

Seller 431

Chapter 431 Forsaking The Homeland

In the eyes of the crown prince, Mark might not be strong enough to defeat the entire imperial army, but his weapons could definitely kill him. Shang Zexi loves his life, and he wants to be safe than sorry.

Mark was also quite surprised by how convincing the crown prince's story was, but he had something up his sleeve to counter that.

Turning toward the crown prince, he then replied, "Suppose you are sleeping on your bed. Suddenly, someone tries to kill you but you escape and catch the culprit. The culprit turns out to be Allen. When you confront Allen, he says that he was ordered by me. Then, you come to me and I say that I was given money by someone to put a bounty on top of you. Even if that someone gets caught, will you leave me and Allen if we simply apologize and say it wasn't on purpose? Or you will put us under trial?"

"That's..." The crown prince fell into a dilemma, whether he should abandon Nie Rougang or not.

It is a fact that Nie Rougang did this behind his back and he was angry at him for this but they are in cahoots with each other in every crime they committed.

If Nie Rougang opens his mouth, forget about succeeding his father, the crown prince should worry about his own life.

As a result, he felt like he had two options to choose. One, burn the bridges and kill Nie Rougang. Two, continue to stick with him by trying to cool down the weapon seller while putting aside his ego once again.

Shang Zexi had chosen the second path and he cupped his fists once again and bowed, "Minister Nie has made a mistake. But, in these times of chaos, he is necessary for the Empire. I hope you forgive him as long we compensate you with material wealth."

If Mark takes that offer, he would lose the excuse of acting against the Imperial Palace.

But, he cannot just show a stuck-up attitude when one is in a high position such as the crown prince bowing before him in front of everyone.

Hence, he waved his hand and continued to be stern, "As I have told you guys earlier, I'm not here to seek compensation or answers. Since you have already accepted my accusation, let me continue."

"There's more to listen?" The third prince and the Emperor felt a headache, not knowing how to deal with this troublesome fellow.

The crown prince sat down and Mark continued by returning his gaze to his biological father, "Thirdly, I want to tell you the reason behind my settlement in the Imperial City. It wasn't because of the business."

"Then?" Everyone curiously stared at him, wondering what it might be.

Mark then revealed half of the truth, "When I was 15 years old, a burglar intruded into our house, ransacked our money, and killed my parents. The authorities kept their mum and the nobles disregard the incident as it is something common in their eyes and the lives of commoners aren't a big deal in the eyes of people like you.

Back then, I'm powerless. But, today, I'm not. I went against my fate and attained the power I desired. I came here to find out the killers of my family.

But, later on, I discovered that the killers are none other than the assassins of the Soul organization and the one who gave them the mission is the Grand Secretariat, Li Zheng Kang."

This time, the shock was so great that every single official stood on their feet. Even the Emperor is no exception either.

And obviously, Shang Fu didn't believe those accusations just like the rest of them.

This time, he defended his late minister, "there's no way Grand Secretariat Li was involved in..."

As he was speaking, he suddenly remembered the word traitor on the forehead of Li Zheng Kang.

Shang Fu then changed his words to a question, "Are you the one behind his death?"

Prepared for such a question beforehand, Mark shook his head, "No, I'm not. I only found this out today. I always had suspicions that someone from the imperial family is involved but I didn't expect it to be the grand secretariat of all the people."

Feeling odd about Mark's explanation, Shang Wei then asked a series of questions, "Who told you that? What evidence do you have against Grand Secretariat Li? And most importantly, why do you suspect that someone from the imperial family is involved in the death of your parents? They were just normal people and even lived far away from us. How were they related to our family?"

Mark pointed his finger at the Emperor, "The man sitting on the throne is the one they had a relationship with. As for the one who told me the truth, it was the contracted demon of Feng Wu.

He claimed that when he killed the Grand Secretariat and saw his memories to find out any useful Intel about the experts supporting the throne, he found out that Grand Secretariat was following the orders of the late Dowager Empress in killing all the women who this noble emperor had violated so that his dignity remains intact in the eyes of the public.

Even their children aren't spared. If I tell you that the number of such women is more than 100, would you believe it? If I tell you that more than 40 children born with the blood of Shang were killed, would you believe it?

And one of those pitiful women was my late mother, who served in this imperial palace as a maid. She left the city and married my father, later on. Their happiness became complete when I was born to them and we were living a peaceful life until your grand secretariat found out her existence and sent the assassins.

Had I not been rescued by an expert that day, I would have died that day with my parents too.

The moment I learned of the truth, I want to massacre every single person from your family but those who are directly responsible passed away, and attacking you people will just make me a traitor of my motherland.

However, I'm too disgusted with the actions of His Majesty that I cannot sit by and ignore them as if nothing happened.

Hence, today, I'm here to spill the truth in front of everyone before leaving this place for good. I received a marriage proposal from the Western Moon kingdom a while ago and soon, I will be engaged to Princess Shen Ling.

It'll be my new home. But, despite my feelings, I will keep my word and fulfill the conditions of every agreement I made with the imperial palace. If your army requires my firearms, your representative may visit the store and purchase them as a customer. I won't mistreat my customers no matter who they are.

Now that I have said everything I want to, it is time for me to leave. Goodbye, Your Majesty. This might be the last time I will be addressing you as such. From tomorrow onwards, you are no longer my emperor and I'm no longer your citizen."

Leaving everyone in a daze, Mark turned around and started walking away. His footsteps are probably the only sounds that the officials could hear at the moment.

And surprisingly, the Emperor was the first to come out of his stupor and called him out, "Wait, Shang... Lu Zhen. Stop."

Mark continued to walk away, not noticing the slip-up from the Emperor. On the other hand, Shang Wei fell into deep thought, analyzing the known truths and the ones Mark spouted earlier.

Chapter 432 Shang Wen's Opinion

Emperor Shang didn't follow Mark and neither did he order anyone to stop him either. He just collapsed on the throne with a look of disappointment.

The ministers and the officials stayed silent as they don't know what to say now.

They want to say that Mark is a liar but deep down, they were aware that their beloved Emperor is a skirt chaser back when he is a young man. It is just that they don't know that the number is so high.

What's more... Grand Secretariat Li and even the Emperor's mother was involved in something like this? It was also a shocking thing for them.

As they looked at each other to say something, in the end, the minister of law & justice, the Zhang Clan's Patriarch was forced to speak out the voices of his fellow ministers.

"Your Majesty, please tell us that he is lying. If the citizens hear of this matter, they will lose their trust in the Emperor. There will be protests." He raised his voice slightly but then followed with an apology.

The Emperor was unresponsive and this made the Zhou clan's Patriarch, the minister of Board and Rites shakes his head in realization and speak his voice aloud, "He cannot because it is true."

The rest of the officials who were mere spectators started murmuring among themselves.

"Excellent, Minister Zhang, you perfectly hit the iron when it is hot," The crown prince thought in his head and tried his best not to smile.

If there was someone who was very celebrating over this fact, it was the crown prince.

In his mind, he was preparing to dethrone his father and ascend it before Shang Wei gets an opportunity.

Rising to his feet, he addressed the rest of the officials, "Everyone is dismissed. Please return to your homes."

Slowly, the room was cleared and only the imperial princes and Bai Xun remained with the Emperor, who was resting his elbows on his knees while grabbing his forehead.

