

## **Seller 651**

Chapter 651: Achieving immortality

Mark's thoughts spiraled constantly for a while. "Who am I?"

Am I Houyi? Or Yandi?

His mind became a mess. He lived two lives just now, each spanning centuries.

When he did, whatever life he had lived so far in this life was almost extinguished into oblivion.

Mark even forgot his own real name for a moment and just pondered on his identity. Which identity should he choose? Shennong or Houyi?

It was at this moment that something began to take shape in front of him. The curves were sleek. The shadows surrounding it bent like gravity itself gave way to its presence. His soul weapon, the anti-matter gun, hovered in front of him.

As if drawn by instinct, he reached out and grasped it. The moment his fingers closed around the grip, the swirl of fragmented lives stilled. His soul no longer trembled. Like a thousand broken gears snapping back into place, he felt his core align.

Memories surged forth—not myth, not legend, not prophecy. His current reality.

He remembered the synthetic blue light of his lab, the way his fingers used to dance over touchscreen consoles. The way the theories would burn inside his skull until he let them out in scribbled formulas across whiteboards. He remembered the cold ambition that drove him to create something that brought peace to the world but misery to his life.

He remembered the betrayal—the way it all came crashing down. His death from his former comrades. The drowning in the ocean and transmigrating into a different earth filled with Chinese customs and a magic world in a medieval era.

He remembered waking in a body not his own, but due to his soul merging with Lu Zhen, he embraced the identity of Lu Zhen both in body and mind.

He remembered the day he met Song Yue. The Day he was offered marriage by Shen Ling. The day he prophesied his love for Song Yue. The day the system betrayed him. The day his son, Lu Shan, was born. And of course, his daughter.

Each memory struck like a gong, deepening the silence that came after.

He slowly lowered the gun. His voice, calm and whole, filled the space around him, not loud, not shouted, just true.

"I may have been Yandi. I may have been Houyi," he said, feeling the name in his chest like steel returning to a reforged blade.

"To some, I'm Lu Zhen."

"To some, I'm Shang Zhen."

"And to some, I'm Lan Zhen." The son who found belonging in the clan of storms.

"But I'm always going to be Mark Spencer," His voice echoed in the white dimension, which started cracking all of a sudden. "And I'm a weapon seller."

The antimatter gun pulsed in acknowledgment, then dissolved into radiant light.

The dimension cracked and cracked, then burst into specs of light, blinding his vision for a moment.

When it was restored, he found himself in the mountains.

The sky, still heavy with lingering thunderclouds, began to quiet.

The ozone-rich wind softened into a still hush, as if the heavens themselves were watching in suspense.

\*Ding! The breakthrough has been completed

\*Ding! Congratulations, master, on reaching rank-11. On achieving immortality

\*Ding! Your skills have been upgraded.

\*Ding! The unfinished quests have been deleted automatically. Possible reason: the system's doctrine.

\*Ding! Ultimate ability, Creation, has been added to the list.

\*Ding! Store Relocation has been added to the list.

Mark gasped as his consciousness surged into his body, spirit snapping into place with an electric jolt. He opened his eyes slowly. Snow swirled around him as he hovered mid-air for a heartbeat longer before drifting down to the ground with a quiet grace, feet touching the frost-kissed earth like a leaf falling upon water.

The moment he landed, a blur of movement crashed into him.

Lan Xia, normally composed, leapt into his arms and buried her face into his chest, her whole body trembling.

She clutched him tightly, fists curled into his robes, as if letting go might mean losing him again.

Her voice broke in sobs as she stammered, her words tumbling over each other, "Y-you collapsed, you weren't breathing, I thought—thought I lost you, you idiot, why didn't you prepare properly... how reckless you are?"

Mark blinked in surprise, still processing her reaction as the person he knows would never be bold enough to do this. Was his situation really turned out to be bad for her to be this worried?" For a long second, he stood there awkwardly with his arms at his sides before his expression softened.

In the end, he gently raised a hand, brushing his fingers across her damp cheek. "I'm alive," he said simply, offering a lopsided smile. "And I broke through. That's what matters, right?"

She looked up, tears streaking her face, and nodded through her sobs. "Idiot," she whispered again, voice cracking.

He chuckled quietly. "You've said that twice."

The snow parted with a quiet rustle as another presence descended. The Sect Leader stepped onto the ground just a few feet away. His expression, normally stoic and unreadable, held a flicker of approval.

He looked at Mark.

"Lan Zhen, my descendant," the Sect Leader said at last, his deep voice steady but respectful. "You've managed to live through the judgment sky bolt and broke through to the transcendent realm and achieve an immortal life span."

Mark straightened instinctively, still supporting Lan Xia, who now stood beside him but didn't move far from his shoulder. "I apologize for causing such a disturbance."

The Sect Leader nodded, then offered a rare smile, thin, fleeting, but genuine. "Congratulations, Lan Zhen. The legends say that those who survive the Sky Judgment Bolt will one day take a place among the deities. I truly hope for the day to come."

He turned slightly before quietly adding, "However, your journey has only just begun. So, don't grow complacent and try to cultivate diligently. When you stabilize your realm, come and see me at the Eastern Pavilion. I think it is time for you to learn the Ultimate Arcane Arts of the Clan."

Mark wanted to say that he doesn't care about those clan techniques, but Lan Yujin has already disappeared from there.

The Elders who were in the surroundings either left or came closer to congratulate him and leave.

Once they were gone, he looked at Lan Xia, who was still sniffing beside him, and smiled. "Come on," he said softly. "Let's go home."

Chapter 652: Going for the war

After returning to his residence, Mark sat down and muttered.

"Open, Character interface."

Name: Lu Zhen (Mark Spencer)

Rank: 11

Strength: 11

Intelligence: 11

Defense: 11

Agility: 11

Vitality: 11

Resistance: 11

Charisma: 9

Luck: 7

Bloodline: Primeval (Blizzard Pegasus, Immortal Phoenix, Gargantuan Leviathan)

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

Spirit Path: Summoner, Mage

Ether Quality: Max.

Ether energy: 100,000,000,000

Bloodline skills: Absolute freezing, Ice bolt, Blizzard Wings, Freezing gaze, Blizzard Pegasus Transformation, Instant Resurrection, Celestial Flare, Flame Burst, Eternal Flames, Phoenix Transformation, Abyssal Resilience, Maelstorm, Tsunami Charge, Ocean Sovereign, and Leviathan Transformation.

Titles: Master of Holy Beasts, Absolute Authority (Equipped)

Soul Weapon: Anti-matter Gun.

Assistants: 1 (Alina Spencer)

Contracted beasts: 10

Contracted demons: 1

Store branches: 2

Headquarters: Lunaris City, Western Moon Kingdom, Vermillion Bird Continent.

Affiliations: Dominion of Genesis, Heavenly Ocean Empire.

Lifespan limit: Infinite

Special SKILLS:

Ultimate Defense I: By Default, the store is invincible under the heavens and cannot be damaged by anyone under the God realm

Ultimate Defense II: Within the store, the host cannot be harmed by anyone in the God realm. The host cannot also be dragged outside against his will.

