

Seller 581

Chapter 581: Prelude to the war (part-3)

Meng Tao and Shen Li had their weapons unleashed at each other; while Meng Tao had two ether handguns, Shen Li had a giant silver-colored revolver in his hand.

They started an intense battle after Shen Li challenged him to a pure gun-fighting skill contest. The wager between them is simple. If Shen Li wins the contest, Meng Tao will join him, and if Meng Tao wins it, Shen Li will not only compensate him with 10,000 gold coins but will also kneel in front of the whole crowd, asking Chang Bo for forgiveness.

The rules of the contest are also quite simple. They had to strike their opponent. Whether injured or not, it doesn't matter. Just striking the target once would give them a point. When one of them reaches 100 points, they will be declared as the winner.

For fairness, Song Tai himself volunteered to be the referee.

Meng Tao mounted on top of the giant two-headed hound, hoping to give his opponent a tough chance to strike him. But, Shen Li had a wind attribute technique that let him fly in the air.

Moreover, Shen Li, with his higher cultivation, could conjure an energy barrier that blocks energy bullets coming at him. Meng Tao's Qilin energy bullets could break through the skin but it is useless against energy shields.

As a result, Meng Tao fell into a deep disadvantage as time passed by and a majority of the people couldn't help but see him in pity, thinking that the prince was bullying him with his superior cultivation. Others felt like Meng Tao was too arrogant for his own good, trying to fight with an Exalt realm expert with his pitiful cultivation level.

Meng Tao's hit count eventually reached the 90s while Shen Li has yet to be hit even once. It goes without saying that Meng Tao's frustration is at its peak.

The match was almost about to end at any moment and Meng Tao already made his plans on how to hurt Shen Li later on. He knew that he would be defeated at any moment but since the wager was just on joining him and not about staying loyal to the prince, Meng Tao decided to take revenge on Shen Li by ruining his goals even while staying beside him.

There were only four shots left.

Bang

As the 97th shot hit him in the shoulder, Meng Tao stopped moving. Shen Li, using his wind-attribute mastery, flew into the air, pointed the silver revolver at Meng Tao's head, and spoke, "I hope you get to your senses by now and work hard for me in the future."

The entire arena went silent, realizing that Meng Tao had finally given up. Many of them couldn't help but become frustrated by how the fate of a commoner still couldn't escape the noble's hand.

Bang

The energy bullet exited the revolver and struck Meng Tao's right knee, causing significant injury.

"Ssss..."

Meng Tao hissed in pain but he stood there in silence, with his head hung down, waiting for the end of the match.

Bang

The 99th shot injured his left knee, but Meng Tao refused to bend his knees as Shen Li wished.

"Now, the final turn..."

Shen Li now had this look of arrogance on his face as he shifted the gun toward Meng Tao's abdomen.

Bang

The hundredth energy bullet was shot from the barrel but it didn't reach Meng Tao.

Shen Li and thousands of spectators saw the energy bullet disappear midway.

Shen Li's eyes widened in the meantime and he looked around him. "A spatial barrier?"

As Meng Tao didn't feel the bullet, he raised his head to look at his opponent, who had his face reddened in anger.

Shen Li shouted, "Who interfered in our match?"

It was at this moment the spider ship suddenly materialized out of thin air and started descending into the arena, attracting the attention of everyone.

In an instant, almost every single spectator stood up uniformly. They recognized the vehicle.

"Hey, Look. It's Lord Lu's aerial ship" "Lord Lu is here" "Talk about timing. Shen Li is f*cked up." "Haha, Lord Lu will now avenge Kuai Qiang (Fast shooter)" "Nah, he won't. It's a fair duel. Even he doesn't have the right to avenge" "We'll see about that."

Whispers and murmurs filled the arena, the commoners and the warriors were discussing the arrival of Lu Zhen and the following consequences.

Meng Tao gazed at the descending mighty ship that sent shivers down the spine of those weak cultivators and normal citizens who witnessed it for the first time, his feelings were complicated, "Master..."

Meanwhile, Shen Li's hands started shivering but he tried to stay calm by controlling his breath.

Soon, the Spidership landed on the arena, and its rooftop was opened, followed by Mark and Eol flying out of it and staying in mid-air.

"A bunch of demigods..." whispered Song Tai in the stands. His voice shook as he said those words and his eyes fluttered, gazing at the Spidership.

Shang Fu and other kings and rulers and other important guests who sat around him heard his words and King Ouyang Zen reacted before anyone else, "Venerable Song, what do you mean by that?"

Song Tai replied with a grim face, "I sense four more demigods lying in that ship. Most importantly, they are not human."

As everyone was shocked and turned their heads to look at Mark once again, the latter slowly flew straight and gazed coldly at Shen Li with his hands behind the back, "You really have guts to lay your hands on my servant, Grand Prince Shen Li."

Shen Li gulped his saliva as his eyes met Mark's and he immediately cupped his fists with a bow, "I have not used any underhanded means, Chancellor Lu. Moreover, Mr. Meng agreed to the duel."

Meng Tao hung down his head once again, not intending to meet his eyes with Mark.

However, Mark didn't look at him and directly said to Shen Li, "Who is he to join you? His life is never his in the first place. The moment he swore his loyalty to me by making the oath of blood, he belonged to me. If you want to take him away, you shouldn't fight him but rather it is me who you should fight with. Hence, this duel was never valid."

Shen Li was shocked and he argued, almost like a scream, "That's unfair. If his life was never his in the first place, why did he accept it? I didn't force him or anything. I merely put forth a proposition." He stretched his hand toward the audience, "All these people can testify to my words."

A pin-drop silence filled the arena at once, everyone now had their eyes on Mark and Shen Li.

Many wonder whether this old man is really bold enough to challenge Lu Zhen, trying to bank on his relationship with Shen Niu, who is Lu Zhen's future father-in-law. Since he is an elder of the royal family, Lu Zhen is bound to forgive him in the end. After all, a servant isn't in the same league as an in-law.

However, to their surprise, Mark simply replied, "And why should I care about it? Maybe, you are right and Meng Tao is in the wrong. But, why should I care?" His words were calm but they indicated something else to the spectators, especially to the royal guests.

As Shen Li trembled at Mark's words, the latter raised his hand to conjure an Ice Spear with a thought of his mind and further said, "Moreover, you seemed to have tried killing my other servant Chang Bo, who is not any less than a younger brother to me, and brazenly admit that you didn't feel any guilt on your actions. You are seriously tired of living, aren't you?"

"Ah... Ah..." Shen Li was no longer seen as imposed as before when he took a glimpse at the ice spear hovering above Mark's palms and the latter's words caused fear to every inch of his body. He moved a few steps back involuntarily and felt like he hit some kind of invisible spatial barrier.

King Shen Niu hurriedly got up from his seat and spoke using sound technique to enhance his voice just like Mark was doing earlier, "Xiao Zhen, show mercy upon him. He is family."

"Silence..." Mark roared in response to the request, releasing his aura. His roar caused tremors to the land, shaking the weak souls of the commoners and cultivators alike. Only those with Exalt realm and above cultivation managed to resist it, "Right now, the one in front of you is neither your son-in-law nor the Chancellor of Celestial United Dominion. It is the President of Genesis Enterprises. So, I ask you not to interfere in our business. Or else, you won't like my response."

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Shen Niu too shivered, feeling fear from the person he treated him as his own son for the past year.

He took a glance at his uncle, who was looking at him for help. The King has already known that Mark has become a demigod. It is the reason why he ordered the soldiers to give him such a welcome. It is also why the Kings were forced to visit Lunar City on an urgent basis.

Hence, Shen Niu put away his pride as a King and cupped his fists with a bow, in front of his own citizens, "Then, I request to spare his life as the King of this nation. The royal palace is willing to compensate Genesis Enterprises in exchange."

Mark stared at him in silence for a few seconds. He glanced at other people and then at Shen Li, "Fine, I'll spare you on account of my company's relationship with the Royal family."

Just as when Shen Niu let out a sigh of relief and hope returned to Shen Li's face, Mark added, "Destroy your cultivation on your own and we will let bygones be bygones."

"Ahhh!"

Chapter 582: Prelude to the war (part-4)

Destroying one self's cultivation is an extremely painful and disgraceful action that one would prefer death.

It was even more painful for Spirit Warriors that has high cultivation levels and they worked hard for decades to achieve what they are now.

Shen Li was a 94-year-old man who reached the 6-circle-realm more than twenty years ago but stuck in that realm since then.

To achieve the Exalt realm, he cut off his connections with the royal family and spent most of his time researching various cultivation techniques from all over the continent.

In the end, he had found a forbidden method of making a breakthrough by sacrificing life force and forcefully turning his normal cells into ether particles.

Luckily for him, he encountered Chang Bo and somehow learned through his treasure that this adolescent boy had the werewolf bloodline and had an incredible amount of life force. He became close with Chang Bo and Meng Tao by joining the store as a chef, using a fake name.

To further deepen their bond, he picked up guns and learned everything about them from Meng Tao, even volunteering himself as his sparring partner.

Eventually, the time comes when Chang Bo is not in protection by the store's guardian robot and he attacks him with another forbidden technique, absorbing almost a thousand years worth of life force.

In the end, he made the breakthrough and became the first ever 7-circle realm expert of the Shen Dynasty.

Since his goal has been accomplished, Shen Li, who developed a liking for firearms, decided to develop a sect, which will have firearm warriors that could potentially go head to head with other top sects.