Bai Xun walks up to his brother-in-law and patted his shoulder, "Your Majesty!"

Emperor Shang raised his head.

He was trying his best to keep to not crying but sorrow was clear on his face. His voice turned hoarse as he said, "I cannot believe Li Zheng Kang and my mother do this to me behind my back. Li Zheng Kang was a friend I trust with my life and all my secrets. How could he do this to me?"

I made mistakes when I was young, but I planned to rectify them by giving them the concubine status. However, they started disappearing one after another. Li Zheng Kang told me that they ran away because of the fear of the society but I had no idea that they were being hunted down."

"Father, why must you behave like you are guilty when it is the fault of that traitor Li Zheng Kang?" commented the crown prince, trying to gain some points with his father.

He further added with wise statements, "And people make mistakes all the time. Which ancestor of ours didn't make such mistakes? The fact that you are feeling guilty about your past actions itself is something admirable. Most rulers don't even have the heart to acknowledge it even to themselves."

"Shang Zexi..." Emperor looked like he was touched by the support given by his eldest son.

He couldn't help but look at his other sons. The third prince stayed silent as he was too busy thinking.

As for the second prince, he always considers himself a soldier when standing in the presence of his father. Hence, he had to keep his mouth shut in the courtroom.

Even now, he stood there like a soldier without showing any emotion but the Emperor wants to hear that he isn't wrong out of this righteous son's mouth.

"Say something, Shang Wen." He urged the second prince to speak.

The second prince replied in a calm manner, "Forgive me, Your Majesty, if my words indicate any disrespect toward you, but you are the Emperor and the role model for your citizens. The commoners treat you as a god in human flesh.

Several schools of thought are trying their best to empower women all over the world, but you treat them as a sexual object? You have a sister who was married to Supreme Commander Bai. You also have a daughter who will marry a noble or a prince of other lands someday. What would you have done if those people will follow in the same footsteps as you? Can you swear on your soul that you won't get angry and try to understand them?

But then again, the past is the past and just being guilty about it doesn't change anything. If you want to repent, then, you should at least compensate their families with material wealth along with an apology letter written by your hand. At the same time, you should also search for the victims who are still alive. It is possible that your illegitimate children are living somewhere.

Regardless of your actions, I will still safeguard the southern provinces with my life. I'm a servant to the imperial throne and I will not abandon my duty as long as I'm not retired. This is all I have to say."

"Shang Wen, how could you talk like that?" The crown prince flared up at his brother as usual. Of course, this time, there's a motive. He wants to get into his father's good books.

To which, the second prince responded with a long statement, "The longer you live in the darkness, the more sunlight will get painful. You would want to go back into darkness as you will be afraid of the sunlight. But, when you decided to face it and bear it for a while, you will be able to witness what the world has to offer. The truth is something similar, Prince Zexi."

Shang Wen's words of wisdom made the Emperor realize something important. It was as if his mind became too clear and all muddled thoughts vanished in an instant.

The depression around him was gone and a look of determination appeared on his face. Rising to his feet, he spoke, "Call back the ministers and the officials who left. Inform them that I'm going to make an important announcement. I need Shang Bo, the Empress, and the two Queen Consorts to be present too.

And Shang Wen..."

"Your Majesty."

"You follow me to the ancestry hall. The rest will stay here," said the Emperor as he stepped down from the throne and walked toward the exit.

Leaving behind everyone in confusion, the father and son pair left the courtroom. They took several lefts and rights in the palace before reaching the Ancestry Hall, where the paintings of the past emperors were displayed on the walls along with the statue of the founder.

Shang Wen didn't know why they came here but he didn't question him and just followed him in silence.

His curiosity did increase when the Emperor told him to shut the door.

However, for the next minute, Emperor Shang just stared at the founder as if he was in deep thought. Shang Wen patiently waited.

The silence finally ended when Shang Fu raised his hand and looked at the ring around his index finger.

Chapter 433 Emperor Shang Announces His Retirement

He took out the scarlet feather of some bird from his storage ring and handed it to the second prince, "this has been passed down in our family for generations and so far, it was used two times in history. When you feel like you need help, pour your ether energy into this feather. The Phoenix will hear you and come to the rescue. However, it can only be used for one more time.

Perhaps, the war could be won if I used it but deep down, I probably know that Western Yan isn't ours to begin with. It is an occupied territory. I guess I wasn't desperate enough to use this last remaining treasure of the Shang Dynasty after losing both of our divine-grade weapons.

Today, I will give you this so that it becomes your life-saving treasure."

"But, Your Majesty, shouldn't this be handed to your successor?" Shang Wen was quite surprised when he heard the history behind this feather which looked quite normal at one glance.

Could it be that his father wanted to name him as his successor or something? Such thought came to his mind and if that were the case, he would definitely talk him out of it.

Shang Wen wasn't remotely interested to rule the empire. His goal is to succeed Bai Xun as the next supreme commander. That's all...

Fortunately, even the Emperor has the same opinion of him. He forced out a smile as he replied, "To be honest, you are a perfect candidate to be my successor as you are righteous and don't have the greed for the throne.

However, I'm also afraid that if you ascend to the throne, you will either lose your character that built so far or your straightforwardness will be taken advantage of by the ministers just like how they did to me.

Hence, I want you to be the guardian of this land just like Venerable Song. It is a pity that he lost his cultivation because of my shortsightedness. But, this also taught me a good lesson. Only the demigods are powerful enough to protect this land."

Placing his hand on the young man who looked quite identical to him, Shang Fu continued, "If you confine yourself in this place, you won't be able to become the demigod. I want you to travel to the higher plane of existence and train there. With the bloodline of Phoenix, I guess you will do fine. Come back when you make a breakthrough to the demigod realm and guard this land of our ancestors. Consider this a request from your father or an order from your Emperor."

"Your Majesty..." Shang Wen doesn't know how to react for a few moments. But, after a while, he kneeled on one leg and saluted with a right fist on his chest, "Your wish is my command."

Shang Fu raised his son up and gave him a hug and then said, "There's a world teleportation located on the island far away in the west. Decades ago, Lan Gengxin and his associates came to this world through the same one. With it, you can travel to higher planes filled with denser spiritual energy. I don't know the exact location, but Lan Jingyi was aware of it."

Shang Wen nodded in understanding while feeling a little bit emotional inside. However, he didn't show it.

After a while;

The confused ministers and the officials of various departments were waiting for the Emperor's announcement, wondering what happened during the time they were away.

Taking his seat on the throne, the Emperor then addressed his officials, "What I am about to announce isn't something that was taken spontaneously. It has been on my mind for a while ago, but I postponed them due to various reasons. Because of the recent situation, I had to do this."

Several high-level officials had the same thought, "Is he going to announce his successor?"

Even the Empress and the Queen consorts had the same thought. After all, why else they would get summoned to the imperial court?

Without betraying their suspicions, the Emperor announced what they have been waiting for, but with a slight twist, "30 days from now, I'm going to formally relinquish my power as the ruler of the Phoenix Empire and name my successor.

And during these next four weeks, my heirs shall participate in the trial set by me and based on the results, I will choose one. All the imperial princes who bear the surname Shang are qualified to participate in the trial. Everyone has two days for the preparation. Supreme Commander Bai will oversee the registrations of the qualified candidates."