Ultimate Defense III: The host can relocate the main store to any place in the universe he wishes. (Note, once you relocate, the host can no longer change the store's headquarters)

Eyes of God: Allows the user to inspect any nonliving thing or living thing and find their details.

Thunderblast: Summon a Sky Judgment bolt from the heavens to strike down the enemy with 150% attack power (max: 14.9). Cost: 50% ether. CD: None.

Multiple Lightning Clones: Summon lightning clones with stats equal to your maximum stats+2. Cost: 1% ether/second per clone. CD: None

\*

Enhanced durability (level-99): Increase the user's body durability to receive less incoming damage of all types except for mental attacks. Effect: 99% DR. Limit: Attacks that are no greater than two ranks/realms above the user.

Ether Regeneration (max): Increase the ether recovery rate by 100 times. Effect: 1% recovery per every 0.7 seconds.

No Touch (max: Deactivated): Upon activation, the user's body will be untouchable through physically. Nothing in the world (except for the items owned by the user and energy) can touch the user.

Gravity Dome: Creates an invisible dome around the user. Inside the dome, the user could control the gravity from 0.0001g to 100,000g. Range: 1,000,000 meters. Cost: 1% Ether Energy per second. CD: 0 seconds.

Taming: Creates a golden rope to capture the target and subdue it. The success rate depends on various factors like the grade of the target, the difference of strength between the target and the user, willpower of the target, etc... Note: The skill doesn't work on targets that are already in a contract with someone else.

Metal Armor: The user can gather magic energy and turn his body into steel, increasing strength and defense stats by 2 points for ten minutes (Max: 12.9) Cost: 50% Ether energy. CD: 6 hours.

Weapon Transmutation (max): With a touch on an item of any grade (ungraded-God), the user could extract all the raw materials used in making it. Cost: N/A. CD: 5 seconds.

\*

Summon Alloses (max): The user can summon the demon lord and the Great Duke of Ars Goetia, Alloses, from the netherworld with his full strength. Cost: 1 year of lifespan per hour. CD: None.

Note: No cost is required if the summoned location is in the Netherworld. The cost will be reduced accordingly if the summoned location is in a place filled with demonic energy (i.e., a place inhabited by demons). The cost will multiply accordingly if the summoned location is in a place filled with divine energy (i.e., a place inhabited by divine beings).

\*

Cosmic Essence Absorption: The user can absorb the energy from celestial objects and convert their cells into ether particles, raising the energy reserves. The closer the distance to the object, the higher the rate of absorption. Range: 1 Light Day.

Creation (max): With enough energy, the user can create matter through sheer will. Note: the complex the structure of the atom of the desired object, the lower its success rate. CD: None.

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"Hmm... "Hmm... the Ultimate Defense got an upgrade, its protection increased directly from demigod to the God realm. And that Ultimate Defense III, I can relocate my main store to any place. I haven't changed the

main store. It's not operable at the moment, but it is still there, lying in dust at Northern Phoenix's Capital City. I can move that store to this place, but before that, I need to spread the firearms here too."

Wil scrolled down further and mumbled, "I guess I can now kill anyone under the elder god realm with the thunderblast. The Gravity Dome is damn awesome. Apart from those two upgrades, the others are meh. This Creation ability is also a good thing. It's like I gained a fraction of the Creation Orb's power. Maybe, this is the ultimate gift left by the system."

\*Haa\*

"Well, anyway, my bloodline and elemental skills have received a worthy boost, and I received a new rank-11 monster. But I'm not going to use 80% of those anyway. Now that I'm an immortal, it is time to take care of that Cat demon empress once in for all. With Xiao Jiao, my little sis, having gained the title of an inheritor and the Blizzard Pegasus becoming the guardian, it has now become impractical for me to participate in the sect head trials and take over the clan, then use them against her. And too bad that I also developed a bit of attachment to the clan. So, let's only use demons instead. Of course, using technology is mandatory. Maybe, the people in these upper realms will understand the power of my firearms and will perhaps be impressed enough to purchase them from my store. A war is always the best way to promote weapons. Sad but true. And now, it is time to wage the war. Before that, I need to make some preparations."

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One week later, in the middle of the night, when the moon is barely visible in the sky, Mark slipped out of his house before proceeding to sneak away from the sect.

But before he even left his house yard, a voice rang behind him. "You really thought I wouldn't notice?"

"Oh, god." Mark groaned aloud and turned around. Lan Xia stood there with her arms folded, dressed in battle gear, sleek white robes reinforced with faint, shimmering scales. Her hair was tied up in a high knot, ready for combat, and the look in her eyes made it clear she'd been waiting for him to pull something like this. "Sister Xia."

"Going out somewhere?" She asked, raising her eyebrow.

"How do you know that I will sneak out?" he asked

"Simple, you made a breakthrough," she replied coolly. "Your hands would obviously itch to annoy Demon Cat Empress once again."

Mark let out a frustrated sigh and rubbed his forehead. "Lan Xia... listen. This time's different. I'm not going out to fight a battle. I'm going to fight a war."

Her brows narrowed slightly, the playful sarcasm dropping from her tone. "What do you mean?"

Mark hesitated a moment. But then said quietly. "I'm going to kill the Cat Demon Empress today."

Lan Xia blinked. "I'm sorry, what? The Cat Demon Empress? You want to kill her? Are you crazy?"

He didn't flinch and answered. "My aim has always been to kill her. This is something I cannot compromise on."

"No, today, I'm not going to let you become reckless again. Just last week, you almost died from the Sky Judgment Bolt. The Cat Demon Empress is someone who can throw thousands of such attacks. You will die. Just what kind of beef you had with that Feline Empress that you are taking such a risk?"

He turned slightly, gazing toward the horizon. "Back in the mortal realm, I went into a dungeon and found an egg. A cat was hatched from an egg. It is the Golden Demon Kitten. I made a soul contract with him, and Anan became a part of our family."

Lan Xia's face changed. She took a small step forward, her voice softer now. "What happened?"

"He was abducted when I was away from my home," he said, clenching his fists. The anger is evident on his face. "They destroyed my creations, they threatened my family. Those cowardly felines..."

He turned to face her, eyes glinting beneath his bangs. "I'm not letting them get away from it. I will take back what's mine, and I will pay them back a millionfold."

Lan Xia stood in silence for a moment. No questions. No interruptions. Then she exhaled and said, "Alright. I'm coming with you."

Mark stepped back. "No. You're not. You're strong, but you're not strong enough."

"I'm not asking permission," she said flatly. "I'll take care of myself. I'm not a burden, Gege."

"You will be if I have to spend every second looking out for you..."

"Well, don't." Her voice was sharp now. "Don't protect me. Just fight your fight. I'll fight mine."

Mark stared at her. For a moment, he wanted to argue, tell her how she was overestimating herself, and there was no need to risk her life for a friend. But he could see an unshakable resolve in her eyes.

Mark exhaled a long breath and shook his head, "You are unbelievably stubborn."

"I know that. Let's go." Lan Xia disappeared and appeared beside him with a step.

