

## Martial Unity 1751

### Chapter 1751: Come Forth

The Emperor turned to Princess Ranea. "My daughter...It has been five years since we last spoke."

"...I was pleased to receive the news of your awakening," She said with a respectful tone.

"I recall that your ambition to cross the waters of the Great Nam Ocean had not ceased even after I told you about the dire threats that exist at the depths at the center and core of the Great Nam Ocean."

"...Yes, Father."

"And yet you wish to set foot in a domain we are powerless within to take on what is the Beast Domain of the ocean..."

"...Yes, Father."

"And you still wish to tear apart the delicate balance of the Kandrian Empire in an attempt to channel all of Kandria's power into this endeavor in pursuit of the many treasures that its treacherous depths have to offer, correct?"

"...Yes, Father."

"..."

He stared at his daughter, apparently speechless, before heaving a soft sigh.

"Your honesty is refreshing. Then, answer this question honestly as well. Tell me, my daughter, what is the crown to you?"

"..." She didn't reply.

"Do you seek the depths of the Great Nam Ocean for the sake of Kandria, or do you seek Kandria for the sake of the depths of the Great Nam Ocean?"

She shook at his question.

It struck at the very core of her drive.

"..." Her expression grew grave even as she held her tongue.

"Your silence is deafening, dear daughter."

"..."

He shook his head before issuing his judgment.

"Unworthy."

He glanced around at his children. "Two years have passed, yet is there nobody who can earn my approval? What have you accomplished in the past two years?"

His eyes shifted to Prince Raul, who winced at his attention.

"Ah...if it isn't my saint of a son," The Emperor snorted.

"...Father."

"The boy who thinks he can move the world by striking the human heart," The Emperor scowled. "Yet he doesn't understand that it is the mind that moves the world, not the heart. That is why he fails to draw enough power from across Kandria to his noble cause."

Disappointment flashed in the Emperor's eyes. "Raul...I...had high hopes for you. I had hoped that you would cultivate thought. Cultivate your understanding of the world. For how can you change a nation you know not anything about?"

His eyes grew sharper. "It took me but a single glance to discern that you haven't changed. That is why you, too, are unworthy."

Prince Raul lowered his head wordlessly.

He finally turned to the final of the seven princes.

"Raijun."

"Father." Prince Raijun narrowed his eyes.

"You don't need to put up a fierce facade, my son," The Emperor grinned. "I can see that you are deeply relieved and pleased that your rivals failed to gain my approval. Even if you yourself fail to do so, the final possible impediment has proven to not get in your way."

Prince Raijun's expression grew ugly as the Emperor effortlessly read his mind, seeing right through him.

"You are correct," The Emperor nodded. "You do not require my support, nor will you get it. I will die before I let Kandria become a Martial supremacist nation."

He chuckled at his own joke before shaking his head. "When I look at you. I don't see you. I see the Martial union."

Prince Raijun's expression grew even more ugly.

"You are a tool."

Prince Raijun gritted his teeth.

"A puppet," The Emperor snorted. "You are even more of a tool than Randal, Ranea, Rafia, and Raemina."

Rui shook where he stood as he realized the Emperor had somehow found out about his manipulation of the four royals. Chills went up his spine at this revelation.

But how?

He didn't know.

Prince Raijun glared at Emperor Rael. "Father, you-"

"Shut up."

The Emperor's heavy voice cut through his words.

His powerful glare pinned Raijun down. "Tools should remain silent and do as they're told."

Prince Raijun gnashed his teeth in humiliation.

"I am disappointed."

His words struck all of his children.

"Disappointed that not a single one of you is able to understand the harmony needed to rule Kandria."

His eyes narrowed. "Kandria is a nation with many pillars that support it. Anybody who does not understand the importance of balance between these pillars that support our great nation is unworthy and unfit to rule it."

The Emperor had issued his judgment.

A dark atmosphere settled into the throne hall.

It was not inspiring to know that the great Emperor of Harmony judged all of them unworthy of ascending the throne.

Many wondered if this marked the end of the Age of Glory for the Kandrian Empire.

Many wondered if the death of Emperor Rael truly would, as he declared, bring about a civil war that would bring ruin to Kandria, marking the dawn of decline. Perhaps Prince Raijun was right.