As the officials started murmuring among themselves while the ministers were looking at each other faces, Shang Fu continued, "Here's my second announcement. I hereby declare the end of millennium-old traditions, as the new emperor ascends to power, stripping the six major noble clans of their grasp over the ministries that have long been under their control."

"What!" The ministers stood up from their seats in shock. The Emperor is removing their positions? What kind of bullshit announcement is this? Clearly, no one is in favor of it.

Seeing the reactions of the ministers, Emperor Shang raised his hand and raised his voice, "Sit down and listen until the end."

As they reluctantly sat down, Shang Fu continued, "The Empire will no longer be divided into 7 provinces. Every province will be divided into two further except for the southern yuan province and each of the territories will be managed by one of your six major clans. As for the ministries, they will be managed by qualified scholars and will act independently just like the three departments.

And my third announcement is that the following Emperors or their relatives will no longer be above the laws.

If he is guilty, he shall be punished after a complete investigation by the law and justice ministry.

He cannot use the imperial treasury as he wishes just like I and my forefathers did. The revenue ministry must give its approval whether it is to spend money or borrow money as long as it crosses more than a million gold coins.

He cannot announce any public constructions without approval from the Public works ministry.

He cannot go to war on a whim without the approval from the War ministry.

He cannot promote or dismiss an official without the approval from Board and Rites ministry.

He cannot make decisions without the approval from the personal ministry. However, he can also reject any propositions made by the ministry. That authority remains with the Emperor.

And if he wants to override the rejection from the ministries, he should have majority support (atleast 3 out of 4) from the Supreme Commander, Grand Secretariat (Head of Central Secretariat department), Chief Minister (Head of the Department of the State affairs), and the Grand Chancellor (Head of the Chancellery).

These decrees of mine will come into action when the new Emperor succeeds me and they cannot be removed by my successors for the next three generations (100 years) unless it is a unanimous decision from the Emperor, Supreme commander, three department heads, 12 regional lords, and the six ministries.

I want these announcements to be heard all over the Empire within the next couple of days.

That is all."

Chapter 434 Unveiling Midnight Encounters

Genesis Weapon Store;

"Eh? Why?" Xie Mei was taken aback as she was suddenly informed that they were leaving the city for good.

She was someone who grew up in the mountains and rarely stepped out of the sect.

The teenager liked this bustling city and she often goes out to walk.

And now, she hears that they were moving to a secluded island that has no human population. Obviously, she didn't like it.

But, will Mark cares about her opinion?

Naturally, he won't.

He straightforwardly said to her, "You can stay here with Allen if you want. I don't intend to close down the store anyways."

"Fine, you are the husband and the head of the family. Wherever you go, I have to follow," replied the teenager as she sat down.

Mark was irritated at her comment and he warned her, although not in a serious tone, "I believe we have an agreement that you won't address yourself as such until you were an adult. In the event you break the agreement, I can kick you out. Remember?"

"Eek!" As Xie Mei sprung up on her feet and hurriedly replied that she will not leave, Song Yue intervened and nicely told him not to tease her before informing her that they weren't actually living on an island but will be shifting their new residence to the Lunar City.

"Ah! That's where your second wife lives," commented Xie Mei in realization.

Mark couldn't help but frown when he heard that. "She isn't my wife, Xie Mei."

"But, will become one day, right?" countered the teenager.

Mark then argued, "Yes, but when it happens, you can address her that way. Until then, she is the princess of the Western Moon kingdom."

Xie Mei stayed silent for a couple of seconds before asking Song Yue, "Sister Yue, I really want to ask something. Are you really comfortable with your Markie... I mean Lu Zhen to have another wife."

As Song Yue hesitated slightly, Mark replied in her place, "She is the one who convinced me to marry Princess Shen."

"Yeah," Song Yue mumbled while nodding slowly. However, her expression was slightly uncomfortable. Maybe, her growing attachment to Mark made her regret such a decision, lately.

It was then, Mark added, "but then again, my marriage with Shen Ling is purely business. You can think of it like a business partnership. Even if I marry someone else in the future, it will be the same. Song Yue is the

only one I love and I intend to stay that way. So, you too should forget about your ambitions for the marriage, kid."

"I'm not a kid. I'll turn 16 within a few weeks." Xie Mei almost screamed at Mark as she gets irked whenever he calls her that. She further added with a challenge, "And just you wait, I'll make you will fall head over heal for me and follow me like a puppy."

"Ha! Wishful thinking, pancake."

"See, I knew you adore me or else, why do call me by your favorite breakfast dish? You should stop denying it and marry me, okay?"

"No, I actually meant something else. And you should stop irritating me or else, I will really send you back to your home."

"Bleh, our destinies are tied. You are not going to send me away..."

"Destinies, what bullshit..."

As Mark and Xie Mei continue to bicker as usual and making the atmosphere quite lively, Song Yue shook her head with a smile and went upstairs to pack her clothes.

The afternoon passed away and the darkness took over the Vermillion bird continent.

The manticore, Xie Mei, Song Yue, and the golden kitten got into the vehicle.

Mark gave a hug to his beloved android and said, "Allen, I leave this store in your hands. Once everything is finished as I planned, you may join me. Until then, take care of yourself. I know you can manage it on your own but it is best if you hire someone so that you also won't get bored to be alone. You have unlimited access to my inventory. So, don't need to wait for my permission to spend money or take out the goods to sell."

"Affirmed," replied Mark with a salute.

Mark then got onto the driver's seat and drove away from the vehicle. Allen waved his hands as a gesture of goodbye, and once the vehicle is out of his sight, he let out a deep sigh like a human and looked at the sky, "I hate times like this. It would be nice if there's indeed a person whom I can talk to without feeling uncomfortable."

The image of a person came to his mind and he mumbled, "I wonder what Sister Xue is doing right now? It's been a while since I last her. After that fiasco, we haven't met again. Let's go and meet her in the morning."

A few hours later;

Allen was walking back and forth in the upstairs living room while keep glancing at the wall clock. "It's still 12:30. There are 5 more hours to go."

As an android, he never needs to sleep.

And previously, when he is a rank-5 android, he was more of a robot than a human. His thoughts weren't complicated. He could just stay sit in a spot for hours without thinking of anything.

Now, after getting upgraded to rank-8, he has all the emotions that a human has. It's like he is a human born in the body of an android.

He cannot sit still. He has massive data in his core and it was keep running, not letting him sit in peace.

Not being able to resist the urge to see his only human friend (outside the Genesis Weapon Store family), Allen left the residence and flew to the inner sector.

Because he is an android and lacked any traditional cultivation, he won't be sensed by any experts around. However, if he flies too fast, the sonic boom generated by him will cause disturbance and he doesn't want to be caught by anyone's vision.

Hence, he flew at a slow pace and it took almost 30 minutes to reach Lin Wuying's mansion.

He came here many times and even knew what room at what residence his friend sleeps. Of course, even if he has no knowledge of it, there shouldn't be a problem. His Hyper sensors could spot her in an instant.

Allen slowly intruded into the house and reached Lin Xue's room, which was surprisingly lit up. The time was around 1 a.m. and Lin Xue still appeared to be awake. She was seriously writing something in a notebook.

