haven't seen any movement from Gluttony either," Emperor Herman added.

"The devil presence inside the Buddhist sect's territory also seems to have disappeared," Venerable Karma Seeker said.

Aldrian's frown deepened as his uneasy feeling grew stronger. The possibility that these devils had disappeared after causing chaos was that they had already achieved their objective—and the Devil Lord had pulled them back.

What kind of objective? What were they trying to accomplish with all that chaos? He felt frustrated. He can't see the bigger picture, and the only conclusion he could reach was that they had to attack the devil territory as soon as possible.

"Then, here and now, our alliance is formally created. I hope we all survive this tribulation," Aldrian said, prompting determined nods from the others.

"We will follow the instructions of our alliance leader," Emperor Raymond said suddenly, which left Aldrian stunned.

Aldrian looked at Emperor Raymond, who smiled confidently at him.

"What? Don't you think we need someone to lead this alliance? Who is more worthy than you? You are also the only one most suitable for this role," he said.

Aldrian looked around and saw that the others tacitly agreed as well. It was just as Baron Rosalind had said before—he was the most likely choice to become the alliance leader. Moreover, now that these leaders knew he was the chosen one, no one would oppose his appointment.

"Also, with you leading this alliance, the people across the continent will have fewer objections. It will be much easier to rally their spirits under your leadership. Haven't you heard what many people are calling you now?" Emperor Raymond continued.

"Aldrian the Great—the name that will be written in golden letters in the continent's history. The one who might unite the continent by his strength alone," he added.

Aldrian couldn't help but sigh in resignation. If it had come to this, then he would accept it.

"All right, I will take this role. Let's make it through this with our lives intact," he said with a slight joking tone, causing the others to smile.

After that, they continued discussing their strategy and every detail regarding the invasion of the devil territory. This would be the first large-scale assault launched against the devil territory, and they knew they had to act quickly.

## **Chapter 545: Outside of the Unreachable Continent**

In an unknown place, there is a huge city similar to those found throughout the Barisan continent. However, this city stands out in several ways compared to the typical cities across Barisan. One of the most obvious differences is the average cultivation level of the people walking through the streets.

Many of them are at the Marquess or even Duke stage— something truly amazing, yet they seem like no big deal here. Even some cultivators at the Emperor stage can be seen passing by, some wearing armor marked with symbols never before seen on the Barisan continent.

Another striking difference is that in certain areas of the city, there is an aura present that is far stronger than that of an Emperor stage cultivator.

One such area is a huge and expansive palace located in the center of the city. The palace is separated by massive artificial waterways that seem to follow the outer edge of the palace grounds. Although these waterways are clearly meant to separate the palace from the rest of the city, and also serve a defensive purpose—they make the palace and its surroundings appear even more beautiful.

From within this palace, there are beings whose aura would shock anyone from the Barisan continent. Even Emperor stage cultivators might tremble just by sensing the presence of certain beings in this place.

Especially in one of the grand halls, where the strongest aura can be found. A man sits on his throne, reading a scroll in his hand. He is a handsome middle-aged man with blonde hair, dressed in regal robes and noble attire that clearly mark him as the highest authority in this place. Though he is not deliberately releasing his aura, it can still be sensed by everyone around him.

The man silently read the contents of the scroll before looking at another man in noble attire standing not far from him. This second man was also middle-aged, with brown hair and a sword at his waist.

"Are we sure about the source of this report?" asked the man on the throne.

"Yes, Your Majesty. It's confirmed. The large movement of devils along the western coast is unusual. Some of them appear to be preparing for something. It looks more like they intend to go somewhere, but unfortunately, we do not yet know their exact destination," replied the brown-haired man.

"But the only clue we have is that they seem to be preparing for a journey to somewhere in the Forbidden Sea," he added.

The blonde-haired man narrowed his eyes.

*"Forbidden Sea? Could it be related to the Unreachable Continent?"* he thought.

The Unreachable Continent was a title given to the lone continent that no one could approach, even with the strongest transportation available.

Actually, in the ancient past, that continent was just a normal continent like the others. The place was even neglected because of its poor environment. But due to a certain event in the past, all the major powers had already sent their people there. However, once they arrived, all contact was lost, as the sea surrounding continent suddenly became unstable.

Since that time, a type of natural barrier appeared, preventing all cultivators from approaching the place.

Anyone attempting to reach the Unreachable Continent is met with violent storms strong enough to tear through space itself. At times, spatial storms even appear, capable of killing high-level cultivators—even those at his stage.

In ancient times, their strongest cultivators attempted to enter the region and reach the continent, but all of them perished. From that moment on, the area was declared forbidden.

For many years, there were no signs or movements from the direction of the Forbidden Sea. However, all of that changed when, more than sixteen years ago, a massive dragon and phoenix suddenly appeared in the sky. The immense dragon and phoenix covered the sky, and the sight alone made his heart tremble.

It was the largest dragon he had ever seen in his life, and even its aura made him want to prostrate before it. It was also different from the dragons found on the Beast Continent. The same applied to the phoenix, whose size did not lose to the dragon's.

The phoenix was elegant and beautiful despite its size, but the aura it shared with the dragon made him feel the same urge to prostrate.

He believed that the dragon and phoenix he saw at that time were what many would call divine beings. No one he had met had ever saw and sensed anything like them before. He had asked many others, and their answers were always along the lines of, *"Those are beings beyond our level."*

Since that phenomenon disappeared, many strange occurrences have come from the direction of the Unreachable Continent. At times, some of the other powers have sensed a sword slash traveling from that direction—he himself had sensed it once.

Because of the distance and the storm, he could not clearly determine the power behind that sword slash. But its presence alone proved that someone in that place was strong enough for people across the sea to sense it despite the storm.

Another thing is that there is a prophecy foretelling that something will happen to this world, and that the fate of the world will be decided by something coming from the direction of that continent. This prophecy is already known to every major power in the world and has become the subject of much discussion.

Especially those dragons and phoenixes from the beast continent—seem the most eager about the prophecy, as if they have their own version of it. He did not know what made them so eager, but a prophecy that will affect the world is not something to be taken lightly.

Many say it will have something to do with the devils, but no one knows how the devils might threaten the entire world.

