

## **Seller 441**

### Chapter 441 Triumph in the Dungeon: Shang Jun's Victorious Battle

Back to the competition for the throne, it's been four days since it began and the first round in this trial was about to end.

The first round was named the Trial of Monsters. For this round, Dungeon of Venclaw was selected.

The six-star dungeon in the Jin province was explored by Bai Xun and the imperial army made sure that no thirty-party adventurer stay in the place.

The mission was simple. The five contenders have to enter the dungeon and make a contract with a beast of at least 4-circle realm within a time limit and return.

Those who are unsuccessful will be eliminated from the competition right away. If there are multiple contenders who are successful, the one with the highest scores (depending on the type of contracted beast), will be receiving an advantage during the next trial.

The contenders will enter the place alone without any help. Shang Jun has the advantage due to his high cultivation while Shang Hao has the lowest chance.

Shang Xiang has contracted with a peak-5-circle-realm beast of fierce grade named Sylfire, a fire-breathing wolf.

Shang Zexi was also successful in contracting with a low-6-circle-realm beast but of normal grade, named the Armored Elephant.

Shang Wei surprised everyone by going for a 4-circle-realm beast. Some experts lauded him for his cleverness as he had come out by sitting on a horse. It was a lightning-element horse. Despite its low level, it can still run up at the speed of 250 km/hr.

However, there are some that criticized him too as he can fly with phoenix wings when he enters the six-circle realm. But, his supporters defended him by saying that an Emperor looks cooler riding a horse compared to flying with fiery wings.

Meanwhile, Shang Ho and Shang Jun were still inside.

After several failures, the 33-year-old was currently trying to tame a four-horned large Bison (peak-4-circle of fierce grade). He was hanging onto its back as it was aggressively jumping around like a bull, trying to shake him off its back.

Its energy levels slowly dipped down as time passed and Shang Ho's confidence grew up.

Unfortunately, for him, fate put Shang Jun in his path. Before he accomplished the task, the bison suddenly disappeared alongside every other creature in the region.

\*Thud\*

Shang Ho fell on his butt and was taken aback by the situation. "What the hell has happened?" He wondered before his eyes fell on a giant crab-like creature with a dark, black shell.

The beast was coming toward him and Shang Ho's face turned pale in fear. He quickly started running away in a random direction but the creature didn't chase after him. It went toward the portal, which could only be accessed by humans.

It entered the portal and exited the dungeon, where a huge campsite was built around with people waiting for the contenders.

Since it was the last day, Emperor Shang and the other princes have been paying attention to the dungeon in anticipation that Shang Jun gets disqualified.

As any father, he wants his children to become more successful than the others. If someone has to become the next emperor, it should be his child, not his brother's son.

Once Shang Jun becomes the Emperor, the descendants of Shang Fu will become a branch family while the former's family will become the imperial family. He knew his eldest son very well. Shang Zexi would definitely rebel if Shang Jun sits on the throne.

More than so, he was inwardly rooting for Shang Wei to succeed him. And Shang Jun's sudden entry also threatened that dream.

However, as they saw the giant crab, everyone's expression became serious.

"He managed to tame the beast king?" mumbled Shang Fu with a darkened expression. The fact that Shang Jun even managed to beat down the ego of a beast king only showcases his ability.

But, it isn't over yet.

Upon reaching the emperor's campsite, Shang Fu jumped down to the ground and walked toward him.

He questioned the supreme commander whether he passes the first trial. As Bai Xun nodded, he went on to ask whether the following trials have anything to do with the captured beast.

As the details of the following rounds were already announced, Bai Xun wondered whether there is something wrong with his long-haired prince and replied, "You can use contracted beasts in the battle."

The six-foot handsome hunk then smiled before leaving a comment, "Then, I'll put it to a better use."

Neither Bai Xun nor the people around him understood what he meant, but taking them by surprise once again, Shang Jun walked to the beast king and closed his eyes, "Release."

The phoenix flames burned the invisible chains between him and the beast king, freeing it from the contract.

The crab king, Venclaw frowned inwardly as it asked him in a deep voice similar to that of a human, "What are you doing? Why did you sever the bond?"

Shang Jun smiled as he summoned a semi-divine grade sword and poured his ether energy into it, "Sorry but your usefulness has ended. Perhaps, a dead one is more useful."

"How dare you?" The Crab king roared in anger, alerting the soldiers around and even the supreme commander.

As the crab king raised its sharp and raised pincers to attack its former contractor, the latter rushed forward with phoenix wings erupting from his back. However, the flames weren't scarlet like the second prince. The flame was blue.

Meanwhile, the broadsword in his hand grew 100 times bigger with blue flames enveloping the blade.

Jumping high, Shang Jun sliced at the crab's shell. The hard shell couldn't block his attack. It was perfectly cleaved into two.

Shang Jun then proceeded to cut down its head where its core is located. He placed the large head in his storage ring and left behind everything.

A few moments ago, it is a beast king, the overlord of the dungeon, but now, it is a huge corpse that couldn't even be cooked and eaten as it is risky to eat a dead crab.

"Okay, that was done." Maintaining a smile on his face, Shang Jun kept away the sword and clapped twice for his effort before bowing toward the corps, "Thank you for your contribution. Your sacrifice will be remembered."

Everyone: "..."

Chapter 442 Trial of the Scrolls: Unveiling the Path to Wisdom

With Shang Ho out of the race, only 4 remained.

The next day morning;

At the imperial court filled with officials, the four contenders stood beside each other as they stared at the Emperor sitting on the throne.

Shang Fu went on to say, "The second phase is the Trial of the Wisdom. As you have been informed earlier, this trial focuses on your wisdom."

He shifted his attention to the officials and continued, "In the upcoming trial, the contenders are presented with a series of intricate puzzles, riddles, and tests of intellect. They must unravel ancient scrolls, decipher cryptic symbols, and solve complex logic puzzles. The trial focuses on their strategic thinking, problem-solving skills, and ability to make wise and sound decisions under pressure."

He shifted his attention back to the contenders and spoke, "The trial of wisdom has seven stages. Each day, one stage. The time limit will be sunset."

For the first stage of this trial, the four of you will be locked in different chambers filled with ancient scrolls. The fragmented information about the Emperor's lineage and historical events is scattered around the chamber.

You just have to collect and piece together the scrolls, arranging them in the correct chronological order. You receive a score based on how much work you have completed. For this task, the maximum score also varies according to the difficulty.

Your scores will add up as you go through a different stage of the trial on each day.

By the end of the seventh day, the one with the least score will be eliminated.

As for which room each one will go to, it depends on your choice. As the highest-scored contender during the previous trial, Prince Shang Jun would get the first choice.

Here are the five scrolls."

The Emperor gave the scrolls to Bai Xun, who then passed them to Shang Jun.

He opened one.

It basically contained the difficulty level in the form of chess pieces, like a soldier (max: 50) is the weakest and easiest difficulty, followed by the royal knight (max: 100), Captain (max: 100), General (max: 150), and Supreme Commander (max: 300).

This time, Shang Jun didn't go for the best one, assuming that it will be too difficult. He took the general level difficulty.

After him, Shang Zexi's turn came. However, he too was reluctant to choose the hardest one. He chose Captain-level difficulty.

Shang Xiang followed the same way and chose the Royal Knight difficulty, leaving the third prince with the option of two extremes.

As Shang Wei was staring at each of them, the crown prince laughed inwardly. He was delighted to see his prime opponent will end up at a disadvantage whatever choice he makes.