## Chapter 653: Sky Pavilion Sect's recruitment test

Soon, both of them stepped into the world portal and teleported to the Null Point before stepping through one of the teleportation portals and entering the Immortal Plane of Existence's teleportation hall under the control of the Sky Pavilion Sect.

The place was quite bustling compared to before. Warriors from a 7-circle to even a God realm 13-circle realm expert could be seen around.

Around them, disciples from different sects moved in orderly formations. Others in foreign-style armor, clearly otherworlders, were sparring, trading, or tending to wounds. The air felt tense, like a war is about to break out very soon.

As they made their way toward the nearest outpost checkpoint, a voice called out behind them.

"Excuse me..."

A young man jogged up to them, wearing a white and blue tunic stamped with the Sky Pavilion Sect insignia. He looked winded but grinned as he stopped a few steps away, looking between Mark and Lan Xia with a mixture of curiosity and awe.

Mark raised an eyebrow. "Yes?"

The young man cupped his fists and bowed. "Greetings. You are here to join the subjugation force, right?"

Mark frowned. "Subjugation force?"

The disciple blinked. "Wait, you didn't know?"

"We just got here," Lan Xia replied flatly. "Explain."

"Oh, right. So basically, the Sky Pavilion Sect has issued a recruitment call to all otherworlders and cultivators in the outer planes of existence. They're forming an allied strike force to invade and bring down the Feline Empire. It's a full-on war effort—commanders, squads, scouts, supply routes, the whole deal."

Mark glanced at Lan Xia. She just arched an eyebrow, clearly unimpressed.

The disciple kept talking. "You don't even have to prove yourself if you're an Ascendant or higher. Direct enlistment. They're giving away Earth-grade divine weapons just for joining at the Ascendant or Transcendant level. If you're a First or Second-Stage Transcendant, you get a Sky-grade divine weapon, and if you're Third-Stage, you even get a Heaven-grade one."

Mark blinked. "They're giving away Heaven-grade weapons just like that?"

"Yep. You show your cultivation, you get your gear. Supply incentive to make sure the strong don't sit this one out." The disciple chuckled. "Heard some big shots already enlisted. Apparently, one guy from the Thunder Valley Sect showed up with a dragon corpse and asked if he could trade it for two. I apologize, I don't know what your levels are. Just that they are way stronger than mine."

Lan Xia sighed. "We don't need any of that."

The disciple tilted his head. "Oh? You already have Heaven-grade gear?"

Mark gave a faint smile and let his hand rest casually on the hilt of his anti-matter gun, which currently appeared as a sleek, dark pistol holstered at his side, bound to his soul. "Something like that."

"Well then," the disciple said, clearly a bit rattled now. "Still, it wouldn't hurt to talk to the command post. Even if you don't want weapons, you might demand other treasures. Everything can be arranged as long as you prove yourselves. And what's more, you can even join the sect as..."

"Where do we go to get tested?" Mark asked suddenly, cutting the disciple off mid-sentence.

The disciple blinked. "Huh? Aren't you both ascendants? You don't have to take a test."

"I don't have to," Mark said with a shrug. "But I'd like to take a look anyway. Might be fun."

Lan Xia raised an eyebrow but didn't comment. She could tell from the gleam in his eyes that his gears were turning.

The disciple nodded enthusiastically. "Sure, the testing arena is over that ridge—see the pillars with lightning carvings? That's where they check your combat power. You just have to damage the stone dummy."

"We'll take the trial," Mark said, turning away already.

Lan Xia gave him a sideways look as they walked. "You sure you want to bother with this?"

"I've got an idea," he replied. "We suppress our realms. No one asks questions. No one gets suspicious."

Lan Xia blinked. "Why?"

"No questions, if you are coming with me." Mark flatly said to her.

Lan Xia stared at him for a couple of seconds and nodded. "Alright."

They walked around the slope until the trial field came into view—a flat, circular stone platform nestled between cliffs, surrounded by floating viewing stands and training disciples. Around a dozen candidates were lined up, their auras flickering at varying intensities—some powerful, some just passable. But none of them had stepped into divine territory. They were all stuck somewhere between 7-circle and 9-circle.

"Perfect," Mark whispered. "Let's keep it low-key."

He tapped into his AI's interface, and a faint flicker passed through his body as he adjusted his spiritual output. Next to him, Lan Xia did the same, suppressing her cultivation. From the outside, the two of them now looked like peak Ninth-Circle cultivators, extraordinary in mortal realms or other elemental planes of existence in some kind of primitive worlds, but here, they are nothing but cannon fodder. Based on the ages and the elegant attire they wore, Mark and Lan Xia looked like they were some nobles who came here to experience the world.

A few onlookers looked up as they approached. Someone muttered, "Another pair of last-minute challengers."

A brawny cultivator in a dark blue robe scoffed as he cracked his knuckles. "Let me guess. Lovers who train together, die together?"

Mark gave him a disarming smile. "Only if you're offering to be the training dummy."

That got a few snickers from the crowd. The blue-robed man bristled but looked away, pretending not to care.

The test proctor, a sharp-eyed woman with silver-threaded armor and a command token on her waist, glanced at them. "Names?" Mark scanned her data and saw that she is a peak stage 12-circle.

"Lu Zhen," Mark said, and then pointed at Lan Xia with a straight face. "And this is Shang Xia." Lan Xia couldn't help but cast a sidelong glance at Mark. She didn't know that she was supposed to give false names. Perhaps it is because Mark wanted to keep the Lan Clan out of this matter. At the same time, Lan Xia also found the name Shang Xia to her liking.

Meanwhile, the proctor looked over a spirit jade that recorded their registration. "You're both Nascent Soul realm (peak-9-circle). Alright.

She pointed to the 9-circle man who was already walking onto the platform.

Mark leaned over and whispered to Lan Xia, "You go second. Let me go first and shake the room."

She smirked faintly. "Don't blow up the arena."

"I'll try not to."

Mark stepped forward just as the 9-circle man on stage finished a solid, if unimpressive, performance, slicing a stone dummy in half with a flashy wind blade and flexing for the crowd like he'd just defeated a sect elder.

"Next!" the proctor called.

Mark walked onto the platform with casual steps, spinning his gun once before clicking it into place in his grip. The moment he stepped onto the arena, murmurs started.

"What is that thing?"

"Is that an artifact?"

The proctor narrowed her eyes and muttered. "I can feel the connection of the soul. It's a soul weapon, but it looks quite odd in shape. Never seen such a weird soul weapon."

Meanwhile, Mark stood on the platform and raised the anti-matter gun and pointed it at the newly replaced stone dummy, which was stronger than the last. This one had a defensive spell, making it capable of taking damage from even a demigod's attack.

Without another word, he squeezed the trigger.

A soundless pulse cracked the air. There was no blinding flash, no energy surge, just a single shimmering dark bullet that struck the stone dummy.

**\*Boom\***

A heavy explosion sounded at the impact, attracting the attention of everyone around.

As it was about to engulf the surroundings, the proctor raised her hand and conjured a barrier around the stone platform, controlling its radius.

Along with the stone dummy, except for the part where Mark was standing, the rest of the platform was gone in the explosion, and everything disintegrated into nothing.