Yes, they are strong sons of bitches, but at present, all the powers in the world maintain the status quo. The devils do not seem to want to make a huge move after the chaos they caused three million years ago, which was repelled by the united effort of the world.

However, this time, the devils seem to be planning something, and it has to do with the Unreachable Continent. This unsettled him, and as he thought about the prophecy, he suspected it might be connected. Such a large movement of the devils had not happened in a long time, and he could not ignore it.

He then stood up and walked past the brown-haired man, speaking as he passed.

"I will meet with the other powers. They must already know about this. We have to do something about the strange movement of the devils. There might be changes in the Unreachable Continent that we do not yet understand."

The brown-haired man followed the blonde-haired man as they exited the hall.

*"I hope nothing bad happens in the future. Suddenly, I have a bad feeling about this,"* the blonde-haired man thought as they passed some royal guards who exuded the aura of Emperor stage cultivators.

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On the other side of the world, a vast forest stretched to the horizon. The sounds of many kinds of beasts filled the air. Inside the forest were many spiritual and wild beasts never seen on the Barisan Continent.

At this time, many beasts were going about their own business inside the forest when suddenly a huge shadow passed over them. They looked upward and trembled as they saw a massive, long dragon flying toward the east. It happened so fast they had no time to react before the dragon disappeared from their sight, continuing its flight eastward.

They wondered why the dragon had flown through the area, but they did not care and went back to what they were doing.

The dragon kept flying until it reached an area where other flying dragons were gathered. When those dragons saw the incoming lone dragon, they dared not approach and quickly flew away. The lone dragon continued flying until it reached a high mountain where many strong auras were present.

On one part of the mountain, there was a flat-topped peak. On it stood a few figures—human in appearance. However, the dragon horns on their foreheads gave away that they were actually dragons.

Some of them stood at the edge of the mountain, facing away from the lone figure seated in a meditation position at the center.

This lone figure, the strongest among them, was a young-looking man with long red hair, wearing regal robes. His aura was so powerful it made the other dragons tremble.

He appeared to be deep in cultivation, his eyes closed.

Not long after, he sensed the approach of a flying dragon—the same lone dragon from earlier.

As the flying dragon neared the top mountain, it instantly transformed into a human man with short blue hair and knelt respectfully not far from the red-haired man.

"Your Majesty, I have a report."

"Speak," the red-haired man said without opening his eyes.

"The devils seem to be preparing something big. They appear to be making preparations on the western coast of the Orian Continent. From our deductions, we believe they plan to journey west, toward the direction of the Forbidden Sea. They are even preparing some of their flying fortresses," the blue-haired man reported.

The red-haired man finally opened his eyes, revealing his red irises and serene gaze.

"The Forbidden Sea, huh? Then it must have something to do with the Unreachable Continent," he said.

He looked toward the horizon.

"They must also be aware of this. It seems we need to meet with the others to discuss it," he murmured.

Then he stood up and leapt into the air before transforming into his dragon form—a long, massive red dragon with a terrifying aura that made all the dragons present kowtow. He flew toward the eastern horizon until his silhouette vanished from their sight.

The dragons wondered where their king intended to go.

## **Chapter 546: Believe in Me**

After the discussion among all the major power leaders on the Barisan continent came to an end, a few decided to stay, while the others returned to their territories. The people outside, who had been wondering about the result of the meeting, were then told that the problem had been resolved.

The patriarchs of the Flamecrest and Rivas families had agreed that their descendants would marry each other. The wedding would take place in the main church of the Heavenly Direction Church, with the date to be announced later.

Hearing this, the people erupted in an uproar, as they had not expected the issue to be resolved so easily. This was truly unprecedented. A union between the descendants of the Flamecrest and Rivas families would cause a sensation across the continent.

But then they understood—it might have been Aldrian's influence that allowed the negotiation to proceed so smoothly.

After that, the leaders announced that, in the near future, there would be an important announcement and asked the entire populace across the continent to prepare. This caused many to raise their eyebrows. What kind of announcement would make the leaders appear so serious?

But they could only wait, as the leaders dispersed—the ones who stayed behind were those with family members in Aldrian's group. Aldrey and Irene still wanted to stay with Aldrian. Sylphia remained to speak further with her father, and Baek Jimin also spent time with her mother.

Venerable Karma Seeker also stayed behind, following Aldrian.

At this time, Aldrian was inside another tent that had been set up for privacy. The tent was even furnished with luxury beds for resting. He sat with Aldrey and Irene at a small table, enjoying tea together.

"How are you doing, son? I see you've caused quite an uproar out there—it always makes me worry," Irene asked as she touched Aldrian's hand. She sat close to him, as if she couldn't bear to sit too far away.

Aldrian smiled at his mother.



"I'm good, Mother. Don't you see how I am right now? There's nothing out there that can endanger your son," he replied in a joking tone.

Aldrey and Irene giggled at his remark.

"As long as you're okay," she said softly.

Aldrey looked at his son with pride, but there was also worry—and even sadness—in his eyes. Aldrian understood exactly what his parents were feeling.

"Father, Mother, please be assured. I'll do my best to keep all of us alive through this prophesied time. Maybe we can stop the devils from summoning that thing, right? So please lift your spirits, and don't worry too much about me," he said, placing his hands over both Irene's and Aldrey's.

"But even if we end up facing something beyond our capabilities, that still won't be the end. That won't be our end. Please believe in me—believe that I can get us all through it," Aldrian said.

His parents' expressions shifted to quiet resignation, and they couldn't help but sigh.

"How can we not worry," Aldrey said, "when you've become the pillar of everything that's to come—and you may be the one to face that thing? Even if you're strong now, I don't think it's enough to face it, so—" He paused, looking at his son with a pained expression.

It hurt to see Aldrian bearing the weight of his destiny as the chosen one—the one who would become the pillar in the prophesied time. He was still in his teens, yet already forced to grow up too quickly, carrying a role far too heavy for someone his age. As his father, Aldrey felt immense pride, but also deep sorrow. He wished he could take some of that burden for himself—but he knew his own limits.

He was nowhere near Aldrian.

He could do nothing about it, and that made him angry at himself—at his weakness, at his helplessness. All he could do was wish he were stronger.

