

Seller 411

Chapter 411 A Deal From Leon Empire

Mt. Lan, Kunyu Mountain range;

It's been more than 3 hours since the Grand Secretariat was abducted and brought to the ruins of Lan Sect.

While it appeared like he was just silently kneeling in front of the demon king, in reality, his soul was pulled into an illusionary realm created by Bael.

There, he was being tortured with all kinds of punishments the demon could think of.

The reason, he didn't speak the name of the mastermind and maintained his stance that he was the one who ordered the execution of Lu Zhen's parents but wouldn't give the reason for it.

As threats didn't work on him because of lacking any family and Mark clearly didn't buy Li Zheng Kang's lie, he ordered the demon to punish him in his own style until his time in the mortal world is finished.

In the meantime, he returned to Helios City and acted as if he was just woken up from sleep.

As one more hour passed away, the last VIP guest finally arrived at the palace while the preparations for the lunch are going on in the kitchens. It is the fourth prince of the Kun Empire, Qin Zhi.

As one of the most popular people of the Vermillion Bird Continent, Qin Zhi was welcomed grandly at the palace but he couldn't meet the birthday boy who was somewhere else. Qin Zhi could only go to his room and freshen up.

On his way to the guest room, he inquired about the whereabouts of everyone else. The soldier told him what he knows.

"Oh, Princess Shen was here? Perfect. This is a good time to talk to her about the issue in Western Yan. If I play my cards right, then, we can acquire a stake in the southern region too. The only problem would be Lu Zhen.

More than his mysterious background and powerful servants, his detachment and neutrality are troublesome to handle. Hmm... if he would actively support one side and will have a stake in the war too, then, he will be tied to something and his actions will become more predictable."

While Song Yue was engaging in conversation with other ladies in the palace and the two experts (Jinlong and Lan Ju) were strolling in the gardens without being bothered by anyone else, Mark, on the other hand, went with some of his fellow royal male guests to the Imperial temple.

Currently, Ouyang Zen was praying for the statues of his ancestors while a giant pig (5-circle, fierce grade) was being slaughtered by the Supreme General of the kingdom as a part of the sacrifice. The priests of the temple started incantations while walking around the kneeling King.

Meanwhile, the royal guests standing far away became busy chatting with each other as they were too bored and disinterested in the ritual that was going on for the past 30 minutes.

Mark was no exception either. He was chatting with the general of Leon Empire.

"Nah, I'm not interested in supporting anyone. I'm just a weapon seller you know," answered Mark as he was asked about the latest developments in Western Yan.

It's already been a few hours. It shouldn't be a surprise for the news to reach these royal guests who have spies in almost every independent kingdom and empire.

Upon hearing Mark's words, General Fan Zongmao of the Leon Empire couldn't help but comment, "War is the most lucrative business for a weapon seller, Mr. Lu."

He then further added, "And the weapons you sell could make them lethal even in the hands of a civilian. If you of all the people don't take advantage of it by supplying the weapons to the weaker party and prolonging the war, it is really a pity."

Mark was slightly surprised by his suggestion. He asked in wonder, "Do you support those bandits? I thought Leon Empire is an ally to Phoenix Empire."

"Well, our alliance isn't as strong as you imagine. You can say we are more like business partners. We don't involve in each other's internal matters no matter how serious they are," replied the general.

He further explained, "Even if we are requested for the support, we aren't obliged to send our troops or economic support. Our self-interests take priority. And our interests definitely lie in the weakening of our neighbors for sure.

Our Emperor is interested in making the third prince, Shang Wei, his grandson-in-law but despite that, our commitments won't change. This is something everyone knows and even we acknowledge it publicly.

There's a reason why no one is approaching me or our ambassador in the friendly way they did with the others. They knew that we are just meant for business."

Mark stared at him in silence for a few seconds and let out a smile, "You are quite straightforward, Mr. Fan."

"Just like the symbol of our empire, we are known for our straightforwardness and directness in our hunting or social behavior," General Fan spoke with pride.

To which, Mark responded with a comment, "But lions are also known to display slyness on certain occasions. Especially, a male lion is often seen trying to lure away the leader to a trap and take over the pride."

General Fan shook his head with a smile, "Mr. Lu, just like how the countless stars in the sky disappear as soon as the sun rises in the sky, you cannot compare ordinary lions to a legendary auspicious beast like Leon. It's humiliating for us.

Our Leon is the symbol of strength, bravery, determination, resilience, and nobility. We believe that slyness is something that weak people do to stronger people due to their lack of strength. Our Empire is like the sun. We don't need to opt for slyness to eradicate our enemy."

Mark wanted to retort that their sun is just one of the mediocre stars in the universe but since this general has no idea about the concept of galaxies while he would unnecessarily go off-topic, Mark kept his opinion to himself and just agreed with his statement, "Yes, your Empire is indeed like the sun."

General Fan smiled in response, "Glad we are on the same page."

"Indeed," mumbled Mark while thinking that this general was just like a frog in the well.

What he truly wanted to say is that Sun behaves like a king in its solar system but in reality, it was also a servant just like planets, revolving around the center of the galaxy where a supermassive black hole is located.

Mark thought that the general would understand it over the course of time.

To keep their conversation alive, Mark then asked after staying silent for a while, "So, General Fan, I was wondering what are your opinions on our firearms?"

"I knew this topic will come up sooner or later." The General behaved a little bit arrogant but he made sure to not sound like one. He replied, "Personally, I feel like civilians shouldn't get such power. And spirit warriors shouldn't depend on external weapons whether it is swords or firearms. But, if you are curious about our Emperor's stance on it, then, I must say he seems interested.

The problem is that we are interested in those flying puppets you sold the purchase rights and the bulk amount to your Emperor. Those bulky metal puppets (Panzers), on the other hand, were too weak. Those things that cause blasts over a wide area are expensive and just one-time use.

Furthermore, we would want weapons that our enemies have no idea how to counter them. If you have anything like those, His Majesty would be willing to be your client.

And after getting to know about the ether weapons from Western Yan, we strongly suspect that you possess more potent weapons, which will only come to light once your store's popularity reaches the certain level you wanted. Am I wrong?"

Something suddenly clicked inside Mark's head and realization dawned upon him. "So, you are planning to talk to me about business from the start. You wanted me to confirm that I have new firearms." After a brief pause, he added with a smile, "I must say that is slyness, General Fan."

The general rigorously shook his head and clarified right away, "No, you misunderstood me. I didn't start a conversation because of business. I'm here to give you a mission on behalf of His Majesty."

"Mission?" Mark furrowed his brows in displeasure. He didn't hide his true feelings this time. "Does your emperor think I'm an adventurer or something?"

The General realized that he had misspoken. He quickly corrected his words, "No, what I mean is that his majesty needs your help in accomplishing a difficult task. Consider it as a deal regarding the Church of Nuwa. Since it is in the territory of Western Yan, we cannot step in without Emperor Shang's permission. This is why I asked you about your opinion on the war."

"Church of Nuwa? War? Please be clear..." As Mark asked for the details, the general glanced around his near surroundings where he saw the guests who could hear them. He shook his head and said, "Not here."

Chapter 412 The Vile Act Of The Grand Secretariat

After the sacrificial ceremony and praying to the ancestors is finished, Ouyang Zen returned to the palace but he didn't step inside. Instead, he went to the palace grounds and blessed the citizens with his presence as each of them was given 5 gold coins and a set of clothes.

This is the tradition of the Eastern Sun kingdom, going on since its foundation.

The nobles, court officials, royal knights, generals, and the members of the royal family will have to present the king with a birthday gift but the commoners and soldiers, on the other hand, will be receiving presents from the royal palace.

As millions of citizens would visit the capital city every year, the donations will start a week before the king's birthday and will end a week after the event. Those who missed the deadline or cannot show their identification documents won't be able to enjoy the rewards.

While Ouyang Zen spent his time there, Mark returned to the royal palace. General Fan and a few other royal guests also followed the suit as it isn't necessary to be present at the palace grounds like with the temple.

General Fan hoped to talk with Mark about the deal but the latter went missing somewhere in the palace. He couldn't find the weapon seller anywhere.

Mt. Lan, Kunyu Mountain range;

Demon King Bael was staring at the dazed prisoner, who was currently trapped in an illusionary realm. His hand was on Li Zheng Kang's head and he had his eyes closed.

Suddenly, a portal appeared out of nowhere and Mark stepped outside of it.

"What are you doing?" He asked curiously.