Since such people were plenty, he was sure that he could make it the biggest sect on the continent.

However, while he doesn't lack any money to buy firearms, he does lack skilled experts who could train them. For that sake, he needed Meng Tao on his side.

Since his actions against Chang Bo were never reported, he grew confident and tried to push Meng Tao even more, trying to use his revenge against him.

He was about to finish his next step too but Mark's intervention completely turned around the situation.

He thought Mark wouldn't make a move on him because of his relationship with the royal family, but never expected this powerful in-law to be so ruthless.

As soon as Shen Li saw how Mark silenced his father-in-law, he had already given up on hope. Then, his nephew had to beg the fellow to spare his life.

For a moment, it does seem like he could escape, but Mark once again crushed his hope by directly giving him an ultimatum: Death or Destruction of Cultivation.

What should he do?

Well, there is no route to escape. He was trapped in a spatial barrier and even life-saving random teleportation scrolls won't work.

Shen Li could only take out a pyramid-shaped locket from his storage ring and spoke, "Can I exchange my punishment with this treasure that was passed down from our royal ancestors?"

"The Sphinx's locket?" Shen Niu, whose expression turned into relief by Mark's promise, frowned when he saw the locket. "I thought that it was lost. It was with Uncle Li?"

"What is it, King Shen?" asked Shang Fu in curiosity. The retired emperor was perhaps the most chilled person in the arena, at the moment. Why would he fear his own son when their relationship has already been repaired, anyway?

Shen Niu answered, "The Sphinx Locket was one of the treasures passed by our founder. It is said to have imprisoned an ancient spirit called the Sphinx, which is said to possess unlimited knowledge and even know the secrets of heaven. For every riddle one solves, it will answer any question that's in the mind of the cultivator. One could even learn their fate."

"Oh, that's a good one," Shang Fu nodded with a smile.

In theory, it does sound like a worthy treasure, when Shen Li explained the same thing to Mark.

However, Mark simply responded with a statement, "The law of Spirit Warriors says that those who kill the person have the first right to the dead's treasures, over the dead's immediate family. In that case, I don't need to spare you for that treasure."

After a brief pause, he continued, "Moreover, what I'm doing to you is simply giving a punishment. You still have to pay compensation to Chang Bo for stealing his life force. That treasure is a befitting one. After the destruction of your cultivation, you can hand it over to Chang Bo personally and apologize."

"You..." The elderly prince was so angered that he spat out a mouthful of blood, "Just what is it that you want, then?" Shen Li roared. "What good it will do to anyone whether my life or my cultivation is destroyed, Lord Lu?"

Mark stared at him for a couple of seconds and replied, "Well, it would certainly satiate my anger. This was supposed to be a joyous occasion but you spoiled it."

"You are dead set on unjustly murdering a royal in front of everyone here, aren't you?" Shen Li's eyes widened in realization.

Mark lessened their distance and looked at him straight in the eyes, "What if I want to?" His eyes wandered in his surroundings as he put forth a challenge, "Who would dare to stop me?"

The arena was silent. It was as if he said. No one dares to come forward and rescue the grand prince. King Shen Niu had to cup his fists toward Shang Fu, asking him to intervene. After all, the murder of a royal in such broad daylight with thousands of witnesses will bring shame to the Shen Dynasty.

However, Shang Fu could only helplessly shake his head, rejecting his request with an excuse that he didn't have the power to change his son's mind. Not even his wife could stop him. The only person who probably possessed such power/authority in the entire world is Song Yue, his daughter-in-law.

King Shen Niu hurriedly took out the communication scroll and sent a message to his daughter, who was resting at the palace and supervising the preparations for the Grand Banquet.

Meanwhile, Mark stared silently at the grand prince, placing his hands behind the back but without dismissing the Ice Spear, as if he wanted to say, "I'm waiting."

Shen Li looked left and right, and fell to his knees as a last resort, "I sacrificed everything, familial relationships, materialism, authority, and even my morals to achieve my goal. I would do anything to keep my life and cultivation intact. If Lord Lu is willing to show mercy upon me, I'm willing to accept slavery too."

"Uncle..." Shen Niu couldn't help but shout. If killing a royal is shameful to the Shen Dynasty, shamelessly becoming a slave to someone is akin to insulting every generation of their ancestors. Death would probably be nobler.

However, Shen Li didn't seem he care about his family's reputation at the moment. He kowtowed and begged Mark to spare him.

Mark was naturally unconvinced. He ruthlessly said, "Why would I accept a weakling and a wicked person like you as my servant? Since you refuse to... Hmm?"

Shen Li's body trembled once again by Mark's words but then the pause made him raise his head and take a look at the young man, who developed a frown on his face as a dark energy scroll appeared in front of him.

Once the message disappeared, Mark changed his words instantly, "You took a thousand years of life from Chang Bo. You shall be his slave for a period of a thousand years."

A 7-circle realm expert doesn't have a thousand years of lifespan. So, naturally, it means that Shen Li will be a slave to Chang Bo until he dies.

"Thank you for the mercy..." Shen Li kowtowed and bowed three times, hitting the ground with his head, and expressing his thanks.

"Eol... seal his cultivation," Mark said to the demigod who was quietly floating in the air, above the Spidership.

"Understood, Sir," Eol gave a modern military-style salute that Mark was familiar with and proceeded to seal Shen Li's cultivation as the spatial barrier was removed.

Once the job is done, Mark then takes a glance at his silent subordinate who doesn't dare to even lift his head in shame, "Meng Tao..."

Meng Tao shuddered for a second, "Ma... Master..." He kneeled and cupped his fists, bowing to him, "I... I apolog..."

"No need for it," Mark interrupted him, not letting him finish the sentence, "I'll leave him under your supervision. We'll about this later."

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"Ye... Yes, thank you for the mercy."

As Eol then transferred Shen Li and Meng Tao to the Spidership where they met four unfamiliar individuals, Mark rose into the air once again and addressed the audience, continuing to maintain the air of a supreme expert, "Now that the pest has been dealt with, let's get to the matter you all have been summoned here. You may all sit down."

Until Mark didn't say those words, none in the audience section sat down ever since he arrived and watched him in silence.

Chapter 583: Prelude to the war (part-5)

"Roughly four weeks ago, when I was away, the city faced an invasion from otherworlders of Saint Realm.

Of course, it wasn't a full-scale invasion, and neither did they target any innocents. They damaged a lot of my robots and took away my pet and the kingdom's guardian as a hostage to get back at me.

But, the incident made it clear to me that in my absence, I can't even depend on the Guardian of this mortal plane of existence.

Perhaps, the guardian god wants to see whether the demigods here could handle the suppressed immortals and Saints. Or maybe, he was too busy with other important matters.

His reasons don't matter.

What's important here is the fact that the world is too vulnerable and I don't wish to see my people suffer for my actions. But, I wonder, who are my people? Is it just my immediate family or does it extend to the innocent citizens who put their hope on me?

This thought gave me the revelation of what I should do, in order to give absolute protection to my people from any foreign threats."

Raising three fingers, Mark continued to speak, "Three things that needed to resolve it.

First, strength.

Ether is something that people are born with. I cannot change the fate of those who aren't born with talent. But, I can surely provide you with the firearms, necessary enough to protect yourself.

Before we consider the crisis from otherworlders, we should solve the internal security. By possessing firearms, even the weak could have the means to protect themselves.

However, buying firearms is expensive. It is even more expensive for those who aren't born with ether as they have to constantly depend on ammunition to use those firearms. The poor cannot afford it. But, no worries. I shall help my people with that.

Mark's words did confuse the listeners as they didn't understand what he was trying to do, especially the Kings of the alliance.

The first impression they had is, almost collectively, 'Was he trying to promote his business or something?' For a second, it seems probable but in the next second, they felt something amiss.

It was then Mark continued, "Second, the culture.

The three thousand years of culture and tradition of this world took away a woman's potential from them. Women make up half of the population of this world but only one out of every hundred thousand women

takes up a weapon to become an adventurer, compared to men with an average of one out of every thousand.

Why is that so?"

Mark's voice rose as he asked, "Are they weak? Certainly not. She can bear the child for nine months, look after her kids, do the house chores, help her husband by working in the agriculture fields for twelve hours, and take care of her elderly in-laws and even parents while still managing her household. Discover hidden content at mvl

Why can't she hold the weapon?

Why should a woman feel embarrassed to hold a sword? Why should she think that she is a caretaker?

Why should even a lady from the noble family think that she is nothing but a pawn to increase her family's reputation by marrying into another noble family?

Why should she think that the female adventurers are nothing but a scourge to womanhood? Why?"

His 9 points of charm made the souls of women audience tremble at once. Many of them had tears filling their eyes, feeling that someone was resonating their voice to the public. And it isn't some lady who was unfortunate or some weakling who was voicing out his frustration. It is the voice of the strongest man.

The voice of the strong always impacts the people. After his grandeur display against Shen Li, his voice carried even more weight.

"The extreme Patriarchal system suppressed their abilities for thousands of years and that halted the development of this world.

Forget about women for a second; this culture we cultivated for thousands of years even takes away the voice of the poor and weak. A royal can just bully a commoner and the commoner couldn't even gather the courage to voice it out.

Look at my own servant. Their master is the Chancellor of Celestial United Dominion and yet, they didn't have the courage to complain about someone like Shen Li.

Why?