The crowd went silent.

Even the brawny cultivator's smirk turned into a dumbfounded gape. "What the..."

The proctor blinked. "That's the power of a transcendant. Why are you here at the test site?"

Mark just smiled. "More like the power of my soul weapon." He raised the gun.

The proctor cleared her throat. "Uh... impressive. Very... unorthodox. You pass. I... uh, I'll report this to command."

Mark nodded and stepped down without fanfare, twirling the gun once and holstering it on his side. As he walked back, all eyes stayed glued to him.

Lan Xia shook her head, exasperated but a little amused. "You're a menace. Look at the mess you have made. And you say we should stay low-key and not want attention. Is this what you mean?"

Mark scratched his cheek in a bit of embarrassment. "I didn't take its explosion into account. I treated it as a human. Oops..."

Meanwhile, far away from them, a blonde haired girl, who look like a kid and had her hands in the hands of a woman in maid clothes, mumbled with a frown, her eyes have these glowing runes circling around. "That's Anti-magic. I thought it is a myth, but it looks reality. how stranger to meet the wielder in a place like this. I expected someone from a celestial race would have hold that power."

#### Chapter 654: The Anti-magic weapon

The summons came less than an hour after the explosion.

Mark and Lan Xia hadn't even left the outer perimeter of the trial field when a silver-robed messenger, riding a wind spirit mount, landed beside them with a polite but urgent expression.

"Command requests your presence immediately," he said with a bow, eyes flicking warily to the black pistol at Mark's side.

Mark tapped the grip idly. "That fast, huh?"

Lan Xia's expression didn't change, but Mark saw her fingers twitch slightly, in preparation for anything unexpected. After all, they came together, and he blew up the testing platform. Fortunately, they didn't show any aggressiveness and instead requested their presence.

They followed the messenger through a series of guarded passageways, crossing through the teleportation hall's inner sanctum, up towards a mountain cliff citadel that jutted over the Immortal Plane's skyline like a blade ready to strike.

The air changed as they stepped past the gates. Invisible threads of Qi prickled over their skin, tugging at their aura, trying to scan them as if to make sure that none of them were beasts in disguise.

"Divine pressure field," Lan Xia murmured under her breath. "Never expected that the Sky Pavilion Sect also possessed this."

Mark stayed silent; his AI, on the other hand, was already busy, scanning the entire surroundings and feeding the information in real time to him.

Inside, the command chamber was built in concentric rings, each one higher than the last.

Various subsidiary sect leaders or their envoys occupied their designated seats along with the Sky Pavilion Sect Elders. A war map hovered in the center, depicting the Feline Empire's rough area of administration. Red pulses marked recent skirmishes. For Mark, it looked quite like a star map of a galaxy.

However, Mark's attention soon shifted to the people sitting there above. Overall, there are about fourteen 13-circle realm cultivators and five 14-circle realm cultivators. The strongest being on the highest seat, probably the sect leader, who is still an advanced-14-circle realm expert, weaker than his great-grandfather. However, the leader's throne is seen empty though, for some reason.

As soon as they entered, almost every eye was already turned toward them.

An elder with a hawk-like nose and crimson robes raised a hand. "Lu Zhen, Shang Xia." His tone was precise, like a knife testing flesh. "Step forward."

They did. Lan Xia's gaze swept the room once and then lowered, her stance easy but alert. Mark looked like he was just happy to be here.

A different voice spoke, softer, but older. A woman with moon-white hair and a crystalline monocle over one eye leaned forward slightly.

"Your soul-bound artifact," she said, "bears traces of anti-magic radiation. That... is a forbidden phenomenon. Even the Archivists from the Time-Sink Worlds sealed such technology. You didn't inherit it from there, did you?"

Mark blinked once. "Ah... this baby?" He patted the weapon lightly. "It's my creation." Of course, it is not. He got it from the soul weapon creation scroll from the Lan Sect, but Mark couldn't reveal his origins. And moreover, he had to make the sale. With prospective buyers around, he couldn't help but brag about the lie. Of course, not that he can't make it. He made an antimatter warhead. Surely, making anti-matter bullets and a gun that can handle them shouldn't be hard for him, right now.

"You made the anti-magic soul weapon?" another elder echoed. The tone hovered between awe and alarm.

"Would you like to order a few?" Mark asked, smiling brightly. "As long as you provide materials, I can make weapons for you, although it is quite time-consuming and won't be ready for the war against Felines for sure."

The room stirred with muted murmurs. One of the generals whispered something to the hawk-nosed elder, who frowned deeper.

Lan Xia gave Mark the briefest glance but said nothing.

Then the light shifted.

A golden rune circle bloomed midair above the map. It rotated, deepened, and from it emerged a projection, a tall figure draped in star-cloth robes, its face hidden behind a smooth, obsidian mask inscribed with a glowing spiral. Space around them warped slightly, like gravity itself bowed in their presence.

Silence fell. The projection didn't speak immediately. Then, a voice, not male, not female, but resounding and distant, like the echo of a god remembering its own name, spoke.

"Lu Zhen," the voice said.

Mark's eyes narrowed the faintest bit. "Yes?"

The projection inclined its head. "I speak for the Voidbound Celestials. I'm not sure if you have heard of us, but we operate from the Null realm, and our job is to protect the magic. We received information that your weapon contains anti-magic, and the anti-magic weapons have long been forbidden in this plane of existence."

"Wait a second, Elder," Mark said lightly. "I think there has been some kind of misunderstanding here. I would like to slightly adjust my statement." Summoning the Anti-matter gun, he said. "This isn't anti-magic. This is anti-matter. It doesn't annihilate magic. It converts my Qi into unique energy and annihilates matter around the magic, like any object or air. If anything, this is magic."

"Eh?" The projection was taken aback by Mark's response and intently observed the gun. "I have never heard of such a weapon."

Mark replied. "The universe exists in balance, elder. I don't need to remind you of such a simple fact. If good exists, then evil does, too. If light exists, so does darkness. If a Deity exists, demons will also exist. And if magic exists, then anti-magic also exists."

Murmurings soon filled the hall.

After a brief pause, the projection slowly said. "If that was the case..." The projection glanced at a specific elder. "Then I advise the Sky Pavilion Sect not to disturb us in haste before confirming the facts." It vanished like mist, after a brief statement, but many of those elders sweated at those words, especially one particular elder.

The command room stayed silent a few heartbeats longer. Then the hawk-nosed elder cleared his throat. "Lu Zhen, you are required to go through another test for us to confirm that what you used is not anti-magic. I hope you don't take it as offense."

Mark shrugged. "That's alright, Elder. We are all gathered here, having come from far away to join the subgation force, as we all were being threatened by one common enemy, the Demon Cat Empress. Making a fuss over such matters will only show nothing but immaturity. I may be young, but not immature."

"Well said." An elder smiled, stroking his beard.

"This young man has quite a character. Bitter on the inside, but not an ounce of that bitterness is shown on the outside. He knows how to mask his feelings." Another elder muttered under his breath. "I like it."

The hawk-nosed elder then left his seat and leaped to the center of the hall, landing before Mark.

