

**993**

[@](http://www.n0V3lwor.m.co)

Oh my God!

"And what are the Chinese going to be giving their citizens?"

"The tainted vaccine we have prepared," he chuckled. "By exhibiting their racism, they will do our job for us. They will inject their people with a particularly fast acting version of the bacteria."

Thousands - tens of thousands - hundreds of thousands - millions - what would the death toll be? And Iskender thought this engineered pandemic was the greatest thing since the domestication of the horse. Terrorism? O Ishara, why had no one figured this out before now? Not the biological warfare; we could be excused for not seeing that coming.

No, everyone's mistake was thinking Temujin was anything like the comic book villain 'The Mandarin'. The man didn't want to be some shadow figure ruling a secret empire. Temujin was out to re-conquer Asia and his team seemed to be completely onboard with that agenda. That meant war on a global scale.

Technically, initiating a land war in Asia makes you insane. That doesn't mean you can't succeed... if you are willing to kill enough people and you have...

"Iskender, where are you going to get the army to move in once the Chinese take your kick to the testicles?" He liked that analogy.

"We've been stockpiling gear since before the end of the Cold War," he blithely revealed to me. I had no doubt that the permission to give me this information came all the way from the top, but why? I'd let Pamela and Katrina figure that one out. They were smarter than me. "You would be surprised what the Soviets misplaced.

Updating the equipment has been aided by our businesses in India, Pakistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria as well as the Turkish Republics. We have hundreds of attack aircraft, much of it equivalent to what the PRC (People's Republic of China) can send up. We have tanks, APCs, mobile artillery, armored scout vehicles, attack and transport helicopters, and trucks. The world has come full circle, my friend.

Once more, victory on the battlefield will be determined by mobility, not mass. We will pin the Chinese in the cities, cut off their supplies and let them rot, or serve as lures to bring the PLA's (People's Liberation Army) mobile forces out to a ground of our choosing." Well, that helped things make more sense to me. For starters, Aksai Chin.

"You are luring their western most mobile forces to the south, aren't you?" I guessed. Iskender nodded. "They are running off to Aksai Chin, leaving Xinjiang vulnerable."

"Precisely," he nodded, congratulating me on being a smart amateur warlord.

"Any chance the Seven Pillars, or the PRC can catch wind of this?" I asked.

Another smile. "They already have... kind of," he snorted. "We offered up some of our agents for them to seize. The agents injected themselves with the anthrax before being captured. They thought they were crippling our network. Instead, by kidnapping our members, they brought the poison into their own houses. Their intelligence gathering units are going to die."

Talk about a second steel tip boot to the nuts. You can crank out half-ass soldiers in a matter of weeks. How long would it take to train up new intelligence officers? How far up the chain of command this sickness would go was anyone's guess. Worse, their vaccine wasn't even a vaccine and I was willing to bet the pre-vaccinated personnel were about to find out how useless that shot had been too.

The Earth & Sky was going to cripple the PRC's intelligence apparatus for six months to a year.

"What does He (Temujin) want from me?" I bit into the Golden Apple.

"Time and understanding. Inside of two months, we will have spent our initial volley. Our new nation will need a reprieve - a brokered ceasefire with the appropriate useless Peace Talks.

Our word in the West will be worthless because of our... terrorist acts. We need people in the UN to intervene once we have finished, yet before the Chinese can bury us with their industrial base," he laid out the second phase of their plan.

What could the Amazons possibly do to bring that...

"You want me to go to my Aunts and see what they can arrange," I met his gaze.

"Precisely. We will also need you to set the stage for a deal with the 9 Clans," he added.

They didn't want a peace treaty among the secret societies. The Earth & Sky wanted a public, open to the world, UN brokered ceasefire. Once the shooting stopped and the E&S had some level of recognition, they could start buying armament and training the troops for round two.

"Understanding? You want me to talk to the US Federal agents and explain to them that the most egregious use of biological warfare the world has ever witnessed is... what?" I said dryly. "Holy Hell, you are talking about putting millions of people at risk - Ishara knows how many dead. How do you plan for me to spin this?"

"We will give you all of the data on the Soviet and our research on Anthrax," he offered.

"Once you've completely boned the Chinese," I clarified. Iskender nodded happily.

"Time table?" He slid a flash drive over the table. That could only mean... the first wave of Seven Pillars attacks went down 48 hours ago. The Chinese government had already started the inoculations.

Save what you can... that was my imperative now. It was not lost on me that by saving Temujin I had set this wave human misery in motion. I had tried to save my people and innocent men, women and children in China were going to die with fluid filling their lungs and monstrous fevers. 'The Seven Pillars brought this on themselves' was a soulless dodge.

This wasn't revenge. This wasn't tit for tat. This was ethnic cleansing on a continent-wide scale. How was I ever going to sleep again? How could I hold my daughters and sons after leaving them this crime as my legacy?

What the fuck had I expected to happen? Every group was staffed with killers, criminals and the morally flexible. Worse, I knew the looks I'd be getting from my Amazons. They would be looks of pity - for me. Pity that I hadn't seen this coming and that nothing they could have done would make me accept this... thing, this style of warfare.

I kept my emotions under tight rein. Screaming at Iskender and telling Genghis to kiss my Heine would accomplish nothing.