The demon king opened his eyes and replied, "I'm watching his memories."

"So..." Mark's curiosity increased.

Bael then said, "His life story is interesting but I will tell you what you want to know. The mastermind behind your parents' deaths is your grandmother, who is, unfortunately, no more. It appeared that the ones who died weren't your real parents but you were switched at birth with your half-brother born to your..."

"I know that story. So, don't bother." Mark didn't let the demon finish his explanation and asked him again, "Are you sure she is the mastermind?"

As the demon king nodded, Mark clenched his fist in anger and let out a shout of frustration, "Argh... Dammit."

With the principal conspirator dead, Mark felt all of his planning became useless.

Just then, the demon said, "I have something else to say. But, before that, let me ask you. What kind of relationship do you have with your father, the Emperor of the Shang Dynasty?"

"He is not my father," replied Mark in a sharp tone. He then added, "If you want to fulfill your curiosity, I don't care whether he dies or lives."

With that reply, the demon got his answer and he then said, "According to his memories, Your fath... I mean, Emperor Shang had fooled around with a lot of women when he was in his prime. It appeared that fathered over 46 children in total.

And except for one child, all the remaining illegitimate children and their mothers along with everyone who knew the secret were assassinated too."

"What did you say? 46?" Mark's heart shook for a moment as if a volcano has erupted. Killing commoners, soldiers, or even innocent women is one thing. But, killing children...

Even in his imagination, Mark wouldn't dare to commit an act like that. "Wake him up." He raised his voice in anger.

The demon king obliged his request and snapped his fingers. Li Zheng Kang's eyes became alive and he looked around in confusion. "It's a dream?"

Surprisingly, he adapted to the changes in the situation quite quickly.

Feeling the heat from the sun, Li Zheng Kang asked Mark without showing signs of any weakness, "How long has the time passed?"

Mark responded by taking out the gun from his storage ring and shooting a bullet at Li Zheng Kang's shoulder.

Bang

"Argh..." He screamed in pain at once and Mark shifted his aim to the former's left shoulder without speaking anything before shooting more bullets.

Bang Bang* *bang* *click* click*

He shot him continuously in different places, perfectly missing his key vitals, until the magazine emptied.

The grand secretariat was feeling pain all over his body and experiencing severe blood loss.

As his consciousness was about to fade away, Mark then spoke, "Bael, heal him."

He saw Bael's stats and skills after he formed the contract and knew what type of abilities he has.

As the demon king healed Li Zheng Kang's injuries, Mark replaced the empty magazine with a new one loaded with bullets.

Pointing his gun at him again, Mark spoke coldly, "I won't blame you for killing all those 46 women who slept with the Emperor but killing their babies? People say that you are one of the noblest officials in the empire. You don't take sides and only serve the throne. You don't have a family as it will become your weakness. You follow the rules and will always make sure justice prevails in the courtroom.

What bullshit rumors are those? You are worse than a monster. Don't you even feel a little bit of remorse for killing children?"

Li Zheng Kang was first surprised as his secret was out like that but then he quickly defended himself with a lengthy reply, "The assassination of illegitimate children of the imperial family is a tradition passed down in the Shang Dynasty. It is the job of a Grand Secretariat to clean after the mess made by his Emperor and the crown prince. All my predecessors did the same.

Fortunately, no grand secretariat ever faced the dilemma of keeping one alive to protect the bloodline. And yes, I don't feel any remorse as I was prepared to do it when I took up the job. His Majesty knew that and yet, he fooled around.

As for the babies, it is their respective mother's fault. They might have willingly or unwillingly slept with the Emperor but it is also a fact that they have the option to kill their baby when they became pregnant.

We cannot kill pregnant women or their unborn children by any forceful methods. It has to be voluntary. We give her a choice to kill the unborn child in exchange for money.

It's not 46 women, Lu Zhen. The total number of women is 114. Of them, 68 agreed to take the money and killed their unborn child by taking the pregnancy termination pill. The remaining women refused.

There are such pills and potions available in the market for a cheap price to do the job but the greed of becoming a concubine by giving birth to an imperial child doomed their lives.

It's nothing but a choice and consequence, Lu Zhen.

If not for the fact that Queen Consort Lan sent you and your mother away from the city, both of you would have died on the day of your birth.

However, your mother's fate was already sealed. Eventually, the late Empress Dowager found out the location of your home and ordered me to proceed with the assassination.

However, I purposely instructed them to spare you as I know that you aren't his illegitimate son but the son of Queen Consort Lan. Regrettably, I only learned the truth after the title of prince was conferred upon the third prince. Killing him would be going against the law and Queen Consort Lan also seemed like she had forgotten you. Furthermore, you are identified as a civilian with no ether energy. Hence, I decided to ignore your existence altogether.

Little did I expect you to return to the Imperial City in ten years and enter our lives as a unique weapon seller. Within no time, you stepped so high into the social ladder that I didn't dare to reveal the truth anymore.

It's not just because you are doing better as Lu Zhen compared to an imperial prince. It is also because your growth in fame and popularity gives hope to commoners.

Ever since you stepped inside the Imperial city and fought with the nobles, the commoners became braver than before and they no longer fear to send their complaints to the court when they faced injustice from nobles or powerful people.

Now, I have said everything I can.

You can take your revenge on me in any way you can but I can't apologize to you for following my duty. Even if I get a second chance, I would do the same."

When Li Zheng Kang first started his explanation, Mark had the urge to clear the magazine once again but as he went on listening, his anger slowly faded away.

In fact, he no longer felt angry with this old man. Instead, his anger shifted to someone else.

"I knew it. In the end, that bastard Shang Fu is the source of my agony. He knew about this absurd rule and yet couldn't control himself lusting for women even when he has several wives. That moth**f**ker played around with 114 women?" Mark concluded that Emperor Shang is the true culprit behind the death of his adoptive parents.

His hatred toward his biological father only grew further and he became more motivated to bring him down for good.

However, there is still one question that's bothering him.

To get clarification on the matter, he asked Li Zheng Kang in response to his explanation, "Did Shang Fu know that I'm his son?"

Li Zheng Kang stayed silent for a while. He hesitated to answer.

bang

Mark grew impatient by his five seconds of silence and shot the bullet into his abdomen, "Just say yes or no. Or else, I will bring him to this same location and ask him by myself."

"He does," answered the demon king in Li Zheng Kang's place.

Chapter 413 Discussion Between Shen Ling And Song Yue

As both of them looked at the demon, the latter looked at Li Zheng Kang, "I have already read your memories. But, you see, speaking the truth leaves a bad taste in my mouth and I cannot lie to my contractor. So, it is best if you speak the truth by yourself."

Li Zheng Kang stared at him for a couple of seconds and let out a sigh, "Yeah, it is true, although not for long. It's only been a couple of months. He visited your store right after but upon seeing how you are doing well, he decided against revealing the truth to you."

Seeing how Queen Consort Lan had gifted her mother's heirloom to Song Yue, I believe she too figured it out. Honestly, it's not that hard for her to realize the truth. Your appearance is a striking resemblance to Queen Consort Lan's father, Lan Gengxin. Adding on top of that, you also had the ice attribute. The rest is easy to connect."

Mark already knew that his mother knew about him. So, he wasn't that surprised about it. He calmly nodded and went on to ask another question, "Does Shang Wei know the truth?"

"I don't think so," Li Zheng Kang shook his head.

Mark then asked his final question, "So, according to you, only you and those damned biological parents of mine know the truth, correct?"

As Li Zheng Kang nodded while pressing the wound with his hand in reflex in order to stop the blood flow, Mark let out a smile for once as he raised the gun. "Thank you for your cooperation. You can die now."

Bang

With a bullet piercing through his skull, the Grand Secretariat turned into a corpse and fell to the ground.

"Bael, your time in this world is about to end." Mark turned toward the demon king and gave his final instruction for the day, "Before you leave, dump this body right in the middle of the imperial court. But, not like this. Crave the word 'guilty' on his forehead, above the bullet wound. And thank you for your assistance so far."

"Alright. I await the next summon." Bael nodded.

As Mark opened the portal and returned to a random location on the outskirts of Helios city, Bael let out a smile while grabbing the corpse. "My choice is right. Wherever this man goes, destruction follows for sure. It's going to be fun. Looking forward to it."

A couple of minutes later;

After dumping the body in the empty courtroom, which was currently frozen in ice, Bael teleported to the outskirts of the city.