At first, Allen planned to knock, but intending to surprise her, he scanned the room and saw that a window is opened.

He flew around and then went in through the window, only to land on the bed and alerted her due to the creaking sound of the bed.

As Lin Xue abruptly turned around and saw Allen, she almost screamed, "All..."

"en..." She managed to control her voice with a look of surprise on her face. "What are you doing here?" She asked curiously before suddenly remembering the fact that he is a high-quality puppet of the weapon seller just like Alina. Depression took over her instantly before anger replaced it.

Mark then said, "I'm here to see you."

"Oh! Around 1 o'clock?" Lin Xue's expression changed and she acted coldly towards him.

Chapter 435 Shattered Illusions: Allen's Awakening To Lin Xue's True Feelings

It was the first time Allen saw coldness from Lin Xue.

He was familiar with her cold personality but she never acted this way toward him. She was always warm and friendly.

He doesn't know why she appeared angry.

Maybe, is it because he disturbed her when she was in the middle of some important issue.

Allen learned from Mark that he cannot just come to a conclusion based on a woman's behavior. Analyzing won't work for some women as their actions don't have logic.

Allen wondered whether Lin Xue is one such woman.

As he was busy thinking about the perfect reply, Lin Xue then spoke, "I asked you a question, Mr. Allen. Why are you here at this hour?"

"Mr. Allen?" The Android was surprised once again but remembering Mark's teachings, he put away his analysis and went directly to the matter.

Trying to be as honest as possible, he explained, "Sister Yue, I'm actually not sure about it. My big bro and the others have left the city and I was alone. You came to my mind and I felt like it has been a long time since we talk. So, I..."

"So, you thought you could just intrude into our residence, into my room, in the middle of the night, huh?" Lin Xue continued to respond to him coldly. After a brief pause, she further added a comment, "No wonder you could do it. After all, you are a puppet, not a human. If you are one, you would be able to have a sense of decency that you shouldn't intrude into a girl's room at such an hour."

"Eh? How did you..." Allen was shocked this time as Lin Xue wasn't supposed to know his secret. But then, he remembered the fight with Necromancer and everything that happened with Alina and all.

He realized that maybe this is why she was angry at him.

Making an apologetic face, he said, "I don't mean to hide the truth from you. But, my big bro has ordered me to keep my secret and I don't want to disappoint him."

"I know. After all, you won't hesitate to kill me if your big bro orders you," replied the Lin Clan heiress, blaming Mark in her mind. She then said, "Anyways, since you are already here, let me be clear. I no longer hold any interest in seeing you or holding any conversations with you. Leave this instant."

"No, it is not true." Allen tried to clear things up for his friend now that she knows his secret. "The past me might kill you if I get an order. But, now, I'm upgraded several times. I can resist his order and you are a special person to me. There's no way I will hurt you and let you get hurt if I had to oppose my big bro."

Hearing his honest words only made Lin Xue more emotional. In her frustration, she growled at Allen, "Why can't you just understand my words properly? I don't want to talk to you. I will shout if you stay here anymore. No matter how strong you are, people still think that you are the younger brother of Lu Zhen. His fame will be the one that gets hit. Your store's fame will also get hit if they know you are abusing your strength to harass a woman."

"Okay, I will leave as you wish and I don't even show my face to you any longer. Don't need to threaten me." Allen raised his hands like he surrendered or something.

However, he didn't turn and leave right away as he could sense her emotions through his hyper-sensing abilities.

Allen pressed her to convince him by arguing, "I just needed an honest answer. Why? Is it really matter if I'm a puppet? Do I become ineligible to talk to you or become your friend? After my last upgrade, I can now fly and travel distances faster than a supersonic jet. I have all the emotions that any human on this planet has. I'm now strong enough to go toe to toe against any supreme realm expert."

I failed to protect you back then but if I face the Necromancer King again, I can defeat him. I can now even help you accomplish your dream. You can become one with the sword. I can scan the surroundings to spot any hidden treasures or mines. I can make the finest sword that a dwarf could ever make.

With my abilities, I can earn money more than all the noble clans combined. I'm better than 99.99999% of all the humans on this planet. And apart from once that happened as my big bro wanted you to stay away from his affairs, I had never mistreated you ever since we met.

Do all of my qualities amount to nothing if I don't possess a human body and soul? I saved your life once. If you want to burn the bridges, then, give me the truth."

Allen didn't know it himself but he looked quite frustrated as he was explaining to Lin Xue. Did her rejection really vex him that much? Who knows...

However, Lin Xue was even more frustrated than him. In the end, she exploded as the tears welled up in her eyes, "You want the truth, right? Then, hear it. I fell in love with you, bastard. And you turned out to be a fucking puppet. It is unbearable for me to even look at you. Can you understand what I am going through?"

You have abilities? Okay, they might suit a bodyguard or an adventurer or some other profession. Sure, you can earn loads of money but can you really love someone? Can your heart beat for someone when you don't even have a heart? Can you marry someone and have kids? Can a girl imagine a future with you?

Loving you is more disgusting than falling in love with an intelligent beast species. You are not even he or she. You are a thing. Now, you are a superfast analyzer, right?

Then, try to think how a girl like me should feel when she falls in love with someone for the first time in her life, she wanted to share her life with you and then finds out that it is nothing but an illusion.

Now, do you get it? Get it?"

She almost roared at his face, looking at him in deep hatred while waking up everyone from the household.

As people rushed to her room, Allen stood there like a statue. He was truly shocked to hear it.

He doesn't have any personal experience but he does see what it means by falling in love and what it means by imagining a future together. His master's love for Song Yue is the best example of that.

As Lin Xue collapsed on the floor and bawled as if her beloved died or something, Allen looked at her in a daze and mumbled without knowing, "So, everything is going to be alright between us if I become a human?"

Lin Xue raised her head and looked at him. She felt as if he was mocking her intelligence.

Lin Xue lunged at him and grabbed his collar while pushing him away slowly, "Yes, go and become a human. Tell your dear bro to turn you into a human. I'll marry you even if you stay as a slave for Lu Zhen your whole life. Leave..."

knock knock* knock*

"Xiao Xue? Are you alright? Who are you shouting at? Open the door. I'm breaking it now..."

The doors were knocked at that time and she heard his father's voice.

"My father is here... leave..." Lin Xue was alarmed and she suddenly talked in a whisper, hurriedly sending away Allen.

Once, Allen jumped out of the window and flew into the sky in a daze, she wiped her tears and turned around, telling him to give her a second.

As she opened the door, she saw his father along with a couple of servants were there standing outside.

He stepped inside and looked around. "What happened?"

"Nothing," replied Lin Xue in a hoarse voice.

Lin Wuying then looked at her face, "You are crying... Are you alright?"

As he touched her face, it felt hot. He then touched her forehead, "You have a fever." He turned his head and shouted, "Bring the physician right now."

As one of the servants left, Lin Wuying took her to the bed and let her sit before he knelt to her height and asked, "What is it that about? Did you have a nightmare?"

Lin Xue nodded thrice in silence, not intending to explain to her father.

Lin Wuying smiled as he patted her head, "It's probably because you holed yourself up for several days. You are probably scarred because of the Necromancer King. To defeat it, you must go out and roam."