Perhaps civil war was inevitable.

Perhaps the Emperor of Harmony was the outlier, a rare individual blessed with the gift of harmonizing a nation.

At that moment, they truly did feel a hint of regret at his impending death.

"I have failed this Great Empire."

His words stunned those who heard them.

If there was anybody who had not failed the Kandrian Empire, it was Emperor Rael. If even he had failed the Kandrian Empire, then what about everybody else?

"I have failed this Empire by failing to impart harmony to my descendants."

Regret saturated his rich, deep, masculine voice.

"If the Kandrian Throne War cannot be averted, then so be it..."

His voice changed.

A new determination filled its depths.

"What I am to do may very well be my final act as Emperor."

A grave severity underlied his tone.

"It will be my final gift to Kandria."

The air grew electric.

It grew taut.

A deep amount of weight weighed down on all of them.

At that moment, a single realization dawned on all of them.

History was in the making.

They didn't know how.

Or why.

But the depths of their instinct felt this truth.

"I hereby commence the Kandrian Blood Ritual!" The Emperor's powerful voice boomed across the entirety of the throne hall, stunning the entire hall with his sudden declaration.

The Kandrian Blood Ritual. An age-old tradition and ritual that affirmed blood kinship between the Emperor and those who bore his blood within a hundred meters of the ritual. It was based upon an extremely rare esoteric substance that reacted to the very essence of the blood of a person.

Everybody instinctively understood that this was the culmination of this historic event.

Whatever was to come would change Kandria forever.

His servants stepped forth before him, kneeling down as they presented a strange ethereal orb to him.

"By blood, we live..." His voice quivered with emotion as he drew a ceremonial dagger.

SPLAT

The blade dug into the flesh of his hand.

"...By blood, we inherit." His voice grew severe.

DRIP DRIP DRIP...

It spilled upon the orb.

For a moment, nothing happened.

Then, the orb glowed, lighting up with a brilliant shine.

The princes and princesses began glowing, row after row, emitting a similar light. The orb recognized the blood within to be the same as that which was spilled upon.

Yet that wasn't all.

What followed shocked everybody to their very core.

No one.

Not a single person could have imagined what followed.

From within the depths of the arrays of guests behind the royals, another light glowed.

A light emanating from Rui Quarrier.

He was frozen.

Frozen in pure horror of what had just unfolded.

"Come forth," A grin emerged on the Emperor's face. "Come forth, Prince Rui Quarrier Kandria."

Chapter 1752: Shocking Decision

1752 Shocking Decision

Not a single person could remain unperturbed.



Not a single person could remain calm.

Not a single one of them could maintain their composure at the revelation that had just unfolded.

Yet the ritual did not lie.

A light identical to that of the other princes and princesses had shone from Rui.

Rui himself had been frozen in shock at the realization of what had just happened.

"Come forth..." The Emperor beckoned him forth with a knowing smile. "Come forth, Prince Rui Quarrier Kandria."

For a moment, nobody moved.

Everybody was shocked.

His acquaintances around him were stunned and speechless.

Master Ceeran, Vericita, Aroanian, Minister Varay, and several others simply stared at him like he was from another world.

The royals stared at him in shock.

The entirety of the throne hall was stunned to its very core.

Yet, none of them were more shocked than Rui himself.

"...What?" He whispered with horror. "This has to be some kind of a mistake."

Time slowed down to a crawl as his Martial fight-or-flight instincts took over. His mind, normally ordered and organized in its thought, had fallen into absolute chaos. Countless thoughts flashed through it as it collapsed into disarray.

He didn't understand.

He didn't understand what was happening.

How could he possibly have royal blood in his veins?

How could he possibly be a descendant of the Kandrian Royal Family?!

Could it be a mistake?

Could the orb be malfunctioning?

No, the probability of that was far too low. This was a matter centered around the Royal Family; there was no room for error.

...Could it truly be that he was a royal?

He didn't know who his father was and had never given it much thought. As far as he was concerned, it didn't matter. It was irrelevant to him.

His mind flashed back to the sole memory of his mother when he first gave birth. Despite her exhaustion and pain, her eyes lingered with deep affection for Rui even as she passed away.

Was she a royal or...?

"Do not make me repeat myself, boy."