It's because Shen Li is royalty, my future in-law. Even with our tight bond, this weak mindset made them afraid that I wouldn't bring justice to them because I'm royalty and would probably side with my in-laws.

So, what can we do to resolve this situation?

Well, even if I use force, it won't change the mindset of an existing culture. It needs upheaval from its roots. But, that means I would probably have to destroy the whole world. I can't do that. So, all I can do is bring my people to the land of Utopia, where such a traditional and oppressive culture doesn't exist.

I'm going to create a country, where the freedom will be given to women to take up arms and respective positions in society and even become family heads, where every house will have a robot that does house chores for free and no longer needs a servant that acts more like a slave, where no one dies of hunger, where everyone gets education regardless of their background, where there will be no noble houses to create a social hierarchy, where there will be a monarch as the head of the state but the real power lies with the commoners who could elect their own leaders to rule them, where the laws will be equal to poor and the rich, where no one forces to worship a deity and influence you to pour your hard earned money into donations, where there will be no street gangs to rob you, where the old doesn't have to depend on their sons for their livelihood, and where you could live without any worries for the tomorrow."

If Mark's earlier words shook the hearts of women and the commoners, his following words have caused even the Kings to tremble. But, not every King or noble is pleased by the words. In fact, the majority of them only felt more afraid as Mark's words indicated of taking over the Western Moon, or possibly the alliance too.

Fortunately for them, Mark didn't end there and continued as he glanced at the VIP section where the nobles and kings had their facial expressions frozen, "Rest assured, I never intended to take away the lands from my friends. This will bring us to the third point. Creation of the country.

Over the past few months, under Commander Fu Sheng's lead, Genesis Elite Troops were focused on clearing Sector 1 and Sector 2 regions in Bloodhill forest. The rest of the sectors will also be cleared very soon and I shall transform the entire forest into a new country.

Whatever I promised earlier, all of this will be delivered to my people. But, who are my people, one might wonder. My people are the ones who follow my ideals put their trust in me, and help me to build the country in the land inhabited by beasts for thousands of years.

Seven days from now, I will lock down the entire region of Bloodhill forest for the outsiders and will start clearing out the field. The barrier will reject anyone that I don't approve of.

And for those who are wondering whether I will be able to keep an eye on such a huge region, which is a hundred times larger than this Western Moon, I present you the guardians of our Country of Paradise."

Snap

With a snap of his finger, four figures rose from the Spidership and flew in different directions, maintaining distance from each other as they were instructed.

Snap

Mark's snapping of his finger cleared the confusion and suspicion of many as the four humanoid-looking kid figures transformed into majestic creatures, whose appearances were known to every individual who went to the academy.

"The... four... holy beasts of the world?" Song Tai's voice shivered as he voiced it out aloud.

Mark nodded, "The Vermillion Bird of the South, The Azure Dragon of the East, The White Tiger of the West, and the Black Tortoise of the North. The very creatures our ancients used to name our continents.

All of these are demigod realm beasts but when they work together and conjure a protective barrier, not even a Saint can break it. Including me, Commander Fu, my friend Sylvandria, and my mother, you have eight demigods protecting the country. No force in the world will have the power to try to destroy the ideals of my country.

In the first phase, I plan to take ten thousand people. It is on a first come first serve basis. The first ten thousand people who had their trust in me naturally will live in the most protected region compared to others.

Once we build a stable society, we will open to a hundred thousand people in the second phase but they will not receive the same benefits as the one from the first phase.

Those who are interested in joining my country can visit our stores and register their names and their family. The poor and weak are given priority but we aren't running a charity here. As I have said earlier, to become a citizen of my country, they had to let go of the oppressive culture and tradition deeply rooted in this society and follow my ideals and they have to contribute to it by helping us in clearing the forest. Man or a woman, the gender doesn't matter. If you are healthy, you need to contribute. Only children and the elderly are exempted.

That's all I have to say to you. I leave the rest to your decision. You have seven days..."

The meaning is clear. If one wants to be one of his people, earn the right to protection and lead a worry-less life, one should follow his ideals and work hard to build the country. As for those who are not his people, he doesn't care.

A lot of people didn't get this meaning, but many intelligent ones and the nobles and also the Kings understood that very soon, Mark and his army would leave Lunaris and they would be deprived of his protection. What kind of consequences this move will have, they can only wonder.

Chapter 584: Prelude to the war (part-6)

After a while;

At Royal Palace, Lunaris City;

Mark and the other six rulers sat together for a meeting; everyone had this tense expression as they were served wine by the servants and they weren't sure whether they should bombard Mark with questions or just stay patiently silent.

If it was before, they would not only question Mark's intentions but also make allegations of misuse of authority against him but his latest action on Shen Li made them realize that Mark just did it on purpose to state his intentions of resorting to violence if the situation arose and he didn't seem like negotiating much.

In the end, as the servants backed away after pouring wine to the Kings, Mark took a sip and addressed them, "So, I guess you are all still wondering what else there is to speak about, after announcing my plans already, right?"

"No, we just want to hear a proper explanation from you," collectively thought everyone at the same time as if all of them share the same brain cells.

Mark leaned to the front and rested his elbows on the table, revealing the rest of his plans, "After one week, I will be resigning my post as the Chancellor of Alliance and the Head of the Cabinet, leaving it in all of your hands. Whether you continue to maintain the alliance or not is up to you. On the other hand, I would focus more on the development of my own country and then begin my conquest of unifying the entire continent under one banner, The Federation of Genesis.

If you are interested in joining me, I promise you the autonomy to rule your own kingdom just as you have been doing now. Other than the fact that your lands will turn into kingdoms and act as the vassal states in name, there will be no changes at all.

If not, I will give you the time to prepare yourselves while I primarily focus on unfriendly empires and then bring my army to your doorstep, still letting you rule your own lands as you have been doing but on my terms.

The choice is up to you."

The guys who sat with him at the same long table were all Kings and Emperors. Even someone like Ouyang Zen, despite being so young, was well-versed in statecraft and could easily guess Mark's ambition after hearing his speech at the arena.

Hence, Mark's announcement is within their expectation. If there was someone who wasn't prepared, it was perhaps, Feng Chen, the puppet king of Western Yan. Unlike Ouyang Zen who deals with the affairs of the kingdom like a true king, Feng Chen lets his uncle, Prince Feng Wu rule Western Yan as his steward, at least until he becomes an adult.

As a result, apart from him who turned his head to look at his uncle, the rest of the royals stared at Mark in silence as if they didn't want to state their opinion.

Mark wanted some kind of reply but since he didn't get what he wanted, Mark targeted the guy who he wasn't close with, pointing his finger at him, "Emperor Ming, if you have anything to say on the matter, you can speak."

Ming Xianzhi took a deep breath and said in a deep tone, indicating his seriousness, "To be honest, the reason why the Qilin Empire joined this alliance is to acquire the backing as well as the protection from Chancellor Lu and Lord Fu's army. If you decide to leave the alliance and mind your own business, then, there is no reason for us to stay in the group. Our Qilin Empire never submits to you, even if you become a deity, Lord Lu. Now, if you excuse me..." He got up from his seat to leave in the middle of a meeting.

"Brother Ming..." Shen Niu stopped him, "Please wait. Let me handle this issue."

Ming Xianzhi looked at Shen Niu, "Brother Shen, Lord Lu is clear in his objective. I'm afraid I don't share that sentiment." Enjoy new stories from mvl

Shen Niu cupped his fists, gesturing for him to believe in him and turning toward his son-in-law, "Xiao Zh... *Ahem* I mean, Chancellor Lu, we don't need to be merged into a single Empire to unify the continent. We can just expand our alliance. There are only three forces remaining in the continent, Leon Empire, Kun Empire, and Dwarven Kingdom. The last two weren't a problem. Kun Empire's Emperor is your friend and as long as we take care of Leon Empire, the Dwarven Kingdom will voluntarily join the alliance on their own. After all, their King is a friend of us too."

In response, Mark snapped at his father-in-law while cracking the cup of wine, "King Shen, are you going to keep interfering in my plans? Earlier, I gave you a face and forgave your uncle. But, this time, you shall not request on behalf of anyone. Certainly not for a fool who couldn't see a bigger picture."

"Hmpf..."

Ming Xianzhi didn't retort to Mark's statement and left the room at a hastened pace.

Once he was gone, Mark then placed his attention on the remaining, or more specifically, on his eldest half-sibling who was the most problematic guy in the group, "If anyone else wishes to leave, they can. But, I have to remind you all that what I want to establish isn't a monarchy, but a Federal system where all vassal states will have significant autonomy. On the other hand, you five will retain full autonomy. All you have to contribute about 10% of annual taxes to the Federation and also ease up the migration for your people, who want to move to my country. All this while, I was merely offering you my support. If you join my cause, I will be your shield. I'm 26 years old right now and I have reached the demigod realm. In the future, I will become

immortal too. So, keep the future in mind and make your choice wisely. You have seven days to send the letter of agreement to my residence."

Mark disappeared as soon as he was finished, not intending to hear their reply right away.

He teleported to his mansion, where he met his parents and sister, who were also ready to move in with him, intending to support him with his decision all the way to the end.

And then, he spent the rest of the week at his home, just waiting for the others to make their choices too.

One day later, he gets an invite for another Council of Kings meeting. All the five states, even including someone like Shang Zexi, agreed to be part of the Federation but under certain conditions.

