

Seller 541

Chapter 541: Eight months later

Eight months went by in the blink of an eye.

Several things happened in this period of time.

Mark and Song Yue officially became husband and wife; a couple of months later, he was engaged to Princess Shen Ling shortly after Song Yue became pregnant. However, their marriage was kept on hold for the moment because of no auspicious dates available for the moment, due to low compatibility between their fortunes.

Due to the attack from more than half a year ago, both of the ceremonies were conducted in a bit of a low-key manner, only inviting relatives and friends to the event.

In the meantime, the rebuilding of the Imperial City of Phoenix, which was renamed as Dawn City, representing its rebirth, has been underway. It's a large project Shang Wei, the new ruler of the Northern Phoenix Empire, promised the people to finish it within five years during his official ceremony.

Presently, there's not much to see in this ghost city except for a hundred-foot large monument constructed in the middle of the city in remembrance of the citizens who lost their lives in Shang Jun's imperial massacre incident. Yup, that was the official name etched into the history books.

To rebuild the city and also manage the empire, the Northern Phoenix Empire needed hefty funds.

Hence, Shang Wei had to join the United Celestial Dominion, an alliance comprised of three independent kingdoms, i.e. the Western Yan Kingdom, the Western Moon Kingdom, and the Eastern Sun Kingdom, two empires, namely, the Northern Phoenix Empire and the Southern Phoenix Empire.

Unlike the usual alliance between empires, this alliance was slightly different. Here, there will be a higher body called the Genesis Cabinet that oversees the affairs of the alliance.

Each member had to pay 40% of their overall tax to Genesis Cabinet, which then used this money for the states that weren't doing financially great or in need of loans. The taxes were also used to maintain Fu Sheng's military army headed by Eol, who had his soul transferred to the body of the demigod after the latter's demise.

Of course, its functions were limited to only these things.

There are other things the cabinet is also responsible for, such as overseeing financial regulations and economic policies of the states, enforcing military law in case of the sudden demise of the ruler, acting as a mediator between two states in case of negotiations, representing their alliance on the world stage, creating embassies and consulates for seamless traveling between the states so that the civilians wouldn't have to worry about being questioned by the authorities, etc...

While the Genesis Cabinet was headed by Mark, he alone doesn't possess the power to make the decisions. There are two permanent representatives appointed by every member to act as the mediator between the ruling state and the cabinet.

Of course, that doesn't stop Mark from implementing a policy. He possesses the power of veto he could use against the wishes of the representatives.

Now, where is the Headquarters of this cabinet located?

Originally, the Bloodhill forest was proposed.

A large area in sector 9, the outermost region of the forest, was stated to be cleared to create a neutral region for the cabinet, its army, and other buildings.

However, after Leon Empire lodged a protest against this move as the forest could not be touched according to the agreement made between Leon Empire and Phoenix Empire, Mark withdrew the idea.

After marrying Song Yue, he put away his hatred for his biological family and also forgave others for their past deeds against him or his friends.

While he still intended to uphold his promises, such as returning to the Ancient Lan Clan with Lan Jing and reviving the Lan Sect on Mt. Lan once again with the Zheng, for now, Mark decided to stay peaceful with his family for a few years. As a result, for now, the cabinet's building is located in the heart of Lunaris City.

While the cabinet seemed all-powerful, it also had its own counterpart. Mark created it so that these ruling dynasties wouldn't feel like they were being controlled by him.

Just like its name, the Council of Kings is a round table conference where all the ruling kings/emperors of respective states in alliance meet in person and discuss other affairs.

The Council of Kings has the power to overrule the decision taken by the cabinet. They have the power to add new members to the alliance too and are even given the power to replace Mark with someone else as the new Chancellor.

But, to challenge Mark's veto, they need atleast four out of five votes against the resolution while challenging the cabinet's resolution would need four of five votes not in favor of the resolution. The abstain from voting plays a major role here. This is usually discussed in either monthly meetings or emergency meetings.

One such emergency council meeting was currently going on in the city of Imperial city of Southern Phoenix located in southern Yuan Province, with Mark overseeing it as the Chancellor of the cabinet.

Shang Zexi put forth the scroll on the table as he looked at Mark in a bit of anger, "Look, Chancellor Lu, this resolution passed by the Cabinet is not acceptable at all. Just a while ago, we paid our quarterly tax and on

top of that, you are asking us to contribute 2 million gold coins for the sake of rebuilding Emperor Shang Wei's capital city."

Due to Mark's identity as his half-brother and his chosen path of nonviolence and compromising attitude in negotiations for the past few months, Shang Zexi took him more ease lately and didn't hesitate to voice his thoughts, unlike in the past.

Mark wanted to beat the hell out of him right away but he swallowed up his emotions and let out his business smile as he replied, "You see, Emperor Shang Zexi, try to understand. The 2 million gold coins you contributed were not going to be a gift or something. It is a loan.

Haven't we promised that we will first reduce the annual interest on it from your quarterly tax payment in the future? Not to mention, it is not like spending that money will bring huge economic problems to your Empire. Why not help out your brother, instead of wasting it by storing it in the treasury?"

As Shang Zexi went red-faced for a second and was about to say something bad, Mark hurriedly continued, "See, if you don't want to contribute, it is fine. I will put those 2 million from my pocket and give it to him as a loan. But, you won't benefit from this.

A significant contribution from you might give you high returns when the Northern Phoenix City's construction is finished." He glanced at the other three and added, "Leon Empire is interested in the project and it won't definitely be in our interests to let them in. Think about it once."

At once, Shang Zexi rested his elbows on the table as he leaned forward and started thinking deeply.

After the partition of the Phoenix Empire, Shang Zexi put forth his allies to rapidly dig out natural resources like ether ores; precious metals like gold, silver, copper, tungsten, iron, etc...; gems like diamonds; cutting down forests for timber; increasing tea plantations in some hilly regions; extracting natural dyes from the plants, minerals, and insects; capturing marine beasts from the ocean to extract meat from them; all of these are then exported to foreign Empires as raw materials.

Chapter 542: The Council of Kings

As a result, the southern Shang Dynasty's ruling family and nobles managed to amass enough wealth, cities became prosperous, the inflow of merchants increased rapidly, and businessmen were putting up their shops. Unfortunately, the majority of its common citizens who worked as laborers or assistants for weekly or monthly wages remained poor.

On the other hand, Shang Wei protected natural resources and instead encouraged agriculture and service industry in his empire. His vision was different from

Inns, teahouses, and taverns that provide food, lodging, and entertainment for adventurers and locals were developed in almost every large city and town.

He provided more benefits to skilled artisans and craftsmen, traditional healers, potion masters, scholars, teachers, musicians, storytellers, actors, messengers, couriers, etc...

While corruption and wealth inequality were a problem here too, the common citizens still looked happier under Shang Wei's administration.

The jobs Shang Wei encouraged everyone were something that even the ones without any ether energy could make a living out of it.

Not to mention, the education policy of Shang Wei, which offers free education to everyone in state-owned institutions as long as their household is registered with the District Magistrate, was something that turned out to be a masterful move and attracted thousands of families from all over the continent, over the past few months.

Shang Zexi was confident that Shang Wei's path wouldn't be as successful as his path, and over time, the difference in their prosperity would only widen further.

In order to make sure that he remains a winner, Shang Zexi played his move.