Irene felt the same. As Aldrian's mother, her worry ran even deeper. Her heart was in turmoil. The son she had carried and raised was the one destined to bear the fate of the entire continent.

The small child who once followed her and his father wherever they went would now be the one to lead them all through the prophesied time.

The heavens had given them something extraordinary—a genius unlike any seen before. But in return, he had to carry a burden no child should ever bear.

"Father, Mother."

They turned to look at their son that always smiled at them.

And then, suddenly, the world around them changed.

They stunned. It only took a moment to realize that Aldrian had drawn them into his illusion.

They now stood in the middle of a vast grassland, surrounded by many people all looking in their direction. If they tried to count, the number could easily reach into the hundreds of thousands.

Aldrey and Irene's bodies trembled. Even within this illusion, they could sense the powerful presence of the people around them. Standing before them, they felt their souls shake and the urge to bow deeply.

Then, suddenly, all these people prostrated themselves in their direction, leaving Aldrey and Irene shocked. What was happening?

"This is my memory from when I entered the core area of the Everlasting Silent Forest," Aldrian explained, but Aldrey and Irene continued to look around in bewilderment.

"These people are the wills of the divine beings from the higher realms—the ones who were brought here alongside the dragon and the phoenix." Aldrian's eyes scanned the prostrating figures.

"They, as beings of the higher realms—the realm of divinity—have placed all their trust in me. They believe I will succeed in this endeavor." He recalled their words, filled with unwavering conviction.

Aldrey and Irene finally looked at Aldrian behind them and saw his gaze fixed on the prostrating figures, as if they were his own people. Then Aldrian shifted his eyes back to meet Aldrey and Irene's.

"If these people can believe in me to get through this prophesied time, then I want my father and mother—the ones closest to me, my family, to believe in me as well. How can these people, whom I've never met in my life, believe in me, but not the parents who have guided and stood by my side? If I am truly the chosen one, then heaven would not give me a task impossible to face."

"What I need right now is for father and mother, to believe in me. Even though you worry, please trust that we can survive this prophesied time. Believe that if I am destined for this, then I can accomplish it."

"Believe in your son—the one you raised and gave your love to."

"Believe in me."

After his words, silence fell.

After a few moments, Aldrey was the first to move. Without warning, he pulled Aldrian into a tight embrace.

"I'm sorry, son. You're right. If these people can trust and believe you will get through this prophesied time, then why shouldn't we believe in you? I feel like I've failed as a father. You are truly my pride," Aldrey said.

Irene stepped forward and hugged Aldrian from behind.

"I'm sorry, Aldrian, for doubting you and your destiny. You are our pride. I only hope that you won't get hurt and that we can all live happily afterward," she said.

Their words of support made Aldrian smile. He hugged both of his parents tightly and sighed inwardly. It felt like he was the elder one calming anxious children.

He showed them memories from his past life's followers and slightly fabricated a story so his parents could truly believe in him, and not worry excessively.

Technically, he wasn't lying. He had truly never met those people in this life. There was no way he could just tell them he was the reincarnation of a mighty figure from the past slowly regaining his memories.

However, Aldrian knew that his parents' worries and doubts had their own basis. What they saw in the illusion was beyond their comprehension, "that" thing is beyond their level.

Even he sensed that, with his current strength, there was no chance of winning. Yet he still believed he could face that threat no matter what.

There might be something that can help, something that can boost his strength. It might be located in the palace on the floating land.

With the planning of many people and even the heavens, he did not believe they were simply pushing him toward death.

Then Aldrian, Aldrey and Irene's surroundings returned to the inside of the tent before they separated and smiles returned to their faces.

Afterwards, they talked about Aldrian's journey and his experiences. He also shared details about his relationship with Sylphia and hinted that he might have a harem. How did Aldrey and Irene react?

"Ahahaha, just as I thought—he's like me. There's no way those women can resist our son's charm! I bet even more women would line up if he showed his true face to the whole world," Aldrey said with a boisterous laugh.

"Son, are you playing with their hearts? Don't toy with women's feelings—it could be your downfall. Even if you're powerful, never underestimate the craziness of women," Irene said with slight disappointment.

Aldrian sighed at his parents' reactions and assured them that he truly loved Sylphia. He explained that having a harem was not a game to him and that he did not play with women's hearts—he wasn't toying with either Sylphia or Baek Jimin.

They talked for hours until sunset. When they finally stepped out of their tent, the situation had calmed significantly as most people had dispersed. A few remained, hoping to find something "spicy." These were the types who liked gathering breaking news to sell to others.

Aldrian then looked at his parents.

"It looks like we'll have to be apart again for a while."

## **Chapter 547: Thank You for Everything**

"It looks like we'll have to be apart again for a while." Aldrian said to his parents.

Aldrey and Irene could only sigh at the separation, but they understood that Aldrian had his own matters to attend to, and with time ticking, there was no time to waste.

"Take care, son. Don't get hurt anywhere," Irene said as she hugged Aldrian.

"I will, Mother," he answered, returning her hug before looking at his father, who was smiling at him.

"Take care, and be careful inside the Everlasting Silent Forest. Even though there's nothing there that can harm you, don't underestimate anything," Aldrey said, hugging Aldrian as well. Aldrian nodded in understanding.

After they parted, Aldrian looked at Baek Jimin, who seemed to have finished speaking with her mother as they stepped out of their tent. Sylphia also emerged from another tent with Emperor Ladwin, but Aldrian raised his eyebrows when he saw that the emperor looked happy, as if he had just hit a jackpot.

His body language could not be hidden, which made Sylphia seem embarrassed. They looked in his direction and approached him.

"Young Aldrian, thank you for taking care of my daughter all this time," he said as he placed a hand on Aldrian's shoulder.

"I hope you'll keep looking after her from now on, and never grow tired of doing so. She might be a little spoiled sometimes, but she truly—"

"Father!" Sylphia called out, her face showing clear embarrassment.

"Alright, alright," Emperor Ladwin said, stopping himself and turning to Aldrey and Irene with a smile.

"Young Master Aldrey, Young Miss Irene—you're truly fortunate to have a son like Aldrian. He is truly a dragon among men," he said.