1) All of them will retain full autonomy, whether it is regarding their economic policies, internal security, or even judicial laws. The Federation will not claim any authority to interfere in the internal matters of the vassal states or attempt to break it into parts.

2) This period will last for atleast 99 years. During this time, none of the vassal states would possess any right to break away. But, once this time passed, they should be given the right to break away from the Federation to become an independent state once again.

3) The Genesis Cabinet will continue to exist but in the form of ministry. In order for the five original vassal states shall have more power compared to the other members in the future, the ones that will join in the future can only have one representative while they continue to have two representatives. As for their tax contribution, it will be reduced to 30%.

4) As agreed beforehand, they will be paying 10% as annual taxes to the Federation. But, this tax is only applied to the income generated from businesses. Agriculture is excluded. Also, under no circumstances, the Federation will not impose any additional taxes on them.

5) Any attack on a state that exceeds the magnitude of a 7-circle realm expert, the Federation must unconditionally send the army and deal with it.

6) Except for the Emperor's title, the vassal states will retain all of their existing titles.

7) The Council of Kings will continue to exist, and as long as there is a unanimous vote from five of them, regardless of others' votes, the council should possess additional power to add or tweak conditions to this Merger agreement.

The seven conditions presented by the five states after a heavy discussion surprised Mark a little bit as he purposely tried to remind them that they were talking to a demigod, but in the end, he comprised a little bit to give them a reason to maintain their dignity and signed the patch, using the oath of his blood. Not to mention, he saw several loopholes in the agreement and in time, he will take advantage of it, if the need of the hour rises anyway.

A few days later;

Imperial City, Leon Empire;

The Old Emperor of Shi Dynasty had his elbow on the throne's armrest and his fist was supporting his tilted head as he was intensely gazing at Sixth Prince, Shi Chong, who was kneeling in the middle of the court and defending himself in a pleading tone.

"Father, it was not done on purpose. If anything, it is the fault of Merchant Jiu. I never wanted to visit Prince Qi's mansion in the first place. He requested me over and over for the event. It was a joyous occasion and we had drinks. One thing led to another and..."

"Shut up, Chong'er," Emperor Shi almost growled in this time. "It isn't enough that you dared to charm King Qi's favorite concubine but you even abducted her? We are on the brink of a rebellion because of your act. King Qi is asking for your head."

"Father, it is not true..." The handsome-looking middle-aged fellow raised his voice in a hurry, "She willingly followed me to become my concubine. I didn't abduct her."

The whole court went silent, witnessing the shamelessness of the Prince who was well known for his profligacy.

It is not uncommon for Princes from the Imperial family to steal wives or daughters of minor nobles or commoners if they like them. In a giant Empire like the Leon Empire, the power of an imperial prince cannot be challenged.

However, laying hands on the wife of someone like King Qi, who had an army of 500,000 soldiers to deploy, is akin to inviting death. Not even an Emperor of the land will dare to do it.

The Emperor clenched his fists to control his anger, maintaining the same posture as if to show the others that he was calm and collected, "Fine then. Let's do this. Go south and bring your nephew, Prince Shi Eun, to the capital. I will take care of King Qi for you. Or else, I will hand you over to Dragon Tiger Forces."

"Nephew Shi Eun?" The Sixth Prince gasped in surprise.

Chapter 585: Moving to Genesis City

As the spies from various empires confirmed the news that Mark was going to occupy the Bloodhill forest, the Emperor of the Shi Dynasty sent King Qi's troops to Bloodhill forest to stop Mark's robotic army and Fu Shen's hundred elites. Explore more stories at [mvl](#)

As for the matter with Prince Shi Chong, the Emperor promised King Qi that the prince was currently on a diplomatic mission and once he returned to the palace, he would hand him over.

Of course, as a gesture of good faith, after sending away his son, Emperor Shi returned the woman Shi Chong eloped with to her husband's side with respect.

To protect herself, she claimed that Shi Chong abducted her rather than accepting that she followed him willingly. She also had to lie that she hadn't been defiled by the Prince and the latter merely wanted to marry her, out of her fear of the societal perception and the importance placed on family honor.

The foolish king believed her words, but the upcoming days would be tough for her in his absence, as her fellow concubines and the Queen consort who are envious of her close relationship with their husband will surely not let go of this opportunity to bully her.

Who knows, she might be driven to death and they make it like suicide. Hence, she planned on making her escape when the time came.

Shi Chong reached Western Yan and stayed as a guest at the Church of Nuwa, trying to look for an opportunity to convince his nephew, whom he was close with, to return to the palace to meet the Emperor.

Meanwhile, the entire Bloodhill forest was declared a forbidden zone by the Alliance. The Kings and Emperors passed their orders to adventurers from their land not to venture into the forest anymore. Shang Wei took this opportunity to announce mass recruitment for his military.

Bloodhill forest has been the source of livelihood for the majority of adventurers within the Vermilion Bird Continent for the past 1700 years, especially those from the Northern Phoenix Empire and Leon Empire to some extent.

Once it has been sealed, many low-level adventurers will become penniless. Hence, he thought it was the best time to increase his military strength by inducting them.

Protests emerged everywhere and many adventurers weren't willing to follow the orders of their rulers; they decided on risking their lives to enter the forest and continue their beast hunting.

Their bet is on the fact that the Bloodhill forest is too big for anyone to keep an eye on.

Little did they know that there was a satellite revolving around the planet while constantly keeping an eye on the forest for several months now.

While the respective armies of the vassal states tried their best to suppress the protests, Mark's robotic army was divided into five divisions. One division followed each beast and spread into four different directions to unleash carnage everywhere, the last division headed by Ark Secundus robot of rank-9, the Deputy to Ark Prime, focused more on capturing the adventurers.

As Ark was connected with the satellite, everyone's positions were clear to Ark Secundus and it made their job a lot easier.

But then again, the forest is indeed too vast. It is spread over 16 million sq. km in area. It goes without saying that it will take time to capture everyone and clear out the forest.

Of course, this doesn't mean Mark planned on eliminating every native species of the forest. It is foolish to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs. The best way is to capture them, breed them, and use them for his own benefit.

Every time the guardian beast attacks a settlement, it leaves some survivors and the robots take them as prisoners, throwing them into prison barriers conjured by the demigod beasts.

For every 10-15 kilometers, one such prison barrier was created where different surviving species were caught and thrown into the place.

The Spirit beasts with edible meat will be used to supply meat.

The Spirit beasts that had strong bones will be used to make either weapons or medicine.

The humanoid-type spirit beasts with significant intelligence like goblins, Orcs, kobolds, and even werewolves will be either branded with slave magic and then work in the mines and farms, or keep their freedom to become scouts to keep an eye on intruders in the forest. It depends on their choice, which he plans to give them later on.

As for the Spirit Beasts that are not of any use to him, they will be slaughtered mercilessly. Since this is a world where spirit beasts are the enemies of humans and there is no PETA here anyway, he doesn't plan on showing any mercy to them.

Six weeks passed away in the blink of an eye;

The barriers between each sector were no longer there; almost two-fifths of the forest primarily located in the south was occupied by Mark. He didn't touch the northern section apart from occupying Sector-1 and Sector-2 completely, leaving the remaining region filled with chaos as high-tier beasts from Sector-3 and Sector-4 went on a rampage because of the freedom. There's also the fact that they absolutely don't want to stay near Sector 2.

But then again, it is understandable. The demigod beasts are unleashing destruction everywhere in a random manner and Eol's army took control of Sector-2 as robots were clearing out the trees to create more land for construction. Hence, some went mad and some were afraid.

As a result, more and more beasts were seen running to the lower sectors of the northern region, which was guarded by the Leon Empire's King Qi and his forces.

After three months, exactly ten thousand and seven citizens left their homes and departed from the City of Lunaris, alongside Mark and his family.

A straight long dirt road was made from the edge of the forest from Western Moon's border directly to sector-1, which now looks like an urban town with thousands of two-bedroom wooden houses built in a uniform manner and a giant palace comparable to that of Dragon Empire's in the center, where sector-zero aka the dragon lair used to be located.

Of course, it is impossible to construct such a huge residence in a matter of six weeks. It was merely the transformation of the Divine throne. He made this treasure his home so that those who live inside (his family) will be safe from any kind of attack, in his absence.

Since he hadn't completely taken over the land, Mark felt such precautionary steps were necessary. After all, the Leon Empire had already sent an envoy with a threatening letter threatening not to break the 1784-year-old pact of not touching the forest. He couldn't care less about Emperor Shi's rants but had to be careful just in case.

Several hours after everyone settled in their new homes, Mark summoned everyone to the palace grounds, where tents were spread all over the place.

It was a little late in the evening and the moon was absent in the sky; yet, the surroundings of the entire sector were as bright as a day, due to the presence of fire lamps neatly arranged everywhere.

Everyone made it to the palace grounds and gathered at one spot, standing together in silence as Mark, alongside Song Yue and their child, was seen on a wooden platform erected not far away from the tents.

As they greeted him with a kneeling bow, Mark gestured for them to arise and then spoke, "Today, we all began a new journey in building this country together. On this joyous occasion, I would like to announce a couple of things. First of all, I would like to give you all a title as the First Citizens of Genesis Federation. What kind of benefits you have over the others who will settle here later will be announced later on."

Murmur

"First citizens?" "I wonder what kind of benefits we will receive?" "His Majesty gave us a new house as he promised. That's enough for us to keep hope" "Shh... His Majesty is speaking..."