As Lin Xue nodded, Lin Wuying sighed as he sat down, "Today also has been hectic for me. First Owner Lu's accusation against the Emperor, then, the Emperor's retirement announcement... Sigh..."

"Uncle Shang's retirement?"

Meanwhile, Allen was flying in the air, trying to digest her questions. On the way to his home, he questioned even himself whether he could really do what a girl expects of him.

Unfortunately for him, he is an android and everything is usually based on logic. Why he stays loyal to Mark? It is because he is his creator, although the system is considered his parent.

But, why does he act too desperate to save his friendship? Is it really because she is the only friend he had or is it something else? Is there a possibility that he too likes Lin Xue the same she liked him once?

There are too many things and Allen couldn't come to a conclusion for some reason. Maybe, he gets the answer if he is a human, thought the android.

Chapter 436 Wedding whispers: Plans for a destination celebration

The next day morning;

Royal Palace, Lunaris City, Western Moon Kingdom;

"Welcome, Lord Lu, Lady Song, and the honored guests, to Lunaris City. Your presence in my palace is a great honor; may our alliance bring prosperity to both our families."

The King of Western Moon, Shen Niu, accompanied by his daughter, courtiers, and officials, greeted the guests with a formal deep bow, showing reverence and acknowledging their presence. Mark and Song Yue respond bows with equal respect.

If this was any other normal visit, such formality was unnecessary. But, since it holds special significance, the king treated Mark already as his son-in-law and gave him the respect he deserves.

Following the formal greetings and rituals, King Shen Niu led the guests in a majestic procession through the palace, showcasing the grandeur and splendor of his kingdom. Courtiers and attendants follow along, adding to the sense of importance and celebration.

It is not the first time Mark and Song Yue were visiting the palace but as agreed upon beforehand, they played along.

Only Xie Mei was new and as a person who never stepped inside a royal palace, she was quite overwhelmed with their wealth, not knowing that Mark once held more wealth than the combined wealth of the Western Moon kingdom's citizens but blew it up all on Weapon Transmutation skill.

Once it was over, everyone was given their own guestroom to take rest until lunchtime.

Xie Mei slept peacefully all night while they were on the way but Song Yue kept Mark company, talking with him so that he don't sleep on the way and their vehicle crashed into some tree or rock.

Now, Mark has 9.6 points of strength, 9.5 temporary points of intelligence, and 9.1 points of resistance his physical and mental stamina is over the roof. He doesn't get tired that easily and neither could he feel much stress unless it deeply affects his soul, meaning emotional things related to his heart.

However, Song Yue doesn't have such resistance. The moment she stepped into her room, she collapsed on the bed and fell into a deep sleep while sharing the room with the manticore and the golden kitten, which constantly act as her bodyguards.

As for her real bodyguard, aka her dad who disguised as the Black Knight warrior, he too couldn't properly sleep in a sitting position as Xie Mei. Hence, he also fell asleep as his back hit the comfy bed.

And if one wonders where the zheng was, the beast emperor continued his stay at Mt. Lan and temporarily stayed away from Mark.

Xie Mei took out her Griffin for a walk as they roamed outside of the palace while Mark was in a private meeting with Shen Niu and Shen Ling in his room.

"Okay, son, let me go through what we have discussed through the communication scroll over the past few days." King Shen Niu started speaking first, directly going through the matter.

Meanwhile, Mark was also slightly surprised at Shen Niu's change of address toward him as it is the first time he called him like that, but he didn't mind it and listened to the king in silence.

"The coronation of Feng Chun is going to happen the day after tomorrow. Hence, I have to leave by tomorrow noon. Xiao Ling will stay here. As you know, we don't have any specific ministries or departments to handle the marriage and other ceremonies. We hire private individuals who we call event planners to do them. They will take care of everything.

Anyways, we hired Yang Tao. You can discuss the dates and venues and everything with him regarding your marriage with Lady Song and then your engagement with my daughter. And then..."

"Wait a second..." Mark stopped him from going further as he wanted to say something regarding his marriage.

"Hmm? What is it?" He asked. Shen Ling, who was just smiling in silence, also couldn't help but curiously look at Mark, wondering what he wants to say.

Mark then said, "There's a slight change in the plans actually. After discussing it a bit, we realized it is better if my marriage with Song Yue happen somewhere else."

"Where?" Shen Niu asked.

Before Mark answered, Shen Ling said in a bit of an unsure tone, "Eastern Sun Kingdom?"

Mark asked curiously, "Did Song Yue tell you that?"

Shen Ling shrugged her shoulders, "just a hunch, backed by a couple of theories."

Mark stared at her for a couple of seconds and got back to her father as he doesn't want her to explain her theories, atleast not in front of her father.

As Shen Niu wondered why, Mark then explained that Song Yue isn't comfortable with both events being attended in the same place without much gap between them.

Hence, he decided to have a destination wedding with Song Yue at Eastern Sun but omitted the location, making them assume that it is Helios City.

Shen Niu felt weird and didn't know what to reply to that, thinking of this destination wedding, far away from their hometown.

He could understand if Mark wanted to marry at the Fujian island since it is legally his own property, but at Eastern Sun kingdom? That far away? Why?

The only reason he could think is because of the current situation at Western Yan and the Phoenix Empire.

Mark then further said that two-three months after the completion of his first marriage, they can proceed through engagement or marriage with Shen Ling as the King wishes.

Mark's assurance about his marriage to the princess brought a bit of relief and a boost of energy to King Shen Niu once again and the latter continued with his explanation about their schedule, "Anyway, once the Western Yan is formally declared as the independent kingdom, we will proceed with implementing this embassy system and make sure to propose this system to the other powers who will attend the ceremony.

Coming to yourself, for the next few days, Xiao Ling will be responsible for taking care of you and your companions. She will let you know everything you have to know about our kingdom and our royal affairs.

After that, I expect you to train the soldiers for a week regarding your firearms and vehicles as you have promised.

Then, you can go and tour around these airstrips and runways that you wanted. Whatever place you want, we will make the announcement but as we know, the sellers usually have ten weeks of time to register their items from the date of announcement. So, I arrangements.

Regarding the world auction, we still have to wait for the announcement but as we know, the sellers usually have ten weeks of time to register their items from the date of announcement. So, I guess we have plenty of time.

You can use this time as an opportunity to marry Lady Song within the next couple of months and then we can proceed with my daughter's engagement after the auction. It's just a suggestion. Not pressuring you by any means..."

"Hmm..." Mark thought about it, taking the matter rather seriously.

To be honest, he doesn't want to think about the marriage until he moved on from his revenge. He wanted it to be something like opening a new chapter of life.

For that to happen, he needed a civil war to start in the Phoenix Empire. To get the desired results, he estimated about 5-6 months of time.

But, this King Shen Niu was trying to rush his marriage with Song Yue so that he can get his daughter to wed him.

What should he do?

Chapter 437 Unleashing Ambitions and Mechanical Disappointments

After much thinking, Mark decided to rush his plans too.

First of all, he cannot keep Shang Jiao hostage for too long. He never knows if Lan Jingyi suddenly loses her patience.

Secondly, there is a high chance that things might get cool down if he gives too much time for Phoenix Empire to recover.