In the end, the third prince gave one scroll back to the supreme commander and spoke, "I will take this."

Bai Xun opened it curiously and saw that he had the soldier-level difficulty one, meaning Shang Wei will be facing the most difficult one. He personally created this trial and knew how difficult it is going to be.

Still, as a person who swore an oath to neutrality, he cannot take any sides, and he acted as if he doesn't care.

"Contenders, I believe you must have already seen the location written in your scrolls. So, you have to find your way to it. There is no prohibition for assistance. You can take the help to find your way to your respective destinations," said the Emperor before adding, "Remember, all of you have time only until the sunset. Good luck."

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Lunaris City, Western Moon kingdom;

In the empty plot of land behind the barracks, soldiers were seen crouching on one of their knees while having ether pistols in their hands. Targets were placed about 20 meters away in the form of scarecrows.

Amidst them, there were also a couple of battle robots with rank-1 and rank-3 respectively.

Meanwhile, Mark was shouting like an officer, "Now, look at them. Don't you feel humiliated when these things could strike the target more precisely than you do? All of you can single-handedly beat them in close combat but you lose when in ranged battle. Why?

Is it because you weren't accustomed to the firearms? No.

That is an excuse for the civilian-level soldiers, not royal knights like you guys. If you couldn't handle small firearms like these, how could you handle big ones? You must have heard about the Phoenix Empire's recent war with our southern neighbor.

Before the supreme beings were involved, the Kunyu Royal Force guarded their land by not letting any foreigners into their land and even kept peace in the Gong City. How?

They were weak but they had the firearms. They mastered assault rifles and sniper rifles, which can strike targets far away that an arrow can reach.

I'm not telling you to depend on firearms. Just treat them as a tool to have an advantage over your enemies.

And how could you master the art of gun firing when you people are not trying hard enough? Put more concentration on the targets. Don't let your gaze move here and there. Don't let your hand shiver. You'll do fine. Now, again. Shoot. Go for the head."

As Mark was done with his store and learned about everything that there is about the kingdom (through Shen Ling) during the past week, he left the store in Chang Bo's hands and went to train the firearms unit comprised of 500 soldiers, in which 10 royal knights are included. He planned to make one of those royal knights a general for this division.

In the meantime, he also started a work called 'Project C'. C stands for Cerberus. He planned to create a mechanical Cerberus capable of moving on its own like a Battle Robot while equipped with several types of guns.

For now, he was using the spare parts of the destroyed robots, especially their batteries.

So far, he made four such prototypes but none of them worked so far. After a few trials and errors, he realized that the internal batteries appeared to be an issue.

The multiple batteries from different robots are the ones that make the problem.

Hence, Mark decided to take them out, and for the past three days, he was busy making an external battery as a power source. However, making it from scratch is something of an arduous task.

Hence, he dismantled the remaining batteries and merged them all to create a bigger one. Only one more shot is remaining and he doesn't want to get any failure.

The circuits and every other part went through multiple checks. And tonight will be the day he will assemble the prototype and go through testing.

Mark was excited about it and that excitement showed in today's training. He was slightly more aggressive as he trained the royal knights in handling the guns.

The evening arrived.

Back at Imperial City's imperial palace, everyone was waiting for the contenders to come out of the chambers; meanwhile, in Lunaris City's royal palace, Mark was looking forward to bedtime.

He was having tea with the King and talking about the power dynamics. All of a sudden, a holographic screen suddenly pops up in front of his eyes with a message from the system.

\*Ding! You received a message from Allen Spencer.

Message: Big Bro, Queen Consort Lan Jingyi is here and she intends to talk to you. It appeared she figured out the truth about Shang Jiao's abduction.

Mark's facial expression changed when he saw that. He rose to his feet.

"What happened?" asked the King of Western Moon.

Mark replied, "I need to leave to handle an urgent situation. Please excuse me."

Chapter 443 A Fractured Family: Lies, Hatred, and Despair

Using his teleportation skill, he traveled to Imperial City in an instant but it took time to return to the store.

Fortunately, the surveillance in the outer sector has reduced by a lot, or one should say it returned to usual, ever since Mark left the city for good.

So, Mark had it easy as he arrived at his destination, where Lan Jingyi was waiting upstairs living room.

Upon seeing him, she commented, "You really could teleport, huh."

"One of my many talents I suppose," Mark shrugged his shoulders and calmly sat down. Looking at her, he then asked, "So, what is it that Queen Consort Lan had to ask me that she visited me during the dusk and even threatened my sibling using false accusations?"

He planned to deny it until he cannot do so.

Lan Jingyi took a deep breath and replied in a serious tone, "Lan Ju has told me that you were the one who abducted Shang Jiao and you were also the mastermind behind this war. The gold dragon, the demon king from hell, and the zheng, all of them just followed your orders and played in the grand scheme of yours."

Mark didn't expect the zheng would reveal his plan. He decided to confront him but for the moment, he needed to handle this woman.

Since the ultimate defense of the store has been upgraded and even demigods are useless, Mark was confident that this biological mother of his was completely at his mercy.

Adding to the fact that she probably came to see him in secret, Mark planned to keep her as a prisoner in case the situation gets out of his hand.

Looking straight into her eyes without any fear, he leaned back and said, "If you think I did all those, then, you can inform your husband, the Emperor. Since I'm no longer a citizen of your empire, I won't attend the summoning of the imperial court but he can use his connections with Western Moon's King to confront me. Why come here?"

"You know why," replied Lan Jingyi.

"What do I know?" Mark responded with the question.

Lan Jingyi looked at the floor and took a deep breath before answering, "The fact that you are not the child of Lu Yimu and Yi Zexi. Emperor Shang is your true father and I'm your..."

"You are my biological mother," finished Mark in place of her. He actually didn't expect her to come out with the truth. But, her timing didn't make it any better. Why did it have to be when Shang Jiao was abducted?

Lan Jingyi nodded as she continued to look down at her feet, not intending to lock her eyes on her son, "Yeah."

Mark stared at her for a while. After ten seconds of silence, he asked slowly, "Since, when have you known the truth that I know it?"

"It's been a while," replied her mother. After a brief pause, she added, "Your sister told me about it after she accidentally heard you talking with Lan Jing."

Mark then asked, "Tell me honestly. If your daughter hasn't been abducted, this day would never come right?"

Lan Jingyi raised her head in shock, not expecting him to take it this way. She tried to defend herself, "No, it's not what you think. I wanted to tell you a lot of times but you have hatred for us in your heart. Trust me, I thought of revealing it to you after we become a little closer but the opportunity never came due to various events."

Mark's words hung heavily in the air as he let out a deep sigh, his voice filled with a somber tone. "Well, it may seem that time has slipped away, Queen Consort Lan," he uttered with a hint of resignation. "Your husband is a notorious skirt chaser who precedes him, and I haven't been honest in the imperial court either. As many as 46 illegitimate children were killed and that sin was on his head.

As for you, you are also a selfish individual who was willing to forsake the sect that nurtured you and even your own child for the pursuit of personal happiness. Regrettably, it appears that no matter what path you choose to redeem yourselves, forgiveness may remain elusive." The weight of his words reflected the depth of disappointment and skepticism in his heart.

"I don't believe I deserve forgiveness either, my son," Lan Jingyi replied with a heavy heart. "We cannot change the past, but we must find a way to create a better future. There must be something we can do to make amends and rebuild what has been broken." Her voice carried a mix of regret and determination as she looked into her son's eyes, hoping to convey her sincerity and willingness to make things right.