"Ah, thank you, Your Majesty. Well... I'm also lucky to have a son like Aldrian," Aldrey said, sounding slightly clumsy in front of the emperor. After all, his son had already taken the emperor's daughter's innocence, so he felt a bit tense.

It was only natural—Emperor Ladwin was the ruler of the elven race, and for Aldrian to have laid hands on his daughter was no small matter.

Aldrian had already expressed his intent to marry Sylphia. If everything went smoothly, their families would become in-laws in the future.

"Anyway, I have to head back. There's much to be done," Emperor Ladwin said as he walked over to Aldrian.

"Good luck, Alliance Leader," he said to him with a smile.

"Yes, Your Majesty," Aldrian replied. But before Emperor Ladwin turned to leave, he leaned in and whispered into Aldrian's ear.

"Son-in-law."

Then he walked away, leaving Aldrian momentarily stunned. But a smile soon formed on Aldrian's face as he shook his head. He looked over at the Venerable Karma Seeker, who stood not far from them, silent and still, like a statue.

Baek Jimin and Sect Master Baek approached them after the emperor left. Sect Master Baek then spoke with him and his parents for a moment before also departing. After thinking there was nothing more to do, Aldrian prepared to teleport, but then he noticed Eleine standing not far from him, near his mother.

Aldrian sighed as he looked at Eleine with slightly sad eyes.

"Are you sure, Eleine?"

Eleine nodded before giving a deep bow to Aldrian.

"Thank you for taking care of me all this time, young master. My experience with you and everything you have done for me—I will never forget it," she said.

Aldrian sighed again. He had already talked to his parents earlier about this and called Eleine inside the tent for the discussion. His mother had told Eleine she didn't care whether Eleine wanted to go back to her or not, she could still stay with Aldrian if she wished.

However, Eleine seemed adamant, feeling her role to Aldrian was complete and that it was time to return to her primary duty.

Seeing Eleine's determination, he and his mother respected her decision and did not try to persuade her otherwise.

Aldrian walked over and stood in front of her. Sensing him there, she straightened her posture, but was stunned when Aldrian suddenly hugged her. Her eyes widened slightly, caught off guard and without time to react.

"Thank you for everything you've done for me, for taking care of me, for always being with me. I'm so grateful to have had you in the Secret Realm, on this journey," he said.

Her eyes turned red as tears threatened to fall, but she held them back. She simply nodded against his shoulder and returned Aldrian's hug. The others watched quietly, not wanting to disturb the sentimental moment.

After a few moments, Aldrian and Eleine finally separated. He smiled at her.

"Then take care, Eleine."

He then turned his gaze to his parents.

"Mother, Father," he added.

They responded with a nod, and after that, Aldrian, Sylphia, Baek Jimin, and the Venerable Karma Seeker disappeared. Eleine, Aldrey, and Irene remained, still looking at the spot where Aldrian had stood, and sighed.

Irene then looked at Eleine and smiled at her warmly.

"Let's go back. I want to hear so many stories from you—you must have many things to tell me," she said, which made Eleine nod.

"Hmm."

After that, all of them departed from the place, and finally, the episode of the meeting that many people had their eyes on came to an end.

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The next day, news of the meeting between the Flamecrest family and the Rivas family had already spread across the continent. As expected, many were stunned by how quickly and smoothly the meeting concluded. Most had assumed there would be chaos at the gathering, but there was none.

The two families even agreed to marry their successors to each other, marking an unprecedented event between them.

However, many understood that this outcome was only possible because of Aldrian. As the son of Aldrey and Irene, his presence had forced the patriarchs of both families to compromise and finally resolve their long-standing conflict.

Also, the major territories across the continent all seemed to be preparing for something significant. The leaders of major territories had hinted at an upcoming announcement that would be broadcast continent-wide.

Ruling families in each territory had also begun summoning the noble houses within their lands. This kind of coordinated movement raised concern and curiosity.

What was going on? Why were they acting like this? For now, people could only wait for the announcement to see whether it was connected to the noble gatherings.

Meanwhile, Aldrian was in Dongtian City, staying at the inn where Sylphia and the others were lodging. He and his group didn't seem too concerned about the aftermath of the Flamecrest-Rivas meeting.

He now wanted to return to the core area of the Everlasting Silent Forest. After satisfying Sylphia last night with his technique, it was time for him to continue exploring the rest of the core area—especially the floating land.

But just as he was about to leave, Venerable Karma Seeker suddenly visited him, which made him curious.

"Teacher," he said after meeting him outside the inn.

Venerable Karma Seeker nodded with a smile.

"Benefactor Aldrian, can you accompany me somewhere? There is a place I want to show you right now," he said, causing Aldrian to raise his eyebrows.



Take him somewhere? His interest was piqued as he wondered where Venerable Karma Seeker intended to bring him.

"Of course, Teacher. I would like to know where you wish to take me."

After that, he informed the Fifth Finger, and then he and Venerable Karma Seeker headed to the city's teleportation station. When he heard their destination, Aldrian realized that they would be visiting the main city of the Buddhist Sect's territory—Blooming Lotus City, where the main sect was located.

Aldrian didn't ask anything about it and simply followed Venerable Karma Seeker. There were topics he wanted to discuss with him, but he felt it wasn't the right time or place, so he quietly followed without speaking.

After their number was called and they entered the portal, they instantly arrived in the capital of the Buddhist Sect's territory—Blooming Lotus City.

As Aldrian stepped out of the teleportation portal, he was greeted by the grandeur of the city. He also noticed that the population of monks here was much larger, which did not surprise him, given that this was the heart of the Buddhist Sect.

They walked through the streets toward the hill in the distance, which seemed to lie outside the city and was covered with tall trees. As they walked, Aldrian glanced at Venerable Karma Seeker's back.

From his observation, he couldn't explain why, but it seemed as though Venerable Karma Seeker was completely unnoticed by others. Or more specifically, he was ignored by everyone around them.

It was like he was invisible. Aldrian wondered how Venerable Karma Seeker managed such a thing, but chose not to ask about it for now.

They continued walking, and just as Aldrian had guessed, they left the city and made their way toward the hill. It wasn't far from the city, and a wide pathway led uphill between the tall trees.