Just as he was about to return to his world, a thought suddenly struck his head and he mumbled, "I still have a little bit of time. I might as well check the presence of anyone else here. Who knows, someone might have a contract with humans."

Meanwhile, at the Helios City of Eastern Sun Kingdom;

In a large private chamber located on the third floor of the palace, also considered as one of the inner chambers where the males weren't allowed to step in unless in emergency situations (except for the king), a gathering was organized for the female guests separately from the males.

All the women here have similar status and even Song Yue had the upbringing of a noble. Hence, she has no problem mingling with the other ladies (wives and daughters of court officials, ambassadors, etc...)

Some of them were casually discussing matters of their families and household affairs, some of them were listening to the music played by a famous singing courtesan, some of them were exchanging knowledge, some of them were showing off their skills in weaving, calligraphy, and embroidery to each other, and a few were even discussing literature and philosophy.

Unfortunately, there was no one here skilled in fighting and neither did anyone have an interest in things nor were they interested in politics. All of them were only doing things that society expects them to do.

And such discussions around her made Princess Shen Ling quite frustrated. She kept her feelings to herself while talking with others, but when she was finally alone with Song Yue, she expressed her true thoughts, "I pity these women, Sister Yue. They act high and mighty but don't understand how useless they are to society. None of these ladies even had any ambition to earn proper recognition on their own and completely depend on their husbands or fathers."

"Well, if you say that way..." Song Yue couldn't finish her words due to feeling hurt by her words but Shen Ling understood it by her expression. She quickly clarified her opinion, "You are different from them, Sister Yue. You might have devoted your life to Lu Zhen but you are still doing something to help him out unlike them."

Song Yue bitterly smiled in response, "It might seem that way on the outside but I'm not much different. I just sit there all day. I couldn't even help him with house chores properly."

"Nah, don't sell yourself short. He trusts you in managing the store and the accounts. I believe he is trying to remove that inferiority complex by doing that," replied the princess, taking Song Yue by surprise.

Not because she was hearing it for the first time but it is because Shen Ling told her the same words Mark replied to her when she asked him during the vacation why he made her the manager of the store.

Feeling that Shen Ling understood Mark's thoughts quite well, Song Yue became slightly upset as she was ready to share her husband physically with other women but not his heart and mind.

The possessive part of her doesn't like someone else to understand Mark's thoughts more than her. But, the kind part of her tries to make her understand that she can stop her husband from loving other women but not vice versa.

Fortunately, the princess of the western moon didn't make Song Yue think more nonsense by changing the topic, "You know, when both of you will shift to Western Moon, I'll teach you the statecraft. Perhaps, you might become a key politician as well as an administrator in the future."

"Eh? Shifting to Western Moon? Administrator? What are you saying?" Song Yue returned to reality and she was confused by Shen Ling's words.

To which, the princess let out a chuckle, "C'mon, there's no way a person like Lu Zhen would stay at Phoenix Empire. I believe he must have already told you about his relationship with the Imperial family, although I figured it out by myself. If you think about it, all of his actions are connected to each other and they all indicated only one outcome."

Song Yue didn't need to connect all of those things as Mark revealed his goal to her long ago.

And she had different thoughts from the princess. She shook her head, "I don't think he would be willing. I mean he doesn't need to."

In her view, Mark intended to overthrow Shang Fu and sit on the throne by himself.

Princess Shen Ling probably understood what was on Song Yue's mind too. She shook her head with a meaningful smile, "You forgot about your friend, the third prince. He has awakened the Phoenix bloodline because of Lu Zhen. I heard that Lu Zhen even saved his life a while ago. And now, this variable suddenly became the favorite to succeed the Emperor."

"But Brother Wei doesn't have such ambitions. He just doesn't like his eldest brother to succeed their father. Since he is a child, he always supports Brother Wen (the second prince) to become the Emperor." As Song Yue tries to argue with her own logic, Shen Ling replied, "Well, it might change once he learns the truth. Who knows, what kind of mess will start at the Phoenix Empire? So, it is better for the both of you just move into our palace."

Song Yue fell silent, worried about her brother-like figures from the imperial family as she could only see their doom in the future, and further wondered if Mark would give his family an opportunity to get his forgiveness.

When she thought about it, her father's face appeared in her head and she felt that maybe she wasn't the right person to talk to her fiancé about forgiveness as she herself couldn't be able to do that to his fugitive dad, not knowing that he was beside her all this time.

Chapter 414 Grand Banquet

Three hours later;

The grand banquet started in the palace and following the social norms, the men were seated in the main hall along with the King while the women were seated in a separate room.

As a person from the modern world, Mark naturally didn't like such customs but since he was a guest and the host was his ally, he had to respect them. Hence, he decided to not show any displeasure on his face and just went on with the flow. With the golden-furred kitten on Song Yue's side, he wasn't that worried about her safety when he isn't with her either.

The Heavenly Spring wine, made from the spring water of a sacred mountain, is served before the start of the meal. And there were cold cuts of dragon meat on the side.

Those who cannot drink alcohol due to preferences or age were served "Crown of the East" tea. It's a tea made from the leaves of a tree called the Crown Tree, which is only grown in the gardens of the royal palace of the Eastern Sun.

As a teenager who just turned 13, King Ouyang Zen naturally drank the tea while Mark was enjoying the wine he never tasted before. He was sitting right to the king while Lan Jing was on the left.

As for Jinlong and Lan Ju, both of them aren't interested to join the banquet as the former isn't interested to eat a species of his own kind (dragon meat) or even see others eat and the latter doesn't want to be bothered by the humans.

They just have the gardens to themselves, enjoying the tea while conversing about unimportant things.

Prince Qin Zhi of the Kun Empire sat next to Mark at the high table with other royal guests. And he was very much interested in conversing with Mark.

The remaining guests of wealthy backgrounds, scholars, court officials, and ministers sat elsewhere in the hall, mingling among people of similar status.

"Mr. Lu, I was wondering what you do with those weapons you acquired from your enemies if you don't use them?" suddenly asked Qin Zhi after talking about various things.

Mark raised his eyebrow and looked at him, "why? Do you want to purchase them or something?"

"Don't misunderstand. I'm not interested in them." Qin Zhi clarified himself with an explanation, "There's a grand auction coming up at Dragon Empire. The date wasn't announced but it is usually either around the end of the spring or the start of the fall. If you have any semi-divine weapons, you can register with the auction. You will get a far better price than here."

"Oh, you mean the world auction by the Temple of Void?" Ouyang Zen, who heard it, took an opportunity to interrupt their conversation with his comment as he was too bored by silently drinking the tea.

"Temple of Void? I heard that name," replied Mark before looking at the teenage king, "What do you know about the world auction?" He was obviously interested.

His question was answered by Prince Qin Zhi, "It's the most prestigious auction conducted ever in this world where all the powers from four continents will participate. The weakest weapon you will find in the auction will be a platinum-grade set."

Ouyang Zen then added after he munched a chunk of the steamed bun and swallowed it, "The royal families were automatically granted entry but for others, they will have to receive an invitation from the temple. Of course, those who auction atleast a semi-divine grade item or a treasure equivalent to it will also get a seat."

As Wil was wondering whether he could introduce firearms at the world auction, Qin Zhi then said, "Assuming that you took all the treasures from the Wuji sect, there are three items in your possession that will sell for tens of millions (gold coins) per each."

"Yu Jade Pipa, Eye of Talim and the Staff of Talim, I guess?" Mark was confident that this fourth prince of the Kun Empire was talking about those two as they were the ones the system also showed interest to trade.

"Staff of Talim? I have only heard of the Eye of Talim," commented the birthday boy.

Qin Zhi explained with a smile, "They were part of the set equipment of a beast named Talim. He was a beast emperor from the upper plane of existence but was said to live like a human mage all his life.

Other than those two, there is the armor of Talim, the crown of Talim, and the Ring of Talim. Together combined, they were as valuable as a Sky-grade item.

The Dragon Empire has the crown, the Qilin Empire's imperial family had the armor in its possession, and the ring is lost somewhere."

Just like in the system, Divine grade in this world was also divided into four categories; Earth, Sky, Heaven, and Void.

Earth is equivalent to Mythril grade. Heaven is equivalent to Celestial. And Void is equivalent to the God grade. As for Sky, it is somewhere between Mythril and Celestial.

However, there are only earth-grade items within the powerful imperial families, and Sky-grade items are just one or two in number. Heaven-grade weapons are only known to be possessed by the gods and Void-grade items are just considered a myth as they are only contained in stories of Jade Emperor and Monkey King. No one actually believes them.