The Emperor's powerful, commanding tone left no room for reprieve. It shook Rui out of his frozen reverie, propelling him forward as he obeyed the Emperor's command.

STEP

STEP

STEP...

With each step he took, he became increasingly aware of all the attention on him.

Not a single person was anything less than shocked.

Those who knew him the most were beyond flabbergasted. The members of the Martial Union were truly taken aback as they realized their golden boy had been a member of the royal family the entire time.

They hadn't even reached the point of considering whether this was good or bad, they were still utterly bewildered by the revelation of the Kandrian Blood Ritual.

Yet, the royal family was even more shocked than the Martial Union!

The moment the realization dawned on them, the royals had lost all dignity as the deepest of horror overtook their demeanor.

Prince Randal's expression crumpled with horrified terror.

He seemed to age by the second.

Princess Ranea, Rafia, and Raemina were frozen in raw fear as they realized the nightmare that this situation was to them.

Prince Rajak gritted his teeth apprehensively at the revelation of Rui being his half-brother.

Prince Raul was, perhaps, the only one who didn't appear to be inflicted with pain at the revelation. Yet, even he was deeply stunned by the revelation. It was clear that not even the Beggar's Sect had been aware of this deep secret despite all their exposure to Rui Quarrier.

Prince Raijun, however, was the very first to understand the implications of this revelation. He gritted his teeth with deep fear and apprehension as he did his best to maintain his composure.

Yet, inwardly, he experienced true terror and fear for the first time in his life.

Rui schooled his expression and his gait with heightened self-

awareness as he walked past the crowd of guests and toward the royal family that had gathered a short distance away from the elevated platform bearing the throne.

With each step he took, the harder it grew to breathe.

With each step he took, the burden on his shoulder deepened.

With each step, it grew heavier.

By the time he arrived, he felt like the weight of the entire Empire rested on his shoulders.

It pressed down on him, squeezing his heart, crippling his breath.

"Rui Quarrier Kandria."

The Emperor spoke his name like an incantation. His voice was powerful, yet his tone was soft.

Gentle.

Rui beheld the Emperor of Kandria.

Gone was the powerful and domineering persona of the Emperor of Harmony. All Rui saw was paternal pride.

He didn't understand.

He didn't understand what he was seeing.

"You are a son of Kandria."

The Emperor's declaration was firm.

"You are a son of the Royal Family."

Not even the slightest hint of hesitation rang in his voice.

"You are...a son of mine."

His words spread through the Kandrian Throne Hall.

Rui stared at him.

His eyes brimmed with intense emotion.

Uncertainty.

Apprehension.

Fear.

The Emperor met his gaze with clear eyes.

A glint of affection lingered in them.

"Be not afraid."

His tone was warm.

"Fear does not befit a son of mine."

His words were sharp, yet his tone did not barb Rui.

It coaxed him.

"...And son of mine, you are," The Emperor reaffirmed once more.

This time, his tone was more firmer.

Fiercer.

"As Emperor, I declare you, Rui Quarrier Kandria, Son of Rael Di Kandria and Miriam Nephi Silas of the Silas Clan..." The Emperor's voice grew grave. "...as my chosen heir."

Rui's widened his eyes, stunned at the Emperor's solemn declaration.

The entirety of the throne hall shook once more as yet another wave of shock washed over each of them.

The Emperor had not only unveiled a new son who had been unknown before but had also declared him his chosen heir immediately after disclosing his identity!

The air grew tumultuous as the weight of the Emperor's declaration struck everybody.

Chapter 1753: Alone

"What?!"

"He's suddenly his son and his chosen heir?!"

"Unbelievable..."

"The Kandrian Throne War has changed forever."

"Who could have known..."

A wave of murmurs erupted from the crowd as the Emperor made his final declaration.

Rui himself was frozen where he stood, shell-shocked.

"...What?" A single whisper escaped his mouth.

The Emperor did not respond to him, instead waving his hand.

A servant walked over to Rui with a prepared ostentatious tray with a ceremonial blade and an insignia atop it. A platinum-gold adorned insignia that bore the crest of the Royal Family.

"Commence the blood seal," The Emperor commanded.

Rui had no idea what that meant, but the circumstantial context and evidence were enough for him to rapidly infer exactly what was expected of him. He took the knife, cutting his palm, allowing the blood to fall on the insignia.