Only after walking for another hour did Aldrian finally see another structure — a long wall with a single gate.

Seeing that they were almost there, Venerable Karma Seeker looked back at Aldrian with a smile.

"Benefactor Aldrian, welcome to the main sect of the Buddhist sect."

## **Chapter 548: Inside the Buddhist Sect**

In front of the gate, two monks stood guard with staffs in hand. When they noticed figures approaching, they looked toward them and raised their eyebrows, instantly recognizing one of them.

As Aldrian and Venerable Karma Seeker neared, the guards immediately bowed.

"Welcome back, Master," they said.

Venerable Karma Seeker stopped and smiled at them.

"How are you two doing? Is everything alright?" he asked.

"We are good, Master. There is no problem, everything is normal," one of them replied.

"Good. Then I will bring our esteemed guest inside," Venerable Karma Seeker said, prompting the guards to glance at the robed figure behind him. They wondered who it was but did not ask, and instead opened the gate for Venerable Karma Seeker and Aldrian to enter.

Once Aldrian entered, he was immediately greeted by the bustling activity within the sect. Several training fields stretched out before him, each occupied by monks deep in their practice. They were training in Buddhist techniques such as the golden body, staff arts, sound elements combined with chanting, battle formations, and more.

Aldrian was stunned. What he saw was that the monks of the Buddhist Sect seemed more prepared than anything. It was as if they already knew what was coming, and every one of them was ready for it.

He kept following Venerable Karma Seeker, watching the monks as they trained in their techniques. It was the first time he had seen them in training, and it truly impressed him. These monks were incredibly strong with their techniques. He could sense their power—enough to fight across cultivation levels—even though the ones practicing were only lower-level Buddhist cultivators.

Every monk who saw Venerable Karma Seeker stopped their training and bowed in respect. They glanced at Aldrian as well, curious. Venerable Karma Seeker had never brought anyone inside personally like this before.

Aldrian kept walking toward the deeper part of the sect until they finally reached the main temple, a massive building with a towering golden statue of a Buddha inside. The moment he stepped into the temple, he was stunned by the sight of the statue.

It was because he knew who this Buddha was.

He pulled back the hood of his robe, revealing his face so he could see the statue more clearly.

He thought the Buddhist cultivators here would be more familiar with other Buddhas, like Amitabha, one of the most revered.

He did not expect to find *this* Buddha's statue here. Did these monks know who this Buddha was? He doubted it, since this Buddha came from a different world than theirs. But then again, he wasn't sure—maybe Feng Xuanyan and Long Shentian had introduced his existence to this land?

The figure of the Buddha statue was the one that often appeared in his visions, along with a few other main figures who also frequently appeared.

*"Tianlian, although it's only your statue, at least I finally meet you,"* Aldrian thought.

Tianlian is one of his followers who can be considered unique. Along with the heavenly demon, he rose from being a normal human to the top through hard effort. They mostly comprehend things based on their own experience, and his role in them is minimal. It can be said he only gives a slight push, and they handle the rest on their own.

Aldrian didn't dwell on it further, as he noticed a few figures not far from the statue. Seven in total, all seated on their cultivation mattresses, spaced evenly apart. Three were on the left, four on the right, facing each other.

Even though they did not exude any aura and appeared as calm as still water, Aldrian could sense that all of them were emperor-stage cultivators. With their number, he finally knew who these figures were.

Venerable Karma Seeker kept walking toward the two vacant mats in the middle, which made Aldrian realize his seat would be beside him. As Venerable Karma Seeker passed, these figures slightly bent their bodies with clasped hands in respect.

Silence filled the space as Venerable Karma Seeker and Aldrian walked forward. Only after they both sat down on their mats did Karma Seeker finally speak.

"All of you have already received my message, and now is the right time to do it. This is Aldrian—the one from the prophecy. The one who may bring light to this continent. After this, I will take him to the 'Lotus' to fulfill his karma."

The others looked at Aldrian with curiosity and surprise. They had already seen him in the information crystal and knew how young he was despite his tremendous strength. But seeing him in person gave them a different feeling.

He seemed more mysterious, and they couldn't help but feel drawn to him with a sense of reverence, as if standing before a mighty being.

Aldrian, the one being introduced, clasped his hands and slightly bowed.

"It's truly my honor to meet the famous Seven Arhats of the Buddhist Sect. I apologize for disturbing you all with my visit," he said.

"As expected of the prophesied one. Only by meeting you in person can we truly experience how extraordinary you are," said one of the Arhats. He had an intimidating, burly body—each muscle seeming to contain explosive power and an impenetrable defense against any attack.

Aldrian recognized one of the Arhats fitting that description and looked directly at the monk.

"To be praised by the venerable Indestructible Fortress Arhat is truly an honor," he said.

The Indestructible Fortress Arhat smiled at the compliment.

"You are far too humble, benefactor Aldrian. With your ability and strength, this monk's praise is like a drop of water in the ocean—still not enough to describe your true self," the Arhat replied.

Aldrian simply smiled, then turned his gaze to another Arhat. This Arhat was slightly older, but what caught Aldrian's attention were his eyes. Around the pupils, a faint golden glow shimmered, and Aldrian could sense a strong presence of karmic and time laws within them.

It was as if those eyes had witnessed countless things not meant to be seen.

Just now, Aldrian felt this Arhat was examining him with his eyes—and it seemed those eyes were a technique in themselves. There was only one Arhat known to have such unique eyes, said to be one of the most difficult Buddhist techniques to comprehend or master.

This monk must be the Venerable Eyes of Destiny, the Arhat who had mastered The Heavenly Buddha's Eyes.

This technique supposedly allowed a Buddhist cultivator to track anyone, uncover their mysteries, and even glimpse the future, much like clairvoyance. Aldrian felt intrigued—not only by the technique itself but also by what the Venerable Eyes of Destiny might have seen in him.

He must have used this technique on him, right?

But then, suddenly, Aldrian saw the Venerable Eyes of Destiny's eyes bleeding before he closed them and clutched them with his hand.

"Ugh," he let out a grunt, as if in pain, which astonished the others. They knew that the Venerable Eyes of Destiny must have used his technique to check something about

Aldrian, but to think it affected him like this? It was the first time they had seen him like that.