Before he left, he did hear of the announcement made by the Emperor. Mark assumed it might be because of his allegations but he didn't have any pity for his biological father anyway. In fact, he thought this is a perfect opportunity.

For the civil war to happen, Shang Zexi cannot win the race at all costs. But, he cannot lose by extreme either. The crown prince should feel like he has a strong chance.

As long as he loses by a tiny margin and Shang Wei ends up being a winner, Mark felt like he could support the crown prince in the shadows through funding and breaking up the military.

Once Shang Zexi emerged as a strong opposition, he will reveal the truth about the new Emperor Shang Wei. Neither the primitive-thinking ministers nor a proud person like Shang Zexi would ever accept an illegitimate child to sit on the throne.

As the hell breaks loose at the Southern Empire, Mark will rake in money while supplying weapons to both parties. He will have his revenge and money at the same time, like hitting two birds with one stone.

However, there's also another problem, which is the fact that Shang Zexi and Shang Wei are still brothers who grow up together. They might have rivalry but didn't have hatred against each other.

If they have strong hatred, then, Shang Zexi would have a strong motive to overthrow his brother even if he has to destroy his own Empire in the process.

But, what can spark such hatred? Mark wondered.

He had a few thoughts like staging an assassination attempt on the crown prince, abducting the crown prince's wife, creating rumors like the crown prince turned out to be impotent, etc...

He wants to have a strong emotion of hatred from the crown prince. After thinking for a bit, a familiar face came to Mark's mind.

A smile appeared on Mark's face as he thought, "Nie Rougang."

Nie Rougang is someone who is a strong player in politics and he was cherished by the crown prince too much. To save him, the proud Shang Zexi bowed his head before Mark in front of everyone without being ordered.

Mark decided to target the man who he didn't like either.

Seeing Mark deep in his thoughts and then have an evil smile made the father and daughter wonder what was going on in his mind. But, they remained patient until he was done with his thinking.

In the end, he apologized and then further said to King Shen Niu that he will keep his suggestion in mind when taking the decision.

After sending away both of them with an excuse that he need to take a light nap, Mark closed the door and lay on the bed as if he was sleeping.

But, in reality, he isn't.

He spoke to the system, "Open Mark's Factory."

Mark's factory

Level: 4

Available machines: Drill press (10), Welder (10), Milling machine (10), Lathe (10), Weighing and measuring equipment, Blender, Grain-forming machine, Curing machine, and Computer Numerical Control machine (CNC).

Available time: 240 minutes

Cooldown: 6 hours

Computer-Aided Design software (CAD)

Testing Ground

Analysis lv2

>> It was leveled up automatically when the system was upgraded and there was new equipment added for his next level of manufacturing.

He has ideas to make new guns but his eyes were set on something else.

Taking out a few destroyed robots and robot dogs on the floor, Mark flexed his fingers and looked at them in the way a kid looks at the toy section at the department store.

"Let's see how these robots are different from normal ones. How could they use ether energy as an alternate power source of electricity? We'll have our answer soon enough."

Mark's face brightly glowed as he dismantled them to pick up some important components.

Three and a half hours later;

Mark's spirit was seen engrossed in making a large-sized multi-headed robot dog using the spare parts from the destroyed ones and the machines available around him. He had a couple of built-in robots from the factory as assistants for more precision and faster.

Eventually, a 7-foot big large sized robot dog with three heads was built successfully. It was quite an achievement considering it has only been a little more than 200 minutes have passed.

Looking at it, Mark imagined the figure he took inspiration from and mumbled in a bit of disappointment, "That Cerberus looked menacing but this looked quite docile even with its size. And their eyes are also slightly small but then again, I didn't have the necessary equipment to make my own camera lens. I had to use what I have at the moment. Even to give it a zooming function, I had to buy 20x scopes and modify them so that they cover their eyes with a voice-activated function from me.

Anyway, let's test it and see the final result. If this prototype works, then, I can make better ones in the future. I can even add various weapons to it."

Taking it to the open area of the testing area within the factory realm, Mark then jumped onto his back and pressed his hand at the joint part where its three heads attached to its body.

There was a type B socket to plug in the adapter. But, Mark intends to test with the ether energy. He placed his hand over it and concentrated a lot, trying to pour as little ether energy as he could.

After all, a rank-5 robot consumes about 1000 ether particles worth of energy to run for a whole day.

He doesn't know its rank yet but he was confident that it won't exceed rank-5 as he didn't use stronger materials anyway and much of its body was also salvaged from rank-3 robot dogs and rank-3 battle robots.

Hence, he was wary about pouring the ether energy, not wanting to short-circuit it. Mark just wants to know whether it is working or not.

And just as his ether energy entered the prototype and reached its batteries, they instantly passed the current all over its circuits. The six eyes of the prototype glowed up in blue as if it came to life.

Woof Woof* Woof*

The three-headed robot dog let out powerful barks simultaneously, lighting up the eyes of Mark in excitement.

But, his happiness was only short-lived.

Before he even got down onto the ground and took a good look at his invention, he heard something like an explosion inside the dog and heavy smoke coming out of their mouths, and their heads were hung down.

"System, activate, Analysis lv2."

He analyzed the dog in a hurry. And the system only gave him a piece of bad news in response.

*Ding! The circuits were fried completely due to incorrect voltage input, component failure, and a power surge.

As if that wasn't enough, the sassy system went on adding a comment of its own.

*Ding! System score: 2.5. Don't put too much focus on the exterior appearance, host.

"Dammit..." Mark's face darkened.

Chapter 438 Unexpected Success and Dashed Expectations

Returning to the real world in disappointment, Mark took a nap to clear his head from having any sort of negative thoughts.

After taking a nap for an hour, he freshened himself with a shower and then dressed up for the grand banquet arranged by King Shen Niu in his welcome.

The courtiers, officials, top military personnel, and wealthy individuals all attended the banquet. Song Yue and Shen Ling joined the other ladies.

Mark felt the atmosphere is quite similar to the one he had at the Eastern Sun. There, he was a visiting guest. So, he was fine. But, here, he is going to be the son-in-law and he didn't like these things to stay that way.

Upon remembering Shen Ling's ambition behind this marriage with him, Mark felt like he should play more of an active role rather than standing behind her as the princess was going to overthrow the patriarchal system in the kingdom.

But then again, he doesn't want the matriarchy system as Shen Ling wanted either. After all, it won't improve the lives of women except for bringing additional chaos.

Shen Ling knows that and she has her own plans to deal with the consequences too. But, Mark also has his own plans for her. And he should make sure that she stays in the dark as long as possible.

The princess is smart enough to figure out his whole secret just by connecting the info she has with his past actions.

As her cooperation is too integral to his kingdom-building strategy and he doesn't want to use threats now that he chose the path of marriage, Mark felt like he should be very careful whenever reveals his plans to her.

Back to the present, after the Banquet was finished, Mark made a visit to the branch store to see how Chang Bo and Meng Tao were doing.

As neared the store, he saw a huge line in front of the entrance even though the sun in on everyone's heads.

Mark was astounded to see such popularity of his store's branch, which was officially opened only two days ago. Unless the royal family publicized extensively, it shouldn't be possible.

He couldn't help but think of his main branch which was out of business for more than a week now.

Curious about this incident, he tapped the shoulder of the person standing at the last of the line, "Excuse me..."