Lan Xia tensed a bit, but she stayed silent and continued to be a silent spectator. Whether it was helplessness to interfere or confidence in Mark, only she knows.

Meanwhile, the elder spoke to Mark. "Display the prowess of your soul weapon, Lu Zhen. And don't worry. Under my watch, you won't be able to cause any trouble."

Mark didn't ask why or express his surprise. He raised the anti-matter gun and poured only ten percent of his ether energy, shooting at the elder without any warning.

In the blink of an eye, the antimatter left the barrel and already struck the elder in the abdomen, piercing his abdomen, exploding inwardly.

The elder's expression changed in an instant as a massive explosion struck his organs, all at once.

\*Puchi\*

He spat blood, went down to his knees. "You..." His voice quivered as he stared at Mark in horror.

The elders got up from their seats one after another in shock. Lin Xia had her face covered by her hands. "First, you destroyed the testing platform, and now injuring an elder? You were going completely against your plan to stay low..." She thought. Content first released on M\_VLEM\_PYR.

Mark stared at the elder. "But as you can see, the moment my attack detonates, it comes in contact with the matter and causes an explosion."

"Then why didn't you warn me before?" The elder growled.

Mark shrugged. "I thought a 2nd stage transcendant like you should be fine. Under your watch, a junior like me is unlikely to cause any trouble." He gave another gaze, a cold one this time, staring down at the kneeling elder. "Right?"

"I knew it. Since when would this resentful man let go of a grudge? I'm sure he did this on purpose." Lan Xia murmured.

A general, who was still seated, laughed aloud. "Hahaha, I like your attitude, young man. Someone like you is perfectly needed for my regiment."

Before anyone even made a move, the general took out a jade scroll and threw it over. As Mark caught in reflex, the general spoke. "It's a command over Outpost Forty-Seven. Borderland sector near the Feral Rift. A High casualty zone, and I think it's perfect for someone like you. There shouldn't be any beast over a 1st transcendent stage over there. Go to the barracks to pick people, not more than 1000, but none stronger than an ascendant."

Mark twirled the scroll once without speaking much. "Alright. I understand."

Chapter 655: Outpost 47 (part-1)

As they turned to leave, the hawk-nosed elder said softly, just loud enough for Mark to hear, "Don't think that you were given a reward, Young man. Outpost forty-seven is a lot more complicated to handle than it seems."

Mark didn't turn around. "Don't worry. I'm not fighting for a reward."

Meanwhile, high above the teleportation hall, nestled in a crystalline tower reserved for diplomatic envoys and celestial envoys-in-hiding, Seri stood by the balcony, small fingers curled over the edge of the silverstone railing. It is the same child who gave the information to the sect that he was wielding an anti-magic weapon.

Behind her, the maid moved quietly, folding linens that didn't need folding. She wore a plain black uniform, modest and crisp.

"Young Miss," she said with a bit of hesitation, "Elder Xi is angry. That soul weapon is not anti-magic."

"That's impossible," Seri whispered. "I saw the annihilation of magic with my own eyes. The entire spiritual energy in the affected area was wiped out by that attack."

The maid stilled. Her voice was quiet as he leaned a bit closer. "Young miss, everyone at the sacred hall witnessed it. According to the sources, what that warrior carried is called an anti-matter gun; he claims to be its maker, and as for its power, it can penetrate through the defenses of even a 2nd-stage transcendent. Elder Xi was injured by the attack."

"Hmm?" Seri's eyes widened at that. She didn't answer for a moment. Her fingers tightened around the railing. "But it looked like the same as the one in the records of cataclysm."

Nalia moved swiftly then, kneeling in front of her. "Young Miss, you are the heiress of the Tower of Mulan. And only an elder of the Sky Pavilion Sect had access to the records of that incident. We need Elder Xi's help, and he is quite angry at our misinformation. As an apology, he is asking us to kill Lu Zhen at Forty-Seven Post."

"47th Post?" Seri repeated, letting out a smile. "It does look like the elders aren't convinced that he doesn't possess an anti-magic weapon. And Elder Xi wants to use this opportunity to kill him, but without having blood in his hands?"

"What do you plan on doing?" Nalia said in a worried tone. "It's dangerous to ambush him."

"Hmpf, do you think I'm a fool to follow that order?" Seri scoffed. "Sure, that old man could help us, but he isn't the only person who could help us. There are other ways."

"What are the orders, Young Miss?" As the maid asked, Seri replied. "Let's travel to Outpost 47, giving that false perception to that geezer that we are on the job." Letting out a playful smile, she added, "We'll see what this Lu Zhen made of, with our own eyes. And see if he is worth our ally or not."

Nalia nodded seriously. "I'll make preparations, Young Miss."

As the servant disappeared, the girl turned from the balcony and padded across the polished floor to a low crystal basin. She waved her hand, and the surface shimmered with the image of Mark, walking beside Lan Xia, scroll in hand, casually spinning it as if he'd just been handed grocery orders instead of a frontline command.

Seri stared at them. "Something tells me there is more to him than we think." A playful smile appeared on her face. "Maybe, I should observe him at a close range instead of far away."

One day later;

Xi Renzhi, the one who was reprimanded for giving false information on Mark, sat alone in the meditation chamber above the scrying spire.

A soft knock preceded the entrance of his personal attendant, a shadow-eyed man in grey robes bearing a communication slip. He knelt and bowed, holding a scroll.

Elder Xi took it without a word, eyes scanning the etched script.

Lu Zhen has made his selection. Three companions only.

The old man's brow twitched. "Three? Only three of them?"

He leaned back slowly, processing the implication. "So five in total... and he still intends to march into Forty-Seven? Hmph. He is too arrogant for his own good."

He lowered the scroll, letting it dissolve between his fingers with a flicker of Qi.

"Does he plan to die gloriously?" he muttered to the air, half to himself. Then, louder: "The profiles. Do you have them?"

The servant was ready. "Yes, Elder. I've already done the background checks."

The servant produced a jade slate and activated the first record.

"A mercenary," he began. "Name: Yuan Feng. Iron Moon Clan."

A flickering illusion took the form of a brawny, wild-eyed man with a jagged glaive slung over his shoulder and what appeared to be a grin carved from defiance itself.

"Ascendant realm. Confirmed 1467 official kills during the current campaign. If not for the urgency of war, he would have been court martialed six times; eleven team captains dismissed him for insubordination. Fights like a beast. Answers to no one. According to some reports, he once killed his own commanding officer mid-battle because he deemed his orders cowardly."

"Hmph." Xi Renzhi didn't blink. "And Lu Zhen chose that brute?"

The servant shifted slightly. "Yuan Feng has no known attachments. No clan ties since the Iron Moon bastion fell. Entire family erased. Demon Cat Empress again."

The elder said nothing for a moment.

"Next." Brought to you by the folks at MV|LEMPYR.

"The second one is named Reva," the servant continued, calling up the next image. A woman—half-wild, half ethereal. Golden fur streaked her arms, and her nine tails fanned behind her in restrained elegance, but her amber eyes shimmered with too much quiet rage to be a mere scout.