Aldrian then stood up and approached the Venerable Eyes of Destiny. The others wondered what Aldrian would do.

The Venerable Eyes of Destiny also sensed Aldrian approaching, which made his body tremble slightly. What he had just seen was still vivid in his mind, and he did not dare to look again. His soul was affected, he was shocked that even from just a glimpse of Aldrian's future, his soul and eyes had been injured.

He felt regret; he regretted that his curiosity had bested him, as his instinct had already told him it was not good to check Aldrian using his technique. He hesitated before deciding to use his Heavenly Buddha's Eyes on Aldrian, which made him see something that was not meant to be seen.

His heart and body trembled slightly as Aldrian arrived in front of him. He wanted to back off, to keep his distance, because he felt unworthy in front of Aldrian. After what he saw and what he did without Aldrian's permission, suddenly he felt unworthy. Aldrian then lowered his body onto one knee.

"Let me heal you, teacher," Aldrian said as he touched the Venerable Eyes of Destiny's hand, the same hand he used to close his eyes. Suddenly, golden energy flowed through the hand, reaching his eyes and soul, which made him stunned by its warmth and comforting feeling.

He could feel the golden energy healing the wounds in his eyes and soul at a fast rate, and before long, all of them were healed, allowing him to open his eyes again. Although there were still bloodstains, everything had returned to normal.

He looked at Aldrian again, and his gaze seemed much different—much more respectful. He slightly bowed his body to him.

"My apologies for my insolence. I ask benefactor Aldrian's generous heart to forgive this monk," he said in a respectful tone, which made the others look at the Venerable Eyes of Destiny in astonishment.

What had he seen to make him like that?

Aldrian only smiled and replied to the Venerable Eyes of Destiny,

"No, teacher, I am not in the slightest offended by it. In fact, I am intrigued. What did you see in me for you to be like this?"

## **Chapter 549: Venerable Karma Seeker's Regret**

Venerable Eyes of Destiny fell silent for a moment before letting out a long breath.

"Well, I can't see anything," he said, which left Aldrian stunned.

"More precisely, I couldn't see anything because what I saw was only blinding light. It hurt both my eyes and my soul. I didn't expect it to have that kind of effect," he added.

Aldrian looked at Venerable Eyes of Destiny for a few moments and nodded in understanding.

"Alright, thank you for the information, Teacher," he said before returning to his seat.

As Aldrian walked back toward his mat, he thought about Venerable Eyes of Destiny's words. He wondered what it was that the Venerable truly saw in him to react like that—because he knew the Venerable hadn't shared everything about his vision.

There was no way that simply looking at his light could cause such a reaction—fear mixed with reverence, as if he wanted to kneel and kowtow. But there was nothing he could do if Venerable Eyes of Destiny chose not to speak further.

Venerable Eyes of Destiny looked at Aldrian's back as he walked toward his mat and couldn't help but think again about what he had seen. It was true that he saw blinding light, so intense that it made his eyes and soul ache just from looking at it. But there was something else—something that had nearly shattered his will when he saw it.

Amidst the blinding light, he caught a glimpse of a throne—a grand throne. The moment he laid eyes on it, it felt as if his soul and vision were about to burst. It was as if the throne was alive, warning him not to peer into Aldrian's mystery or future. That was what truly injured him. The throne radiated an aura so overwhelming it made him want to prostrate himself before it. His soul screamed at him to kneel before he forcefully canceled his technique.

That vision lasted for only a second, yet it felt as if he had stared at it for a long time. It was carved into his memory, leaving a mark that made him look at Aldrian in a completely different light. Yes, Aldrian was the one prophesied by many—but the experience just now had completely overturned his understanding of him.

He was not just the prophesied one who would bear the weight of the continent's destiny. He was something beyond that. This continent alone was not enough to contain his fate. It made Venerable Eyes of Destiny wonder—what had Aldrian been in his past life? There was no way the heavens would entrust such a destiny to someone without something extraordinary within them.

Aldrian had already taken his seat on the mat when Venerable Karma Seeker opened his lips again.

"Well, I know you're still curious about Aldrian, but after what just happened, I hope you'll restrain yourself. I'm afraid you'll end up harming yourself instead," he said, and the others remained silent.

None of them spoke—they all understood that Venerable Karma Seeker's words were true. For the Heavenly Buddha's Eyes to be injured simply by peering into Aldrian's mystery, it meant Aldrian was far more profound and unfathomable than they could imagine.

"Anyway, now that you've all met him, I'll take Benefactor Aldrian to the Western Paradise Temple. You're dismissed—continue with the preparations," Venerable Karma Seeker said as he stood and turned to Aldrian with a smile.

"Let's go. I'll bring you to the place I wanted you to see."

Aldrian nodded and rose to his feet. Together, they walked out of the temple, leaving the Seven Arhats behind as they silently watched them go.

Aldrian and Venerable Karma Seeker walked behind the main temple, passing through a beautiful bamboo forest. Aldrian raised an eyebrow the moment he stepped into it—he could sense the presence of a formation. It was an illusion array, likely a defensive measure meant to trap anyone who entered without permission, leaving them lost within the forest.

As they continued on their path, Venerable Karma Seeker suddenly spoke.

"Benefactor Aldrian, I have yet to properly thank you for what you did for me. So, please accept my most sincere gratitude." He stopped walking, looked at Aldrian with a gentle smile, and offered a slight bow with clasped hands before continuing on.

Aldrian glanced at Venerable Karma Seeker, puzzled by his words.

"Did I do something that warrants your gratitude, Teacher? Forgive me, but I don't recall doing anything worthy of thanks," Aldrian replied.

And yet, for reasons he couldn't explain, Aldrian felt something unusual in this moment. Venerable Karma Seeker seemed... fragile. Not like a powerful cultivator, but like someone who simply needed comfort.

Venerable Karma Seeker fell silent for a moment before parting his lips to speak.

"In the past, I had a disciple I was proud of. I met him while wandering through the Buddhist territories—as if fate had led us to cross paths. At that time, he was just an orphaned child, living off the mercy of others. When I saw that poor boy, I simply couldn't walk away. So, I took him in."