Raising his head to look at his brother instead of Mark, he raised three fingers, "Not two million. I was willing to contribute up to 3 million gold coins on my part, but not through the cabinet. I want a state-to-state loan transaction, but will charge the usual 12% annual rate of interest."

Taking everyone else by surprise, including Mark who didn't expect this guy to make such a move, Shang Zexi further said, "Brother Wei was rebuilding the Capital city to honor our forefathers. I respect it but I'm currently the Emperor of Southern Phoenix and I have to think in the best interests of my people.

As long as Brother Wei agrees to pay me 1% monthly interest on time, meaning 30,000 gold coins, I'm ready to lend a hand. Hence, I reject the resolution."

After he put forth his proposal and rejected the cabinet's order, he leaned back to the chair and observed the others who were slightly influenced by his words.

After all, it wasn't just Shang Zexi who received such an order. The others are also ordered to contribute according to their wealth, i.e. Western Yan – 500,000 gold coins, Western Moon – 1.5 million gold coins, and Eastern Sun – 5 million gold coins.

As long as they follow Shang Zexi's path, Shang Wei would have to pay hefty monthly interests, which eventually hinder his empire's growth.

Mark was also aware of it.

He was about to speak something, but his brother from another mother beat him to it. Folding his hands calmly, Shang Wei surprised the others with a nod, "I accept your deal." His voice was calm and there wasn't even a little bit of hesitation on his face. "I'm abstaining from this resolution."

"Yes..." Shang Zexi clenched his fist under the table. His eyes wandered the room. Just as he expected, the facial expressions of others changed and his confidence grew.

"This idiot fell into the very trap I was trying to make him avoid..." Mark felt like slapping his own forehead because of Shang Wei's stupidity.

He knows that Shang Wei wasn't originally keen on joining this alliance.

Heck, he wasn't even interested in becoming the Emperor in the first place. But, the circumstances forced him to.

When he met Mark and expressed his wishes to step down and appoint Shang Bo in his place, Mark told him about the alliance. Shang Wei accepted on the condition that Mark would help him rebuild the city their forefathers founded and lived in for over 1700 years.

Mark personally gave 6 million gold coins from his own pocket as a zero-interest loan and put another 9 million on the heads of other states.

Why did he do that?

Well, it was originally out of necessity.

Eight months ago, the Tang Dynasty (Dragon Empire), for fear of Demigods' onslaught in revenge, offered an apology.

Mark accepted it on the condition of 1 Billion gold coins as compensation.

Of course, it was an absurd amount and after several negotiations, the compensated amount was reduced to 100 million gold coins, which will be given in twenty installments, every month once.

So far, Mark received 40 million gold coins but all of it along with most of his savings was spent on buying construction materials for building his own city on his island, and rare metals for making weapons and ammunition.

Even with profits from selling ammunition and existing weapons stock, his current savings are only a little more than 2 million gold coins in his inventory.

Hence, Mark had to depend on others now.

After Shang Wei accepted Shang Zexi's deal, the others started having second thoughts. Even Shen Niu was in a dilemma of whether he should accept the Cabinet's original order or challenge it.

In the end, he raised his hand, "I'm fine with either way. So, I abstain from voting."

"Good. Now, just one more..." Shang Zexi's right leg started shaking in nervousness and excitement.

As the others seemed to be weighing their options, Mark, who didn't want to resort to threatening Shang Zexi and others to force out money, rested his elbows on the table and sighed inwardly. "Man, this is making me remember those days when I kept on requesting the Department Head to increase the funding for our research.

If only I hadn't had a one-night stand with his ex-wife of all people, Project Astra could have been successful. Damn, the timing went wrong. But, the experience was worth it, I guess, although I cannot remember her face. So many years have been passed already."

*Ding! Master, would you like me to play the memory?" A voice spoke in his head.

"Shut up," Mark shouted in his head and became more focused on others. As something clicked in his head, he spoke to the AI, "Ark, Tell me everyone's mood status."

*Ding! Scanning

Two seconds later, words that are invisible to the rest of the world appeared above the heads of the people in the room, added with an emoji.

"Hmm... Shang Zexi looked excited. Does he think he will be successful or is it the tea? It could be the former. Shang Wei was calm as if he didn't care; My father-in-law looked conflicted. What is there to think now, old man? Didn't you already abstain?"

Feng Wu seemed to be in a mixture of worry and excitement, and his nephew King Feng was confused? What's there to be confused about? You are only a couple of years younger than Ouyang Zen. Look at him, how calm and confident he is looking. He didn't even bring a bodyguard like you did.

Ugh... okay, let's stop with distractions and focus, Mark..."

Chapter 543: Cultivating even before birth?

After a few minutes, the result came out as follows.

Shang Zexi: Southern Phoenix is rejecting the resolution

Shang Wei: Northern Phoenix is abstaining from the resolution

Shen Niu: Western Moon is abstaining from the resolution

Ouyang Zen: Eastern Sun is in favor of the resolution

Feng Chun: Western Yan is abstaining from the resolution.

Bang

Mark slammed the plate with the hammer, just like how the auction house master does at the final bid, and announced, "Three Abstains, one in favor, and one rejection. According to Article 3 of the Genesis Cabinet's constitution, the cabinet will revise the terms and conditions of the resolution and send it to the states for approval.

Now, let's move on to the next agenda. The Red Lotus Brotherhood."

Everyone's facial expression immediately changed upon hearing that name.

It was a newly formed rebel group, shortly after the partition of the empire. Their aim is to wipe out wealthy individuals and nobles who enjoy the fruits of the labor done by common citizens. They also held the Shang Dynasty accountable for the Shang Jun imperial massacre incident.

More than a rebel group, it is like a sleeper cell. No one even knows who orders them in the first place and how many people are working for this organization. Any civilian or random adventure could suddenly launch a terrorist attack in public areas and grand events.

If there was one thing that was common, it was their way of conducting the attack.

Mark placed a red pill on the table and spoke, "I believe all of you already know what this is."

Shang Wei nodded seriously, "The Exploding Pill."

Mark then took out a hand-sized glass bottle and placed it on the table, surprising the rest as it had dozens of pills inside. "A couple of days ago, we accidentally caught a suspicious merchant at Lunaris, trying to sell this to a servant of our palace."

"Eh?" Shen Niu looked surprised by this news as he wasn't aware of it.

Mark continued, "The servant was a relative of a soldier who lost his life in the massacre incident.

While we couldn't extract the information of the mastermind behind the organization, what we know so far is that they were targeting the relatives of the victims who lost their lives in that incident, poor people who were frustrated about the inflation, victims or who were related to the victims who were, in one or another, harassed by nobles, military and civilian authorities, etc..."

"What is the source of this jar full of exploding pills?" asked Ouyang Zen. If a batch of pills is so many in number, where each pill represents one possible terrorist attack, it is natural for this 13-year-old to be worried.

Mark answered, "The prisoner said that this was given to him by a wandering merchant in a clown mask and hood. He was given 500 gold coins to deliver to Servant Yu, who unfortunately committed suicide without revealing anything."

"Meaning, they have a high fund source. We need to look for someone with a legitimate business that has the potential to acquire high profits and has a high customer base but for some reason, their profits are only marginal. Businesses where their profits could easily be concealed from the official account books," Shang Wei commented in a firm tone as if he was confident in his hypothesis.

"Hmm, we can certainly start from there," Mark agreed with Shang Wei's thoughts as even Shen Ling opinioned the same when he consulted with her.