"Yes?" the guy turned around to look at Mark. He didn't recognize him and just asked, "May I help you with something?"

Mark pointed at the tower and asked, "Why there are so many people?"

"Oh, you must not have heard about it." The young man's face just glowed in excitement as he explained, "The food served over there is top-notch. Even normal egg-fried rice tastes like a delicacy. The best dish, Meng's Roasted Spirit Duck was just heavenly. You know the best part? It only costs 3 gold coins."

"Uhh... that is a weapon store, right?" Mark couldn't believe his ears properly. Why this guy is talking about food?

The stranger then nodded, "It is but, it's just the bottom and the first floor. On the second floor, there is a clothing store. On the third floor, there is an alchemy store. On the fourth floor, there's a Jianzi challenge, where there's a reward for the number of feather ball kicks. And there's also a quiz challenge to win the rewards. The fifth floor was occupied by the restaurant and the sixth-floor was restricted. It's probably where the manager lives. Who knows..."

After a brief pause, the stranger finished with a comment, "I should say these guys know how to do business. But then again, it is the King's son-in-law. You can't expect normal things from such a legendary figure."

If Mark would hear this comment at another time, he would feel happy to hear such praise from a stranger as a third party, but his mood isn't good at the moment. He felt like his trust has been betrayed by Chang Bo and Meng Tao.

He left the line and went to the backside of the tower, where there is another entrance. However, that can only be opened from the inside.

He took out the communication scroll and contacted Chang Bo. The latter was busy explaining the features of an AK-47 and AK-203 to a customer, and he dropped the conversation and rushed to the back exit, located in a small storage room behind the counter, as soon as he received the message.

The large stone door, which is a part of the tower, was slid to the side within no time.

Chang Bo greeted Mark in great excitement, "Lord Lu, when did you arrive here? I thought you were supposed to come to Lunaris City, five days later. Please come inside."

Mark stared at him with a look of frown on his face. He didn't respond for a while.

The welpire was startled for a moment when he saw his displeased boss. He asked, "Lord Lu, is something matter?"

Mark raised his head to look at the tower and replied, "I believe I told you to run a branch of Genesis Weapon store, not turn it into a recreational hub."

"Recreational hub?" Chang Bo never heard of such a word. Hence, he was confused a little bit but at least he got the gist of what Mark was trying to say.

He politely said, "We'll explain to you everything but please come inside."

But, Mark was stern and gave an order as he stepped inside, "I'll give you 60 seconds. Throw everyone out and drag Meng Tao's ass here."

"Even the ones who are eating?" Chang Bo became slightly worried by Mark's order. Since he was promoted as a manager, he began to think like one.

Mark gave him a cold gaze and answered, "Everyone, including any other staff member you have hired so far. Give whatever excuse you can give."

"Yes!" Chang Bo flinched at Mark's gaze and he quickly scurried away.

Mark didn't know what the welpire has told everyone, but within just 90 seconds of time, the entrance door was closed and only three people remained in the store.

Meng Tao and Chang Bo were standing beside each other in silence as Mark stared at them with clear displeasure written on his face.

"Chang Bo, explain yourself..." Mark opened his mouth as he sat down on the chair.

The teenager and the young adult gulped their saliva.

Chapter 439 A Menu of Transformation

Sometime later;

Meng Tao and Chang Bo were kneeling on the floor with Mark sitting on the chair and staring at them.

His anger couldn't be subsided no matter how much he tried to be calmer.

Chang Bo and Meng Tao defend themselves earlier by how it incredibly made the store popular and how they raked in earnings of about 754 gold coins in just a matter of two days.

If one considers the rewards they gave out in the form of guns and grenades and the cost of ingredients, the profits were still over 600 gold coins.

Mark scolded them for misusing their freedom to do whatever they want and he shouldn't have put a teenager a young adult to manage his store. He explained that he didn't lack money and that what he intends to do is to promote firearms.

Chang Bo once again defended his actions by arguing that his strategy has made them sell 285 gold coins worth of firearms and ammunition.

However, Mark wasn't convinced at all. He made the counter-argument that they didn't think of the store's reputation he built up so far. Because of their actions, now people would have a wrong impression of the store.

As Mark commented that he shouldn't have put immature boys like them as they have too many stupid ideas in their heads, Chang Bo felt wrong and he wanted to argue, but Meng Tao stopped him and forced him to kneel alongside him to apologize to their boss.

After much thinking, Mark then called out the young adult, "Meng Tao..."

"Yes?"

Mark gave an order, "Go and bring me all the dishes that you sell here. Don't make too much. I only wanted to taste them."

Meng Tao's face glowed up as he felt like their boss is giving him an opportunity to prove themselves.

"I'll return in a jiffy, boss." As Meng Tao rushed away to the stairs, Chang Bo looked hopeful at Mark.

Mark didn't spare a glance at Chang Bo and stayed silent. The welpire continued to kneel.

After a few minutes, Meng Tao returned and informed him that the food was ready.

Mark realized that this former heir of the Meng Clan probably made it in huge amounts in advance and stored it in a storage ring.

While storage rings will keep them fresh, the heat will be dissipated when the food entered that dimensional space. They have to be reheated after taking them out. This is probably what Meng Tao did. Or so, Mark thought as he went to the restaurant on the fifth floor.

Before he left, he didn't forget to inform Chang Bo to continue to kneel until he returns. Chang Bo obliged his order. Meng Tao could only pat his shoulder in sympathy and tried to cheer him up by saying that his food will improve their boss' mood.

As Meng Tao followed his boss, Chang Bo looked down at the floor. He almost felt like crying as he was mumbling, "I shouldn't have left his side when he gave me the offer. Life was so simple in Imperial City. Here, the ambition to earn more money has gone to my head and I became too greedy..."

Meanwhile, Mark sat at the table and Meng Tao served the dishes on small plates.

The moment Mark's eyes fell on the first dish, the Stir Fried Vegetables, his gaze changed a bit, "I see... so, these aren't made by him. Okay, let's see how good it will be." He picked up the chopsticks.

"Mmmm"

It was just stir-fried vegetables but Mark remembered the times he enjoyed the food made by Alina.

Seeing Mark's expression, Meng Tao's nervousness disappeared and he served the next set of dishes more confidently.

"Boss, this is steamed fish. The primary ingredient is the Dragon Fish (1-circle realm)."

"Boss, the eggs used in this fried rice belonged to Spirit Ostrich Queen (3-circle)."

"Boss, this is sweet and sour ribs, a delicacy from my hometown. The pork meat we used is of the Spirit Thunder Pig (4-circle)."

.

.

.

"And this is the highlight of our restaurant. It is Roasted Spirit Duck but my version. Well, I should say it is my mom's recipe. Please try it..."

Mark tasted 12 dishes and there was no dish that he could say was average. He liked everything and all of that earlier anger was gone.

If he doesn't put such talent to use, he would be an idiot. But, he didn't praise Meng Tao.

Instead, he said, "Bring out Qilin. I want to talk to it."

"Eh?" Meng Tao was slightly taken aback but he did it as he was asked. Soon, his eyes turned scarlet and his voice changed. "Lu Zhen..."

Mark looked at the youngster and smiled, "I know that it was you who did all these dishes and not your host. But, anyways, good job."