It is why, sometimes, Sky grade is treated as Heaven grade, and Heaven grade is termed as Void grade.

Returning to the present, as Qin Zhi was trying to tempt Mark into auctioning the items and further extending an invitation from their empire to join them at the VIP room in the auction, the latter asked what was occupying his mind for the past couple of minutes. "How would the auction organizers be able to decide to put in an auction and entice the bidders for higher bids for a never-seen weapon?"

"Eh?" Qin Zhi was surprised for a second as he didn't see any excitement on Mark's face for how much he could earn by selling such coveted items but instead there was curiousness about expanding the fame of his weapons store.

And trying to use this opportunity, he then explained, "Well, the Void Temple's word is enough for everyone to bid. All you have to do is to give a demonstration to their representatives. If you are willing to join us, we can arrange that too."

"Hmm... I'll think about it." Mark didn't give a definite answer as he wanted to keep his options open.

Personally, he would want to attend with King Shen Niu or his daughter as they were willing to ride in the same boat as him and soon, they were also about to play a massive role in his plan but he will have to talk with the princess before taking the decision.

Unlike the empires, the small kingdoms like Western Moon don't have that much budget to spend on things like weapons in an auction and too when they have already spent during the expo.

If they have to attend a world auction, then, they will be forced to spend a lot of money to keep up their dignity in front of others. That is why he will have to talk to Shen Ling and only then, he will take the decision.

Slowly, time passed away.

The tables were filled with various delicacies, followed by a serving of the legendary wine known as Black Spirit Wine. It was probably rare that only 2 foot-sized vase was brought into the main hall and was served to only important royal guests like Mark, Dwarven King, and others.

When Lan Jing offered to Mark before the others, he refused it right away in a little bit of disgust while staring at its details.

Black Spirit Wine

Grade: N/A

Description: Made from the blood of the penis of a beast king named Black Spirit Tiger, this wine is said to enhance one's testosterone levels, stamina, life force, and physical and mental strength (temporary).

Note: Not recommended for Spirit warriors below 5-circle.

Aftereffects: Those below 6-circle will go into an intoxicated state if drink more than 200 ml. If drank more than 450 ml, the sexual desire will overwhelm the user.

Note 2: No effect on the host.

"Mr. Lu, don't go after its color. Just a cup of wine almost costs 20,000 gold coins," said Qin Zhi as he took a sip. An expression of delight instantly appeared on his face. "Hmmm..."

Mark waved his hand with a smile, "It's alright. I don't enjoy the wine too much. You enjoy, Prince Qin."

"Okay..." Qin Zhi continued to enjoy the wine just like the other adults with the dwarven king enjoying the most. People appeared so intoxicated that they couldn't bother chatting about important things with others anymore.

Because of the taste of wine, Qin Zhi probably missed it but Ouyang Zen captured Mark's expression as the teenager wasn't allowed to touch alcohol.

Tugging Mark's sleeves, he leaned to the side and slowly asked while covering his mouth, "Do you figure it out? I heard that Brother Lu's eyes were quite special."

Mark nodded and replied, "What would happen if people realize the truth of the secret ingredient?"

Ouyang Zen shrugged his shoulders, "Thousands of people enjoy that organ itself. And many alchemists use such parts in making medicine. What's the problem with the blood anyways?"

Just like with his feelings about the separation of the dining place according to gender, Mark doesn't want to force his views on the kid and hence, he ignored the matter altogether and simply changed the topic, asking about his schedule for the rest of the day.

Chapter 415 The Request From Leon Empire

As the banquet was finished, the guests were either escorted to their rooms to take a rest or went on a stroll in the gardens.

Ouyang Zen, however, didn't have the time to rest. He has to travel to the port to launch the warships and then unveil the new statue of his late father built in the heart of the city.

After that, he will have to return to the royal palace where the presentation ceremony will take place. All the guests who participated in the banquet will present their gifts to the birthday boy.

Only then he could finally take a nap.

The teenage king and his guardian were out with the dwarven king and Prince Qin Zhi tagged along with him due to their curiosity about the Kidd-class warship. One wanted to inspect its technology and the other wanted to see if they were worth buying too.

Mark took this opportunity to talk with the general of the Leon Empire.

Seeing that he was trying to talk with him since morning, Mark took out the LMV Iveco and asked him to sit beside him, and drove outside of the palace with an excuse of just touring the city.

No one is there to question him and neither knew him well enough to suspect his actions either. Perhaps, the only thing that soldiers were curious is the LMV. It was so out of the place that it naturally attracts attention.

As he was slowly driving on a sturdy concrete road and the general was looking around in curiosity, Mark opened up the topic. "So, General Fan, tell me. You said you have something to talk about, involving the fate of the Western Yan."

The general turned serious as he nodded, "Yes, I do. You must have heard of the Church of Nuwa."

"Yeah, I heard that the Church is the ally of the Ji clan and considered the guardian of the Western Yan, well, atleast its branch there," replied Mark while carefully choosing his words. He doesn't want to reveal that he had already killed its archbishop and intended to demolish them very soon.

General Fan then took a deep breath and said, "The Church of Nuwa has its branches all over the world and each branch has a cardinal overseeing the region. Below him, there will be three Arch-Bishops carrying out his orders. Every cardinal is usually a 7-circle realm expert and every archbishop will be in a 6-circle realm.

Of course, there are also elite fighters who don't preach to the people but just take the jobs like adventurers.

Anyways, coming to the point, the current cardinal of the Church of Nuwa's Western Yan branch is a 20-year-old young man named Shi En."

"Shi?" Mark instantly recognized the surname. "Is he a member of the royal family? A prince?" He asked.

The General nodded with a bitter smile, "Yes, he was originally a prince. His mother isn't a human but a species called Elf."

"Elf?" Mark was taken aback at once. He couldn't help but think of Zan Rong, a fellow earthling with amnesia. "What kind?" He asked.

This time, it was the general's turn to get surprised. "You know about elves?"

Mark nodded and behaved as if he had knowledge about the elves. "Pale face, pointy ears, affiliation with nature; do I need to go on?"

General Fan shook his head and even let out a sigh of relief before explaining, "Thank goodness. I guess we took the right decision in contacting you. As far as we know, Queen Consort I... Eyy... Eirlys (EY-RlihS), sorry about that. Queen Consort Eirlys introduced herself as a moon elf. We thought she came from the moon goddess domain.

When she was pregnant with Shi En, our current Emperor Shi Xuan who was retired back then fell ill due to a curse. His Majesty contacted everyone but even supreme realm experts couldn't do anything.

In the end, he contacted the Church of Nuwa's Supreme Pontiff. The latter asked for a price."

"And that price was Shi En?" Mark's facial expression darkened all of a sudden. He stepped on the brake, stopping the vehicle in the middle of the road.

"Yes." General Fan nodded while slowly shifting his gaze, worrying that this mission is going to be a failure.

Mark was someone who faced injustice as a baby and hence, there's no way he would understand their point of view. Still, he had to listen to everything before making the decision. Keeping his anger in check, he gestured for the general to continue with the story.

General Fan continued, "At first, His Majesty thought that he could offer a baby born during the same time as Shi En in place of him but Shi En wasn't born as a human but as an elf.

With his mother dying during childbirth, the elders didn't face any problem in convincing His Majesty to proceed with the sacrifice. Shi En grew up in the church as the child of Goddess Nuwa.

He was currently serving as the Cardinal and the latest news from our spies at Qing Dynasty (Xiezhi Empire) stated that one of the four heavenly princes of the church had passed away and there is a high chance that he will be appointed as one.

If that happens, then, it will be too late. We have to act when he is outside of their protection."

"Okay, tell me something. Do you want him to return to his biological family or do you want me to end his life? What are you suggesting?" Mark could sense that it was more likely the former case but they wouldn't ask his help for such a thing, would they? It's illogical. Hence, he placed his bet on the latter.

General Fan replied while sighing inwardly, "Naturally, we want him to return but he already made his decision clear. He wants nothing to do with the family but three years ago, as our Emperor passed away, Grand Emperor Shi Xuan took the charge as the ruler once again.

His Majesty is willing to confer the title of a prince on Shi En and give him an opportunity to succeed him. What we need from you is the destruction of the Church of Nuwa's branch at Western Yan and his abduction before delivering him safely to the imperial palace."

"Hmm... let me get this straight," Mark spoke with a frown on his face, expressing his displeasure.