"I didn't think much of it at first, but as time passed, I realized he was a hidden gem buried in the dirt. He had the potential to become a remarkable cultivator. That's when I decided to make him my disciple."

"For years, I trained him, and he never disappointed me—not even once. I was truly satisfied with him. I daresay he was one of my greatest disciples."

"I still remember the way he smiled each time he mastered a technique I taught him. I can still feel how proud I was—watching him, as if he were my own son."

"When he came of age, he expressed a desire to spread the Buddha's enlightenment to the world. He was so passionate about it, eager to explore the world and share kindness wherever he went."

Aldrian continued to listen in silence as they walked through the forest.

"A few years later, he finally left to venture into the world—to spread the Buddha's enlightenment, to spread kindness." Venerable Karma Seeker paused, as if gathering his thoughts, before continuing.

"But one day, he changed. He returned from his travels... different. He began asking me about the ugliness of the world—how people could let such things exist. He asked why he couldn't stop them, why it felt like he was the only one who even cared."

"I told him that as humans, we all have our limits. We cannot change the entire world by ourselves. Even the Buddha could not transform every living being into a creature of pure goodness. There is darkness in us too—that is the nature of living things, like yin and yang. The most we can do is create order, so that the darker nature in each of us does not run wild."

"But it seemed that wasn't enough for him. Over time, those thoughts began to consume him. He grew envious of those who could look away—those who seemed free, unburdened by the weight he carried."

"That was the turning point—and one of the greatest regrets of my life. I didn't stop him when I still had the chance. He ran away from the sect and disappeared for a long time. That alone saddened me deeply. But what truly shattered my heart was when I finally heard news of him—only, it wasn't in a good way."

"He had become a devil cultivator. And not just any devil cultivator—"

"He became one of the Seven Deadly Sins—Envy."

Aldrian inwardly slapped his forehead. How could he have forgotten that the Envy Devil was once a disciple of a Buddhist sect? He had also seen glimpses of his memories

with a monk. Thinking back now, that monk had indeed resembled Venerable Karma Seeker but a younger version.

To think that the Envy Devil had been his disciple...

"I truly regret not being able to stop him. I couldn't even bring myself to kill him. And with every one of his victims, I felt as if their blood was on my hands too."

"That's why... when I sensed that my karmic tie with him had been completely severed—that he had died somewhere—it gave me peace."

"So truly, benefactor Aldrian... thank you." He stopped briefly and looked at Aldrian with a quiet smile before continuing on.

Aldrian sighed inwardly at Venerable Karma Seeker's story. It was truly tragic. Now that he thought about it, the advice Venerable Karma Seeker had given him back then made more sense—it came from his own experience.

His disciple had become what he did because he could not bear the weight of his own righteous heart. He could not endure the ugliness of the world, felt powerless to change it, and was eventually consumed by his own negative feelings. Aldrian had already seen the memories of the Envy Devil and understood this deeply.

He continued following Venerable Karma Seeker until they finally emerged from the bamboo forest and arrived at a giant pond. At its center stood a structure.

Aldrian felt refreshed as he took in the serene beauty of the place. There was nothing lacking here—only calm and peace.

The structure in the middle of the pond was a small temple, enough to hold around ten people. But there was something else that stunned him—a divine energy exuding from the temple.

The source of the rich heaven-and-earth energy in this place also seemed to come from the temple itself, which made him wonder what was inside.

To reach the temple, they had to cross a lone bridge, the only path connecting their location to the temple.

"That place holds our most treasured treasure, even more precious than our legacy artifacts," Venerable Karma Seeker said as he continued walking toward the temple.

Aldrian followed, and as he got closer, he could sense that the temple was actually a place where faith gathered! With so much faith concentrated here, it must represent the entire Buddhist sect's territory.

He felt surprised and happy inwardly about this development. If he built his domain here, then he would only lack the Everlasting Silent Forest and the Devil territory to make the entire continent his domain!

### **Chapter 550: What Makes You Think I Can Bear it?**

After they passed the bridge and entered the temple area, Venerable Karma Seeker began chanting a Buddhist chant. Not long after, the view in front of them became wobbly, and Venerable Karma Seeker simply stepped inside, with Aldrian following.

He could sense strong illusion laws and a formation similar to the one in the bamboo forest.

"This illusion can trap someone at the emperor stage. If they are trapped here and try to approach the temple, they will never reach it in their lifetime unless they can overpower the illusion formation. It is powered by the entire sect ground, with our treasure inside serving as the eye of the formation," Venerable Karma Seeker said.

Aldrian nodded in understanding as they approached the temple. The temple did not have a door, and normally they could instantly see the interior from outside. However, because of a kind of formation that obstructed their view—like looking at wobbly space—they could not see what was inside.

Venerable Karma Seeker stopped once again and chanted a Buddhist chant before the wobbly space disappeared, revealing what was inside. Once the distortion faded, rich heaven and earth energy mixed with divine energy swept over Aldrian.

Inside, the temple resembled a hall, and in the middle of it was another pond, still connected to the one outside. However, his attention was instantly drawn to something at the center of the pond. What he saw was a translucent lotus, emitting a light that made it resemble a diamond illuminated by a radiant glow.

His eyes glimmered as the crystal lotus's light reflected in them. He felt a strong connection to the lotus, which made him think of Tianlian.

Venerable Karma Seeker walked inside with a smile and stopped before the pond, then looked at Aldrian, who had followed him.

"Benefactor Aldrian, this is the Heavenly Lotus of the Buddha, the most treasured treasure of the Buddhist sect," he said, then looked at the lotus again.

"When our ancestors arrived on this continent, they found this lotus right here. It was as if fate had guided them to this place, making this place as the main sect of the Buddhist sect."

"Our ancestors, whose cultivation far surpassed the emperor stage, experienced the deepest comprehension of the Buddhist doctrine from this lotus. That was why they did not hesitate to declare it the most treasured treasure from that moment on. From this lotus, we have received many benefits. With its help, we developed our own techniques, unique to the Buddhist sect on this continent.

"For example, the lotus contains powerful karma laws, which allowed me and many others to develop techniques based on those very laws," Venerable Karma Seeker explained.

Aldrian's focus remained on the Heavenly Lotus of the Buddha as he read the information about it.