After discussing a few other affairs, they concluded the conference and Mark had a series of private meetings with them, who mostly enquired about the status of the weapons manufacturing on his private island and asked whether he could provide the first batch of their orders as it has already been 6 months since he took advance from them.

Unfortunately, Mark could only disappoint them by citing a lack of raw materials for certain parts of firearms. In reality, he isn't interested in releasing them into the market until the numbers reach the (1 million) benchmark. Since he could no longer create weapons out of nothing, Mark had to carefully plan to establish a successful long-term business.

Once he was done with the meetings, he left the palace in his LNovelBin without his father-in-law and traveled nonstop for six hours to reach Lunaris City, before reaching a large mansion in an affluent neighborhood, guarded by robots.

Upon his arrival, the robots made the way for him to enter the Genesis Mansion, greeted by more robots.

From the cook to the gardener, every servant appeared to be a robot here.

He gave nods to each of them, climbing the staircase to the first floor and eventually reaching a bedroom where a 26-week pregnant Song Yue was seen sleeping peacefully. The Golden Demon Kitten, Anan Spencer, was in his cat form, lying beside her and sleeping too. And so was the Manticore, which was lying on the floor. There are a few Rank-8 robots standing in the corners of the room like bodyguards.

His arrival alerted both of them, but neither of them came to him to show their affection, like before. They looked at him and then slept once again as if he didn't matter. As for the robots, they bowed to him and stood straight once again.

Mark couldn't help but let out a wry smile when he saw that and let out a sigh, "Well, it was my decision to cut off my contract with them and force their wills to bind it to Song Yue instead. At the very least, they don't hate me. I should be satisfied with it."

He dragged a chair nearby and sat beside the bed while the manticore, Baltrow, moved aside in silence.

"Ark, check the status of baby," He spoke in his head, taking a glance at her belly.

*Ding! Scanning in progress

A few seconds later;

Fetus (unnamed)

Status: Healthy, Body is fully developed, hibernation.

Gender: Male

Age: 6 months, 18 days.

Estimated time of Birth: Unknown

Cultivation: 1-circle (High)

Attribute: Chaos

Bloodline: Primeval (locked)

Description: The unnamed fetus is the child of Master and his first wife, Lady Song Yue. Due to the remnants of chaos energy left behind by the Orb of chaos after its extraction, the fetus was forced to cultivate automatically before even the birth. However, due to enormous power, the fetus was forced to go into hibernation. Its birth might happen after the end of its hibernation.

"Oh, he already reached the advanced stage? Two days ago, it was only at intermediate stage, good," Mark developed a big smile on his face, feeling proud of the child who has yet to be born. At the same time, there was also this anxiety about when his birth will take place.

Of course, in case of emergency, there was always Sylvandria on her side, the unborn child's godmother, appointed by Song Yue.

But for the moment Sylvandria isn't in the home as she went to Mt. Lan for her breakthrough.

Roughly, Three weeks ago, following Lan Clan's ancient technique, under Zheng's instructions, she created an avatar by splitting her soul into two, using the elemental seed of light, which was brought by Deity Yujiang on Mark's request.

Her ether energy has been halved but resulted in two copies of Sylvandria with mid-9-circle-realm cultivation, one has a light element and the other inherited her divine energy.

Together, they ventured into Bloodhill forest and the oceans on a daily basis in order to increase their cultivation by absorbing the cores of the spirit beasts.

Two days ago, they managed to reach the peak stage and went to Mt. Lan for the merge.

Chapter 544: Mark becomes a father

Back to the present, Mark silently stayed with Song Yue without disturbing her sleep, until her mother returned from the kitchen with a ladle in her hand, wearing an apron.

"Oh, Xiao Lu, when did you arrive?" She seemed surprised and couldn't control her voice for a second.

"Ah, just now..." Mark got up and greeted her with a bow, "Mother-in-law."

"Hmm..." Song Yue furrowed her brows in her sleep, looking like her sleep was disturbed.

"Sshhh." Chen Xiao put her finger on her lips and then gestured to her outside the room, not intending to disturb her daughter's sleep.

As they walked into the living room on the first floor and took their seats, she asked, "So, how's your meeting gone?"

Mark let out a sigh as he shook his head, "Not positively. The Cabinet's resolution was overthrown by Shang Zexi. The others don't also seem to be in favor. It looks like it is going to be a bumpy road for Shang Wei."

"Well, you did what you could do. We don't need to worry about the things that are out of our control," Chen Xiao consoled her son-in-law. After a brief pause, she added, "By the way, Xiao Yue has shown the signs of losing control yesterday."

"Again?" Mark's facial expression changed once again. "When exactly?" He asked.

"Afternoon," replied Chen Xiao. She took a breath and explained, "We were having lunch together, and suddenly, weird dark energy erupted out of her and destroyed the tableware, spilling the dishes around. Fortunately, little Baltrow acted timely and swallowed it while Little Anan knocked her out."

"Hmm..." Mark thought of something and consulted the AI, "Ark, can I assume that it is because of the minor breakthrough? This happened in the past too."

*Ding!

"Certainly, Master. The chances are more than 80%. However, you should also consider the fact that pregnant women are often sensitive about things. It could also be the taste of the dishes or it could be the feeling of separation from 'Master' too. Without witnessing in person, I cannot conclude it with one reason."

"Ugh, I truly missed the system in times like these," Mark couldn't help but comment.

The Artificial Intelligence made a counterargument right away, trying to poke him where it hurt, "Should I kindly remind master that it was my creator who left you to death after you used you?"

"Well, I don't hate the system," Mark, however, calmly reacted. "Even before leaving, it allowed me to have the army of robots while writing off my debt. It also doesn't change the fact that whatever I'm now, the credit goes to the system."

The Artificial Intelligence was the one who got triggered instead, "Hmpf, Master, It's me who saved your life. You should be more grateful toward me, not my creator." It immediately lodged a protest.

"Wow, I didn't expect you to be jealous of someone too," Mark chuckled as he teased the AI inside his head.

"Master is to blame for that. After integrating with your consciousness, I unlocked some of your human emotions..." As the artificial intelligence dealt with a statement, a confused Chen Xiao interrupted their conversation with a question, "What are you thinking about, Xiao Lu?" She didn't know about Ark. Hence, it was natural for her to be confused.

Mark returned to reality and shook his head, "Nothing. I was just excited about my son's birth."

Chen Xiao believed his words and nodded with a smile, "Every parent feels the same."

Five days later;

In the middle of the night;

"Ahhhh"

A loud scream echoed through the mansion, followed by the crying voices of a baby. After a while, the door was opened and Chen Xiao walked out with a baby wrapped in a cloth, all cleaned up.

Mark was quick to rush toward her.

When Mark approached Chen Xiao, who was currently carrying a crying baby boy in her arms, his eyes met with his son, and in an instant, the crying stopped and the baby raised its arms toward Mark.

"Oh my..." Shen Ling let out a giggle in surprise, "It looks like the baby knows who his father is."

Mark couldn't just stop smiling as he took him into his arms. It was the first time he was feeling something incredible. Various emotions were flowing through his mind.

He couldn't help but have a rush of overwhelming love for that radiant baby, amazement and awe, a sense of protection toward that precious little thing, joy, and happiness, and this rush of emotions overwhelmed him, making him tear up a little.