"One, you are going back on your promise. Two, you want to act against his wishes. Three, you want me to kill people who had nothing to do with me. And four, you want me to abduct him and deliver to you like a hired mercenary. Why do you think I will help you guys?"

Mark usually says this type of words with a hidden meaning like asking about what he gets in return but this time, he was direct as his heart responded to it, not his mind.

The General then took out two scrolls from his storage ring, "These two are wish grants from His Majesty. You can have one of them. If you take the left one, Apart from the throne and the lives of the imperial princes and princesses, you can ask for anything. The Leon Empire will be obliged to fulfill your request.

And if you take the right one, you can also ask for any materialistic reward that doesn't cross the value of 10 million gold coins.

Of course, it goes without saying that your firearms will be acknowledged by the imperial palace. This is how much we value your help. Will you do it?"

*Ding! You received an emergency quest, Justice to Shi En.

Chapter 416 Unlocking Zan Rong's Memories

Quest: Justice to Shi En

Description: Shi En was born as a prince of the Leon Empire but due to circumstances, he was sacrificed by his father when he was a baby and faced injustice. Deliver justice to him in any way you can.

Time limit: None.

Reward: Unknown (Depends on the end result)

Mark stared at the holographic screen floating before his eyes and fell into deep thoughts. Meanwhile, the general stayed silent, displaying his patience.

He thought from all angles and in the end, he decided on taking the wish grant scroll that lets him demand anything from the Emperor. But, before taking it, he made sure to confirm that this grant doesn't have an expiry date.

*Ding! You accepted the quest.

"I promise you that your Emperor will meet his grandson at his home for sure." Mark accepted the quest and turned around the vehicle to drive back to the royal palace. General Fan was happy as his mission is accomplished, not knowing that Mark has different plans for Shi En.

Several hours later;

It was around midnight and almost all the royal guests went to sleep. Mark was awake though. He was lying on the bed and staring at the ceiling, thinking of everything happened during the past 24 hours.

"With the attack on the Emperor and killing of the Grand Secretariat, the imperial court would likely assume that it was the work of the mysterious warrior who imprisoned and killed those experts in the Ji palace.

By now, Song Tai should have made his move. However, Feng Wu says there is movement from the enemies. It is as if they have given up on Western Yan.

Nope, if that is the case, there will be a formal letter to Feng Wu. Then, do they think that it is the work of an unknown enemy? Or maybe, they think that they'll have to act carefully and need to gather their troops to launch a full-scale war?

Whatever the case, I have no time to lie down here. Tomorrow morning, I will have to..."

Knock knock* knock*

His thoughts were interrupted by the door knocks before it was opened. Mark immediately sat up and get down from the bed in a hurry as there was only one person who would open the door without asking his permission.

Soon, the door was opened and Mark saw three figures in hoods.

After a while;

Zan Rong was seen wearing the amulet (Eye of Talim) around her neck with Lan Jing placing his hand on her head. Both of them had their eyes closed and Lan Jing was guiding her. As for Mark and Ouyang Zen, they were spectators.

An hour later, Lan Jing finally took off his hand off Zan Rong's head and let her drown in the sea of memories that were hitting her like waves.

Roughly about half a minute later, she opened her eyes widely with a look of shock on her face.

She looked at Ouyang Zen and spoke to him first, "Your Majesty, I know what my origins were. And sorry for troubling you until now." She formally bowed deeply as she stood up, shocking Ouyang Zen and Lan Jing. In their eyes, she was a silly and clumsy girl who doesn't have the capability to become serious even when someone put a knife at her neck.

She then turned toward Mark and bowed to him too, "Thank you for your help. Without you, I wouldn't be able to remember who I am."

"No problem. I could do that much for a past acquaintance," replied Mark as he glanced at the notification screen.

*Ding! You completed Emergency Quest, Awaken the memories of Zan Rong. You received a mysterious package as a reward.

A Zan Rong turned toward Lan Jing and Ouyang Zen while thinking that Mark was talking about them, the wise teenage king managed to decipher his words quite quickly and said, "He was talking about you, sister."

"Eh?" A look of surprise appeared on her face. She turned toward Mark once again. "We know each other? But, I have never seen you in my life."

As Ouyang Zen and Lan Jing looked at each other, wondering whether she really had all of her memories returned to her, Mark then spoke in a language that can't be understood by the people of this world.

(English) "I know you, Marina Zan. You are a student at JKU and live in the city of Linz. You are then summoned to the Ixitis Empire and become a spirit warrior there before landing into this world."

Zan Rong's eyes widened in shock, "How do you know?" Unknowingly, she too responded in English, probably of the fact that it is her mother tongue.

Mark replied, "(English) if you are interested to know how I could know this language or these details about you, we can talk before lunchtime or you can take your time and come to our store branch at the Lunar City of Western Moon and meet me there. I also need some answers from you."

Lan Jing and Ouyang Zen, who couldn't understand a thing these two were speaking, couldn't help but look at them in confusion. But then again, it also proved that Mark knew her.

Soon, the three of them left the room and Mark closed the door and quickly opened the inventory to check what kind of treasure he earned.

*Ding! You opened the mysterious package.

*Ding! You received 0.2 free attribute points and a memory storage card.

"A memory card?" Mark couldn't help but look at the details.

Memory storage card

Storage space: Unlimited

Grade: N/A

Description: You can store anyone's precious memories in the card and access them at any moment.

Note: The memory storage card isn't bound to your soul and can be accessed by anyone.

Directions to use: Place it on the forehead with the blank image on the card facing upwards and pour your ether energy into the card before thinking of the memories. To access the stored memories, place the card with the image facing upward.

"Okay, I guess I misunderstood by its name. Anyways, let's use this attribute. I wonder if it can be used to increase defense to 10 points."

Mark opened the character stats and saw a plus besides every attribute except for luck. "Here we go."

*Ding! The defense attribute has been raised by 0.1 points.

"9.9 points..." Mark's face darkened as he saw the plus sign disappear beside the Defense option. All this time, he wondered if he should train in a traditional manner just like the natives of this world to make a breakthrough into the demigod realm but now he confirmed it.

Sigh "Let's just focus on maximizing the stats. We'll think about breakthrough later..."

*Ding! The strength attribute has been raised by 0.1 points.

Name: Lu Zhen (Mark Spencer)

Rank: 9

Strength: 9.6

Intelligence: 7.6 (+25%)

Defense: 9.9

Agility: 9.6

Vitality: 9.1

Resistance: 9.1

Charisma: 9

Luck: 2+5

Bloodline: Blizzard Pegasus

Attribute: Lightning, Ice, Space, Gravity, Oil, Poison, Antimatter

Spirit Path: Summoner, Mage

Ether Quality: High

Ether energy: 1,644,962

Special skills: Ultimate Defense I, Ultimate Defense II, Thunderblast, Lightning clone, Seal breaker, Devil's hand, Taming, Enhanced Durability, Ether regeneration, No touch, Gravity Dome, Eyes of God, Metal Armor.

Bloodline skills: Absolute freezing, Ice bolt, Blizzard Wings, Freezing gaze

Titles: VIP customer (equipped), Master of Holy Beasts

Special items: Danya (the divine throne), Exoskeleton suit-VIII, Missile Defense system-VII, B-2 spirit bomber, Mark 14 nuclear bomb, peak potion, Attack helicopter EC-665, Ring of luck, M134 Minigun.

Unlocked exclusive weapons: Derringer (lv1), Shotgun (lv2) Grenade launcher (lv3), Panzer IV (lv4), LARS (lv5)

Assistants: 2 (Allen Spencer, Alina Spencer)

Contracted beasts: 10

Contracted demons: 1

Store branches: 1

Lifespan limit: 585 years (560 years left)

Available credits: 78,635,118

Available credit limit: 189,500

Net worth: 11,204,479 gold coins

Total debt: 0

The next day, the remaining royal guests who stayed for the night also started leaving one after another. Only Mark and his companions stayed behind for the lunch. Princess Shen Ling wanted to stay but the situation at Western Yan required her presence at her home.

At around 10 in the morning, Mark and Song Yue were strolling in the gardens while chatting about each of their past funny incidents.

"Mr. Lu..." A faint voice was heard far away from behind. At first, Mark didn't put his attention but then as he was called once again with the voice getting a little bit louder compared to before, Mark halted his footsteps and turned his head.

"What happ..." Song Yue pause her talk and also followed the suit, spotting a woman scurrying toward them while grabbing her long skirt to not trip and fall down. "Do I need to leave?" She asked.