VMMM!

The artifact absorbed the blood, shaking and glowing, before finally subsiding.

"The Royal Insignia is proof that you are of the Kandrian Royal Family," The Emperor declared. "And the Royal Sword of Kandria..."

He extracted his sheathed ceremonial blade from his robes. "...

is proof that you are my heir."

Rui stared at him with uncertainty.

"Come forth, my son, and accept my offering of heirship." The Emperor commanded him.

Rui walked over to the throne with a measured gait, ascending the platform before arriving at the Emperor.



Their eyes met, fixing upon each other's. Rui's eyes bored into his with askance, yet the Emperor's steely eyes were firmly unmoving.

"And with this..." The Emperor's solemn voice reverberated through the throne hall as he bestowed his Royal Sword upon the kneeling Rui. "The world shall recognize you, Prince Rui Quarrier Kandria, as chosen heir unto the Second Emperor of Kandria."

CLASP

A chill went down Rui's spine as he accepted the ice-cold ceremonial sword. His mind jarred back to reality as he broke out of his shell of shock. The surreality of what was unfolding at the moment had suddenly struck him like a jackhammer.

'...Is this real?' Uncertainty grasped at his heart, squeezing it in a vise.

He hoped he was having a nightmare.

He hoped, from the bottom of his heart, that he would wake up in the Quarrier Orphanage as just another ordinary orphan blessed to have been accepted by Lashara thirty-one years ago.

Yet reality denied his deepest desires.

Instead, it cruelly thrust him into a world where he was somehow a Royal Prince, son of the Royal Emperor.

Rui's eyes wandered around with uncertainty as he returned to his spot.

The Royal Sword weighed down on him.

It was heavy.

It was a burden he didn't ask for.

It was a burden he didn't want.

One that was thrust upon him against his will.

Yet he hadn't even reached the part where he could calmly evaluate his circumstances objectively.

He was far too shocked about the nature of his own circumstances. He didn't even know how to begin processing everything that had just happened. He didn't even know how it could possibly be happening.

"My subjects."

The Emperor's powerful voice cut through the tumultuous atmosphere as the Emperor took the opportunity to address the guests.

"My children."

He glanced at the royals gathered closer to him.

"Much has unfolded during this Royal Addressal Ceremony," The severity of his tone reflected the weight of the circumstances. "Much that no one could have predicted or known."

No one aside from the Emperor himself, of course.

"I, the Emperor of Kandria, am diseased," He closed his eyes. "I do not have much longer left. Know that I have fought, with all might, against this curse that addles my body for far longer than any of you could have imagined. I have fought... and I have failed."

He opened his eyes, meeting everybody with his powerful gaze. "This is my final act. This is my will. I believe that this, even as I inch closer to death, is the right choice for Kandria. For the future of Kandria."

The weight of his words was deep.

"I have made my choice," He told the many powers and forces of Kandria that had gathered within the hall. "I have made my choice, and it is time for each of you to make yours."

The air grew electric.

Each and every single person in the hall understood what the Emperor was telling them.

A new prince had entered the war.

A prince who bore the will of Rael Di Kandria.

In other words, a powerful competitor for the throne had emerged from the woodwork. It was bound to be the birth of a new faction. A new faction that they could choose to support or not.

It could be a great opportunity if exploited correctly.

The guests narrowed their eyes with deep seriousness as they furiously considered the prospects of supporting and allying with the final prince of Kandria.

"I, Emperor Rael Di Kandria, declare the Royal Addressal Ceremony to be complete," The Emperor announced. "Glory to Kandria."

"Glory to Kandria!"

A saying that signaled the end of royal ceremonies.

CLACK

The giant doors of the Kandrian Throne Hall opened.

For a moment, nobody could move.

Yet, move they did.

Shock was not a justification to ignore royal protocol.

The guests neatly exited the throne hall row after row, heading down the stairs as the Martial Masters of the royal security force secured the path down. Sage Farana had already shifted, standing in the sky, overseeing the security of all the important powers and forces of Kandria.

Her heavy presence weighed down on the world, inspiring great confidence in their safety in the minds of the many powerful guests.

Rui never moved.

He didn't move so much as an inch from where he stood.

Even as the many princes and princesses headed to the exit in the order that they had arrived in, he never moved.