"Congratulations, Dear" "Congratulations for the son, Xiao Lu" "Congratulations, Mr. Lu" "Congratulations, Lord Lu" "Congra..."

Amidst the congratulations pouring from all sides, Chen Xiao spoke, "Name your son. You cannot go in and see the mother until the child is named."

"Yeah, I know," Mark nodded in understanding.

Shen Ling commented from the side, "If you haven't prepared the name, you could always give a nickname first."

To which, Mark responded with a shake of his head, "No, that is not needed. I and Song Yue have already thought of the name, long ago."

Mark let the baby grab his finger with its tiny hands and announced, "I would like to have my son lead a simple and modest life, one without any life risk. Hence, I name him, Lu Shan."

The baby boy who was curiously looking at his father suddenly broke out into a smile when he heard Mark's words, as if he understood them.

"Ah, look. He seems to like it," Shen Ling couldn't help but also smile in happiness as she found it very cute. She took it into her arms as both of them followed into the room, to visit Song Yue.

Song Yue looked quite weak at the moment and Mark couldn't help but rush forward when he saw that, kneeling beside the bed and grabbing her hands, "Are you alright?"

She weakly nodded with a smile and asked, "Did you name him?"

"Lu Shan," replied Mark with a nod.

Song Yue then said, "Let me take another look at our child."

Shen Ling brought the baby, who once again went into a curiosity mode and observed the princess, and placed it beside his mother. He instantly reached out to his mother's left breast, but upon touching the clothes, chaos energy suddenly erupted from his palms, disintegrating a portion of her clothes instantly without hurting her, taking Shen Ling and Mark by surprise.

Shen Ling hurriedly turned her head aside while Mark stopped Shen Niu, who was about to step inside with a gesture of his palm.

As Baby Lu Shan started drinking milk from his mother, Shen Ling took this opportunity to tease Mark once again, glancing at his surprised face from the corner of her eyes, "The given name and your child's actions don't seem to be matched, Dear."

Mark could only laugh in a mixture of embarrassment and pride, "Well, he was born with cultivation. So, it is normal, I guess."

After a while, the child went to sleep and Chen Xiao stayed inside to change Song Yue's dress as Mark and others came out. Soon, the guests were escorted to their rooms while Mark returned to Song Yue's room to keep an eye on his son, for the rest of the night.

Little did he know at that time that his son's birth itself brought trouble to his doorstep, cutting off his dream of living a peaceful life with his family.

Chapter 545: Lu Shan's fortune

Planet of Vriga, Immortal plane of Existence;

A teenage-looking woman with the ears and whiskers of a cat was rapidly absorbing the natural energy from the planet, which was once frozen in Ice but the rapid depletion of energy caused the ice to melt, and turn into water, before slowly turning into a barren wasteland.

Her meditation was disturbed by the arrival of a humanoid-looking man with golden feathered wings on his back, and the Golden Demon Cat instantly attacked him in annoyance.

The winged man evaded the beam of energy with a sidestep and stretched his hands forward, "Woah, easy there, my wild cat. I'm merely here to pass you a message from Master."

"Die." She charged forward with her claws out. Her speed was so fast that it appeared as if she teleported a hundred meters away in an instant, and yet, the stranger evaded it once again with another sidestep while still maintaining a smile on his face. "You know it is bad manners to act against your big bro, like this."

"Who the f*ck is my big bro," The Golden Demon Cat was only enraged by his comment. She jumped high and swiped her claws into the air, aiming at her opponent.

Giant arcs of energy made their way toward him. The stranger, this time, didn't evade. Instead, he conjured a hexagonal prism-shaped golden barrier around himself, letting the claws of energy strike the barrier and deflect.

In an instant, the entire planet was shredded into pieces of dust with even its core destroyed, leaving behind these two beings floating in space while the planet's three moons started drifting away to form their independent orbits around the star, located about 6 billion kilometers away.

Soon, a portal with suction power emerged between them, and in a few seconds, all the dust around them disappeared and the girl raised her arms to conjure a sphere of demonic energy, but the man didn't fight her as she thought.

Instead, he casually lectured her while folding his hands to the chest, "Relax there, kitty. You know that you cannot defeat me. Why bother getting riled up for no reason and destroying worlds? Just listen to what I have to say."

"I told you already. I have no relations with your race..."

It goes without saying that his comment only enraged her further. The strongest under mythical cosmic beasts responded by throwing the concentrated energy sphere at him, so potent that it could even destroy a solar system as long as it hits something and explode.

Hence, the winged man couldn't help but take action this time. "Singularity." With a mumble escaping his mouth, a dot appeared on his palm, generating an enormous amount of suction force and absorbing the energy sphere.

Once the energy sphere entered the black hole, he destroyed both of them and tried to converse with the serious-looking girl, who was already preparing for her next attack; the appearance of horns on her forehead and the rapid energy gathering in between those horns was the best evidence for it.

"Would you keep acting like a brat?" The winged man tried to reason with her, although his choice of words wasn't appropriate from the start, and neither did they get better.

The Golden Demon Cat growled at him, "Shut up, you mortal."

"Well, the one who is sitting on the top of that heavenly throne is also a mortal, sweetie," replied the winged man, winking at her.

The girl shivered in anger at once, "Stop calling me that, you bastard..." She screamed, unleashing the beam of energy with her horns.

Containing the power of almost an Elder God (low-15-circle), the energy beam struck him head-on with its full force, bringing a smile to her face only for it to be wiped off in the next second as the beam disappeared into his body.

When the attack ended, she saw a black hole on the upper part of his chest as his expression turned serious for the first time.

"Sera..." A word escaped from him, making her shudder in fear this time as he raised the hand and conjured a sword with live images of galaxies seen on its blade. "You know what happens when I draw the sword of Void. So, this time, with great sincerity, I'm going to say it again. Master wishes to pass an order to you. Listen carefully.

Master had a prophetic dream, where a mortal child riding on top of a masculine golden demon cat challenging the Jade Emperor, sometime in the future. He wants you to abduct that baby and bring it to him. In exchange, he will reward you handsomely."

The Golden Demon Cat's facial expression changed all of a sudden, "the prophetic dream?" After seeming like she deeply thought on the matter for a few seconds, she asked, "What if I refuse?"

"What else? The same as last time," replied the winged man. When her facial expression turned ugly, he finished the sentence, "The annihilation of your clan."

"You damn..." The Golden Demon Cat swiped her claws at him once again, tearing the space between them in the process, but he didn't even bother engaging with her further and disappeared instead.

The energy claws started traveling nonstop, destroying everything on its way. Meanwhile, the Golden Demon Cat tightened her fist and swore under her breath, "One day, I will make a breakthrough and that day, I will annihilate your race across all worlds. But, for now, I need to put my focus on mastering the Great law of Null."

A few days later, in the mortal plane of existence;

Song's residence, Lunaris City;

Song Yue was carrying the baby boy in her arms, Lu Zhen was standing beside her as a famous fortune teller of the continent visited them to read the baby's fortune.

He came all the way from the Kun Empire, on King Shen Niu's request, to see the baby.

Now, Mark has no belief in things like fortune telling as they were always vague, and unlike prophecies, fortunes also have a low chance of success. Despite such fact, it was deeply rooted in the tradition of this world and Mark couldn't help but listen to his wife, who was curious about her child's future.