However, the darkness in Mark's heart made him blind to see her sincerity. He said, "In the future that I want to build, there is no place for you or your husband in my story, Queen Consort Lan. Nevertheless, you still gave birth to this body. Hence, I would thank you.

As for my so-called sister, don't worry. She is safe and sound. Unlike you, I don't do injustice to my family. I may have used her to keep you away from the war, but in return, I'm compensating for it by training her.

Rather than imprisonment, you can consider it like she was cultivating in seclusion. She will be returned very soon, but not before I see your husband's doom."

"Can you at least let me meet her once?" asked Lan Jingyi, dropping her plans of freeing her. "I promise you that I will just talk to her once and leave. Yu can trust me on that."

Mark, however, didn't intend to listen to her request too. He denied it right away, "Sorry but I don't trust you. You are someone who was even willing to see your husband bow his head in humiliation rather than lending your strength. In fact, with your strength, you wouldn't need to send me away in secret.

You wouldn't have worried about giving birth to a baby without the potential to become a Spirit Warrior. You could just stop your husband as he played around with the lives of the women. With you helping your husband, he wouldn't have depended on the major noble clans and perhaps be more righteous in his rule.

The princes and the nobles would probably be more afraid of committing crimes against commoners. Just a word from you would have been enough to make Li Zheng Kang and your dear mother-in-law stop their nefarious schemes of killing the innocents in the name of protecting your family's dignity.

A demigod in the imperial family of Phoenix will bring the foreigners to come here and settle. The Phoenix Empire would have been more prosperous. The Phoenix Empire would have gotten more allies.

Perhaps, I would have grown up as a prince and probably look up to you, trying to work hard as I follow the path of righteousness.

But, you chose to hide your strength and behaved as if you are a civilian. Why? It's because you are afraid that your husband won't love you when he realizes that you are a demigod that can destroy his whole empire on a whim. He would fear you.

To protect your secret, you continued to act for decades as a helpless queen who cannot do anything about the issues in the empire.

Now, tell me. Do you think you are trusted worthy?"

Chapter 444 The Lamp of Wishes: Allen's Surprising Request

Lan Jingyi has no answer for Mark's accusation and she didn't appear to be interested to defend herself too.

In the end, after a long silence, she rose to his feet and said, "I understand that you won't trust me no matter what kind of reason I give you. But, I will have to say these words whether you believe them or not, Shang Zen. It is true that I acted as a civilian and I ignored his actions as I was afraid of ruining my marriage.

However, I didn't abandon you. Rather, it is the opposite. If I didn't keep you away from me to change your fate, you would have passed away on your 25th birthday. I truly regretted it when I heard you were dead along with your parents.

I can't do anything about it but what I can do now is to tell you the complete truth when you are ready to hear it.

Before I leave, I assure you that your secret will be safe with me. But, I will not give up on searching for my daughter too."

She turned around and started walking away.

"Great statement. But, why do you think..." Mark wanted to say that he wouldn't allow her to leave as she pleased but taking him by surprise, Lan Jingyi turned into a blur and disappeared from his sight.

"What the..." Mark stood up on his feet at once, shocked by what he witnessed so far.

"System, shouldn't my store disable the powers of even demigods? How did she teleport away?" Mark fired at his system.

\*Ding! The host confirmed that he no longer considers the imperial city as home. Hence, the store is no longer considered as the main branch. The skills exclusive to the store were disabled.

"Why didn't you say it before?" Mark raised his voice, feeling like he had almost shot in his own foot just now. What would have happened if he had attacked Lan Jingyi and then realizes that her powers aren't sealed?

Of course, she might have forgiven him based on the fact that she is his mother and still has feelings of guilt. However, it will also affect his justification as he brings down the Shang Dynasty.

The frustration made him shout at the system, which coolly responded with a notification.

\*Ding! The system remembers informing the host about such a rule long ago. It isn't the fault of the system if the host forgets it.

Mark's face reddened further as frustration turned into embarrassment, "Fine, it's my fault. Since you disabled the skills, then, you could transfer it to the branch at Lunaris city."

\*Ding! Do you wish to switch your main branch from Imperial City to Lunaris City?

\*Ding! Note: the current store at Imperial City will turn into a branch and will replace the branch store at Lunaris City in the side quest. Note 2: The blueprint will be transferred to the new main branch.

There's a side quest that asked him to open branches in different cities and make a sale of 1000 weapons per each.

Shifting the main branch would be a good idea as the store at the imperial city has already attained fame enough to pull in the crowds.

However, the following note stated that the residence will also be shifted. It'll turn the six-story tower into a residential mansion. More than an upgrade, it could be a downgrade.

Hence, Mark threw away such an idea and planned to create a main store somewhere else.

Furthermore, he had another question in his mind he would have to solve.

Before Lan Jingyi left, she said that if she didn't abandon him, he would die on his 25th birthday.

Lu Zhen's parents always celebrated his birthday on the 4th day of the tenth month of the year. After their deaths, he found that it was false from a family friend with whom he had worked for ten years. Lu Zhen didn't care much about it as he felt his birthday no longer mattered.

Meanwhile, the third prince celebrates on 4th day of the seventh month of the year.

Mark knew that his soul was merged with Lu Zhen's soul on the same day as his real birthday. Hence, technically, Lu Zhen died on the day he turned 25.

Then, did Lan Jingyi foresee his death? How? Even after what she indirectly termed as a sacrifice for the greater good, it still happened.

"An irremovable curse? Or some kind of hereditary disease?" Mark didn't know what it is but he knew that the time will come again. He has to be patient for now.

Mark went into meditation for a while in order to clear his head of any messy thoughts.

As the sunset in the west, the darkness loomed over the empire. At the Imperial Palace, the Emperor announced the scores of the contenders. Shang Wei took the lead with almost perfect marks (285), followed by Shang Jun (150), then, Shang Xiang (100), and finally, Shang Zexi (90).

After their results were out, everyone was dismissed and told to wait for the next day.

Meanwhile, Mark was served dinner by Allen. As he was eating, the android kept on staring at him until the former questioned him.

"What is it, Allen? You look like you want to say something." Mark urged him to speak without any hesitation.

Allen took a couple of seconds and then asked, "I was just wondering what it feels like to love someone."

"Love?" Mark looked at him in wonder. "Why the sudden curiosity?" He asked.

"Lin Xue..." Allen was about to tell about his talk with Lin Xue but for some reason, he couldn't say it. He covered it up by saying, "Nothing, earlier Sister Xue was talking about you and Lady Song loving each other and caring for each other. I'm just curious and wanted to confirm something. Big Bro, tell me please..."

Allen didn't realize himself, but just now, he lied to the only one who he stays loyal.

As he urged Mark, the latter answered with a smile while remembering Song Yue, "It is actually tough to explain. But, if I had to simplify, when you love someone, you would have a strong emotional bond with the person. Just thinking about your love will bring a smile to your face. You would miss her greatly when you are alone.

When you are happy, you would want to share it with her first. When you are sad, she is the last person you would want to share it with. Even if you are the strongest person in the world, you would still feel vulnerable in her presence, and you enjoy such a feeling.

Everyone has their own way of expressing their love.

But, if you ask me, Song Yue is the light that filled the darkness in my heart. In her presence, I would forget about revenge and just feel like enjoying the present. If I had to make a choice between her and the rest of the world, at any given time, I wouldn't hesitate to burn the whole world."

"Does love has such power?" Allen asked innocently.