"Nah," Mark shook his head, "You know the truth already. No need for privacy." He told her to stay, giving her a slight moment of happiness.

After a while, the three of them went for a ride to talk in the vehicle without worrying about someone listening to them.

However, Song Yue had to take the back seat for she was merely a spectator.

"So, what answers do you seek from me?" asked the girl after Mark drove silently for a while and gave her the signal to speak.

"Well, let's start with how you were summoned by the elves."

Chapter 417 Zan Rong's Past

Three years after Mark's abduction;

Year 2044, Linz City, Eurasian Federation;

In a city where the air traffic is slightly busy with Aero-cabs flying everywhere, a young adult couple was walking on a sidewalk with their arms locked with each other.

One is Zan Rong/Marina Zan and the other one was a handsome-looking young man with aquamarine eyes, messy hair, a v-shaped torso, and broad shoulders. He looked attractive enough to have the attention of the female passersby.

"Babe, I have to return to the dorm," said 17-year-old Mari. To which, the man responded with a question, "It's already the time? I thought your flight is at 19:00 hrs."

Mari shrugged her shoulders, "I haven't packed."

The man's shoulder's dropped and his face crestfallen in depression, "I can't believe the summer is here already."

"But then again, it is just this summer. Once I return, I can move in with you." Mari told him about how her dad has given his permission for her to move out of the dorm and live with her boyfriend.

The man was naturally happy when he heard that and he expressed how he cannot wait for the day when they start living together.

Both of them stopped and looked at each other before kissing each other. The passersby don't care about it anyways as it is a common thing.

Just as they were about to separate from each other, something incredible happened all over the world at the same time.

Thirty beams of light descended onto the earth while everyone was frozen in their spots as if time itself stopped.

Coincidentally, the two of them were also caught up by the beams of light. Once they disappeared, the time flew like normal.

The young adult couple suddenly found themselves in the middle of a large platform alongside the other chosen heroes of similar ages and they were surrounded by dark elves.

A tall and attractive-looking woman who was standing in the summoning circle greeted them. "Welcome, chosen heroes from another world. I'm Nyxira, the third princess of the Ixitus Empire. Our world is in grave danger and we require your assistance to save millions of people from the demons.

We will give you powers, we will train you, we will make you live as long as our race, and you could also return to your world with those abilities to become heroes there too. All we ask is your time, bravery, and service."

One year later;

Somewhere in the woods;

Mari and her boyfriend were wearing a full set of equipment and carrying bows & staves just like the other dark elves as they were hunting down demonic creatures in a forest.

Despite the fact that they have only trained for one year, the two of them have already surpassed the dark elves of captain rank in terms of strength and skills. With the 7-circle realm of cultivation, Mari is now a newly promoted general while her boyfriend turned fiancé is her lieutenant general with the cultivation realm of peak-6-circle.

After killing one after another, both of them eventually reached the central region of the lair of the demonic serpent Vyrkara, a beast king of the 7-circle realm.

There, a half-naked muscular man was waiting for them while sitting on his throne.

"Welcome to my abode, the legendary demon slayers. I heard so much about the heroics of you two lately but you two aren't smart at all. Flaunting your talents in front of the natives and snatching their positions will always create envy. Now, look at the two of you coming straight to death..."

"Don't overestimate yourself, serpent." Maria took out her staff adorned with a blue crystal on its top and pointed it at Vyrkara. Her partner also took out his bow made of dragon bones and conjured an arrow.

"Oh boy, here we go..." Vyrkara stood up from his throne and transformed into a seven-headed serpent with each one in a different color, corresponding to each basic attribute. Its cultivation rose to 8-circle and the young couple's faces changed upon realizing that they were indeed fallen into a trap.

The battle ensued between them.

Eventually, Marina and her fiancé fell into extreme disadvantage and they decided to escape from the beast, but not outside. Instead, they ventured deeper into the caves located in the lair.

Vyrkara naturally followed them from behind. Unfortunately, its large size made it difficult to capture the couple and its movements also slowed down.

However, Vyrkara cannot transform back into a human form either. He wasn't an emperor-grade beast that can transform at will after reaching a certain level. There was some sort of cooldown timer between transformations.

After running for so long with injuries, they ended up in an underground cave where a mysterious headless statue was placed in the middle.

"Babe, look at that. There's something written here..." Mari pointed at the stone tablet below the statue as her fiancé was wondering where the statue came from.

She walked toward the stone tablet and crouched down to wipe it off.

"We don't have the time to fool around, Mari," said the man as he took out a scroll and placed it on the ground, getting into action to activate the teleportation formation.

"C'mon, there's no way that serpent would be able to reach with its huge size. We literally crawled in those tiny gaps." After telling her fiancé to stop worrying, she further told him that she won't take a long time to fulfill her curiosity.

However, just as she wiped off the first few characters, she was taken aback in surprise, "Uhh, babe, look at this. It's Mandarin."

"Huh?" the man was surprised and couldn't help but look in the direction of the stone tablet. As Mari hurriedly wiped off the dust to reveal more characters, her fiancé commented, "It looked like we aren't the first ones to be summoned by the elves."

"But, who could have inscribed these words here and what was it doing here?" asked Mari filled with curiosity.

To which, the man responded with a shrug, "Who knows! We don't have the luxury to probe into the matters."

"Wait. There's a message here. Give me a second." Mari went on to wipe out all the dust with her hand and read the sentence as her fiancé continued with his process.

"For some complicated reasons, I'm sealing my soul in the statue, hoping that I will never get out. If you read this, then, I hope you never attempt any technique that involves space attribute anywhere near my prison as it will create distortion in space and unleash hell onto this world. I hope..."

Just as she read it in her mind, a panic appeared on her face as the teleportation formation was completed.
"Mari, it was ready."

"Oh, no." Mari abruptly turned her head and shouted, "Shut it down, Allen."

"What are you..." The man was taken aback and before he even reacted to anything, the statue started cracking and multiple portals appeared randomly with each one having great suction power.

Without being able to resist, the two of them float in the air and flew toward a portal each.

"Mari..." "Allen, no..."

They ended up being swallowed up by the portals before the statue crumbled to dust, releasing a wisp.

At the same time, random portals started to pop up everywhere around the world, and from them, alien creatures exited one after another, throwing the entire world into chaos.

Present day, Helios City, Eastern Sun Kingdom;

"And this is how I ended up in this place only to lose my memories in the process." Mari finished her story and let out a deep sigh as she looked outside through the window glass. "I don't even know where my hubby was right now and how should I find him. But, I think I can find some clues in the ruins of Khambhat, where I appeared on this planet.

Even if I find a way to leave, I still need to worry about my cultivation now. There was some sort of seal on me and my cultivation realm was regressed to 5-circle."

After hearing everything, Mark only asked one question as he pressed on the brakes, "Your fiancé. Is his full name, Allen Spencer?"

"Hmm? Yes, how do you know?" Mari asked curiously. She told her story but had yet to hear how this man knows her past and could speak her mother tongue. "Do you know Allen?"

Mark's hands started shivering all of a sudden and Song Yue's facial expression also changed.

Forcefully calming down himself outwardly, Mark nodded, "Yes. He is like a brother. I mean, I was a close friend of his elder brother."

Chapter 418 The Emperor Summons Mark

Originally, Mark planned to reveal his real identity and further tell her all things about Allen to prove his point in order to gain her trust so that he could get access to all her memories and find a way to his home planet.

But, after hearing her story, he realized that it is useless and he changed his plans swiftly. He doesn't see any reason to access her memories now. Without his younger brother's presence at either Ixitus Emperor or his home planet, he has no motivation to visit those places.

Yes, there's an afterthought of taking his revenge against his former superior, the friends who betrayed him, and the mafia gang group that turned his life upside down, but still, they aren't as important as his younger member. Finding him takes priority and now Mark has no idea how to accomplish the task.

As a result, he took the approach of being a close friend to Mark who heard about her, that's all.

Zan Rong/Marina didn't buy his story completely as she remembered the incident when they met for the first time. Back then, Mark addressed with her shortened form.

However, Marina didn't have a single memory where she met Mark before her life. Hence, she could only conclude that either they knew each other very well and her memories didn't return completely or there are some truths he was withholding from her.

After experiencing the world of fantasy for a couple of years, her bet is on the latter. Allen's full name completely coinciding with her fiance's name only increased her suspicion further.