The fortune teller looked at the baby's birth time and date, his attribute and density of ether particles, the Yin and Yang balance in the body, the Feng Shui of the house he was born in, his given name, and ancestral background, before he did the calendric calculations, such as the combination of ten heavenly stems and twelve earthly branches which cycle through the years, month, days, and house.

After taking about half an hour of time, Fortune Teller Wang spoke to the couple, "Your child's destiny is filled with greatness. He has the fate to become a King.

He would have everything in his hands that the entire universe would have to offer." While his words were filled with praises, Mark saw beads of sweat on this fortune teller's forehead despite the optimal temperature in the room, indicating that he was feeling quite nervous for some reason.

He couldn't help but respond with a question, "Will he face numerous challenges in life? Does it involve life threatening?"

"Uhh..." The fortune became silent for a moment and the others looked at him in worry.

Chapter 546: Sylvandria changes her fate

Those twenty seconds of silence raised Song Yue's heartbeat to the peak and the chaos energy remnants inside her started going wild. She was trying her best to calm herself until the fortune teller opened his mouth to answer her husband's question.

Wang Yu took a deep breath and looked at Mark as he said, "Every moment of life is filled with danger. When he is not in danger, he becomes dangerous. Only a Deity's blessing could avert this fate."

After a while, after the fortune teller left with a bag of 1000 gold coins as his fee, Song Yue worriedly looked at her husband, "Markie... what should we do?"

Mark put his hand around her shoulder with a smile, "Never take fortune tellers seriously. The analysis behind him just stemmed from our lives. He knew that we had enemies. He also probably knew my connection to the Shang Dynasty. It was just a gimmick. Nothing to worry about and don't unnecessarily worry others, especially your mother too."

"Ah, is that so?" Song Yue's worries lessened after listening to Mark. When her mother entered the room and enquired about the fortune, Song Yue had to keep that negative fortune for herself and only told her the positive thing.

No one knows how this news about Lu Shan having the fate of a King spread to others. But, by evening, it had already reached the allied Kings too, and two of them started worrying about their throne. One was Shen Niu and the other was Shang Zexi. The trust in the alliance slightly shook for a bit with the rumor.

Shen Niu summoned the princess to push up her marriage, and Shang Zexi couldn't help but contact his trusted ally, Xu Sect, to discuss the matter.

Several hours later in the night;

Song Yue was sleeping in their bedroom with the baby kept in the cradle and a robot was taking care of the baby, swinging it slowly and making sure the baby had a good sleep.

However, Mark was missing there. He was actually lying down on the roof and watching the beautiful sky filled with stars and galaxies. He consoled his wife but his heart was disturbed by the words of the fortune teller.

"This can't go on. After abandoning my revenge and living without scheming against someone or fighting, I really found the value of peace. Lu Shan has a chaos attribute and inherited Primeval Bloodline too.

I don't know what this going to do, as I have yet to experience it myself, but the fact that the system placed it above Blizzard Pegasus only indicates that it is heaven-defying.

His talent would surely attract the powers without question, and after Shang Jun, I can't underestimate the craziness of these people. Some might go to any extent to hurt others. Not to mention, the threat of those exploding pills lately has even reached my neighborhood.

First of all, I need to secure the planet from outside forces. For that, I need to improve the strength of those four ancient beasts.

Secondly, I should fasten the progress of bringing democracy to this land and turning it into a constitutional monarchy. This is going to be tough unless I have an empire of my own. The only way I can have that without troubling my allies is to cut down the Bloodhill forest and claim it for myself. However, it also means that a war with the Leon Empire will be imminent.

Not a problem for me but the war will generate hatred and my child will only be in danger.

Thirdly, I need to find a way to amass ether particles for my breakthrough. I lack funds at the moment to buy ether crystals. So, my best bet is to finish the remaining quests and gain that cultivation skill that will let me absorb energy from the cosmos.

But, the problem is that I can no longer summon Bael because the medium has disappeared, along with the system. Not to mention, the Church of Doom with its tower disappeared from this land after I killed their founder. I don't know where their Supreme Pontiff is hiding right now and I cannot teleport to the quest's location as before.

Hmm, I still have a few advanced stat pills in my inventory. Should I sell them? But, I won't get much this time. Hmm... wait a second..."

As something suddenly clicked in his head, he quickly sat down and slapped his thigh, "There is a way. I just have to mine it from other worlds. Who knows, I could also find Ether ores and get lucky. I just have to focus on mastering my space attribute."

But, in the next second, he turned serious as he contemplated on the matter, "Unfortunately, I cannot do this on my own. I need an able teacher who can be trusted with my secrets too. There's no better one than Lord Yujiang but he is the guardian of the realm. He won't have time to teach me. Another one I can lean on is Bael himself.

Even if I couldn't summon him, I could still go to the netherworld to meet him there. However, it is going to be very risky as that world is filled with powerful demons that I cannot battle against. If something happens to me, what will happen to my wife and child? No, I cannot do that.

In such a case, I can only see one path ahead of me that can help me out and also keep my family safe. The Ancient Lan Clan."

A couple of days later, at Mt. Lan of Kunlun Mountains;

In the middle of the day, all of a sudden, dark clouds gathered on top of Mt. Lan and thunder rumbled among the clouds so loud that it alerted several experts of the above 7-circle realm in the thousand-kilometer range.

Meanwhile, the supreme beings and demigods living elsewhere in the world had their gaze fixed in the direction where Mt. Lan is located as the figure sitting on top of it was bombarded with lightning strikes one after another.

Sylvandria's body was protected by the barrier of divine energy as she was in a deep meditative state.

Lan Ju, the zheng also added an additional layer of security by conjuring another barrier on her own, shielding her against the lightning strikes that intended to burn her to ashes for going against heaven.

Meanwhile, inside her mindscape, Sylvandria was fighting against an identical image of her but with more skills and mastery. Unfortunately, she wasn't on the side of victory.

Looking down at Sylvandria who was barely supporting herself from collapsing completely onto the ground and taking heavy breaths, her opponent pointed the blade at her and spoke coldly, "Give up, Sylvandria. You cannot change your fate."

An agitated Sylvandria shouted back, "I refuse."

"I don't sense any love from you for that mortal. There's no need for you to swear your loyalty to him, just because your body has been defiled," replied the mirror self. As Sylvandria tried to get up, she further added, "Purity should be within the soul, not the body that will be returned to the earth over the passage of time."

Upon getting up, Sylvandria put her hand on her stomach and said, "Because of our connection, you can only see my memories. You don't know the condition of my body, do you?"

At once, the mirror self's facial expression changed, "That's impossible."

"It's not about the loyalty, Goddess Faenya. I'm fighting for something far more precious enough to risk the erasure of my existence forever," Sylvandria raised her hand to conjure a divine sword in her hands to continue their fight.

However, the mirror self didn't fight her for some reason. Instead, she put away the sword and spoke, "Very well. I'll let you free. However, when the day arrives, I'll come for you. Be prepared for it. No matter what kind of intention a being has, the one who goes against the way of heaven must face consequences."

She disappeared from the spot after giving a warning, leaving Sylvandria on one of her knees, trying not to lose consciousness.

Meanwhile, on the outside, her lightning tribulation went through smoothly without facing any potential injuries at all until her cultivation realm finally pushed through the wall of the supreme realm.

The divine energy erupted from her on all sides had destroyed the barrier conjured by Zheng while the clouds disappeared from the sky.

Staring at the sky, she mumbled, "I'm always prepared to face the punishment."