He simply stood there, staring at the Emperor.

The uncertainty and confusion in his eyes were replaced with a steely glare.

One by one, everybody left.

The Master-level bodyguards.

The concubines that had stood by his side.

The many attendants that had tended to him.

Soon enough, they were alone.

Chapter 1754: Tale

"You seem displeased."

The Emperor's powerful voice echoed across the vast expanse of the Kandrian Throne Hall.

"Oh, I do, do I? You don't say."

Rui's sarcasm was palpable.

Yet the Emperor didn't seem to mind the impropriety.

"Your displeasure is very understandable." The Emperor remarked. "Yet you managed to retain your exterior composure even when bombarded with life-altering revelations in front of all the greatest powers of Kandria."

A hint of approval could be detected in his voice. "Had you grown unstable or had a mental breakdown, I would not have chosen you as my heir. It was...the final test."

Rui narrowed his eyes, glaring at the Emperor. "The final test?"

"Final test." The Emperor reaffirmed calmly. "You have passed all others with flying colors. You are truly a prince worthy of ascending the throne. You are worthy of being Emperor of Kandria."

"I don't understand."

Rui's voice betrayed the frustration that had rapidly built up since the revelation of his royal bloodship.

"I DON'T UNDERSTAND." He bellowed as a surge of emotion washed through him.

A brief silence lingered in the air.

"I don't blame you." The Emperor's tone was gentle. "Sometimes, I'm not entirely sure I understand what happened."

Regret and sorrow echoed within the melody of his voice.

He heaved a sigh. "If I, as Emperor of Kandria, had the choice to choose a single supernatural power or ability, what power do you think it would be?"

Rui furrowed his eyebrows in confusion at the random question.

What did it have to do with their current circumstances?

What relevance did it have to anything that was pertinent?

If ranked on the list of topics that Rui wanted to speak to the Emperor about, it would not even make it into the top ten thousand!

Yet, as he met the patient and calm eyes of the Emperor, waiting for an answer, he heaved a sigh.

"...Telepathy? Precognition. Clairvoyance..." Rui nonchalantly replied. "Depends on its synergy with your circumstances and needs as ruler, I suppose."

"That is a neat analysis; those are certainly good choices," The Emperor nodded, smiling wryly. "I chose precognition."

Rui tilted his head. "I do not follow."

"Or rather, an opportunity to choose precognition had risen nearly forty years ago," The Emperor replied calmly. "One of my intelligence networks had caught wind of a clue to the location of the mythical Silas Clan."

Rui's eyes narrowed sharply at that name.

The Emperor had mentioned it when he declared Rui his heir.

It was the clan of his mother, allegedly.

He had never heard of such a clan before in his entire life.

"The Silas Clan is a nomadic clan descended from the Transcendent Prophet, the Astral Sovereign." The Emperor explained. "It is a clan birthed by the son of the Transcendent Prophet, a Martial Sage who went by the name Silas."

Rui's eyes widened, surprised at the connection between the prophet of the Virodhabhasa Faith and the clan his mother was allegedly from.

"The historical records about the origin of the Silas Clan are...

shoddy, to say the least," The Emperor admitted. "However, it is said that Silas was inspired by his father's Transcendent Prophecy from a very young age, so much so that he grew up wanting to become a prophet like his father. It is said that it had shaped his entire identity as he grew up, the core of his drive."

He glanced at Rui. "What do you think his Martial Path was when he broke through to the Apprentice Realm?"

Rui's eyes narrowed. "...Prophecy?"

The word lingered in the air.

"Indeed." The Emperor nodded, closing his eyes. "Over the span of centuries in the Age of Martial Art, Silas broke through to Realm after Realm, reaching the Sage Realm. Just one Realm below Transcendence. It is said that Sage Silas had reached the cusp of the Transcendence Realm...before he ultimately disappeared, thought to be dead."

"'Thought' to be dead...?"

The Emperor shrugged nonchalantly. "Thought to be dead. Gaia is an astronomically enormous world. Orders of magnitude larger than any other in our solar system. He could be dead or not. I doubt we will ever find out. However, before he died, he passed on a technique to his clan of descendants...

a forbidden technique, the Eye of Prophecy."

Rui's eyes narrowed.