"She is a beast-kin. A hybrid of a Nine-Tailed Fox and a human bloodline. Ascendant stage, though untested in open combat. Served as an infiltration scout during recon missions. Exceptional senses, but no formal battlefield experience."

"Why pick someone who hasn't even tasted blood?" Xi Renzhi mused.

"She's the only survivor of her entire clan. The Demon Cat Empress wiped out the Den of Silver Winds five years ago."

There was a beat of silence. Xi Renzhi couldn't help but frown. "Her family is also wiped out? What about the last one?"

"Ryder Night." The servant's voice lowered unconsciously, as if the name alone carried bloodstains.

"Night Clan?"

A cloaked figure appeared in the illusion—a lithe young man with silver eyes and a subtle blur of lightning trailing behind him even while standing still.

"From the Lightning Plane. He was once heir to the Night family—the most feared assassins across the nine realms. However, ten years ago, his immediate family was expelled for reasons still classified. They lived in exile on Eligar for the past decade... until it was turned to cinders during the third campaign by the Demon Cat Empress. Only survivor. No records since."

Elder Xi leaned forward, elbows resting on his knees, hands folded under his chin. His eyes glittered with a cruel gleam.

"So... three orphans. Three remnants of worlds destroyed by the same hand. I feel like Lu Zhen picked these three on purpose..."

He chuckled, low and venomous. "However, it is still foolish."

The servant stayed silent.

Elder Xi continued, standing up. "Their heads will roll before the season turns at Outpost 47. There is a reason why many teams were massacred there."

The servant didn't comment and simply asked. "Shall I continue observing them, Elder?"

"Of course," he snapped. "I want every step recorded. Where they go. How they train. Who they speak to. Especially that artifact he carried."

The servant bowed once more. "As you command."

As the attendant departed, Elder Xi turned toward the obsidian window. The light from the late morning sun twisted across his face like ghostfire. "I need to get that artifact once he dies."

Meanwhile, in the sect outerfields, Mark and the remaining made their way to the world portal.

Mark walked at the front of the five. His footsteps were measured, light as ever.

Yuan Feng strode just behind him with lazy defiance, dragging the head of his glaive across the stone, drawing a long, screaming line behind them.

Reva walked in perfect silence—tails tucked in, ears alert, golden eyes narrowed.

Ryder was barely visible; his steps never echoed, and even his shadow moved unnaturally, as if it had a will of its own.

Lan Xia walked by his side, staying quite close to him.

For a while, the atmosphere was mostly silent, no one willing to speak much.

And the silence finally broke when she asked Mark in a quiet voice, "Why only these three?"

Mark didn't stop walking.

"They're unique." He said it with no emphasis, as though it were the only word that mattered.

"All three of them had their families wiped out by the Feline Empire." His tone didn't rise, didn't show pity. Just cold data. "Each of them has nothing left to protect... except their future. That kind of rage doesn't just burn people—it sharpens them."

Lan Xia's brows dipped slightly. "You chose them for their grief?"

The three of them who heard those words couldn't help but raise their eyebrows.

Chapter 656: Outpost 47 (part-2)

However, Mark shook his head, dispelling their thoughts. "I don't care for righteous men. Or heroes who chant about justice and fairness and all that bullshit. That idealism doesn't sit with me.

He turned his head slightly, just enough to catch Lan Xia's face with the corner of his eye. "I only care about three things."

He could see that those three seemed a bit tense, observing him. He didn't exactly keep his voice low and casually spoke.

"One," he said, holding up a single finger. "Can you grow strong enough to be useful?"

"Two." Another finger. "Will you stay loyal to me, not to the sect, not to the flags, not to the elders, me?"

"Three." His voice turned razor-edged. "Never cross my bottom line."

Lan Xia tilted her head slightly, her voice soft but precise. "And how are they supposed to know what your bottom line is?"

Mark shrugged. "Simple. Travel with me. And pay attention to what I do. In what situation, I spare people, and in what situation, I don't care."

Then, he turned fully to her, still walking backward now, a grin tugging at the corner of his mouth. "Or else, why do you think I keep letting you tag along?" he said. "Just because you're the most beautiful girl I have ever encountered?"

Lan Xia froze for a fraction of a step. Her expression flickered—not breaking, but shifting. The faintest touch of color bloomed on her cheeks.

"You... never mentioned that before," she muttered, her voice caught somewhere between confused and defensive.

Mark raised an eyebrow, tilting his head slightly as though trying to read her like one of his weapon manuals.

"Hmm?"

"Nothing," she said quickly. "It's nothing."

She looked ahead again. But the faint crimson at the tip of her ears betrayed her. For all her coldness, that single comment struck deeper than any of his weapons could.

Mark blinked. Was she... embarrassed? No, it was more than that. He watched her for a second longer. Her steps were steadier now, but her breathing had changed—barely audible, but not the same rhythm. As if the mention of her beauty had stirred something she hadn't let rise in a long time.

Or ever.

He narrowed his eyes slightly. "Perhaps, no one ever told her?"

She was one of the strongest in their cohort, feared for her sword, respected for her discipline—but perhaps not once had anyone looked at her like a woman.

Mark looked away and said nothing more. But the thought lingered.

Behind them, the three couldn't help but cast a glance at Lan Xia. All of them had the same thoughts. There's something going on between these two.

Soon, the World Portal roared to life as the five stepped one after another

The jump gate fractured reality like shattering glass, flinging Team Genesis through the lightless rift into the choking air of the 47th Outpost's second frontier zone.

Basically, 47th Outpost is a star system with 12 planets, of which only 3 are rocky and inhabited by humans.

Those three were named first, second, and third frontier zones.

And Mark and his team, named Genesis, chose the second frontier zone as priority due to the fact that it currently has the highest human population.

It was a dead and dry planet, blackened stone plains stretched to the horizon, cracked and scorched under a copper sky. The sun above hung low and red, swollen and sickly.

There were no rivers, no lakes.

Water here slept beneath the earth in ancient aquifers, hoarded beneath cities carved into subterranean stone.

By the time Mark and his team arrived, only one stronghold remained: Mulan, the last underground bastion of Second Frontier. A city of steel doors, choking corridors, and flickering lights.

But before they could even take a step toward their destination, the beasts that guarded the portal they came out of attacked.

All five of them had just steadied from the teleport when the ground shook.

A low rumble. Then a thunderous roar.

From behind the rocks and ruined ridges, beasts, five hundred strong, encircled them in seconds like a noose closing around the neck.

Reva's ears twitched. Yuan Feng spat onto the sand and tightened his grip on his glaive. Ryder vanished into the shadows, his aura dropping to lethal silence. Lan Xia had already drawn her blade.

"Ambush," she muttered. "As expected."

Mark stood at the center, hands still by his sides. His face was unreadable. Eyes half-lidded. Calm.

Yuan Feng growled, "You want formation, boss, or we go loud?"

Mark didn't answer. Instead, he raised one hand.

"Gravity Dome, 600g."

At once, the charging beasts howled in shock as their legs buckled and spines collapsed under their own weight. Wings tore as they were slammed into the earth. Claws screeched against stone as they tried to move—and failed.