Mark continued, "Anyway, secondly, very soon, all of you will be getting your Queen Consort. In the future, Princess Shen Ling will succeed me and become Empress Regnant one day. So, I ask you to show your utmost loyalty to her."

Murmur

"What is His Majesty saying?" "Princess Shen Ling will rule this land? Why?" "So, His Majesty is actually serious when he spoke of promoting women empowerment?" "But, even then, there is Empress Song here. How could Princess Shen become the Empress Regnant?" "Yeah, what about the Crown Prince, then?"

This time, murmurs were a bit heavy, and even Mark could sense there was a clear dissent within this large crowd.

Song Yue couldn't help but comment in a hushed tone, "See, I told you. No one would like this idea."

Mark forced out a smile and whispered back, "We'll see about that."

He then shifted his focus back to the crowd and spoke loudly, "For those who are wondering why I would appoint Princess Shen Ling as my successor when there is my son right here. Well, not everyone is a leader material. A dragon might be the strongest creature known to mankind but we don't fear it. Instead, we fear to wage war against a lion because it knows how to lead the pack. Princess Shen Ling is a capable leader, which this land needs to prosper. But, you don't have to believe my words outrightly. When we achieve the third phase where our nation is ready to take it in a million inhabitants, I'll go on a short vacation with Empress Song and Prince Lu Shan for a short period, leaving this place under her care. You could then experience her ruling firsthand. When I return, I will ask you questions about her rule and ask for an honest answer. Your decision will decide on whether she continues as the Empress Regnant or will go back to being a Queen Consort."

Chapter 586: Ascension ceremony at Church of Nuwa (part-1)

Eight more weeks later;

Church of Nuwa, Western Yan;

The church of Nuwa had guests from all over the world, mostly the Bishops and other devotees who had a prominent place in the society. They were all here for the coronation ceremony of the new Supreme Pontiff.

The other three Cardinals were busy spending their time with important guests, especially the nobles and wealthy individuals who fund the church.

Shi En, the favorite candidate for the ascension, was however seen walking in the gardens, with his uncle from Leon Empire who had been staying in this place for the past three months.

The main topic of their discussion was however Mark and the future of Leon Empire.

Some time ago, the previous Supreme Pontiff of the Church of Nuwa had sent a letter of invitation to Mark to attend the coronation ceremony in the hopes of building a relationship with Genesis City.

He wanted to expand the church of Nuwa into Genesis City before the ever-dominating Church of Light managed to get in.

More importantly, Mark also accepted the invitation.

The problem however is the fact that Mark is currently at loggerheads with Emperor Shi.

While the Leon Empire was putting up a barricade to protect half of the forest, Mark's robots and Eol's army focused on clearing out the remaining part.

Prince Shi Chong was naturally against the idea of allying with Mark but Shi En doesn't have any personal opinion on the matter. If anything, this half-elf was slightly in favor of his church's decision. However, his views align more with having a strictly business relationship with Western Yan, unlike the political one that the current Supreme Pontiff is expecting.

"Look nephew, you don't need to follow what your predecessor decided, who by the way is insane to even think about influencing an arrogant heretic like Lu Zhen. You are going to be the new leader of the church. Once you ascend to the position and receive the blessings of Goddess Nuwa, you can take whatever decision you think it is better. And you are going to be immortal anyways. What's there to be worried about?"

Shi En responded with neither a refute nor an acceptance. Instead, he let out a chuckle, "Uncle, you seem like you are afraid to meet Lu Zhen here?"

"Wha..." Prince Shi Chong was taken aback by his nephew's comment and he stammered as he defended himself, "Who... who is afraid of him? If not for his demigod servants, he would have long been dead by now. I heard that those beasts were guarding the forest. Since he knows that he is vulnerable without their protection, he didn't dare to advance further."

Shi En slightly blankly stared at him and commented, "he is also the same as them, just so you know."

"What do you mean?"

"He is a demigod. Didn't your father tell you?"

"Uhh..." Prince Shi Chong couldn't speak for a while. His legs started trembling a bit. He quickly grabbed his arms, "Nephew, why did you even invite someone like him to the event? What if he comes and decides to do something bad? No one could stop him. I think I should return."

Shi En couldn't help but chuckle at his uncle's cowardice, "actually, this is a good chance to impress your father. See, you understand that I don't return to Leon Empire anyway, whether I get selected or not. You might as well take this opportunity to strike a deal with Lu Zhen to stop his conquest and give relief to your father. Your position will be solidified."

"Yeah, as if I could do that task," Shi Chong scoffed at his nephew's suggestion, "If I was that capable, I would have long sat on the throne."

"But, you were pretty much good by charming ladies and stealing them away from their husbands," Shi En remarked almost instantly, causing the prince to become embarrassed, "I don't know whether I should take it as a compliment or an insult. *cough*"

"Anyway, what you suggested earlier is something to be noted of. How about you help out your uncle in negotiating with Lu Zhen? Since you are the host, perhaps, the chances of success will be slightly higher." Shi Chong changed the topic back to Mark, not intending to go on that line filled with arguments about ethics and all.

A few hours later;

The majestic spider-ship landed in the premises of the Church, where Mark arrived with the Grand Prince of Western Yan, Feng Wu, who is also called the true king, considering the fact that he was the one who was administrating the region in place of his nephew, the real king who was a 12-year-old kid.

Leaving the region's protector, the gold dragon, to guard the King, Prince Feng Wu joined Mark in attending the ceremony.

As the representative of the palace, Feng Wu received a great welcome from the young deacons of the church and Mark received even greater honor as the chief guest, getting personally welcomed and escorted by the current Supreme Pontiff to the prayer hall.

While Feng Wu sat down on the second with other guests of honor, Mark got to sit in the front row with the four Cardinals. Shi En was one of them who in fact sat right next to Mark.

However, there was absolutely no conversation between them at all. Discover more stories at [mvl](#)

Mark stayed silent and had his gaze fixed on the statue of the goddess with the upper body of a human-like and the lower body of a snake. The serpent-like tail coils beneath her.

Soon, the Supreme Pontiff of the Church came to the podium. Everyone got up as he spoke that they first prayed for the goddess.

The guests of honor from across the world were all believers of the goddess. They naturally stood up. Even Feng Wu, the representative of the palace had to stand up in respect for the Supreme Pontiff, the peak stage legendary realm expert. However, Mark was different.

He neither held the Supreme Pontiff in respect nor did he worship the goddess. He alone sat down. The Cardinals couldn't help but furrow their brows in displeasure because of his silence and continuous stare at the statue, the other guests of honor were shocked and some of them were worried about possible conflict over this disrespect, but the Supreme Pontiff acted like he didn't see it and proceeded with his preaching.

After a while, everyone sat down and the Supreme Pontiff addressed everyone by raising his golden staff, "Now, in a few moments, with the blessings of Goddess Nuwa, I will be naming my successor, who shall inherit this staff of immortality as well as the will of the church. Before that, the final two candidates shall have one last opportunity to appeal to the Patrons who arrive today. It is not only important for the Supreme Pontiff to lead the preachers of the church but also very important for him to work with the Patrons to spread the word of our Goddess to different regions. Hence, all the 26 patrons will directly vote for the candidate they would like to see him to lead the church."

The announcement from the Supreme Pontiff did take everyone by surprise as they were expecting this 341-year-old man to directly name his successor. Instead, he involved the guests without informing them in advance in order to select the new Supreme Pontiff.

At the same time, the four cardinals couldn't help but expect their names to be in the final two. Since the leader of the church isn't going to select his favorite anyway and leave the decision to vote, their expectations are raised up.

Mark furrowed his brows in response to the announcement from the old man which he didn't want to be a part of anyway. He just folded his hands and looked at the Supreme Pontiff as he called out two finalists.

The first choice was obvious, it was Shi En. The second one was a much older guy named Yan Chao, who is over 125 years old and is at the intermediate stage of the legendary realm.

As Shi En and Yan Chao stood on either side of the Supreme Pontiff, the latter asked them to make their final speech for the votes.

Yan Chao was quite passionate. He gave a 10-minute-long speech like a politician who wants to appease the masses, which Mark had only seen in his past life.

Shi En, on the other hand, simply mentioned that his accomplishments were known to the Patrons and if elected, he promised to make his predecessors' common wish of making the church of Nuwa surpass the church of Light.

Mark didn't know about others but he was certainly not moved by their words. He sat there in silence as one after another from the back rows stood up and named the person they pledged their support to.

As if fate is putting Mark in an important position to take some decision, by the time it reached Mark, Shi En was winning by 13-12, and so, everyone had their eyes fixed on the chief guest who could make this a tie or make Shi En a winner.

As the Supreme Pontiff asked him and the entire hall was filled with silence, Mark spared a glance at each of them and spoke, "Personally, I wasn't a Patron of your church and certainly won't worship Mother Goddess Nuwa. So, I'm not sure why you even want me to vote in the first place."

The Cardinals and the Bishops and others felt like their heart skipped a beat upon hearing those provoking words. Some of them gave an unpleasant glare at him and he could feel it.

Nevertheless, Mark couldn't care less about their feelings and continued, "But, since I'm the chief guest for this event and you asked for my opinion, I would say this guy is more suitable to lead the church than that fake on the podium." He pointed his finger at his back row, specifically at Shi Chong, and then added, "Right, Shi En? Or should I say, Shi En who is a pure elf?"