Mark smiled as he answered, "It's because you love someone with your heart. And the heart always has the power to suppress the logical reasoning of the brain."

"Heart, huh?" Allen mumbled in a low tone as he placed his hand on his own chest.

Mark continued with his dinner. He cut a large piece of steak and stuffed his mouth, enjoying the taste.

As he was busy chewing it, Allen suddenly spoke, "Big Bro, I want to become a human. Can you use the Lamp of Wishes to turn me into a human?"

\*Cough\* Cough\*

Mark swallowed at once due to the shock. For a couple of seconds, he suffocated with the food stuck in his throat. Allen hurriedly gave him the glass of water.

He hurriedly drank it and swallowed down the whole.

Placing it on the table, he looked at the android, "What did you say?"

## Chapter 445 Forbidden Love: The Decision to Become Human

A couple of minutes later;

An eerie silence filled in the room. Mark didn't know what to speak either. An android and a human loving each other? Perhaps, only in movies, he saw such weird things.

And then, Lin Xue knows the truth and breaks off their relationship?

For a moment, he felt like a side character and Allen was the main character of the story. It was quite cinematic.

But then again, this is reality. Such a taboo relationship isn't acceptable here. And that is why Allen wanted to become a human.

It wasn't as if he doesn't understand Allen's sincerity. He even confirmed with the system that it can create a physical body for Allen and transfer his core into the body.

The new body will not have any soul and will die when the core is destroyed. However, doing this would not only disconnect Allen and Mark but the latter even had to sacrifice the lamp of wishes as the cooldown timer will be ten years before using it again.

As a part of his explanation, he even promised to make a new body for Alina as long as they can gather the required materials.

But, it is a tough decision for Mark. On one hand, he wants to help out Allen's love. And on another hand, he doesn't want to take unnecessary risks.

As Mark was thinking about what decision he should take, Allen then further said,

"Big Bro, in my current situation, I'm not strong enough to guard you and neither could I help you in innovations as it would waste my skills. After turning into a human, I plan to turn into a weapon research specialist.

The knowledge I receive from the system so far will be enough for me to help you in setting up a research facility. In the meantime, we can study the physical body I left behind for our Project Android to create a perfect body for Alina. Until then, Alina can stay in the Cerberus (robotic version of Cerberus). Let me assist you in Project-C."

Mark thought for a bit. If it was someone else, perhaps, Mark would have thought about the pros and cons. However, Allen is someone special to him.

As he earlier mentioned, the heart has the power to control the logic of the brain when such special people are involved. Mark wanted to see Allen happier.

Taking a deep breath, Mark spoke softly, his voice filled with a mix of concern and determination. "Allen, I understand you. But, before taking the decision, I need to talk with Lin Xue. I want to see if she truly loves you as you described or if it is just your delusion."

Allen replied, "It might be a bit tough as she was emotionally unstable at the moment. However, I can share with you the recorded data of our last meeting."

"Okay, do it." Mark went on to watch the recording. Allen was quite uncomfortable while sharing the memory of that night, but if he wants the approval of his big bro, there was no way out of it.

Upon watching the whole clip, Mark could only let out a deep sigh and nodded slowly, "I see that she acted quite emotional for someone known to be cold and elusive. And she also seems to be deeply broken by your truth. Alright, I support your love. I will turn you into a human, Allen."

Allen's face glowed brightly in happiness and he kowtowed right away, expressing his thankfulness, "I'm grateful to have an owner like you, Big Bro. It is out of my calculations to see such a day."

Mark sighed again as he commented, "Ai... I didn't expect to see such a day either."

Sometime later;

"System, Open the blueprint section."

A series of blueprints appeared on the holographic screen. He needs to spend 800,000 credits to complete the side quest and acquire the Lamp of Wishes and the Staff of Blessing at the same time.

Hence, he decided to upgrade his store instead of spending it all on purchasing skills or items.

The current one stands at 25000 gold coins, somewhere in the middle. However, he had to spend a lot. So, he didn't look at anything else on the way and just scrolled and scrolled to the right until he entered the high-end section.

The blueprint goes all the way to a billion gold coins. Hence, he didn't go too far and just looked around the 4-10 million range.

In the end, he chose the one with a price of about 6.5 million gold coins, i.e. 1.3 million credits.

\*Ding! Upgrade the interior of the store, right now?"

"How long it will take for the upgrade?" Mark asked. The last time he upgraded the store, it took 3 hours.

\*Ding! The renovation will take 715 hours, i.e. 29 days and 19 hours.

"That long? Don't you think you are taking too much time?" Mark was slightly taken aback by the completion time. If such a building will take more than a month time, what if he chose the most expensive interior? Will it take years?

However, the system is always known to counter its host. Without any surprise, the system replied to him.

\*Ding! In your past life terms and calculating the price of gold during the time of the host's death, right now, the host put an order to build a 5 billion dollar palace with state-of-the-art facilities and still expecting it to be done in 24 hours or something?

Mark could feel like the system appears to be angry or annoyed. He ended the argument right away, "Fair enough. But, we won't proceed with the replacement right now. Put it on hold and drag the blueprint right to the front. I don't want to waste too much time with scrolling again."

\*Ding! Affirmed

Mark closed the window without proceeding with the purchase as he intended to sleep there for the night.

Allen was connected with Mark and he knew how his master will proceed with the purchase as well as the upgrade in the morning.

He couldn't help but become excited. And he wanted to tell this good news to Lin Xue.

Perhaps, Mark's latest briefing about love had an effect on him. Allen couldn't just stop smiling as he imagined the girl.

As midnight arrived, he left the store and made his way to the Lin Mansion.

Chapter 446 Return of Alina

Mark's Factory;

Mark's spirit entered his factory space and the assistant robots proceeded with assembling all the parts.

This time, the Robotic Cerberus was connected to a large external battery, which was fully powered.

The whole thing was brought to the testing space and Mark proceeded with the launch.

Mark land on its back to activate it. Just as he was about to switch it on, Mark took back his hand in nervousness.

"No, let's not risk this."

Mark remembered Allen's advice and wondered if he could integrate Alina's core into this robot by himself.

But, he doesn't want to risk getting it damaged either.

Hence, he consulted the system.

"System, can the core get damaged if something unexpected happens in this project?"

The system was always quick to reply.

\*Ding! Negative. The exterior of the core is made from adamantium alloy, which can resist the attack of even a demigod.

<nulli>"Hmm... then, this is safe, I guess..."

Mark brought the robot back to his lab and dismantled its upper body. A couple of hours later, with the help of assistant robots in the factory, he managed to build a cube-shaped battery compartment, somewhere below its joint neck.

As the life came to the six eyes of the Robotic Cerberus, instead of barking like it was +designed, the middle head spoke in a human speech, and surprisingly, that too, in a The connection to the external battery isn't removed as he inserted the glowing cube, taken from his inventory, into the battery compartment. Mark felt like the cube needed a jumpstart.

The rest of the body was reassembled and then brought back to the testing space once again.

Landing on its back, Mark took a deep breath and reached out to the switch. <nulli>"Please, let it work... please let it work..."

Filled with nervousness, Mark switched it on and then jumped onto the ground.

A tremendous amount of electrical power was released by the 500 Ah Battery and entered the robot. The glowing cube glowed more brightly, powering up everything in a couple of seconds.

As the life came to the six eyes of the Robotic Cerberus, instead of barking like it was designed, the middle head spoke in a human speech, and surprisingly, that too, in a female pitch he was familiar with, "Big Brother, I can move..."