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### **Heavenly Lotus of the Buddha**

**Description:** This Heavenly Lotus is the embodiment of the supreme Tianlian Buddha's enlightenment and comprehension. His compassion for all living beings led him to share that enlightenment through his teachings.

The Heavenly Lotus of the Buddha also contains a powerful karmic bond with Tianlian Buddha, awaiting the arrival of the absolute ruler.

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As he expected, the lotus was connected to Tianlian. No wonder he felt such a strong connection to it.

"But here is the thing," Venerable Karma Seeker continued, "ever since our ancestors found this lotus, they were visited by a figure during their state of comprehension. This figure was holy, and according to the records, our ancestors felt as if they stood before a supreme being—someone far beyond their level."

"That being also radiated the holy light of the Buddha, which led them to believe it was the true Buddha, the supreme Buddha from a higher realm. From that vision, they came to know the nature of this lotus and our ancestors received a message—one we have preserved to this day. We inscribed it on the wall of this temple."

Venerable Karma Seeker then pointed toward the end of the temple.

Aldrian, too focused on the Heavenly Lotus, eventually looked toward the end of the temple and saw a writing engraved on the wall.

*To the brightest star whose light shines upon all lands*

*The sign of the universe came upon you*

*Those who follow your light rejoice*

*Those who deny your light stray*

*May your light grow ever brighter as you find your destiny*

Aldrian knew—once again, just like with the other traces left by his followers—this writing was meant for him.

"That figure gave our ancestors a message," Venerable Karma Seeker said, "telling us to show these words and the Heavenly Lotus to the destined one—the 'brightest star that shines upon the land.'"

He turned his gaze to Aldrian.

"All these years, we didn't know how to find that brightest star, nor did we know who the destined one was. But then the prophecy came, followed by many phenomena—and your appearance. I knew right away that you were that star."

"Do you know what I saw in you the first time we met? What made me realize you were the one mentioned in this writing and led me to approach you?" Venerable Karma Seeker asked.

Aldrian looked at him with curiosity.

"Please enlighten me, teacher. What did you see in me?"

"What I saw was your blinding presence and immense karma—so immense that I couldn't see the full extent of it. It was as if your karma was one with the world itself, something I dared not delve into. You will draw many things to you, even if you remain seated and do nothing."

"You are the opposite of me. I never wanted too many things to become connected to me through karma. Ever since my disciple became the Envy Devil, I've taken to venturing outside to help those in need. It's my way of atonement—to gather good karma, bit by bit."

"But whenever I go outside, I use a karmic shield to the best of my ability—so that others will ignore my presence. They see me as no more than a stone by the roadside. They know I'm there, but they choose to ignore me. They neither look at me nor touch me. They act as though I am beneath their notice and instinctively avoid me."

Hearing this, Aldrian finally understood why Venerable Karma Seeker could do such things. A technique that made him "invisible but not invisible" through karma—this had to be a high-level karmic art.

He could still speak with Venerable Karma Seeker normally, without detecting any anomaly—something that genuinely impressed him. Venerable Karma Seeker had hidden his karmic shield so thoroughly that Aldrian couldn't sense it at all unless he actively invoked his own karma laws.

Despite his deep comprehension of karma laws, the insight drawn from Tianlian's Heavenly Lotus seemed strong enough to obscure even his perception.

"With the reaction from the Venerable Eyes of Destiny when he tried to look into your mystery, and all these phenomena surrounding you, I can't help but wonder—who were you in your past life, Benefactor Aldrian?" Venerable Karma Seeker asked with a smile. But in his gaze, it was as if he already understood the secret Aldrian carried.

Aldrian simply smiled in return. He wasn't disturbed by someone suspecting his past life was that of a mighty being. Even Xin Haotian had begun to question his true origin. And Venerable Karma Seeker, as a Buddhist cultivator deeply attuned to karma and reincarnation, was bound to notice something. There was no way to hide it from him.

"Well, maybe I'm just someone lucky enough to be chosen as the brightest star," Aldrian said with a smile.

Venerable Karma Seeker knew that Aldrian did not seem willing to reveal the whole truth—and that was okay. He understood that with how vast Aldrian's karma was, and how he would attract everything in the universe, the truth would come out someday.

"Anyway, now that it seems I was correct in my judgment and have brought the destined one here, please feel free to do whatever you wish. It seems you already know why you are here," Venerable Karma Seeker said with a smile, a smile that showed he sensed Aldrian's connection to the Heavenly Lotus.

Aldrian smiled at Venerable Karma Seeker and bowed with clasped hands.

"Thank you, teacher," he said before walking to the side of the pond.

He paused for a moment before stepping into the pond, which was actually shallow—only calf-high. He stopped right before the Heavenly Lotus, its light illuminating his body.

He was mesmerized by its beauty for a moment before sighing and looking back at Venerable Karma Seeker.

"Teacher, may I ask something?" he inquired.

"What is it that you wish to ask, Benefactor Aldrian?" came the reply.

"About your advice back then—the one where you said not everyone can bear the weight of righteousness—why do you think I can? What makes you believe I am worthy to bear a righteous heart? What if something happens, like what happened to you? What if the ones I love are the ones who cause destruction?"

"Will I still have a righteous heart to punish the wrong? What if I end up compromising my righteousness for those I care about? What if I'm too hard on myself and end up like your disciple?"

Hearing Aldrian's questions, Venerable Karma Seeker continued to smile.

"The normal person might not be able to bear a righteous heart—I have failed at it myself—but you are not an ordinary human, remember? After everything you have experienced and done, do you still doubt your ability to carry that weight? Don't underestimate yourself, Benefactor. If anyone can bear it, it is you."

"You may even possess the strength to avoid experiencing that kind of burden, so in the end, you won't have to abandon your righteous heart."

Aldrian was stunned by the last part of Venerable Karma Seeker's advice. He bowed once again.

"Thank you for the enlightenment, teacher."

Venerable Karma Seeker nodded in response.

Aldrian then turned back to face the Heavenly Lotus and closed his eyes.

*"Yes, why should I think too hard about it? I have the ability to protect myself and those I love from making mistakes that could lead to a fate like teacher Karma Seeker."*

*"I must become stronger so I can prevent such a tragedy."*