"Is this all for now?" I questioned Iskender. He nodded, pleased as punch over this latest cycle of cultural vengeance - the pastoral steppe dwellers versus the agrarian valley inhabitants.

"Breakfast?" he asked.

"Nah. We are in enough danger stepping out of our doors these days. I need to run this back to my people and figure how I'm going to handle the calamity when the shit-kicking begins. Be careful, Iskender," I told him as we stood and hugged once more.

I was about to leave when one ray of sunshine pierced my gloom. I could save a few. I could do something and send one wave to counteract the tsunami Temujin had tossed my way.

"Iskender, I need something done," I looked down as he had resumed his seat.

"Yes?"

"My allies have oil and natural gas facilities plus refineries in your backyard and I want them protected," I demanded. I was a fucking prince in their eyes. It was time I pushed back.

"Are these your assets?" he equivocated. He knew they were not. That was the polite way of telling me this was 'none of your business', so I lied.

"They are my fiancée's properties," I fibbed a fable worthy of my best efforts. "Hana Sulkanen, is her name. Here is the name of her on-site coordinator," I handed him a card. "Make sure He knows this is important to me, if I am to have assets invested in the Khanate."

Lest everyone forget, I was a Business Major/Philosophy Minor and both came into play here. The business aspect was simple. If I had heavy investments in the Khanate (when it formed), I was less likely to betray Temujin. Besides, as I was a peripheral member, he could take away tomorrow what he gave to me today. The philosophy aspect was that the best rulers used both loyalty and fear to get the job done.

My response to my mission could be viewed as me doing this out of fear that he'd eventually have me killed, or I was doing this because I believed in the Khanate and that Genghis stood a chance - I was betting on his horse to win, which the Amazon nation was. The thing was, Iskender really liked me. I had helped his career and it turned out we had compatible personalities.

We were also now in the same political pond. That meant we could be strong allies, or strong rivals. My rank was higher - Prince - and I believed that was on purpose. He wanted me keeping his other outer-ring power players aware they weren't the only game in town. I was still a 'nobody' at this point. If I could pull off this move for Hana, that would change.

Temujin would give me power by proxy - his to parcel out and take away.

"I will tell him very soon. I will contact you when we know something," he acknowledged.

"Also, we are sending assistance to the Ninja, so we will be increasing our assets in the region. Is there anything that the Host can do for the Khanate?"

"Not at the moment, but we can ship you some of the correct vaccine," he proposed.

"That would be great. Can we have production rights for the correct vaccine?" I tacked on another request.[www.0w0Ew0.0M.coM](http://www.0w0Ew0.0M.coM)

"That is already on the flash drive," he smiled.[www.0w0Ew0.0M.coM](http://www.0w0Ew0.0M.coM)

"Now, I really have to get going," I gave a lopsided grin. Oh, yeah, I had to go. I caught sight of two rough looking guys at a table by the door. They were Iskender's men. I wasn't worried. Delilah and Pamela were already converging on me as well. First...

"Hana, I need to ask you..." I said as I called Ms. Sulkanen.

"Hello Cael, how did your meeting go?" she interrupted. She was freaking anxious, fretful and worried.

"Hana, will you consent to be my wife?" I tossed it out there. One... Two...

[www.0w0Ew0.0M.coM](http://www.0w0Ew0.0M.coM)

"Yes... Yes I will, but you will have to talk to Father soon," she responded.

Hana knew the score. She knew the cultures I was dealing with. Clan, tribe and people stood taller than any national, corporate, identity. I couldn't protect our marriage, I could ward off my own side from my property - thus the economic necessity of our marriage.

"Your people can expect contact within a few hours," I continued.

"Yes Hana, I was confessing, I had lied to 'my side' about us."

"They may be bringing a gift. I suggest your people go along with it. I'll explain when I get a chance. It is very important - okay?" Talk about a meaningless warning.

"Honey, I hope to hear from you soon. Lunch perhaps?" she hinted.

"Dinner," I responded.

"I'll meet you at Osteria al Bogo at 6:30," Hana suggested. I agreed. "See you then," she signed off.

We were out of the restaurant and into the SUV by the time I finished.

"Congratulations," Delilah gave a bitter smirk. The Man-Dog-Pig had just retired his bachelor status.

That was more a cause for mourning than joy. I was in mourning alright. Pamela patted my shoulder (she was in the seat behind me). All I could do was hold that hand.

"What is going on?" Agent Loire/Vincent inquired.

"Call Javiera. I need a face to face meeting. And you have State Department people as part of your tas-kforce?"

"We do," he answered.

"Get one of your best 'China' people to that meeting as well," I couldn't even look him in the eyes.

"This is something that... people are going to want to know about."

"Is her Majesty's Government going to be part of this discussion?" British Agent Delilah Faircloth, MI-6 responded.

"MI-6 responded."

"Absolutely. I'm going to need some serious favors pretty soon and I might as well start paying this forward while I've got the chance," I responded. After that, no one bothered me. Pamela would just say that I looked like I'd looked into the face of death and found nothing to laugh about. A sick thought occurred to me, then was discarded.

What if Iskender had infected me? Cruel - yes. Pointless - also yes. Why anger the Amazons? Why anger the United States by spreading the contagion to New York City? You could ask the Taliban because I was too valuable for them. No, I wasn't going to escape my guilt by becoming a victim.

What if I was too valuable for the terrorists. Yay me...