"Thanks but I only did the cooking, following Meng Tao's directions. Hence, he is the one worthy of your praise," replied the Qilin's spirit that was possessing Meng Tao.

Mark shrugged his shoulders, "He is a soldier, not a cook. I don't want to encourage him."

After a while;

Mark returned downstairs and Chang Bo prepared himself to apologize to him, promising him that he won't do such things again.

However, to his surprise, before he even gets to open his mouth, Mark ended his punishment and further gave him permission to continue with his theme.

Chang Bo couldn't help but gratefully look at Meng Tao.

And then Mark went on to modify their theme, a bit slightly.

"Since the space has been constricted, we will be selling only selective models. On the first floor, it will be non-ether firearms like Ak-47 and Ak-203, rocket launchers, explosives like C4, and grenades. The low-level ones like the pistol, revolvers, and semiautomatic handguns will be taken out and placed in the reward section on the fourth floor.

And the second floor's display shelves will be filled with ether firearms. I'll send you the required ones.

I also want you to visit the furniture store and custom order some designs like the battle tanks, robots, and others I give you later on.

As for the restaurant, raise the food prices and the quality of the ingredients. The food will be free for those who purchase firearms, although not unlimited. For example, if one buys a grenade worth 100 gold coins, they can eat dishes worth a maximum of 100 gold coins. However, takeaway is not available in that condition.

And there are too few games above. We have enough space to include two more events. You are using the sixth floor to live together and also the kitchen. Vacate it. I'll provide your accommodation elsewhere. We will also rent a kitchen outside.

Instead, we use the sixth floor as a bar, I mean, a pub. We fill with drinks of variety.

But, to access all of these additional floors, the customers would have to pay a subscription fee. It is like paying a fee per month to become an exclusive member. We'll do something about this during the next week.

Until the changes get implemented, the store will remain closed."

Meng Tao and Chang Bo looked at each other, trying their best to digest the changes instructed by their boss.

"Understood, Milord."

Chapter 440 Imperial Intrigues and Throne Trials

A week passed away in a blink of an eye;

During this time, Mark was busy implementing his plans for the store and it was going rather well.

He couldn't help but look forward to the day when it reopens.

In the meantime, he won a new type of battle tank from the lottery wheel to sell. The battle tank was based on Merkava-IV from Mark's past world.

With each unit costing just about 7500 gold coins, the main battle tank is something that can destroy any spirit warrior below the high-6-circle realm and is durable enough to block the attacks below the 6-circle realm. Perhaps, the only disadvantage it has, like any other battle tank, is the speed.

But then again, the smoothbore gun (120mm) of the battle tank could attack enemies from as far away as 3-4 km. So, it shouldn't be an issue.

Another disadvantage is that these are too heavy and it will be challenging to navigate in certain terrains, such as soft or uneven ground, forests, or urban areas. This can make them more vulnerable to ambushes and restrict their operational flexibility.

There is also high fuel consumption due to their large engines but since Mark planned on using his oil attribute to sell even the gasoline and all other types of fuel, it is cool.

Meanwhile, peace returned to Western Yan. Feng Wu's nephew and the only remaining heir of the past king, Feng Chun ascended to the throne at the tender age of 8.

Obviously, that means Feng Wu will be ruling in Feng Chun's place until the latter grew up into an adult.

The coronation ceremony went quite well with the attendance of the crown prince Shang Wei from the Phoenix Empire, King Shen Niu from Western Moon, King Ouyang Zen from Eastern Sun, respective envoys from the Dwarven Kingdom, Qilin Empire, and Kun Empire.

The Leon Empire even sent one of the princes with a general to the ceremony. Everyone formally acknowledged the ruling of the Feng Dynasty once again at Western Yan.

There, Shen Niu proposed the embassy system to fellow representatives. Only Ouyang Zen and Feng Chun gave their assent. The remaining could only take the proposal to their rulers.

As agreed on beforehand, the hostages were released by the Western Yan. The Ji family, General Hu, and his soldiers; everyone except for the experts of the Church of Nuwa were released.

Shang Wei also demanded Ouyang Zen to his release sister from captivity. However, Lan Jing replied that he cannot control the zheng. He merely was contracted to it.

According to the newspapers, the zheng was contracted to Ouyang Zen's Prime Minister, Lan Jing. And he abducted the daughter of the Emperor to force him into making peace with Feng Wu.

It is what Mark wanted to happen so that his name don't be attached to Western Yan as a key ally, and Lan Jing also cooperated with him, just like several other things, as he wanted to go back home with the heir of the Ancient Lan sect.

Shang Wei could only return empty-handed, disappointing his parents. Lan Jingyi swore in her heart that she brings back her child.

And within two days of the coronation ceremony, there was a huge battle in the Kunyu mountain range. Forests were destroyed, hills were razed to the ground, and several indigenous tribes living in the mountains without any contact with the outside world were wiped out, but Lan Jingyi couldn't achieve victory against the five-tailed scarlet leopard.

She lost her challenge and can no longer demand her daughter from the zheng. Hence, she can only try an emotional angle.

She would visit him daily and request for her daughter's release. As time passed, zheng's attachment to her and her late father affected him and made him softer.

Meanwhile, at the Imperial City, the trial for the imperial throne has started. About 5 contestants ended up in the race but unfortunately, Shang Wei didn't appear to be the favorite as the clan lords had expected.

From the imperial family, there are only two" Shang Wei (third prince), and Shang Zexi (crown prince).

The second prince isn't interested in the throne and he would have to leave very soon while the fourth prince prefers to stay in the shadows.

As for the remaining three, one is the Emperor's younger brother from a different mother. Shang Xing, aged 51, is the son of the Queen consort of Shang Fu's predecessor.

He and Shang Fu fought for the throne but the latter won with more support as he was not only the crown prince but also awakened the bloodline of the phoenix. Since then, the Grand Prince stayed out of politics.

Now that an opportunity came before him, Shang Xing jumped into the race.

The fourth contender, named Shang Hao, is a distant relative of the imperial family but still bears the surname as he was a direct descendant of Shang Fu's predecessor's predecessor's brother.

Shang Hao is currently working as the vice secretary of the Department of State Affairs. He isn't exactly what you call a key figure but still holds connections with the major noble clans.

And the final contender is surprisingly Shang Xiang's eldest son, Shang Jun. Aged only 27 years old, this young man was once touted as a genius who has the highest chance to become a supreme realm expert.

Born from Shang Xiang's concubine who hailed from Dragon Empire, Shang Jun was not only blessed with the phoenix bloodline but he also became a spirit warrior at the age of 5. When he was 8, he was already in the 2-circle realm.

However, in a suspicious incident in the past, when he and his mother were ambushed in the wild zone, his mother was killed along with the guards while one of them grabbed and escaped.

A timely save from a wandering spirit warrior saved his life but by that time, the kid has lost his cultivation. Since then, he was looked down on by family members and relatives. He faced a lot of bullying in the young but his father turned a blind eye.

After seven years, the 15-year-old coincidentally met the same wandering spirit warriors, who took him as a disciple. And together, they embarked on a journey.

No one knows where they have been or what Shang Jun was doing, but as he returned home a week ago after being away for 14 years, he somehow gained the cultivation and entered the 7-circle realm while still having the abilities given by the phoenix bloodline.