Chapter 547: Shang Jiao and Jingwei

A couple of weeks later;

Genesis Factory, Fujian Island, Western Moon kingdom;

Roughly Three hundred kilometers away from the mainland, there used to be an island, a 5 sq. km of land filled with beautiful white beaches, lush forests, and a large mountain.

But now, the forests are gone and replaced by gardens. The mountain completely disappeared and was replaced by a lighthouse.

Instead, a massive factory that encompassed three-fourths of the island, over 4 sq. km in area, became the landmark of this location.

From the outside, it looked like a giant dome made of white granite. But when one steps inside, their minds will surely blow up in amazement.

Magical ceiling was applied at the largest section of the factory, which is actually almost 90% of the factory, and makes it seem like it is under the sky.

Usually, it is a testing arena where Mark tests his weapons, but at the moment, it has become a battleground for Shang Jiao and her recent mentor and also her friend, Jingwei.

The 16-year-old princess was already in the legendary realm and currently perfecting her new Bloodline ability, the Eternal Ice, in which she could endlessly conjure ice for a couple of minutes and manipulate it in any way she wanted.

The skill was so strong in her hands that even Jingwei, a supreme being, was completely focused on evading it as a streak of ice chasing her at subsonic speeds.

Naturally, her speed is way higher than the streak of ice and she couldn't help but taunt her opponent with provoking words.

"C'mon, little princess, try to catch me up" "What happened? Did you slow down? At this rate, you won't be able to master this place" "Don't you want to get out of here and assist my papa? Put more ether energy into it..." "You are doing nothing but destroying this place."

However, Shang Jiao completely ignored her taunts. She was standing on top of an ice pillar with icy wings sprouting from her back; her gaze looked calmer, and it was difficult for Jingwei to see through her thoughts.

Jingwei eventually got bored of it and decided to patiently evade the ice streaks and then knock out her opponent once it disappeared.

It was only after a while did she realized that she was actually playing right into Shang Jiao's hands. By the time she realized it, she was surrounded by the ice streak on all sides. The only way for her escape was to fly higher, but there was a giant Ice mirror covering the sky above her.

Shang Jiao finally let out a smile as she motioned her hand, "Now."

In an instant, thousands of icicles gush out of the mirror, raining down on Jingwei. The latter covered herself with an energy barrier.

It was at this moment all of a sudden, the false sky turned scarlet and the ice streaks disappeared at once; so was the energy barrier around Jingwei. Both girls started falling to the ground.

As they landed safely on their feet at the same time, Mark was seen entering the space in a white lab coat alongside a robotic three-headed hound (Alina) and a couple of robots in lab coats too.

"Zhen-ge," The little princess was taken aback in surprise, upon seeing her brother coming out of nowhere. "When did you arrive?" She hastened her pace toward him, ignoring Jingwei altogether. However, the latter beat her to it with a dash to Mark and grabbed his arm, "Papa..."

Mark stroked Jingwei's hair with a smile but had his attention on his sister instead, "Jiao-mei, I need your help with testing a missile."

"Okay, sure," Shang Jiao's eyes lit up as if she was excited. However, Jingwei, who was enjoying her time snapped out of it and protested by tugging his sleeves, "Papa, I'm stronger than her and in a higher realm. Shouldn't I be the one to help you?"

"Excuse me, Wei wei..." Shang Jiao folded her hands to her chest and let out a smirk, "Who was the one that ran away like a scaredy cat? You were almost defeated by the one in the lower realm."

Jingwei sharply stared at her and argued, "Hmpf, who was afraid? I was just biding my time. Moreover, I was helping you out as your mentor. I could destroy it in a matter of seconds if I want to."

"Oh, Yeah? Then, how come I never saw you did it? You always beat me with your higher speed," Shang Jiao didn't back down.

"Then, let's resume our spar. This time, not only I will destroy it head-on but I will also teach you a lesson on how to respect your elders," Jingwei displayed confidence, glancing at her master from the corner of her eyes.

"All this time you were acting as if we were the same age and suddenly you become my elder? Fine with me. Let's fight. Your bluff doesn't work on me..." As Shang Jiao looked like she was ready to fight, probably to show off her prowess in front of her older brother, the latter interrupted them before it got out of his hand, "Okay, stop it you two."

He then pointed his finger at the red skies, "You see it right. I have activated the Null mechanism. Neither of you will be able to use your powers in this place. Now, Jingwei, this has nothing to do with who is stronger. My sister's ice manipulation is stronger than mine and I need that ability for my test."

Alina chimed in, "Yeah, that's right. We need to test our 'Song II' missile in extreme cold conditions."

Named after Song Yue, the Song missile is a nuclear-capable missile, created by Mark and Alina a year ago, using Brahmos missile as the base. It was also the first missile he actually built in this world.

This versatile missile could be launched from land-based mobile autonomous launchers, naval vessels, and aircraft.

However, it could only move at supersonic speed (Mac 2.9 without a warhead) and the range is around 300 km.

For the past few months, Mark has been working on this project, placing Alina as the main researcher for it. Their aim is to increase its speed, range, and yield capacity, eventually giving birth to Song II, which has a 560 km maximum range without a warhead and has over Mac 4.5 speed. Yielding capacity is also increased from 42KT to 75KT.

But, it has its own challenges too.

Chapter 548: Testing the missile (failure)

The supposed upgraded missile, Song II, turned out to be weaker than the original Song missile created by the system, mainly due to the fact that system-created missiles have 100% energy conversation while the one he currently built only had like 45%.

Hence, while Alina focused on upgrading the missile, he was focused on the warhead.

The factory, which was upgraded to the maximum level before the exit of the system, has already the necessary equipment to create every type of weapon he could. The only problem is with the procurement of materials now that the mining system, unfortunately, didn't materialize with the factory.

Hence, Mark could only recycle the existing warheads lying in his inventory, increase the quantity of fissile materials, improve the efficiency of the implosion mechanism, and eventually increase yield. But, that also decreased the energy conversation rate in the process.

Without any assistance from fellow researchers, it was a tough job even for someone like Mark. But then again, since he wasn't in a hurry before, he was taking step by step. But, Lu Shan's birth has changed everything for him. Mark suddenly decided on increasing the time on research, to prepare against even Saints.

Once this is completed, he will start working on the Song-II (A) variant, which will have a lighter payload, increased range, and speed, so that he could deploy anti-matter warheads.

With a few anti-matter warheads in his inventory, Mark knew that it was a surmountable task. Hence, he had to master the antimatter attribute staying dormant in his veins.

But first, making Song-II Missile resisting to extreme conditions is important.

As a part of it, he sought his sister's help, who was glad to help him out in any way she could.

As the red skies returned to normal in the testing zone of the factory, Shang Jiao used her ice manipulation to first create a powerful snowstorm in the surroundings.

Mark's Rank-9 robots manually inserted the missile in one of the barrels of the launcher, which was placed near the edge of the testing zone. This missile doesn't have any warheads. Hence, Mark was not worried about firing at Shang Jiao, at all.

She was standing around 2 km away, near the edge on the opposite side.

Alina placed one of her forelimbs on something that looked like a USB port. A wire extended from her paw and inserted into the port; the screen lit up in red.

"Access granted. Auto mode on"

"Alina, Lock the target."

With her control, the launcher automatically moved and the screen showed that it locked onto some dot. As an android, she was quite fast and accurate in locking the target.