It let out a scream of delight as it extended its head toward Mark. Not being able to stop smiling, the latter touched the head and spoke, "Welcome back, Alina."

He doesn't need to question the three-headed robot further to ascertain that she is his Alina. "Sorry for taking so long."

"I missed you," replied Alina without feeling any discomfort in the body of a robotic dog.

\*\*\*

Meanwhile, at Lin Wuying's Mansion;

Allen was sitting on the window as he was silently staring at the sleeping beauty.

Usually, this can be considered creepy, but the android has yet to understand such logic of privacy. He was just savoring the moment as he found her more beautiful, for some reason.

There was warmness in his core and he couldn't stop smiling but it is quite difficult to understand what this new type of feeling he was experiencing. Taking Mark's lessons as advice, the android felt like this is probably Love.

He doesn't want to disturb her sleep and neither does he want to leave. Hence, during the whole night, he just stared at her, until it was dawn.

By the time he returned to the store, Mark was found to be asleep, but he wasn't alone in the store.

There was a 7-foot big three-headed robot dog lying in the living room, just like a dog does as it sleeps. There are a few books spread around it. One of them is opened.

Upon his entry, it quickly woke up and looked at the android, "Allen..."

Allen scanned it for a second and exclaimed in surprise, "Alina? Did Big Bro manage to integrate your core with it? Wow, he is really a genius."

"Hmpf, of course. My 'Mark' is the trailblazer, crafting the weapons that will define the future," replied Alina filled with pride in her voice.

"Your Mark?" As Allen raised his eyebrow, Alina patted the floor with his right paw, "A figure of speech, Lover Boy. Accessed Mark's memories and saw that you want to become a human because of Lady Lin. You want to marry her, huh? I'm really proud of you, my elder brother. You get to bang the beauty. I almost once had sex with Mark but you interrupted in a timely manner. Back then, I didn't think much but now, it seemed like that kissing was a good experience."

Allen blushed in embarrassment before scolding her, "Hey, watch your language, will you."

"Grow up, bro. When you become a human, you'll be an adult. Hence, you should also behave like one. According to these books, once you were lovers, you could hold hands and embrace each other every once in a while, and could only have sex after you married. Or you visit a brothel if you want non-commitment sex.

It was said that people often go there to experience it so that they get to perform better with their spouses. There were quite an amount of techniques described in the fourth novel. Even the main protagonist, Li An went there with his troublesome buddies. After turning into a human, I think you should..."

"I believe big bro told you to stop reading those erotic novels," interrupted Mark as he was too embarrassed to hear her anymore. Furthermore, she wasn't in Android form. Such words coming from a robotic Cerberus appeared even weirder.

Alina let out a sigh and her robotic heads collapsed on the floor as she replied, "I was too bored."

"Well, it won't be long before we leave this place. So, you just have to wait for a bit." Allen reminded her about the renovation while thinking about his upcoming new transformation.

Soon, Mark woke up from his sleep, freshened up, and sat for breakfast.

Allen sat patiently as Mark was having the food. He, however, became restless as every second of waiting felt like an hour.

Once Mark was done, Allen could no longer wait and reminded him about the upgrade.

Alina couldn't help herself teasing him again as soon as she saw the opportunity, "our dear Allen couldn't wait to prove his manhood to his lover, eh."

Allen got irritated quickly, "Would you stop being so dirty, Alina! Ever since you were reborn in this robotic Cerberus, your speech is becoming uncontrollable."

"Ho! Our dear bridegroom is getting angry..." As Alina continued to tease her older brother, Mark stopped her, "Okay, that's enough. Let's have a serious discussion. Allen, sit down."

As the android took his seat, Mark looked straight into his eyes and said, "Mark, before taking this decision, you should remember one thing. Once you become a human, there's no coming back, not because there isn't a way or something. It is because you are taking a decision on your own and I don't want you to have regrets. Whatever it might be, you will have to stick with your decision. Understood?"

Allen nodded firmly.

"Good. Then, let's get this done."

Mark opened the blueprint section and proceeded with the upgrade.

\*Ding! 1.3 million Credits have been deducted. \*Ding! System expansion is about to start in 5 seconds.

\*Ding! You completed the side quest III and received Staff of Blessing and Lamp of Wishes as a reward.

\*Ding! You received a new side quest.

Chapter 447 Secret Ally for the Crown Prince: Mark's Role in the Trial

As the black-colored barrier enveloped the store, Mark and Allen get transported out of the store.

As for Alina, since she wasn't an android, she could be placed in the inventory. Hence, Mark stored her in one of his inventory slots before getting kicked out.

After coming out in the open, Mark didn't waste time in equipping the exo skeleton suit and flew away. Allen followed him from behind until they reach a remote location with nothing but wild trees and plants around.

"Open inventory."

From the inventory, he then took out an object that resembled a genie's lamp.

"Do I need to rub it or something?" He wondered.

\*Ding! You got it correctly.

Assuming that a familiar-looking genie will come out of the magical lamp, Mark rubbed it on its side, "Come out genie and grant my wishes."

However, only smoke came out. There is no genie inside the lamp. Instead, he just got a notification.

\*Ding! You used the lamp of wishes. The host may now state the wish. According to the wish (if it could be granted), the cooldown timer will change.

\*Warning: Please be careful when asking for the wish. The wrong choice of words might bring calamity to the host.

With his cheeks reddened in embarrassment, Mark didn't argue with the system and spoke out loud, "I wish for a healthy functioning human body for Allen's core to transfer into.

Now for the conditions. It should have the same appearance as his current self but include all parts of a healthy adult male. The system should transfer his core into his new human body and not take his android body that was left behind. All of his current abilities and rank should be retained by his new body."

\*Ding! Is that all? Once the wish was locked in, it cannot be changed.

"Hmm..." Mark thought, <nulli>"Since you are already giving me a wish, I might as well add powers. Nah, if I will become too greedy, the cooldown timer will become so high that it will be unusable anymore. Let's just add a simple thing."

He then said, "The new body shall possess the light attribute and remain the owner of Aries, the sword of light."

\*Ding! Locked in the wish?

"Proceed."

\*Ding! Please wait for a while. Calculating...

10 seconds later;

\*Ding! The wish shall be granted and has a cooldown timer of 12 years, 6 months, and 15 days.

\*Note: The host cannot change the wish and can only modify it.

"Proceed with the wish, System."

\*Ding! Proceeding with the wish.

Mark's forehead brightly glowed in the next second before shooting out a beam of golden energy toward Allen.

As the android was hit with it, he collapsed on the ground and his core was extracted by the system before dragging it into Mark's body.

\*Ding! The process has been started. Estimated time for completion: 176 days.

\*Ding! Trade Allen's android body for 20 million credits?

"No thanks..." Mark placed Allen's body in the inventory as he rejected the system's offer. However, strangely, the system didn't stop.

\*Ding! Trade Allen's android body for rank-6 android?

"A rank-6 android?" Mark felt slightly suspicious. Why would the system offer such a deal? Nevertheless, he wasn't interested in selling it.

"Nope." He rejected it again.

Little did he expect that the system didn't back down, it stayed persistent in acquiring the body.

\*Ding! Trade Allen's android body for rank-7 android?"

"A rank 7 android?"

It was then Mark felt too suspicious. As he remembered how the system attempted quite a few times on acquiring Allen, He couldn't help but ask, "What is Allen's specialty? Is there a secret in his body or something?"

\*Ding! Allen's body was augmented by the upgrade crystals.