But then again, she didn't question him because of the distance of familiarity between them. Perhaps, she would ask him in the future but for now, she kept her opinions to herself.

After going on for a drive a couple of hours, they returned to the palace. Allen was seen competing in calligraphy with Lan Jing. The king was all praises for the android, expressing his disbelief of how he couldn't believe Allen was a complete beginner as Mark told him.

Being at rank-8, naturally, Allen's learning ability was something normal humans cannot understand it. Mark could only smile and reply that he is proud of his brother.

Soon, they went to the dining hall for the lunch and once it was finished, Mark started his journey back to the Phoenix Empire.

By the following evening, Mark reached home with Song Yue, Allen, and Black Knight (Song Yun) while the two beast emperors traveled on their own to go to Mt. Lan.

As for the two coachmen and the bicorn carriages, since they originally belonged to Eastern Sun, Mark left them at the palace and traveled the LMV.

They reached home by 4:45, and surprisingly, just half an hour later, a soldier was at the store with a scroll in his hand.

He gave it to Allen and returned it.

After freshening up, as Mark came out of his room, he was handed the scroll. Taking a seat on a couch, he opened it.

There weren't many sentences written inside. And the content was also so clear that he was forced to respond right away. Closing it, he calmly rose to his feet and said, "Allen, we are going to the imperial palace. Inform Xie Mei about it and also tell her to pass the information to Song Yue. It might get a while for her to come out of her bath anyways."

Allen nodded firmly before asking about their means of transport and further suggesting his opinion. As the rank-8 android, he was more connected to Mark's soul than Alina in the past ever could be.

He exactly knew what Mark was thinking. And at the moment, the weapon seller was wondering whether he should take the attack helicopter, go by LMV, or just fly using an exo suit.

"Big Bro, based on how your fame has improved in the eyes of the imperial family and the change in the situation at Gong City, it is recommended to intimidate the imperial family before they put pressure on us. There is a high chance that the Emperor will question your involvement in the war." Allen didn't wait for orders and instead gave his master a piece of advice, trying to test if Mark would feel comfortable with it or if he would feel offended.

Based on Mark's reaction, Allen decided that he would act accordingly in the future.

Of course, there is a reason for him to suddenly voice his opinion even though he was upgraded to rank-8, a while ago. It is because of the existence of the real Allen Spencer.

He knew that he is a replacement for Mark's brother but after the incident with Zan Rong, Allen was worried about his place in Mark's heart after the original returns.

Seeing that Mark's real brother was stranded up in some world and Mark planned to search for him too, the android who was becoming a lot closer to a real human felt like he should use all this time to get so close to Mark that the latter would no longer think of him as a replacement.

Fortunately for him, Mark already stopped thinking of him as a mere android. So, that's a head start. Now, he should once again make his master feel like he is not only reliable for fighting but also a reliable advisor.

"Upgrading to rank-8 really had brought tremendous changes to him," thought Mark and responded with a question, "What do you think we should do then?"

Seeing Mark respond positively, Allen let out a pleasant smile and spoke, "Jinlong, the gold dragon would be the best scenario to be used as a mount but he has other uses, and using traditional mounts to make appearances shouldn't be your style. Hence, I recommend Danya."

"The divine throne?" Mark was taken aback at first but then he remembered that it can change shape according to the will of its owner. And it can also fly. In an instant, he realized what the android was trying to convey. "Do you mean I should transform Danya into some sort of spaceship from sci-fi movies?"

"Exactly," nodded the android. Allen further said with a tiny bit of excitement, "Its appearance shouldn't be simple either as it only makes it appear exotic for the people of this planet and nothing more. If you give me enough time, I think I could design in a way that you can even use all the unlocked missiles too. While it will take several days to build a perfect model, for now, we can do with basic ones like rotary guns at one of the hard points and..."

"Nah, let's just stick to the civilian spaceship model." Mark shut down Allen's idea as it would restrict him to transform into other things at any time he wants. There's also the weapon's available skill set to consider. "Anyways, thanks for the tip. Let's go with your idea. And I think I have the perfect appearance I need in my mind."

Allen immediately realized what his master was thinking of and he gave his approval with a nod, "Yes, I believe you do, although we have to mind the size of the object. It should be big but not too big. People should witness its entire appearance and we should be able to land it in the palace ground."

"Yeah, I know."

Mark proceeded to summon the divine throne.

Chapter 419 Mark Finally Bares His Fangs Against His Father?

The imperial palace, Imperial City of Phoenix;

Unlike any other usual day, the palace was heavily guarded by thousands of soldiers from the entrance gate to the Emperor's chamber.

From morning to night, every second, they were on high alert, working in different shifts and ensuring the palace was always secured.

And when they spotted an unidentified flying object in the sky which is descending toward the forecourt of the palace without going through standard procedures, almost half of them rushed forward and took out their weapons.

However, a majority of their hands were shivering in nervousness and fear as they remembered the warning from their Supreme Commander. If any enemy is bold enough to make such an entrance, then, it is almost assured that only those above the 7-circle had remote chances of surviving.

More than some sort of spaceship, it looked like a creature. With its spiny, spider-like shape and constantly undulating black skin, the divine throne took the appearance of a sci-fi warship called the shadow dreadnought, although of the mini size.

Overall, it did have an unsettling effect on the spectators. Naturally, the generals were informed and by the time the object landed, even Song Tai was present. While everyone is tense and Song Tai looked serious, there was just one person who looked calm.

"Relax everyone. It is not an enemy. Lower down your weapons." Shang Wen's words attracted the attention.

As they turned to look at him, the second prince pointed at the object, "It looks weird, it is made of metal, and it can fly. Do you need me to say any more?"

The low-level soldiers looked at each other in confusion while the imperial guards and the three generals realized what the second prince was hinting toward.

Soon, a door was opened on the top of the vehicle and two men were seen slowly rising up.

Song Tai's eyes darted to Mark and then at the sixteen-pointy legs of the vehicle until Mark and Allen landed on the ground.

The supreme realm expert then disappeared from the spot, returning to the side of the Emperor whom Bai Xun was guarding in his absence.

"It's been a while, Brother Lu," greeted the second prince with a smile, expressing his friendliness.

Mark smiled in return and nodded, "It is, Brother Wen." He doesn't want to address him like that but it came naturally from his mouth. After all, Shang Wen was the only one in the imperial family Mark respects from the bottom of his heart. Perhaps, it might be because of the second prince's noble and straightforward character, or it is because he never thinks of himself as royalty. The reason might be anything.

Leaving behind the divine throne and Allen in the middle of the palace grounds, Mark started walking forward. Walking beside him, the prince asked, "What was that? Is that a new flying puppet?"

During the divine throne's transformation, people cannot sense its grade. Hence, Shang Wen has no idea about it.

Mark has no plans to reveal the secret either. He answered, "It was a gift I recently received. There's only one of its kind in the world though."

"Relax. I'm not interested in it. There's already so much on my plate with the existing ones," commented the second prince with a shrug of his shoulders.

After a brief pause, he then changed the subject, "Originally, I planned on meeting you to borrow Allen to increase the pace of the flight training. But, the situation forced us to meet under different circumstances."

Mark immediately replied, "Honestly speaking, neither you nor I have anything to do with this current situation. It's not our job to worry about it."

The second prince immediately understood what Mark was hinting at. He couldn't help but comment, "Well, not everyone thinks that way though. People always connect something with another to suit their needs."

"That's true." Mark nodded in agreement.

Soon, the both of them made their way to the private chamber while everyone else dispersed to get back to their work. However, the spider-like vehicle was attracting too much of their attention that they couldn't help but glance at it very often.

Meanwhile, Mark stepped inside the chamber and saw Shang Fu and the remaining three princes in the chamber alongside Song Tai and Bai Xun. There was no one else apart from these.

It was also the first time Mark saw Shang Bo in person but his impressions of this prince are nowhere near positive.

As the leader of NET, the most powerful spy organization in the whole Vermilion bird continent, usually, he certainly is a person worthy of befriending but because of the fact that Shang Bo is an imperial prince who appeared to be working in the shadows, Mark feels like he is more of a threat.

As Mark stood in one spot for a bit of time, Bai Xun asked him to take a seat before introducing the princes.

Mark nodded to each of them and greeted the emperor with a bow and then sat beside Shang Wen.

Looking at him, the serious-looking Emperor then opened up the matter, "Lu Zhen, you must have already learned of the situation at Gong City."

As Mark nodded, Emperor Shang continued, "The reason I summoned you here is to discuss how much involvement you have in this war."