"It was a Sage-level technique that is said to allow the user to see the future." The Emperor remarked. "The Silas Clan inherited Sage Silas' final heirloom and dedicated everything to it. Their entire identities warped around the technique as they religiously embodied it."

His eyes met with Rui. "I'm sure you're familiar with the correlation between identity and Martial Path; what do you think happened?"

"...The Martial Artists of the Silas Clan naturally came to possess Martial Paths centered around the Eye of Prophecy," Rui realized. "If their progeny were raised to form their identity around their inherited technique, then there's no doubt that their Martial Art would not stray far away from the technique."



"Indeed," The Emperor nodded. "That was not all. There is a reason the technique is considered to be a forbidden technique. The original technique was not a forbidden technique; it was a Sage-level technique. It was made functioned to make use of the Sage Realm of power. In other words, it was not a technique meant to be used by even Masters, let alone Martial Artists of the Lower Realms. Yet they were determined to harness the power of the technique, the only heirloom given to them by their beloved progenitor, Sage Silas."

The Emperor's eyes narrowed. "They were willing to use it no matter the price. And the price they did pay. The many Martial Masters united together to decode, decipher, and reconstruct the technique to water it down."

"...I presume they succeeded." A glint of curiosity flashed in Rui's eyes.

"Partially," The Emperor replied. "They managed to water it down in order to make it easier to use as a result. However, they were never entirely able to reduce it below quasi-Sage level. The technique was fundamentally such that it required a bare minimum amount of the power of the Sage Realm."

#### Chapter 1755: Forbidden

"And, rest assured, the quasi-Sage level version of the Eye of Prophecy was also too difficult for any of the Masters at the time, let alone any of the younger Martial Artists," Emperor Rael's tone grew darker. "As I mentioned, it could not be used without paying the price and the price they paid."

He stared deep into Rui's eyes. "The price they paid to use a technique they were unworthy of using was their lifespan."

Rui's eyes widened with shock. "What?!"

"They modified the technique, adding forbidden principles that could supply them with the power they needed to wield the Eye of Prophecy in exchange for their lifespan," the Emperor explained in a heavy tone. "Lifespan is precious, and when sacrificed can conjure up miracles. That's why those principles are forbidden. That is why it is considered a forbidden technique. The Panamic Martial Federation frowns upon the creation and propagation of forbidden techniques, techniques that cause irreversible harm to their user, yet the Silas Clan was determined to use the Eye of Prophecy even if it came at the cost of

their lifespan. They believed the power was worth it, and thus began a century-old tradition in the Silas Clan."

Rui listened to the Emperor's tale with rapt attention.

"And they were right," The Emperor remarked. "It was worth it. When the world learned that the Silas Clan had harnessed the power of prophecy, naturally, they wanted it. The Silas Clan was targeted and hunted by the powers of the world that sought to get their hands on the power of prophecy."

"...Why didn't they seek refuge in the Transcendent Prophet if they were his descendants?" Rui raised an eyebrow.

"They probably tried." The Emperor sighed. "But Martial Transcendents are...detached from human civilization. Not even I have been able to understand what it is that drives them away to distance themselves from humanity when they break through to the Transcendent Realm. Regardless, it can be readily inferred that this option was not available. Otherwise, they would have lived happily ever after in the Virodhabhasa Theocracy."

That was a sensible deduction.

The Emperor heaved a sigh. "Prey to the predatory greed of human civilization, the Silas Clan abandoned their roots and became a permanently nomadic clan that wandered through the peripheries and gaps in human civilization and the Beast Domain to this day. The world searches for the Silas Clan even to this day, yet none have found them yet."

His eyes narrowed. "None except me. I searched for the Silas Clan for many years, studying every ounce of data and creating models of behavioral patterns until I managed to predict their future course based on a crucial piece clue that the Kandrian Intelligence Agency. I personally undertook the operation, traveling across Panama in disguise to intercept them along with a single Martial Sage, and succeeded. I won the race to the Silas Clan."

An affectionate smile appeared on his face. "...And that was how I met your mother."

Rui's eyes widened as the Emperor's demeanor changed.

His eyes grew loving as they glazed over, recounting the memories of a woman who no longer was.

"...Your mother was a being of hope." The Emperor remarked lightly, lost in his memories. "She gave me hope when I had nearly lost all of it."