"Eh?"

"Huh?"

"What did he just say?"

Chapter 587: Ascension ceremony at the church of Nuwa (part-2)

For a couple of seconds, everyone blankly stared at Mark as if they couldn't believe their eyes.

Shi Chong at the back frowned at his statement and suddenly transformed into the half-elf who was supposedly standing on the stage, "How did you know?"

Mark let out a smirk of victory without turning his head, "that is quite obvious. You both have almost identical souls. But, your soul seems stronger. I bet this avatar of yours is created by soul-splitting technique, although you somehow managed to separate your race too."

Mark's eyes were on Shi En who was near the altar and his eyes were reading the information written on the holographic screen floating before him.

Shi En

Rank: low-8-circle

Age: 3 weeks old

Species: Human

Attribute: Fire

Spirit Path: Summoner

Affiliation: Church of Nuwa, Western Yan

As Shi En went silent, the Supreme Pontiff of the church hollered in displeasure, "Can someone tell me what's really going on here? Shi En?" He looked at the guy standing beside him.

With everyone's attention on him, Shi En got up and spoke, "I apologize, Your Grace. I merely wanted to make sure that my race shouldn't become a problem for the church, as my fellow Cardinals keep pointing it out."

Shi En, on the podium, then opened his mouth, continuing his explanation, gaining the attention of the others, "So, we split up into two beings. Me, a complete human, and my other self is a complete elf. I will lead the church as an authoritative figure while my other self will protect the church from the shadows. That's why we have decided to gain trust from our believers."

Clap Clap* Clap*

Mark started clapping then, earning a frown from both versions of Shi En, with his comment, "Your intentions are good but it doesn't change the fact that you still tried to cheat your people in your church's most sacred ceremony."

It was then the old man opened his mouth, "No, Cardinal Shi En didn't cheat anyone here. In fact, it was admirable for him to think of the church's reputation first and the feelings of the believers."

A supporter of Shi En and a noble of the Qilin Empire, Wen Chao then said, "I agree with His Grace. I'm sure Lord Lu would also understand, considering the fact that he himself is a ruler of a country now. A leader must always make certain decisions for the welfare of his people. The fact that he is willing to sacrifice himself to lead the church itself shows how mature Cardinal Shi En is."

"Hmm..." "It seems like Lord Lu doesn't like Cardinal Shi En for some reason" "Of course, it goes without saying" "Lord Lu is against Leon Empire now and Cardinal Shi En is the grandson of Emperor Shi" "But then again, like he said, he isn't a patron of the church anyway. His opinion doesn't matter." "Yeah, why is he meddling in our affairs in the first place" "I wonder why His Grace invited him to the ceremony" "Shh... He will listen. If you offend him, it is over for you"

As whispers and murmurs flowed around, which didn't escape Mark's ears, the latter questioned the two cardinals in a serious tone, although his gaze fixed more on the pale boy, "In that case, I have to ask the candidates where their political allegiance will lie, after they become the Supreme Pontiff. I heard that the church interfered a lot during the past decade when the Western Yan was governed by Ji Clan."

"So, this is why he accepted the invitation?" Everyone including Prince Feng Wu and even the Supreme Pontiff wondered.

Yan Chao, the Cardinal of Dragon Empire's branch, spoke first, "I believe it should depend on the number of believers and the kind of support we get from the country. The Western Yan is the only region in the world where devotees of Goddess Nuwa crossed 50% of the population. More than a million people worship our Goddess. Hence, no matter what, we have to look after their well-being. We should help when we are in the position to help. Unlike the Ji Clan, the Royal Feng Clan treats the subjects as their own and has the most powerful backing in the world. They don't need our interference, Lord Lu."

Mark was satisfied with his answer and he nodded with a subtle smile. He moved his gaze to the pale boy, "what about you, Shi En?"

Shi En, the human avatar, looked back at Mark, meeting his eyes with his, and then answered in a voice filled with conviction, "In my governance, the church will not meddle in any affairs. We help those who come to the church and ask for it. We help the unfortunate who lost everything, giving them hope to live. We provide guidance to the lost souls so that they can find their way back into the path of righteousness. But, that's where our duty ends. "

Mark didn't buy it and further asked, "What if I were to destroy the Leon Empire? You still maintain this resolve of yours?"

Shi En was momentarily taken aback by his question. The one sitting behind in the second row wanted to answer but the avatar on the stage beat him to it by stating, "Absolutely."

"Well, I don't think your shadow agrees with you," commented Mark in response, almost instantly.

"Hmm?"

Shi En (elf) was taken aback as gazes fell upon him, at once. He stayed silent, not intending to lie.

After a brief silence, Mark continued, "Look, I don't care if you want to take sides or stay neutral. But, if war arises between Genesis Federation and the Leon Empire and I hear anyone related to your church helping out the enemy, even if it is your patrons or believers, either the church should abandon them or face the consequences. Consider it a friendly advice or a threat. This is all I want to convey in person to the one who will take charge of the church. With that said, hoping that the next Supreme Pontiff will maintain that resolve of neutrality, I vote for Shi En."

Mark's words were sharp and overbearing but none dared to say anything against his face and simply accepted his judgment.

In order to repair the spoiled atmosphere, the Supreme Pontiff went on handing over the golden staff in his hand to Shi En, "I announce Cardinal Shi En as my successor and the new torchbearer to all the believers of Nuwa in this world."

The golden staff of immortality glowed as Shi En was enveloped in light for a couple of seconds before a white cape appeared over his robes and a long hat with the symbol of a serpent on his head.

It was followed by the appearance of a serpentine woman made of light particles who gave a bow to the boy, speaking to only him. "I greet the new apostle of Mother Goddess. Milady sent her blessings and your holy mission, just like your predecessors. Unless you die, you are forbidden to give up this holy mission or pass your position to someone else. The staff of immortality is bonded to your soul and will forever protect you from any harm. Very soon, when the water star, fire star, wood star, earth star, and metal star align themselves in a straight line, the Heavenly Kunlun mountain will be descending to the mortal realm, right into this world at a place that shares a similar name. However, it cannot be accessed until one finds the key and unlocks its entrance for the first time.

During the time of descent, the heavenly key will also descend to this world. However, it could fall anywhere from regions ruled by spirit beasts to even the depths of seas. And whoever claims this key will have the greatest chance to become the master of the Heavenly Kunlun mountain. Your holy mission is to find this key and become the master. The Heavenly Key brings a lot of changes in its surroundings. That will be your clue.

I have to remind you that other gods and goddesses will inform their apostles of the same. Hence, you have to be ready for it. Now, accept a portion of my power to raise your strength instantly, which will help you in facing for what's about to come."

The entire message was strictly heard by Shi En alone, and to an extent, the elven counterpart of Shi En also became aware of it due to their telepathic and soul connection. For the others, all they heard was a strange being talking in an extremely unfamiliar language.

Little did Shi En or the messenger know that Mark had his artificial intelligence Ark automatically recorded the entire message and simultaneously translated it to him.

Mark managed to keep his poker face, acting as if he didn't care what was happening.

Inwardly, he decided his next course of action.

Once the message is over, the heavenly messenger disappeared.

However, Shi En started floating in mid-air, enveloped by the divine energy of Nuwa.

His ether particles were steadily rising, leaving the spectators in awe.

"Look, His Grace is going through a breakthrough." "I wonder if he will become a demigod" "I don't think so. Since he is not his whole, the most he could become is a Supreme being, the peak stage of the 9-circle realm." "Yeah, you are right. However, I wonder what powers he would be receiving from the Mother Goddess" "I heard His Holiness (past supreme pontiff) has received the gift of Xalar venom, the most poisonous venom known for the man."

Having nothing else to do at the moment, Mark started focusing on the murmurings of the audience, entertaining himself to pass the time.

It was at this moment one of the deacons, the attendees of the former Supreme Pontiff who are standing not far away from Shi En, suddenly charged forward at the target.

"Wha..."

Before anyone could even make a move, the supposed deacon reached a vulnerable Shi En in an instant and attempted to stab in in the chest.

Just as the black, corruptive, energy dagger about to stab in the heart, the deacon was frozen on the spot.

In the meantime, Mark was seen having his hand stretched forward. As he tightened his fist and motioned it above, the hooded deacon raised high above the floor.

Those with high cultivation bases could see that the deacon was suppressed by some kind of attribute energy on all sides, effectively controlling the target's movements.

At the same time, they also observed that there was absolutely no sort of resistance from the captured target anymore.

Using his spatial control, Mark brought the target closer to him, feeling a bit familiar of the exposed partial face.

The hood fell down eventually, revealing the face of one of the most beautiful woman a man in this world ever laid his eyes on.

Mark got up with a shocked expression on his face, "Alina?"

"Argh..." Shi En, on the podium, also screamed at the same time with some kind of needle struck his neck before he flopped to the ground.

Thud

Chapter 588: Ascension Ceremony at Church of Nuwa (part-3)

"Your Grace" "Shi En!"

Amidst of a series of gasps from all around, Cardinals rushed forward alongside the elven counterpart of Shi En too.

Even Cardinal Yan Chao too stood nearby Shi En to protect him from further ambushes. Now that the decision is over and Shi En received the mandate from their goddess, all cardinals and bishops and everyone else who belonged to the church must stay loyal to the new Supreme Pontiff.