"Nope, even before that, you were interested in retrieving Allen from me," Mark argued back. This time, he felt like the system is hiding something.

\*Ding! Allen's body is made of superior materials and is more precious than the rest.

"What kind of materials?" Mark asked.

But this time, there was no response from the system.

"Hmpf, I can find it out myself." Mark planned to research it anyways. Hence, he thought the system's silence shouldn't be a big deal.

Opening up a portal, he returned to Lunaris City and traveled to the royal palace by his vehicle.

\*\*\*

Roughly around a couple of hours later, at the Imperial palace, the four contenders were summoned to the imperial court just like the earlier day.

Emperor Shang then announced the second stage of the Trial. Once again, they were locked in private chambers filled with hundreds of scrolls according to their difficulty.

However, this round is about solving the riddles. The Contenders are presented with a series of riddles and brainteasers that test their problem-solving skills and lateral thinking. They must unravel the mysteries and provide correct answers within a time limit.

As the highest scorer of the previous trial, Shang Jun gets to choose once again. Even for the remaining 5 stages of the trial's second phase, he will be the first to choose too.

Once again, he chose the second most difficult one.

Shang Xiang also chose a safe route. However, the crown prince went with the toughest one, not intending to give an opportunity for his brother to get ahead of him in the race.

And he lost this gamble as he wasn't as smart and intelligent as Shang Wei. Once again, he ended up getting the lowest score.

defend their positions against opposing viewpoints.

In this round, a heavy competition occurred between Shang Wei and Shang Jun but The following day, they weren't locked anymore. Instead, a philosophical debate was conducted in front of the ministers and officials.

Contenders must engage in a lively debate on philosophical topics and ethical dilemmas. They must present logical arguments, demonstrate critical thinking, and defend their positions against opposing viewpoints.

In this round, a heavy competition occurred between Shang Wei and Shang Jun but the third prince eventually won the most score.

On Day 4, Contenders were faced with a simulated diplomatic scenario where they must negotiate and resolve conflicts between different factions or kingdoms. Their ability to navigate complex political situations, foster alliances, and find peaceful resolutions will be evaluated.

Here, Shang Jun excelled the most. Despite the fact that Emperor Shang is rooting for his children, he couldn't help but praise Shang Jun's diplomatic ways, although it was only in theory.

On Day 5, Contenders are presented with a strategic warfare scenario and must devise comprehensive battle plans to overcome challenges and achieve victory. They must demonstrate tactical acumen, resource management, and adaptability in their strategies.

Once again, Shang Jun excelled here.

On Day 6, Contenders were presented with a series of ethical dilemmas and must make difficult decisions that impact the well-being of the empire and its people. Their ability to weigh consequences, consider multiple perspectives, and make wise judgments will be scrutinized.

Shang Wei won this stage.

By the end of Day 6, Shang Wei was slightly leading with a score of 1245; Shang Jun was in second with a score of 1198; Shang Xiang was in third place with a score of 640 and Shang Zexi was in last place with a score of 610.

The officials, the ministers, and the public weren't interested in who will emerge as the first in this trial. They wanted to know who will be eliminated.

Only one last stage in the second trial remained and Shang Zexi wanted to make sure that he gets qualified for the next trial.

The final stage of this trial is a test for leadership. Contenders are given a group of individuals with varying skills and personalities and must lead them through a challenging task or obstacle. Their leadership qualities, including decision-making, communication, and motivation, will be assessed.

The three contenders arrived at the court to receive their helpers.

But, the fourth one never arrived even as the time crossed half past nine in the morning, bringing a frown to the Emperor. The servants couldn't find him in his allotted room either.

"Someone, go and fetch Shang Xiang, this instant," said the displeased Emperor.

Shang Wen, the second prince responded to it, "Your Majesty. I'll go and investigate the matter."

The crown prince, who seemed very pleased by the incident, stated his opinion, "Your Majesty, we cannot delay the trial, any longer. It's already been more than 30 minutes. Those who don't give value to the time of the imperial court don't deserve to be your successor. I suggest you disqualify him right away."

"Yes, Your Majesty" "I agree, Your Majesty" "The Crown Prince is right, Your Majesty"

The three ministers who are in Shang Zexi's camp chimed along so that their prince will be saved. Meanwhile, Shang Jun and Shang Wei glanced suspiciously at the crown prince, wondering whether he has something to do with it.

Chapter 448 A Unveiled: Trials, Rivalries, And Hidden Agendas

2 hours and 30 minutes later;

As the time reached noon, Shang Wen returned to the court with a piece of bad news that Shang Xiang, the Grand Prince is nowhere to be found.

Following the rules, Emperor Shang announced the disqualification of Shang Xiang and just ended the trial with Shang Wei as the winner. Everyone was dismissed and given a break for the rest of the day.

Shang Jun, Shang Wei, and Shang Zexi proceeded to the next trial, which is called the Trial of Strength.

This trial is quite straightforward.

They shall choose their teammates and fight Bai Xun in the arena in a 2v1 battle. The only condition is that the selected teammate must be someone who works for the military. Retired or active duty, it doesn't matter.

Shang Wei was leading in the previous trial. Hence, he got the opportunity to choose his teammate before the others.

Without any hesitation, he went for his brother. Shang Wen accepted it as he too was rooting for the third prince in his heart.

Shang Zexi cried fouted in his heart but he cannot do anything about it.

First of all, Shang Wei has the privilege.

Secondly, the relationship between him (crown prince) and the second prince isn't so great that the latter would work with him.

And then, Shang Jun surprised everyone by choosing General Hu, the one who was captured by Mark and released by Western Moon, as his teammate.

That leaves Shang Zexi with two generals and four vice generals to choose from the active-duty soldiers. The remaining ones are all in 5-circle or below realms despite their huge numbers.

As for the retired soldiers, they are either too old or suffering from a disability. No sane person would pick them for a battle.

As a result, Shang Zexi had to pick up General Yan, the one who commands the northern imperial army while staying in the imperial city.

They were given five days of preparations to increase their strength, improve teamwork, develop strategies, etc...

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Meanwhile, in the Western Moon kingdom;

"Okay, that's it for today. We'll resume the training tomorrow with explosives," said Mark to the royal knights. There's Song Yue and Xie Mei in the group too. The former was gleaming in excitement while the latter looked very depressed. As for Song Yun, he just stayed on the side as if he doesn't exist.

Soon, the four of them started returning to the palace.

On the way, Song Yue was chattering nonstop about how she has improved so greatly during the past few days. On the other hand, Xie Mei stayed silent as she was following them.

For the past couple of weeks, Mark spent most of his time training the soldiers.

Originally, for the following week, he planned to tour all over the kingdom to choose the right spots for airstrips and runways.

But, as he was stuck with the newly formed firearms division, his plans were postponed a bit.

Not wanting to just stay as a trainer all the time, he included Song Yue in his training so that he gets valuable time to spend with her. Xie Mei also joined them with an excuse of mastering the sniping rifle. Of course, there's also an underlying motivation of impressing the guy she is determined to marry.

But, the reality struck her quite hard.

As a person who devoted to archery since she was a child, it is tough for her to handle the guns despite her superior eyesight.

As if that wasn't bad enough, Song Yue's superior talent in handling the gun frustrated her even more.

In her eyes, this woman, who Mark loves, is an individual who cannot do cooking, house chores, fight, or even has the potential to reach high cultivation realms.

All Song Yue had is the beauty and gracefulness of a noble lady.