"You see," The Emperor remarked as his attention returned to Rui. "The reason I sought the Silas Clan wasn't just because prophecy was an extremely useful and revolutionary power for any ruler to have, although that was also true and a good bonus. But the true reason I sought the Silas Clan...was because they had the power to help me find the key to healing my curse."

Rui's eyes widened with shock.

The Emperor's eyes darkened. "I had already been alerted to the Eternal Dream disease that lay dormant in my body a few years prior to my meeting with the Silas Clan. There was no known cure in the medical community. No treatment could slow it down. Nothing could get rid of it. I drove myself mad, looking for a solution, almost unraveling into despair until a possibility finally appeared."

Rui's attention intensified.

The air grew heavy.

"The Divine Doctor." The Emperor remarked. "The single greatest known healer in all of human history. A genius that is said to be a gift to humanity from the God of Medicine herself. Born many centuries before even the Age of Martial Art, this doctor was said to be transcendent in his ability to heal and cure. The Divine Doctor is said to have even cured death itself, transcending morality and becoming an immortal sage who wanders throughout Gaia to this day."

Rui grew amazed, enraptured by the Emperor's tale. "...He doesn't even sound human."

"He can hardly be considered to be a human," The Emperor replied. "He isn't the only one. Throughout history, there have been those born with transcendent minds and godly mentalities, not unlike yourself."

Rui narrowed his eyes.

He eyes Rui carefully with a pointed look. "The Scrier...an extraordinary archaeologist who sought to uncover the mysteries of the Empty Ages before known and recorded human history. The Beggar Sage, the founder and current leader of the Beggar's Sect, is said to possess an unfathomable comprehension of information and epistemology. And, of course, the Divine Doctor, the godly healer, said to be able to cure anything."

The Emperor narrowed his eyes. "I believed that he might have the power to heal my condition. However, finding him was even more difficult. It proved untenable with my power alone. I needed something that could help me find the Divine Doctor."

Rui's eyes widened as realization dawned on him. "That was why you sought the Silas Clan. That was why you sought the power of prophecy. You hoped that with Silas Clan's Eye of Prophecy, they would be able to help you find the Divine Doctor to help cure your condition before it manifested."

"A keen inference," The Emperor nodded, smiling. "An accurate one, too. Yet, the prospect of finding a secret nomadic clan to then somehow gain their most treasured technique to, in turn, somehow help me find the Divine Doctor was...a dubious plan, to say the least. By the time I had succeeded in intercepting the Silas Clan myself with a Martial Sage, I had lost all hope and, as I said before, that..."

He smiled once more with clear eyes full of hope. "...was how I met your mother. She gave me hope. The hope for life. The longer I spent with her, the more hopeful I grew. And long I spent with her, indeed. It wasn't long before she gave me more than just hope."

A soft smile appeared on Rui's face.

"As a Martial Apprentice, she had already gained the power of prophecy."

Rui's eyes widened, surprised. "She was a Martial Apprentice?!"

## Chapter 1756: Unforgotten

"Indeed," The Emperor nodded. "Although young and inexperienced, she possessed the forbidden technique of the Eye of Prophecy. In return for the technique in her Martial Art, I offered the Silas Clan a powerful Sage-level artifact that would aid in obscuring them even further. And thus, an exchange occurred."

He smiled. "She was pregnant with you even before we bade the Silas Clan farewell and returned to the Kandrian Empire..."

His smile grew sorrowful. "And that was when things took a rough turn."

"...What happened?"

"She grew revolted and disgusted at the toxic, poisonous relationships within the Royal Family," The Emperor heaved a sigh. "Princes and princesses plotting and scheming each other's downfall and deaths. Scheming to one day ascend the throne after I died or abdicated it. Anybody who bore the blood of the royal family was in danger of being targeted to eliminate competition."

"...Like what happened to Rajak," Rui realized.

The Emperor nodded. "Indeed. You might think that what happened to him was special, but really, it's rather tame compared to what has happened and what does happen."

Rui's eyes sharpened at those words.

The Emperor shook his head, heaving a sigh. "She sought to distance herself away from me. She refused to let her baby become embroiled in the venomous and hateful conflicts between the members of the Royal Family. I tried my best to convince her, but she demanded that I abdicate the throne and leave Kandria with her forever if she wanted us to remain together as a family. However, so long as the crown rested upon my head, she deemed that it was a threat to her growing fetus."