The former Supreme Pontiff kneeled to a collapsed Shi En and checked his system as purple patches slowly started appearing on his skin. Letting out a gasp of surprise, he spoke, "The needle released the spell of powerful witchcraft inside him. If we don't act fast, he will die."

"No, that's impossible," Shi En (elf) argued with the old man, "my human counterpart, my brother received the mandate of Goddess Nuwa. He should have already become an immortal by now."

The former Supreme Pontiff shook his head, "Without completely absorbing the blessings of the goddess into one's soul, the staff's immortality doesn't work." Shi En's expression grew grave upon hearing those words. "What... what should we do now?" He stammered a little bit.

The Supreme Pontiff let out a deep sigh and placed his hand on Shi En's chest, "There's only one way to save him, The Curse Transferral."

"What do you mea..."

The Supreme Pontiff didn't bother to give any explanation and pressed his hand on fallen Shi En's chest further, releasing an enormous amount of his divine energy into Shi En's body.

"After I was gone, all of you must wor..."

Swoosh

The Supreme Pontiff too didn't get to finish his words and was interrupted by the sudden appearance of a pitch-black barrier in the church, almost imprisoning everyone.

Mark's words then echoed in everyone's ears, "My domain's rule: I reject all kinds of witchcraft spells."

It's the first technique of his domain, the Absolute Law.

As soon as the Absolute Law comes into effect, purple-colored energy is released from Shi En's body, freeing him of the patches on the skin too, alongside the purple energy seal from Alina's floating body. The strange purple energy flew to the top of the ceiling and got out of the barrier on its own before floating over there.

"Amazing. Shi En is saved," The Supreme Pontiff screamed in surprise, earning Mark gazes from all sides filled with admiration.

Mark simply shrugged his shoulders, "Consider this a present on the ascension."

He then shifted his focus on the purple-colored energy floating around the barrier, trying to invade it but to no avail, "Singularity."

A tiny dot appeared right above the floating energy, releasing an enormous amount of suction force and swallowing up everything before it destroyed itself, with a simple thought from Mark.

This is no longer the Mark from a few months ago who depended on the system too much. In a matter of a few weeks, Mark explored his powers quite a lot, and under the guidance of Sylvandria, he mastered many of them to the extent of invoking them with a thought. Of course, his mastery is still inferior to other regular demigods but still, the current mastery is enough for him to resolve small situations like these.

Maintaining his domain, Mark passed the orders to Ark, "We should fast forward our world barrier integration plans, Ark. The four guardian beasts should be ready to launch it by the time those two objects descend to the planet."

"Understood, Boss," replied the A.I. Mark could swear that if this A.I. is standing before him as an android, it will be saluting right now. The A.I. meanwhile further added, "But, I have a question. What should we do about the ones who come here beforehand and wait for it?"

"Naturally, we either eliminate them or capture them," replied Mark. "However, we need to increase the production of A.I. cores. Let's halt weapon production for now and focus on developing A.I. cores instead."

"As you say, Boss"

A few hours later;

Mark was in a room alone with both versions of Shi En. When they expressed their thanks for the help, Mark didn't speak anything.

But, when he was about to leave, he spontaneously asked for a meeting as if he suddenly thought of it, and they had to accept it right away.

Of course, some of them were still worried about letting Mark be alone with their Supreme Pontiff without any guards in their presence. Not to mention the fact that some still suspected Mark is behind the incident.

First, he berated their Supreme Pontiff and the church, then, he saved him timely, and then, he asked for a meeting. Naturally, they couldn't trust him.

But then again, they couldn't do anything either. That's a demigod, an existence who could just kill the entire country and still escape without facing any consequences.

Coming to the meeting, as Supreme Pontiff Shi En, who reached the peak stage of the Supreme realm because of Nuwa's blessing, asked him to speak of his mind, Mark opened his mouth.

He didn't beat around the bush and directly speak of the matter he wanted to speak. Unsurprisingly, it was about the Leon Empire.

He first proclaimed that Leon Empire would be broken into pieces after he was done with his conquest and he offered one of those territories, which is larger than even Western Moon, to Shi En's elven counterpart with full autonomy, provided that he governs the land under his authority. He also offered guidance from Sylvandria, a pure elf, in order to explore his powers too.

Shi En can then shift the headquarters of the church to that region, which will be protected by Mark and his army. As an additional bonus, Mark was willing to give his support to the church of Nuwa, making it the prime religion in the Vermilion Bird Continent.

Shi En did neither say YES nor NO. He merely told him that he would think about the proposal.

Mark knew the reason behind their hesitation. And since he knew about the descent of the heavenly Kunlun mountain in the Kunlun/Kunyu mountain range, Mark didn't pressure them further and calmly left the room.

As he walked out of the room, he saw the real Shi Chong, Leon Empire's crown prince, standing there in a bit of worry.

Their eyes met and the prince bowed slightly, "Hello."

Mark gave a subtle nod after inspecting his details, "See you around, Prince Shi Chong."

As he walked away, Shi Chong rushed in to see his nephews, "Shi En, you alright?" He couldn't help but ask.

Both of them nodded at the same time. As the elf left the room citing an excuse of having an important thing to do, the new Supreme Pontiff of the church conversed with his uncle for a while, revealing every bit of conversation he had with Mark, taking Shi Chong by surprise.

While Mark and Feng Wu boarded the spider-ship with an unconscious Alina, Shi En (elf) who covered himself in black robes left the church and made his way into the town.

Meanwhile, the old witch was sitting in a rundown basement with little sunlight. Mystical drawings and strange items from dolls to even skulls were seen all over the place. And her expression at the moment doesn't look good.

"Damn it. My perfect plan went down to waste. It's all because of that old geezer. Why should he invite someone like Lu Zhen to the ceremony? Not only my connection with the puppet was gone but also failed to do his task. Now, Shi En has become invincible. I lost the opportunity of a lifetime."

As she was busy muttering the words, blaming her fate, a hooded man walked in and let down his hood, revealing his face to the witch. The witch was instantly scared by his appearance. "Shi... Shi En!"

Shi En coldly looks at the witch, "You failed to assassinate him. Not only you disappointed your lord but you also disappointed me too. You were supposed to kill him and that will enable me to freely roam the world to search for my father.

To help you out, I even pulled strings behind everyone's back to let your puppet inside. In the end, you couldn't still do your job.

And now, I'm not only stuck to the church once again but also have to face one of my uncles' assassins. Luckily for me, Lu Zhen pledged to take care of the Shi Dynasty. But unfortunately for you, my brother lives and I lost my chance to get my freedom. Tell me. What should I do with you now?"

The witch trembled a bit, averting her gaze away, "It's the fault of Lu Zhen. Had I known that he is actually a demigod who mastered the domain, I would have planned it differently."

"I'm not here to listen to your excuses," Shi En (elf) folded his hands to the chest, giving her a stern gaze.

Chapter 589: Return of Alina

The old witch with her disheveled hair went silent for a few seconds before laughing out loud like a maniac, "Hahahahaha, why didn't I think of it before?" She then looked back at the young man whom she feared earlier, "I have a way to kill him too. I need your cooperation in invoking the forbidden spell of witchcraft."

Shi En didn't say anything and just silently stared at the witch, who started muttering various words in a disoriented speech like a maniac. She went past him and collected various things from all over the room before finally taking out a needle that looked identical to the one that pierced earlier.

Upon reaching the place of what seemed like a perfect blindspot, she threw the needle precisely aiming for Shi En's neck. The needle was about to pierce him but Shi En tilted his head at the last moment and the needle evaded the target.

"Sh*t..." the witch couldn't help but curse inwardly as her plan failed. She quickly made her way toward the exit. However, she couldn't even go a couple of steps and a hand pierced her back, grabbed her heart, and forcefully brought it out.

Thud

She fell to the floor at once and turned into a corpse.

Shi En looked at the body coldly and crushed the heart into a bloody pulp, "Hmpf, do you take me for a fool or something? Just because I was willing to give you another chance, do you think you can try to kill me and present my body to your beloved client? No one in the world deserves a third chance. But, don't worry, I will send your client to the spirit realm to keep you company."

Meanwhile, after dropping Feng Wu at his palace, Mark refused his lunch invitation and hurriedly left for his private island.

Once he reached the factory, he carried an unconscious Alina to the experiment rooms, where the mechanical Cerberus Alina was seen busy monitoring the weapon production.

"Hey, Alina." "Big Bro! "*Gasp*"That's my body..." Alina charged toward him in excitement,

"Where did you find it?" "Is it in a good state?" "Looks that way" "I know that you promised me but still I never expected to find my body once again." "Master, let's begin my core integration immediately. I can't get back to my previous state"

Alina was jumping left and right like a doggy in her robotic three-headed hound's body. Whether it is her tone or her body language, she is clearly excited and quite impatient to return to her original state, showing how much she missed it.

Mark however stopped her, "Nope. We have to test it first to make sure everything is clean. Earlier, it was controlled by witchcraft."

"Ark, connect to Ark Prime and call him here." He passed the instructions to his A.I.

Within half a minute, Ark Prime, the rank-9 super robot came to his master and greeted him with a half kneel bow.

Leaving him with the objective of the analysis and core integration process, Mark left the experiment room to leave the island, flying to the island nearby where his Yong, the Great Anaconda King, was resting on a hill.

Yong uncurled its tail from around the tip of the mountain and made its way to the beach, where its master was waiting for him.