While there were no ill feelings between Song Yue and Xie Mei, the latter believes herself superior to the former in every way except for age and driving the unique vehicle.

When she was badly defeated by Song Yue in the art of firearms, she was shocked but then told herself that it is not the difference in talent. She thought that it is the difference in experience.

While she was depressed about losing, she was determined to surpass her as fast as possible.

The only problem was that she knew Mark wouldn't cooperate to fulfill her ambitions.

Hence, she decided to opt for a different method.

Upon reaching the royal palace, she didn't talk much and returned to her room with an excuse of showering.

Mark and Song Yue didn't pay much attention to her as they were busy chatting about their wedding plans.

Song Yue was talking about consulting the fortune teller recommended by Princess Shen Ling but Mark was skeptical about such things.

He doesn't want to say no but doesn't want to listen to the fortune teller or his pieces of advice either. Hence, he decided to make a personal visit to the fortune teller before their official visit.

Time passed away and midnight arrived.

Mark sat on his bed and closed his eyes. He concentrated on establishing a connection with one of the ancient beasts on his private island.

Since the distance isn't that high, the two-way telepathic communication was set up easily.

"How is our new hostage doing? Any resistance?"

"Doesn't matter. Just don't kill him. That's all. Break his legs and heal them again and again if it is necessary."

"Is Shang Jiao going to break through very soon?"

"Oh, Yong volunteered to spar her for today? That's new."

"Okay, what about your progress?"

"You all need to make the breakthrough to 7-circle within the next five days even if you had to eat every spirit beast living in the ocean. It will be tough to keep three of them there if you couldn't do it."

"I know that the four of you could work together to cast a grand barrier over the island but still, you have to be careful. You cannot underestimate anyone with a strong bloodline like Blizzard Pegasus or Phoenix."

"Just a few months of wait; you all will find a new home that you like. Until then, please be patient."

"Okay, I need to sleep. I'm severing the connection."

Once he was done conversing with the leader of his four mythical beasts, Xuanwu, the Black tortoise, he lay down on the bed and took a nap for a couple of minutes before deciding to enter the factory.

Chapter 449 Unleashing Song: The Birth Of A Formidable Missile

In the factory, the robotic Cerberus (Alina) was seen lying on the floor and sleeping.

Alina opened her eyes at once as she sensed her master's presence.

"Big Brother..." She greeted him by jumping onto him like a real puppy. Mark hurriedly dodged and scolded her, "Hey, do you want to crush me or something?"

"Oops!" Alina apologized, although her tone suggested that she was trying to act silly, not a heartfelt one.

"Forget it. Follow me." Mark didn't care about it and just walked to the table while Alina followed him from behind. He smiled as he looked at the parts spread all over the long table, "let's finish this up..."

Half an hour later;

They have what seemed like a 2-story building-sized missile, which is currently incomplete. "Now, for the warhead..."

Mark didn't have any technology to create them from scratch. Hence, he used the loophole and dismantled the nuclear Brahmos missile he purchased to integrate with Gripen Aircraft through some modifications.

He used his 9.6 points of strength to take out the 300kg spherical warhead from the Brahmos missile and inserted it in the nuclear version of his.

Another 20 minutes later;

An 8.6 meters missile was finally completed. Rubbing his palms in excitement, Mark mumbled, "Now, only testing it remained."

It was then Alina reminded him, "This missile is based on the Brahmos missile itself. Hence, this can only be fired by that one specific Gripen Aircraft you have modified for the Brahmos missile during the past week. But, you still don't know how to fly and Allen isn't available for the moment. What will you do about it?"

Mark smiled in response, "I don't plan on firing it from the aircraft."

"Eh?" Alina was taken aback for a second. Unlike in the past, she isn't connected to his mind and doesn't know what her master was thinking. Hence, she can only analyze it through logic.

Mark first transferred the missile and Alina to the testing place with a thought in his mind. He then opened the inventory to take out what seemed like a truck with 12 wheels. But, it has four launching tubes in the back and other machinery.

"I purchased this specifically for Brahmos missile as I thought it is best to have a land-based launcher as those LARS systems underperformed in the recent war. It only cost me 300,000 credits to unlock this and each unit only cost 20,000 gold coins to purchase."

As Mark explained his strategy, Alina argued, "But, I didn't see you modify it in any way. The new missile might have been inspired by Brahmos but it is still a different one with different sets of mechanisms. On the other hand, this Mobile autonomous launcher (MAL) is specifically designed for Brahmos. As if that wasn't troubling enough, you inserted the warhead. For a missile head, there is no need for a nuclear warhead, you know. I worry about system failure or worse, an accidental explosion during the launch."

Mark smiled while waving his hand, "Relax. With luck on our side, there should be no fear of failure."

A few days ago, during his weekly lottery wheel spinning, he won the mystery box. It has neither powerful items nor skills.

Instead, he was given a choice to choose one reward between the two. One is a +1 stat card that can take any stat one realm above as long as it doesn't cross 10 points. It could even be applied to others.

The other choice is a +2 luck Card, which raises his luck points permanently. With the additional passive points from the ring of luck, he had now 9 points. He doesn't even need to absorb it from others to become a lucky person.

Hence, everything is just going in his way lately. Even abducting Shang Xiang from the imperial palace became as easy as strolling in a park. And Lan Jingyi also appeared to be ignoring it.

Back to the present, putting his hopes on his own luck points, Mark inserted the missile into the launching tube using a two-step-transportation method, i.e. first transporting the missile to his inventory, and then equipping it in the launcher. After all, he cannot just carry a missile with over 2800kg of weight. Maybe, he could if he practices enough, but for the moment, he opted for this smart method.

The launcher provided by the system has the control system right in the driver's chamber just like with the tanks. It made his job a lot easier.

Mark sat inside and operated the vehicle. The launching tubes slowly rose toward the sky.

"On the count of 5, 4, 3, 2, 1... Go."

Mark pressed the big red button that was seen beside the map screen with an x mark on a specific spot.

At once, the missile was launched high into the air before changing its direction horizontally. The parts of its outer shell were coming off as it zoomed into the air like lightning.

For the next four minutes, there was nothing.

Mark and Alina waited patiently as this was in his calculations.

On the 5th minute, he received a notification from the system.

\*Ding! The missile test has been successful. It has hit a distance of more than 100 km. You have successfully completed the side quest. You unlocked all types of warheads in the gallery.

\*Ding! Would you like to register the missile?

"Yes."

\*Ding! Name the missile.

"Well, let's call it Song."

\*Ding! Missile Song was added to the system's data.

\*Ding! You received 100,000 credits as a one-time payment as you used the system's owned warhead.

Missile Song

Length: 8.62 meters

Diameter: 0.67 meters

Weight: 2627 kg (without warhead)

Range: ~316 km (without warhead)

Speed: Supersonic (approximately Mach 2.9)

Warhead: 390 kg

Yield: 42 Kilotons

The energy released at the point of impact: 175 Terajoules (equivalent stats: ~11.1)

Propulsion: Twin-stage solid propellant booster followed by a liquid ramjet sustainer engine

Guidance System: Inertial Navigation System (INS) combined with satellite navigation (GPS) and an onboard active radar seeker for terminal guidance

Warhead: Various warhead options are available, including high-explosive, submunition, and nuclear variants (weight and yield depend on the specific warhead)

Launch Platform: Can be launched from land-based mobile autonomous launchers (MAL), naval vessels, and aircraft

Operational Capability: It can engage both land and sea targets, making it a versatile missile system.