"And you chose the crown." Rui narrowed his eyes.

The Emperor heaved a sigh. "I had truly come close to abdicating. Maybe I would have, had I had just a little bit more time. Unfortunately..."

His voice grew grave. "...Time I didn't have, for that was when true disaster struck."

The air grew a few shades darker.

Rui narrowed his eyes. "What happened?"

"...A few weeks before her delivery, she foresaw her own death." The Emperor heaved a shaky sigh. "She told me that it was inevitable and that no force in the world could save her life, refusing any help. I desperately begged her to accept the medical intervention of the Royal Doctors of the Royal Court, but she refused. She did not want her existence to be alerted to the princes and princesses who would undoubtedly learn of her and her baby should any Royal asset come into contact with her during pregnancy or childbirth. After all, that was how Rajak was exposed."

The Emperor paused as his expression grew darker.

"I...lost my temper that day. I said things that I now can never take back."

Deep regret and guilt churned in the depths of his voice.

"Yet the last time I saw her, she extracted an oath from me." The Emperor breathed in shakily. "That you would grow up with the true love that every child deserves. That you would grow up with the love of a family that she and I were unable to give you. That you would never be preyed on by the darkness of the Royal Family."

The Emperor sighed as sorrow flashed in his eyes. "Back then, I was truly resentful of her for walking away from me and refusing my aid. However, I never forgot the oath I made to her."

A sorrowful smile returned to the Emperor's face.

"I...found a place far away from the politics of the Kandrian Empire. An orphanage about an hour away from the town of Hajin by carriage. An orphanage created and run by a woman who was once a trafficked orphan, determined to offer a loving home to orphans that she had been denied as a child. After months of rigorous vetting, I deemed her orphanage worthy of being the home that you deserved. The home that would also fulfill my oath to Miriam, your mother."

The Emperor smiled at Rui. "That was the Quarrier Orphanage."

Rui stared at the Emperor in amazement as the Emperor recounted the tale that had gone on to shape his life!

"So you made it so that Mother Lashara accepted me as an orphan?" Rui whispered, shocked.

"T'is but a trivial matter for my wide set of competencies," The Emperor shrugged nonchalantly.

"..And then you, what, decided to forget about me until recently?" Rui narrowed his eyes. "Hide the truth from me until you needed me? And then reveal the truth to me alongside the entire world in a manner that forces my hand?"

A hint of resentment echoed in Rui's voice.

He was not pleased about the emotional rollercoaster that the Royal Addressal Ceremony had been.

The Emperor heaved a sigh. "I did not forget about you. I have never forgotten you."

His demeanor grew solemn yet soft.

His eyes peered into Rui's.

"I watched over you your entire life. I rejoiced alongside you, celebrating your accomplishments. I mourned alongside you when you suffered from the tribulations life thrust upon you. Yet, I never forgot about you, watching your miraculous life with more pride than I ever thought I had. I even actively

protected you before you became a Martial Artist, though I wonder if you even remember...it was so long ago, then again, I don't know if I should..."

The Emperor's voice trailed off as he murmured to himself.

"What do you mean?" Rui's eyes furrowed with uncertainty. "I don't follow your words."

The Emperor's eyes shifted to meet his. "...Then I suppose it would be better to show than to talk, isn't that right? Sayfeel?"

For a moment, nothing happened.

"...Huh?" Rui frowned, wondering if the Eternal Dream disease accelerated mental decline. "There's no one else here but us."

Oh, but there was.

A familiar Realm of power unfolded behind Rui.

His eyes widened as he felt a titanic surge of pressure weighing down on him.

Not just him.

Everything.

The very world around him seemed to shiver.

Heaven and Earth seemed to bend.

They bent under the weight of his being.



Rui leaped away in terror as he turned around to catch a glimpse.

Yet what he saw shook him.

A man.

A Martial Sage.

Yet, it was not his Realm of power that shocked him.

It was his appearance.

"You...!" Rui gasped with recognition.

The Martial Sage smiled.

Rui stared at his face with bewilderment.

This was the man who had saved him from being kidnapped by a trafficker at the age of seven, many years ago!