"Greetingssss, masssterrr"

As it greeted its master with a hiss and lowered its head to almost the ground, Mark responded by slightly flying high and giving a pat on its head, "Yong, this time, I came here to take you with me to your new home. Let's go."

"But, masssterrrr, I, thiss, place..." Yong seemed reluctant to leave because of its attachment to the island. Mark, who already anticipated it, went into action without wasting any time.

He flew into the sky higher and higher until he could see the entire 1 sq. Km of the island with a little mountain in the center.

Stretching his arms widely, he unleashed spatial energy into the surroundings, connecting with everything around him.

"Compression."

Compression: The User can compress the matter into condensed size without hurting the objects or people inside for a period of 60 minutes. After the time limit, everything will become original right on the spot. Note: weight doesn't change. Cost: 30% Ether energy. CD: 3 hours.

As he moved his stretched arms toward each other, Yong sensed that the entire island with it was being compressed on all sides. However, it didn't feel any discomfort even though it was reduced to less than an inch in a matter of a minute.

At once, the island vanished from the ocean. As the emptied region was replaced by the waters, Mark used his Density manipulation on the 2-foot-sized cube, reducing its density to 0.01 times before carrying it away with him back to his factory.

There, Ark Prime and Alina were busy rebuilding her body to give an upgrade with stronger materials from the recycled junk of various rank-8 and rank-9 robots.

Mark left them to their own devices and teleported back to his home, the Genesis City. The citizens came out of their homes to look at the sky where a large floating island appeared out of nowhere, followed by the rush of the clouds as if they were in a hurry to hide the mountain. The majestic peak of a 700-meter-tall mountain which was coiled around by an anaconda was witnessed by the prime citizens of the country. They couldn't help but look at it in awe as four guardian beasts flew over the city skies not long after and landed on the floating island.

The holy beasts took the position in each direction of the island and unleashed an invincible barrier over Genesis City, safeguarding it from any outside entrance that Mark didn't approve of. That means even if one secretly entered the country, they couldn't enter the city anymore and have to fend off themselves in the wild, where surviving beasts turned even more aggressive due to their periodic capture and extermination by the robots.

Two more days later, at Fujian island later;

"Assembly: initiated.

Framework: stabilized.

Inserting: primary core module.

Wiring: connected.

Power source: upgraded, integrating new cells.

Sensors: calibrated.

Motor functions: enhanced, installing servos.

Memory bank: expanded, synchronizing data.

Voice module: adjusted, testing output.

Visual processors: optimized, activating enhanced optics.

AI core: installed, running diagnostics.

Final assembly: complete.

System booting: initiating startup sequence."

Within a few moments, Alina slowly floated in the air and slowly landed on the ground.

Ark Prime and Ark Secundus, both intellectual superbots greeted her at the same time.

"Welcome Back, Android B143S."

Her eyes gave off a pitch-black glow around her blue pupils as she opened her mouth, "Alina... That's my name, fellas. Call me Alina Spencer."

She then flexed her fingers, observing them for a few seconds before releasing an orb of dark energy, "I feel different."

"Your powers have been combined with necromancy powers left behind in your system from your previous holders," replied Ark Prime, to which, Alina shot the dark energy orb to the ground.

The orb hit the floor and transformed into a lich. As it let out a ghostly scream, Alina curled up her lips and licked them, "I like this."

Ark Prime and Ark Secundus looked at each other meaningfully.

Chapter 590: Emergency meeting at Leon Empire

Imperial Leon City, Leon Empire;

In the palace, Emperor Shi called for an urgent assembly of the ministers in his throne room without any public audience. General Fan and Grand Marshal Yu were also present at the meeting.

Whether it is the Grand Marshal of Leon Empire, Supreme Commander of Phoenix Empire, Sovereign Supreme of Dragon Empire, or the Supreme General of Western Moon, the titles might be different, but basically, all of them are just the same. They are the heads of the entire army and are often considered the second most powerful person in their country.

General Fan briefed the situation in Bloodhill forest, explaining, "Apart from King Qi and his three legions, there are more than five hundred adventurers, and Mt. Hudang disciples were also trapped in the barrier. For all we know, Lu Zhen has ordered the capture of intruders in his territory. And for those who resist, they will be killed. That barrier from the demigod beasts wouldn't let anyone go in or out without his permission."

"The situation has indeed become dire. We have to do something," commented the minister of finance.

The minister of war slammed the table with his fist of anger, "This is clearly an act of war, Your Majesty."

The Prime Minister of the Empire reluctantly voiced his opinion, "Your Majesty, as far as we know about Lord Lu, he is someone who would prefer peace when he could see profits. It's best if we negotiate with him."

"Negotiation? That's something we have to do if we have no other choice, Prime Minister Wang," commented the Grand Marshal.

Emperor Shi has added to the Grand Marshal's comment, "If we negotiate, there is only one thing he will ask. The recognition of his country, which we will never will. We have been guarding the pact of not touching the forest for the past 1785 years. There is no way we will let it break now, just because some demigod is interested in having his own country."

Everyone felt silent for a few seconds, now that they have heard their Emperor's thoughts.

The Emperor's eldest grandson, Prince Shi Chong's son, Prince Shi Xuan, who often competes against his own father for the throne and was the most vocal in the assembly, spoke on the matter as the others were still wondering what to say, "Your Majesty, we don't need to act on our own. We can move the guilds."

"Hmm?" Emperor Shi looked at his grandson for an explanation. The others also did the same, except for the Prime Minister who already seemed like he understood what the prince wanted to say.

He quickly warned the prince, "Your Highness, you do understand what you are about to suggest, right? If taken wrong step, the entire world will burn in the flames of war."

"Yes, I understand it too," As the Prince solemnly nodded, the Emperor asked him for a clear explanation.

The Prince went on to explain, "Lu Zhen could form a country on his own. It is not a problem for anyone. It's because Bloodhill Forest is not the land claimed by any Empire. He can even cut down the forests and build his own cities.

However, if he is wiping out all the beasts and harvesting their corpses for himself, covering up the entire forest with the barrier, and banning entry for the outsiders, he is going to affect the livelihood of thousands of adventurers.

Based on this act, we can force the guilds to act against Lu Zhen in order to protect the interests of their fellow adventurers. An egoist like Lu Zhen will never bend to someone's will. Obviously, the guilds will lose. But, if we carefully act, we can involve the other empires to give justice to their guilds.

The guilds are one of the primary sources of income for every country. The restaurants survive on the meat of the corpses they buy on the market, and we cannot forget the usage of spirit beast bones in medicine. Of course, the usage of beast cores in raising one's cultivation, and some key parts like blood, eyes, and heart are used in making high-quality weapons.

And before involving everyone, we have to bring our neighbors into our fight against Lu Zhen. According to our spies, weeks ago, Lu Zhen announced that he intends to bring every single region in the Vermilion Bird continent under his rule. The South is more or less under his control, but before he makes his move, we have to ally with Qilin and Kun Empire. If we also bring the dwarves to our side, it will make our job even easier."

"Hmm..." "What His Highness makes sense" "Your Majesty, I agree with His Highness" "me too" "Me too" "Me too" "I also agree with his opinion" "I'm not sure about it. I mean this will paint us as weak" "No, Minister Li. If Lu Zhen attacks us directly, we have what it takes to protect our land, but it is another thing to venture into the wild and attack him. We clearly have no idea what else is lurking in that vast forest." "Your Majesty, please make the decision."

"Hmm..."

After much pondering, the old emperor commented, "I guess my wastrel of a son indeed did a good job of giving birth to a smart one. However, it isn't enough to bend his will for a very long time. We need a key hostage, a betrayer, and a strong adversary."

"You mean..."

"Find out where the Supreme Pontiff of the Church of Doom is hiding. And contact that mage. It is time to wake up our sleeping spies."

Meanwhile, at Fujian Island;

As Alina sat there on the table obediently, Mark was inspecting the details.

Alina Spencer

Species: Android

Rank: 8

Spirit Path: Assassin/Mage

SKILLS:

Shadow Cloaking: Turn invisible for 120 seconds and escape the sense of 8-circle and lower. In this state, Alina can attack the enemies. CD: 10 min

Short Teleportation: She can teleport 500 meters away. CD: 30 sec

Shadow Daggers: She can summon two protos daggers and use them as weapons. They can interrupt the energy of enemies. CD: 0 sec

Twilight Shackles: She can manifest three energy chains with blades as the tip. Enemies who pierced by the chain will lose speed by 50% for 5 minutes. CD: 2 min/chain

Undead Creation: She can create undead creatures that can unleash magic such as Lich and wraiths. CD: Depends

Specter Extraction: She can extract specters from the dead creatures, out of their hatred. The specters extracted will retain 50% of the strength that the dead body has, at their peak moment. She can only maintain one such specter at one time. CD: Depends.

Death Knight: She can call forth the Death Knight from the netherworld to battle the enemies on her behalf. The Death Knight will have +1 rank stats than her and will stay in the world of living for a period of 30 minutes. CD: 24 hours.

Passive:

Aegis of Night: Her stats increase by one rank after sunset and is immune to all the curses. She also turns a bit sadistic and violent.

Interrogation: She can bewitch the minds of enemies with a 7-circle or lower to extract information.

Friend of the undead: Any undead creature will automatically act friendly towards her unless she lands a hit on them.

*

"Hmm..." Mark couldn't help but fall into deep thinking, wondering about the implications of such new abilities in Alina.