Price: 5000 gold coins to 15,000 gold coins (depending on warhead)

System's Score: 8.7

Comment: Despite its different mechanisms, this can be considered as a variant of the Brahmos missile, nevertheless, a well-done job, host.

"The fuck... 11? Just 42 KT yield of TNT can kill the immortals as long as they were hit directly?" As Mark was shocked to see the result, suddenly, he remembered something he should have remembered a long time ago, when he got the Mark 14 nuclear bomb or acquired the anti-matter attribute.

"The energy conversion. How did I forget such a simple thing? The actual energy released from a nuclear detonation is typically a fraction of the total energy contained in the nuclear material.

Judging by the calculations, it seems to be 100% instead of the usual 5-40%. I think I need to study this lot more to understand how the system managed to do it.

But then again, there is also something I learned. 6.9 MT yield can kill Saints while a mere 40KT yield can destroy the immortals.

If I remember correctly, I killed a peak-rank-8 with the power of a normal lightning strike that has about 1 billion joules of energy.

Hmm, I guess, I might need 100 gigajoules-1 terajoules of energy to take out supreme realm experts. And about 10 terajoules to 100 terajoules to take out demigods.

Going this way, the immortals (11-circle) would need about 100 terajoules to 1 petajoule of energy to get wiped out.

For the Saints, it might be stretched from 10 petajoules to all the way to an exajoule. Ugh... if I go at such length... Mark, you are going too far again. Just stay in the present.

We have Warhead with us. Let's see what kind of them I can buy."

He opened the Gallery and scrolled until he found it in the form of a sphere.

Warhead

Grade: N/A

Description: An explosive or destructive component of a missile, rocket, or other projectile. The host may decide its shape and mass according to needs.

Price: Varies.

He clicked on purchase to test its price range.

\*Ding! Please select its type: High Explosive (HE), Fragmentation Warhead, Shaped Charge Warhead, Incendiary Warhead, Cluster Munition Warhead, Chemical Warhead, Nuclear Warhead, and Anti-matter Warhead.

"Oh, there's antimatter warhead too. I guess it is added because I purchased the attribute. So cool! What are we waiting for..."

Chapter 450 The Anti-Matter Warhead

\*Ding! You selected Anti-matter Warhead.

\*Ding! Please type the yield you desired in grams.

"Hmm, let's go with the base..." Mark wrote 1, which should be equivalent to that of a 21.5 KT yield, enough to take out average demigods with ease.

But, the demanded price is far higher than an equivalent yield from a nuclear warhead.

A nuclear warhead of such magnitude costs about 10,000 gold coins but the anti-matter warhead is 10 times higher. It is around 100,000 gold coins per warhead that only has 1 gm of antimatter.

For 1 kg of antimatter warhead, the price spiked up as high as 100 million gold coins.

It is not just because of the attribute. One should consider the costs of the high explosives and casings, neutron reflectors and tamper materials, safety and stabilization features, etc...

Rather than depending on the system to manufacture these, Mark felt like he should just try to master the attribute and make his own. It is not like he doesn't know how to create antimatter explosives.

Mark was confident about making them in the future, but for now, he purchased 9 warheads with 10gm antimatter, each worth about 1 million gold coins, and 10 warheads with 1 gm antimatter, each worth about 100,000 gold coins.

As a result, his wealth was further reduced by 2 million credits, leaving his net worth with only about 1.3 million credits and 11 million gold coins.

It will still make him the richest individual in the Western Moon kingdom though.

Usually, he would be happy to test them but the high costs made him rethink it and just stored them in the inventory.

Returning to the real world, he then slept for the rest of the night.

The next day at dawn, Mark made his way to the training grounds. By sharp 6, the soldiers and everyone arrived. Song Yue ran late a little bit and arrived 15-20 minutes later but she was alone.

She informed Mark that Xie Mei and her griffin are missing.

Mark didn't place too much attention to it and replied that she probably had gone sightseeing as she told them during the earlier dinner.

Song Yue thought it might be the case and focused on the training.

Little did either of them know that the teenage girl had actually been standing in front of the store since dawn.

She patiently waited for at least an hour before finally getting to see Meng Tao and Chang Bo. Thankfully for her, there were also no people around as the opening hours start at 9.

They both recognized her and were quite surprised. Following them inside, she took a seat.

"What is it, Lady Xie?" asked Chang Bo.

Xie Mei looked at Meng Tao and replied, "Actually, I came for him."

"Me?" Meng Tao was taken aback. This is only the second time he was seeing her. Or maybe, the third time...

As Chang Bo was about to leave the two of them to talk in private, Xie Mei stopped him and requested him to keep this meeting a secret from their boss.

As both of them nodded and Chang Bo left the room, Xie Mei then said, "Mr. Meng, I want you to train me."

"Eh? Train you?" Meng Tao was confused once again. "You are a 6-circle-realm Spirit Warrior." He reminded her that he was weaker than her.

Xie Mei shook her head with a smile, "I'm not talking in the traditional sense."

"Then, do you mean cooking?" He asked.

Xie Mei shook her head once again and this time, she became direct to clear his confusion, "I'm talking about firearms. I heard Lu Zhen once mentioned that you have the best skills in handling firearms after him and Allen. I vaguely remember watching your battle in the Dragon Warrior tournament. You do certainly have the skills despite the fact that you are self-trained."

"Thank you for the praise, Ms. Xie but..." As Meng Tao appeared to be like rejecting her request, the latter quickly interrupted with an offer, "10 ether crystals of high quality for four weeks of training. Deal?"

"High quality?" Meng Tao was tempted by the offer as each of them will be sold for at least 1000 gold coins in the market and that too, when available. If he sells all of them as a package in the black market, he could fetch 20,000 gold coins with ease. That's an amount even his clan would struggle to pay someone.

But, the only problem is the time. How could he afford such time to spend on her training when he has a job to do? Not to mention, his boss (Mark) will be displeased if he knew about this.

Seeing the guy still thinking about it, Xie Mei pushed it further by saying, "I won't take all of your time. Just one hour before dawn and one hour after dusk. Two hours per day. Please help me..."

Meng Tao took a few seconds and nodded, "Okay."

"Great, pleasure to be working with you, teacher." Xie Mei smiled as she bowed to him.

Meng Tao awkwardly smiled as he waved his hands, "Please don't do that... Treat me more like a training partner or a mentor."

"Alright."

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Sector 3, Bloodhill Forest;

In an Ether mine secretly located within sector 3 where rank-7 beasts like the werewolves roam around, the Necromancer King was busy absorbing the ether energy from the crystals around him and simultaneously refining it.

His cultivation has grown from the elementary stage of the supreme realm to the peak stage. However, no matter what he does, he couldn't just break through to the demigod realm for some reason. It was as if an invincible wall that is blocking his progress.

Eventually, the whole mine was dried up but still, he has to see the success.

The Necromancer King got frustrated. "Why? Why couldn't I just make a breakthrough? I guess the quality of the mine is the problem. I need to look at a better one."

As he was prepared to leave the place, a voice was heard in the surroundings, "It wasn't a problem of the quality. Your method itself is wrong, Mr. Xia."

The Necromancer King furrowed his brows and looked around. He saw no one and shouted, "Who is it? Come out?"

A figure materialized. He spoke with a smile, "Hello, I'm the current leader of the Church of Doom and I'm here to help you on behalf of Lord Yujin."

"Church of Doom?" The Necromancer King's frown deepened. "You are a successor to that bag of bones, Long Yujin?"