"On the count of 3." Mark counted, "3, 2, 1, fire..."

A missile fired from the launcher, generating a loud sound enough for Jingwei to momentarily close her ears in startle. Mark stayed on the spot as if he wasn't affected. He looked quite serious, based on his expression.

The missile fired through low visibility snowstorm, under -15 degrees Celsius temperature; in a couple of seconds, it reached its peak height of only 100 meters from the ground and cut through the wind at supersonic speeds, traveling in a straight line for two more seconds, before changing start descending with an increased speed.

Shang Jiao, who was standing there, was startled when the missile appeared before her eyes. Her body moved before her mind. "Ice wall." A gust of cold wind erupted from her palms, freezing on the spot and creating a wall of ice within a second.

The missile collided with the ice wall and exploded.

The wall conjured by her managed to block the explosion but cracked all over. "F**k. It hasn't even been five seconds." She couldn't help but exclaim in amazement.

However, Mark's facial expression darkened. Putting away the telescopic gun, through which he was watching the scene, he shook his head with a sigh, "This idiot..."

"Hmm? What happened, papa?" Jingwei asked him in curiosity.

"She was supposed to freeze it before the collision, not protect herself. The missile was destroyed and we have to make it once again," Alina answered her instead of Mark, who placed the weapon back into the inventory and turned around to walk away in disappointment.

After a while, Shang Jiao caught up to her brother who was sitting at a beach and looking at the sea in order to calm down his emotions; she apologized to him.

Mark could only sigh in response and slowly slapped the sand beside him, gesturing to her to sit beside him.

As the little princess sat down, Mark opened his mouth, "I know that it is not your fault, but I was just frustrated. That's all. Manufacturing this new weapon is a time-consuming process." After a brief pause, he patted her head, "Not to worry, I will think of a solution eventually. Anyway, your parents are missing you. Don't you want to return shortly and meet them?"

Xiao Shan's first-month celebration is coming up and he still has yet to see his aunt."

"Well..." Shang Jiao went silent, averting her gaze away as if she didn't want to answer to that, for some reason. "I want to attend but I don't think I could make it. Because of my promise with the guardian beasts, I can't step out, until I defeat one of the guardians."

"C'mon, it was just an oral promise, not an oath you made to the heavens or applied a blood/soul oath. Moreover, defeating any of those guardian beasts is next to impossible, when you aren't even in the same realm."

Mark tried to convince her but Shang Jiao seemed adamant on fulfilling the promise, even if she had to miss the event of her nephew.

Not having any choice, he left the island, returning home through his teleportation portal.

Once he was gone, Shang Jiao's icy wings erupted from her back and she flew into the sea, traveling to a nearby island located just about fifteen kilometers away.

Unlike the Fujian island, this one was quite green and was full of vegetation. As she neared the island, the sight of a majestic beast appeared in her eyes.

Chapter 549: Shang Jiao and the curse of time (part-1)

The Azure Dragon, the White Tiger, the Black Tortoise, the Vermillion Bird, and the anaconda king, which never stayed in pet inventory from the start, were shifted to different islands around when the factory was shifted from Mark's inventory to Fujian island.

As soon as she stepped onto the island of Dijun, Xuan Wu, the Black Tortoise of the North opened its large pair of eyes that were bigger than even the tallest human, observing her silently from far away until she reached him.

Unlike her usual playful or stubborn nature, the princess carried herself with a dignified demeanor of royal bloodline as she landed not so far away from the beast and walked toward the holy beast.

"Shang Jiao greets his grace." She half kneeled before the beast and cupped her fists, lowering her head with her gaze fixed on the ground.

The holy beast treated her the same way. It rose to its feet and replied in a human speech, "Arise to your feet, the inheritor of Blizzard Pegasus."

As she stood up, the Black Tortoise continued, "State the reason for your visit, Ms. Shang."

Shang Jiao raised her head to look at it, "I wish to confirm whether the upcoming one-month ceremony of my nephew is not the doom you predicted." She looked dead serious when she said it.

The Black Tortoise's eyes glowed for a bit before it answered, "The future looks still unclear to my vision."

Shang Jiao silently stared at the beast for a few seconds as if she was thinking about something. Eventually, she opened her mouth to ask, "Tell me. Do I really have any chance of making a breakthrough in seven days?"

"It is not possible," The giant beast nodded. Just as the princess became crestfallen, the former added, "Unless you accept your destiny."

Shang Jiao's facial expression hardened. She couldn't help but clench her fists but managed to control her emotions and firmly replied, "No, I will look for another way."

"In that case, you can be on your way," The holy beast sat down and closed its eyes, ignoring her.

"So much for a holy beast with knowledge of ten million years," Shang Jiao, this time, couldn't stop herself from stomping onto the ground in frustration before walking away.

However, a few seconds later, she was forced to halt her footsteps when the Black Tortoise's words echoed in the surroundings, "There is one another way, but the journey will be life-threatening. After you get that power, your life won't be easier in any way either."

Shang Jiao abruptly turned around, "What is it?"

The Black Tortoise replied, "The Orb of Time."

"Hmm?"

Several days later;

Lunaris City, Western Moon Kingdom;

As the day of little Lu Shan's one-month celebration arrived, everyone in the palace became busy with attending to the guests; Kings and Emperors of the alliance, princes and nobles of various empires and their wives, Wealthy merchants and their families, scholars from all over the continent, and other important individuals with incredible strength who aren't exactly invited but still welcomed by the servants of the palace.

While some of them are curious about the boy rumored to have been born with 2-circle realm cultivation and remaining want to pay their respects to a demigod (Lan Jingyi), their primary reason for attending this ceremony is because of the auction that's going to happen on the next day.

One of the few things announced is the legendary pill (stat pill) that permanently raises one's realm even if they are in 8-circle realm, a potion that instantly gives the strength of a supreme being (peak potion), a robot with the strength of a legendary realm expert (rank-8 robot), a flying metallic puppet that has various abilities (EC-665 Attack Helicopter), a warship same as the ones owned by Eastern Sun and currently ruling the seas in their vicinity, and most important of them all, the legendary Sword of Light-Aries, one of the nine recorded heaven grade weapons in the history (celestial-grade).

Of the nine, only five surfaced so far. Naturally, people are excited to own it.

Not to mention, the Sword of Light is also known as the King's sword and has a mythical status. Everyone who held it became an Emperor and various princes are determined to acquire it to ascend the throne of their respective empires.

Mark originally didn't intend to sell it. The system left it with him before it left in Allen's body. However, he was worried about passing it to his son if it stayed with him. Mark was told by the famed fortune teller that his son has the destiny of a King and he merely wants a peaceful life for Lu Shan.

It could be seen as overthinking, but it is what it is.

With this, Mark also planned on making a statement that he was not interested in power. The allies would be happy with such a move. Or so he convinced himself with.

But, the real reason for this auction is simple.

He wants to amass a large fortune and use it to buy materials aggressively to ramp up production. For that, he didn't even hesitate to sell his precious attack helicopter.

If there was one thing that became better with the disappearance of the system, it is that the items previously bound to his soul are no longer bound, as the medium of that connection has gone.

Back to the present day, in the grand hall of the palace decorated with symbols of lotuses and banners with blessings and poetic couples on the walls, Mark and Song Yue alongside their baby were seated as the hosts as the guests were meeting them one after another, some of them bless the baby with materialistic gifts,

scholars displayed their knowledge by reciting poems or gift calligraphic scrolls that mostly linked to the baby's gifted potential, longevity, prosperity, etc...