But it didn't stop with the enemy.

"Argh..."

Reva dropped to her knees, panting.

Ryder gasped from where he reappeared, hands planted on the ground, barely able to lift his head.

"Raaaa"

Yuan Feng roared, the veins in his arms bulging as he resisted.

Lan Xia's sword trembled in her grip as her knees gave out, but she resisted.

Even his own team couldn't move.

Only Mark stood tall and free.

Without looking at his struggling team, he reached into the inventory and unlatched a long-barreled cannon, sleek and brutal, humming with dormant violence.

The M-99 was mounted on the ground, amid hundreds of pairs of eyes.

He touched the trigger.

The weapon hissed as his ether flowed into it, his red energy veins glowing faintly beneath his skin.

Then he fired.

Once.

A single bolt of crimson ether roared through the beast horde like a god's spear, exploding on impact. A dozen monsters evaporated, their forms turning to ash mid-scream.

Then again.

Boom. Another cluster gone, flung like ragdolls into the distant crags.

Boom. Boom. Boom.

Each shot painted the cracked ground with charred remains and molten craters. The dome echoed with inhuman shrieks and the hiss of vaporized blood.

Mark moved methodically. No wasted motion. Like he was pulling weeds.

In thirty seconds, the field fell silent.

Beasts that once numbered five hundred now lay broken, scattered like discarded dolls across the scorched plain.

And the dome dropped.

The weight lifted like a veil of judgment being withdrawn.

The others gasped, coughing and trembling as oxygen flowed more easily.

Lan Xia stared at the battlefield in stunned silence.

Yuan Feng blinked, then let out a low, whistling curse. "That... what in the hell was that?"

Ryder didn't say a word. But his hand gripped the hilt of his dagger like he'd just seen a glimpse of death and realized he was standing next to it.

Reva was wide-eyed, ears flattened. "I thought magic didn't work here?"

Mark unmounted the weapon and slung the M-99 back over his shoulder and looked at them all, not condescending, not proud. Just calmly.

"Well, unless you can move at this pressure and slay your enemies," he said flatly. "You're all going to be a burden to me. You might as well take this as a vacation. I will wipe them out by myself." He turned to Lan Xia. "That goes for you, too, Sister Xia."

Lan Xia clearly understood the meaning behind those words. You volunteered to come with me. Then, better earn your qualifications.

Yuan Feng wiped off his sweat and let out a grin. "Alright, then, I implore Captain to use it regularly for us to get used to it."

Mark looked at him and smiled with a nod. "Now, that's what I need from you guys."

Chapter 657: Outpost 47 (part-3)

After Mark's mindblowing performance, they could only stay silent throughout the rest of the journey.

As everyone is atleast a demigod, they all could fly naturally. And

The wind howled against their flight cloaks, dust trailing behind them. Below, the barren plains stretched endlessly, and beasts and their skeletal remains were seen almost everywhere on the way.

Because Feline beasts, apart from hybrid ones, don't generally have wings, and due to the world laws that prohibit magic, no demigod or above realm beast was seen around, the rest of their journey has been quite smooth.

Eventually, as the sharp ridgelines of the Mannan Caves came into view, jagged fangs of rock surrounding dark, ancient hollows, a huge enemy camp was spotted from above.

Below the cliffs, a few kilometers away from the cave mouth, smoke rose. Dozens of tents, bonfires crackling, dark shapes pacing the perimeter.

Mark hovered above the scene for a few moments, scanning their ranks.

Lan Xia drifted closer, keeping her eyes on the cluster of beasts gathering below as they too noticed the enemies in the sky.

"What's the move?" she asked, voice cool and level.

"We don't engage the camp," Mark said simply as the scanning finished. "We go straight to the cave. Let's go to the stronghold."

"Alright."

He descended toward the rocky plateau in front of the cave entrance, with Lan Xia dropping beside him. The rest of Team Genesis held formation in the air, weapons ready but unmoving.

The moment Mark's boots touched the dirt, a hailstorm of arrows rained upon them at once, taking them by surprise.

Dozens, tipped with poisoned barbs, enchanted with minor tracking glyphs.

Mark made no move to block.

He didn't have to, as he saw Lan Xia make her move.

Like a sudden winter, the air shifted as a shimmer of light-blue mist spread from Lan Xia's feet.

Arrows froze mid-flight, halted in place as if time had stopped. Frost crystallized along their shafts and snapped them in mid-air, falling in harmless shards at their feet.

The guards paused in confusion, some falling back from their stations as the ambient chill gripped their lungs.

The rest of the team stared down from above.

Reva's jaw parted slightly. "I thought Captain was different. But even Vice Captain is also the same."

Ryder's gaze narrowed with interest. "Is this what the transcendent realm looks like, able to bypass the world laws?"

Yuan Feng exhaled a short grunt. "Hmpf, it's just a trick."

"Magic can be blocked by the laws," Lan Xia then said softly, letting her hand fall back to her side. "But when you master your element... You automatically become immune to those laws..."

She looked at the fallen arrows frozen in ice.

Mark turned his head slightly, a rare flicker of admiration in his eyes. "Sister Xia, I'm stronger than you," he said. "But when it comes to elements... you're beyond me."

Lan Xia glanced away, her usual impassive mask cracked slightly. "You've said that before."

He smiled faintly. "And it's still true. Nothing wrong with repeating the truth."

Her lips tugged into something close to a smile.

A moment later;

The frost had barely faded when Mark stepped forward, voice rising above the wind.

"We're from the Sky Alliance," he called out, loud and clear. "We're here to assist. Effective immediately, I'm assuming command of this stronghold."

Silence greeted him at first.

Then, the two guards at the gate exchanged glances. One barked a sharp command and disappeared into the shadows of the cave, the other remaining, claws twitching nervously on the hilt of his curved blade.

Moments later, a grizzled man in worn, dented armor emerged from the tunnel, accompanied by four more guards. His eyes were sharp, tired, and wary—eyes that had seen too many losses and trusted too few promises.

He didn't approach.

Instead, he stopped just within the protective range of the entrance's glyph barrier and raised his voice.

"You expect me to believe the Council sent only five of you?" the captain asked, disbelief etched across his scarred face.

Mark's smile was calm, unbothered. "We five are enough."

The captain scoffed, folding his arms. "I see that all of you are truly young. Were you here to experience the outside world of your sect or something? Let me remind you that this isn't your typical battleground. Your Cultivation levels don't matter here."

Mark didn't reply to that and simply responded with a question instead. "How many people in there are eligible to fight in the stronghold, Captain?"

There was a pause. A long one.

The guards stiffened. The captain's face darkened. "Why do you want to know?"

"Captain, do you think he is a feline beast in disguise?" A soldier quietly said.

"Yeah, earlier, that woman froze the place. Captain, please tread it carefully."

"Look at that woman in the back, Captain. She has tails."

The captain couldn't help but frown as soldiers spoke one after another.

His tone immediately shifted, sharpened with suspicion. "How do we know that you are not enemies in disguise?" He asked.