Mark expected that much from the start. He calmly answered, "I'm a weapon seller and my job is to sell the weapons to the customers. What they do with them is none of my business and the consequences are not mine to bear either."

"I don't buy that, Mr. Lu," commented the crown prince. He took the opportunity to act first before the other princes, especially Shang Wei.

As everyone looked at him, the crown prince went on to say, "I believe you were aware of who Kunyu bandits are and what they will do once you sell the weapons to them. As a citizen of the empire, you do have the responsibility to alert the imperial prince if you were to sell something really dangerous to the traitors of the empire."

A frown instantly appeared on Mark's face as he heard the words of the crown prince but it quickly disappeared by his sheer willpower. He didn't waste time in defending himself, "I'm bound by the customer-seller confidentiality. And those who walk into our store are our customers regardless of their identity. Whether it is an Emperor, peasant, or a traitor, all of them have equal status for us."

"How dare you compare His Majesty with a peasant? Do you think of us as a joke?" The Crown Prince raised his voice. Perhaps, he wanted to impress his father more and decided to be more vocal. Or it might be because of his ill feelings toward Mark.

Mark is the type of person who has a high ego and doesn't like to be insulted by enemies, definitely not when he had so much anger toward the Shang Dynasty, which encourages the killings of babies.

He instantly reacted by giving him a death stare, "And do you think you are qualified to raise your voice against me just because you are a crown prince? Whatever I am now is the result of my hard work. On the other hand, you got that position on a gold platter because you are the eldest. It's not the result of hard work. So, yes, I think of you as a joke and look down on you."

"You..."

Everyone: "..."

Chapter 420 Shang Wei Offers A Deal

At once, silence filled the room for a few moments.

From Bai Xun to Song Tai, no one did expect Mark to flare up against the crown prince right in the presence of the Emperor.

But at the same time, they knew Shang Zexi was also in the wrong to raise his voice like that. Mark/Lu Zhen wasn't your average weapon seller that the crown prince had to showcase his authority over him.

If he is such a person, he wouldn't have been summoned to the palace like this. The crown prince should have handled this matter with grace.

Maybe, it is because of Mark's current status and how valuable he has become. Or maybe it is because the crown prince's situation isn't good in the palace lately. Whatever the case, the Emperor didn't side with him and instead scolded him as soon as Mark lectured him.

"Prince Zexi, I believe I have told you not to speak anything carelessly. Now, I forbid you from speaking any further." The Emperor's stern voice shocked the crown prince and he stammered in his speech. "Me? But... father... he is the one... he is... why?"

As the Emperor's stare became sharper, the crown prince shut his mouth and looked at Mark in hatred.

Then the Emperor gestured for the third prince to handle this matter with his eyes. The latter let out a smile and spoke, "Don't mind my eldest brother. He has been house arrested for a while. So, his emotions aren't stable lately."

The crown prince also took a glance at him in hatred, feeling humiliated.

On the other hand, Mark nodded in understanding while wondering what this prince is going to say, considering the fact that they didn't get angry.

No matter, by the end of this meeting, Mark swore to spoil the relations between him and the imperial palace and turn them sour so that it becomes easier for him to shift out of the capital city and openly support Feng Wu. Of course, it can only be done under the premise that they were the guilty party.

The third prince then said, "Okay, here's the situation. The Kunyu bandits are equipped with firearms and some of them aren't known to us. You don't sell them in your store either.

The Empire is at war and we need the details like their strengths, weaknesses, and how many you sold to them each model. You can do that much for the imperial palace, right?"

Mark thought for a bit and replied, "I have no problem with sharing the details but you might lose the motivation to continue the war with them. Do you really want to know?"

"What did you sell?" The Emperor furrowed his brows, feeling uncomfortable in his chest as he words those words.

Mark turned his head and answered with a mixture of truths and lies, "First, I will tell you about seven key weapons; LARS, Rank-5 Robot, C-4 (advanced), sniper rifle (ether), PANZER IV, and finally Grenade launcher."

The third prince asked for a sheet with details written on them but Mark went on to explain everything orally because the words have more impact.

And just as he expected, the faces of every listener in the room changed quite a bit when they heard how devastating the firearms used by Feng Wu's army going to be.

"Your Majesty, we cannot let our infantry units fight them," opinioned Bai Xun. "It is a suicide." More than their damage power, the supreme commander was worried about their high range.

Shang Wen agreed with him and further said, "Only archers above 7-circle could have such a high range. But, if we use the mages purely for maintaining a defensive barrier over a large scale instead of offense, we can hold them down until our experts infiltrate their stronghold."

"Hmm..." The others thought about the second prince's strategy. The crown prince on the other hand wanted to say that it is unwise to discuss their strategy in front of a possible enemy. But, he could only shut his mouth.

In the meantime, the third prince was thinking deeply while staring at Mark. The latter felt his gaze and asked, "Do you want to say something to me, Prince Wei?"

Shang Wei responded with a question, "What currency did they pay you?"

"I'm sorry?" Mark was taken aback a bit. As the others looked curiously at the third prince, the latter clarified his question by stating, "I know for sure that the firearms you described cannot be sold cheaply. If they procure such weapons and their respective ammunition, then, where did they get so much amount of money? If they have paid you such an amount, then, someone wealthy should be behind them."

"Hmm, now that you mention it, it is suspicious indeed," Emperor Shang also felt like he ignored such a vital matter.

"Is there a foreign kingdom or empire that is pulling the strings from behind?" thought everyone.

Unfortunately for them, Mark was already prepared for the question. In fact, it was Allen who listed possible questions that could be asked in this meeting while they were on their way to the palace.

Mark calmly answered, "They didn't pay me with gold. Instead, they put three semi-divine-grade weapons of the Feng Dynasty as collateral. When they paid me in full, I will return their weapons. In the event of default, I will get to keep them."

"Collateral?" Shang Wei thought for a bit and asked, "How much is the bill?"

"Roughly about 6 million." Mark threw a random figure as he knew they won't bother to look too much into it. If such a case arose, then, he will cover it up by stating that there were advanced orders pending too.

Little did he expect that the third prince would suddenly put forth a bold offer.

"The imperial palace will cover the bill and you get to keep those weapons. We will also throw in another semi-divine grade of high quality. In exchange, you just need to lend Venerable Wu for a day."

"6 million?" The crown prince couldn't help but scream at once. Even the Emperor furrowed his brows in displeasure as he commented, "I didn't expect you to take such a decision without discussing it with me."

Feeling the pain, the Emperor has already allotted 10 million gold coins for this war. They will be spent on paying remunerations to the military, guilds, and sects. Of course, there's also compensation for the lost families.

On top of this, if they spent 6 million more just to recruit Wu Weibao (Lan Ju/the zheng) for a day, the imperial palace's treasure will not have sufficient funds to run the empire for a very long time. They would have to resort to rapidly mining more gold and silver to fill the treasury or take a loan from the northern empires.

Even if it wins them the war, it just doesn't seem that worth it. Now, adding on top of that, Shang Wei is also offering a semi-divine grade weapon of high quality (Ruby grade).

It is obvious that the Emperor is angry at his son, who just decided things on his own without considering the aftereffects.

However, the third prince wasn't a person without plans. But, it appeared that he doesn't want to share things openly, "Your Majesty, we cannot afford to lose the Western Yan. I will explain everything later on but for now, trust me on this."

Shang Zexi was told to shut up. Shang Wen was always on Shang Wei's side. Shang Bo never speaks unless he was asked to do so. Bai Xun only speaks on matters of the military. As for Song Tai, he doesn't have any role in this meeting other than staying there as a guard for the Emperor.

Hence, the Emperor is the only one who will think and make the decision. Before he did that, he made sure to ask Mark about it. Looking at him, he asked, "If we give you what Shang Wei has promised, can you promise me that Venerable Wu will bring the head of that mysterious Supreme Being? He doesn't need to battle anyone else either."

Everyone turned their heads to look at Mark. The weapon seller, who thought of a quick excuse, replied by shaking his head, "I'm afraid that's not possible. It's because the enemy is equally powerful as Wu Weibao. To defeat the enemy, Wu Weibao had to fight with his full strength. But if they fight in Gong City, there's a high chance that the entire city will disappear from the world. That means you will have to be prepared to sacrifice hundreds of thousands of innocent citizens."

Everyone's face hardened when they heard his words but only Shang Wei thought differently as he realized something important.

"You know who that mysterious expert is, don't you?"