None of the gifts presented impressed Mark so far but he nevertheless thanked them while constantly putting up his business smile while cursing in his head of how miser these rich folks are.

It went on for a couple of hours before the feast was announced. Hundreds of servants flooded the hall with dishes as ladies emptied the hall to go into separate sections, following the customs.

However, before the plating has ended, the party is interrupted by the arrival of an old woman entering the grand hall, attracting the attention of experts in an instant. First of all, it was a woman intruding into the men's feast; secondly, she turned out to be a supreme being; lastly, she seemed like she was either not in a good state or she was possessed by a ghost, based on her wobbling state.

Mark was casually conversing with King Shen Niu, when it happened. However, before they get to notice, all of a sudden, Sylvandria appears out of nowhere beside him and whispers to Mark, "Be careful. I sense a beastly aura from that woman."

Mark swiftly turned his head to look at the uninvited stranger. "Hmm?" He furrowed his brows, feeling like he knew her.

Even Shang Fu who was seated beside Shang Bo thought the same.

Being prepared for an enemy attack from the start, Mark quickly activated his God Eyes to study the enemy.

But, when he did it, his eyes widened in shock, "Jiao Mei?" His words echoed down the hall, taking everyone by surprise.

The old woman forced herself to raise her head and shed a drop of tear, "Zhen-ge."

Chapter 550: Shang Jiao and the curse of time (part-2)

Shang Jiao

Nicknames: Little Princess, Emperor's favorite daughter (former), President Lu's sister, and Princess of the North.

Species: Human/???

Status: Cursed

Age: 16

Rank/Cultivation: peak-9-circle

Bloodline: Blizzard Pegasus

Attribute: Ice, Time (locked)

Affiliation: Northern Phoenix

Description: The princess of the Northern Phoenix Empire was the master's biological sister, sharing the same parents. Her current body is in the state of a powerful curse where her life force is being depleted rapidly each minute. An unknown object has been discovered in her mindscape which is likely the cause of time attribute and the curse.

*

Mark rushed to her, as soon as he confirmed her identity, and grabbed her shoulders in worry, "Jiao-me, what the hell has happened to you? You were fine last week."

"Zhen-ge, I need your help," replied Shang Jiao in a weak tone. Followed by the cry for help, she slowly started falling down on her back. Mark caught her.

He quickly picked her up and left the grand hall without a care about the guests. Some were left curious, some were offended by his act as he didn't even apologize, some were understanding, and some acted as if he didn't matter.

Fortunately, Shen Niu acted quickly, replacing Mark as the host, making sure that the grand feast wouldn't get disturbed. As Shang Wei was a king and one of the distinguished guests at the events, he was forced to stay there to converse with others.

After a while, in one of the guest rooms, Shang Jiao was seen lying on a bed in an unconscious state and Sylvandria was trying to diagnose her condition. Mark and Shang Fu were standing on the side with troubled expressions.

Soon, the thread of divine energy that invaded Shang Jiao's system was expelled from her body, startling Sylvandria for a bit before she took a deep breath and turned her head to look at Mark, "It is the work of a powerful ancient artifact stuck in her mindscape which appears to be too powerful for my divine energy.

For now, I reduced the curse by sealing her cultivation but it is nothing but a temporary measure," Her tone was quite serious. She then got up and added, "There's also something you need to know."

"What is it?" Mark furrowed his brows.

Sylvandria answered, "When I was probing her system, I sensed something strange inside her body. She has a spirit core"

"Eh?" "Spirit Core?"

Shang Fu and Mark looked at each other in surprise. "But, that's impossible," Shang Fu cried out in shock.

His reaction was not surprising, considering the fact that spirit cores only exist in the bodies of beasts. Even Mark was shocked for once before remembering the data he saw earlier.

He meaningfully nodded, "I guess it should be the work of that artifact, which probably housed an ancient beast spirit."

"Eh?" As Shang Fu was taken aback once again and looked at his son, Sylvandria nodded in agreement, "That's the only explanation even I could think of."

"So, what should we do now?" Shang Fu turned anxious, "How to save my daughter?"

Before Sylvandria gets to answer, Mark, who has already failed in removing the curse with a purification stone, voices his opinion, "Can a Saint realm Deity help her?"

Sylvandria shook her head while letting out a sigh, "If you are referring to Lord Yujiang, it won't work either. Unless you know of someone in God's realm (13-circle), you cannot remove this curse forcefully." After a brief pause, she added, "However, if you want to save her, there is a roundabout way, although it is going to be pretty expensive."

"Money won't be a problem. What is it?" Shang Fu asked in a hurry. Mark, on the other hand, seemed like he had gone into deep thinking.

Sylvandria looked at Shang Fu and replied, "She needs to consume a de-aging potion for her youthful appearance to return and then needs an enormous amount of life force from someone. But, that is still not enough. We also have to destroy her cultivation for good."

"De-aging potion? And life force?" Shang Fu's facial expression hardened at those names. "That potion is very rare, only seen in auctions. Nevertheless, I will use all my connections to procure them at any cost. As for the life force, I will provide mine. Even if I die, my Phoenix Bloodline will resurrect me."

"But, you are only in 6-circle-realm, Emperor Shang. You won't be able to survive this," Sylvandria warned him. However, the father of the girl seemed like he had already made up his decision, "I'm prepared to die for the sake of my child." His voice was so resolute that it kinda moved the elf.

"No need. I know how to save her," Mark opened his mouth, surprising them. As they looked at him, they saw Mark taking a vial of transparent liquid out of nowhere and handing it to the elf, "This is the Elixir of Eternal Spring I won in the grand auction. This will maintain her youthful appearance and vitality for as long as she lives."

Shang Fu's eyes widened and a ray of hope could be seen in those eyes, but in the next second, the light dimmed as Sylvandria commented, "I don't think this will work effectively on her. The curse was too strong for this potion. The best this elixir will have a temporary effect, just like the de-aging potion."

"That's completely fine," Mark made his decision firm. He further said, "As long as it could save her for the moment, it will be worth it."

Shang Fu stared at his son with a mixture of various emotions; on one hand, he was grateful and happy. On the other hand, he never felt so helpless and angry at himself. This wasn't the first time he thought it but still, it has been a few months since he last blamed himself for stepping down from the throne.

Meanwhile, Sylvandria smoothly transferred all the liquid in the vial to Shang Jiao's mouth, which slowly flowed down into her stomach and was absorbed by her body. The amount of liquid was actually enough for two people but because of the current situation, the elf had to empty the vial.

The effect of the elixir was instant. Shang Jiao's youthful appearance returned; perhaps, the elixir also nourished her cells. Shang Jiao's beauty peaked to the extent that it is tough to say who is more beautiful, she or Song Yue.

After a while, leaving her on the bed with a rank-9 robot placed there as a guard, Mark returned to the grand hall to join the other guests. After all, he is the host and it is not proper for him to be absent unless the situation is dire. Now that the problem had been solved for the moment, he peacefully hosted the banquet.

Shang Fu also had to follow the etiquette of being a royal guest and joined Shang Wei and Shang Bo, updating them on the situation.

The next day, at the auction house, the guests with formal invitations as well as the uninvited ones, separated by their respective sections, took their seats as Chang Bo and Xie Mei were seen nervously standing there on the stage.