Lan Xia tilted her head slightly but said nothing. Reva's ears flicked again. Ryder didn't move.

Mark, however, let out a small laugh. "You want proof?"

He turned and looked toward the distant ridge, where the feline beast encampment still burned faintly from their earlier freezing.

"I'll give you proof."

Without another word, he extended his hand.

A metallic hum echoed as something unspooled from his inventory, long, black, and modular. Panels unfolded. A sleek interface blinked to life.

Lan Xia's eyes widened slightly, watching a giant artifact coming into existence. "His artifacts kept on becoming bigger and weirder every time." She quietly murmured.

"This is my Song-II Missile Defense System," Mark spoke aloud. Of course, no one knows what it meant.

Mark didn't explain and simply tapped the console, moving the cursor on the map with swift movements. The weapon's long launcher arm extended, locking onto the target.

He simply pressed the blue button.

\*Swoosh\* \*Swoosh\* \*Swoosh\* Swoosh\* Swoosh\*

In a flash, one after another, five missiles launched into the sky. It struck the center of the beast camp and then...

\*Boom\*

Heavy explosions filled all over the region. Large-sized mushroom clouds rose into the air, and the entire place shook like an earthquake had hit them.

And then, nothing.

No screams or movements. Just absolute silence filled the campsite.

Gasps echoed from the guards.

Even the captain's face turned pale beneath the grime.

"Nine hundred and sixty four beasts," Mark said calmly, lowering the launcher. "One shot. I don't need Qi to blast them to hell."

He glanced at the captain again, expression unreadable. "Does that prove we're not beasts?"

No answer.

Only silence.

The kind of silence that comes when one is too shocked to respond.

Lan Xia stepped forward, her voice soft but icy. "We're the last chance this place has to hold. So, either get your people to follow our captain's orders... or prepare to face them on your own while we shift our focus to the first and third frontier zones."

The captain didn't speak again. He merely nodded once, stiffly, then turned, cupping his fists and bow. "Mulan City welcomes you all. Please follow me to meet the City Lord."

Mark and Lan Xia exchanged glances and nodded.

The gate creaked open, and the deep path into the underground city of Mulan awaited.

Chapter 658: Outpost 47 (part-4)

The underground stronghold of Mulan was dim, lit by hanging crystal lanterns that flickered with a cold, ethereal glow. Despite the heavy stone walls and fortified checkpoints, an air of desperation still clung to the place; no one had the smiles or relief on their faces.

Now, deep inside the command structure, in a cavernous chamber known as the War Room, or what Mark called it, a different kind of stillness had settled.

The round table was made from obsidian mined from the planet's veins over the course of years. Very sturdy but also brittle, just like Mulan City. Around it sat the remaining captains, lieutenants, elite fighters, and the Lord of Mulan. Most were quiet, tense, trying to make sense of the power the young outsider had displayed on the surface.

At the head of the table, Mark sat casually but confidently, one leg crossed, fingers interlaced before him.

He finally spoke.

"I'll speak directly. I'm not here to command your every move," he began, voice calm, direct. "I'm not here to babysit survivors."

He looked around at each face.

"What I am here to do," he continued, "is give you a chance to face your current as well as your future enemies with your own hands."

He tapped the table once. "I'll supply firearms, the ones that don't need magic but could kill hordes of beasts," he said, eyes locked on the captain across from him. "I'll also provide ammunition, which is like arrows for the bow. And I'll also train your people on how to use them so that even a weak one who could only hide in this shelter could contribute something to protect their home."

Murmurs broke out.

"Why them?" someone asked. "They can't even hold a blade..."

"They'll die..."

"I don't know what these firearms or ammunition mean, but do they really help us?"

Mark raised a hand. The room quieted again.

"Listen to me very well. I don't know the intentions of the council, and I don't know when the next full-scale assault will happen, but I know for sure that you win when your entire city can fight back. You have like what... 4600 soldiers? Even in the case of a war, only half of them could be deployed to fight the beast horde. The other half is needed here to protect civilians from any internal strife, and to protect 370,000 people..."

There was silence for a moment.

Mark continued. "Now, imagine, just even ten percent of them could wield firearms. 37,000 people with weapons, each could atleast eliminate one feline beast..."

While Mark's words indeed incited hope amongst the captains and even the City Lord, many also seemed skeptical. One of them was Captain Ji, who said. "It's too risky to involve civilians. They are inexperienced, and we might not have time to train them in war tactics."

"Then don't pay attention to them," Mark said simply. "You do what you always do, protect the city from any outside trouble. And give me just one week to train the volunteers. I will transform them into warriors."

He stood up slowly, walking around the table, and stopped beside the City Lord, who sat at the other end. "Lord Qi, I've seen too many cities fall because people waited for a hero. I don't want to be your 'hope.' I'm just here to give you a gun and show you how to aim it."

He walked back to the head of the table and sat down again. "This is your war now. I'm just here to make sure you live long enough to fight it your way."

The map shimmered once, then disappeared.

All eyes were on him.

And for the first time since the outpost's fall, the majority of them didn't look hollow anymore.

They looked ready.

Three weeks later;

In an unnamed valley, a battlefield had formed. Not between two empires. Not between titans. Just broken humans—scraped together and trained in desperation—facing off against a tide of snarling feline beasts.

There were no commanding roars from beast generals. No tactical formations from their side. This was a mindless surge, wild and aggressive—designed to overwhelm, to drown resistance in numbers.

But the humans didn't falter.

A young woman with soot on her cheeks fired her Five-seveN sidearm at a charging panther-kin. The beast snarled until it staggered mid-stride. Its limbs locked, eyes wide. It collapsed, twitching, as violet arcs of lightning pulsed from the wound.

Beside her, an older man fired three shots. One bullet embedded itself into a beast's chest and exploded with a burst of frost, freezing its front limbs in place. Another shot lanced through a leaping puma-beast—and the creature's fur began to smoke, as the poison infused in the bullet seeped into its veins.

None of these were soldiers.

They were bakers. Carpenters. Ex-scavengers. Survivors with shaking fingers and grim determination.

But they had teeth now.

Each weapon looked ordinary—just military-issue Five-seveNs from Earth. The ammo, however, was anything but. Crafted by Mark himself, using his creation energy and laced with Ark's elemental precision, each bullet carried the power of an element.

Some generate flames, while some freeze. Some could produce electric shocks, while some induce poison.

What they lacked in power, they made up for in effect.

Above it all, Mark stood atop a jagged cliff, the wind tossing his coat like a banner. His expression was calm and focused.

Both hands moved in a rhythm only he understood, his ether flowing from his palms like ink across parchment. Magic circles appeared before him—thin, elegant—and out of them, clips of specialized bullets formed and floated into metallic crates by his side.

Every ten seconds, another hundred rounds.

In his head, Ark's voice chimed softly every now and then.

"Batch 147 complete. Suggest introducing the incendiary piercing variant to adapt to increasing armored beasts."

Mark nodded slightly. "Add a delayed detonation timer. One second fuse. Enough time to get inside the armor."

"Confirmed. Adjusting now."

Down below, Yuan Feng was in full berserker mode, slicing beasts apart with dual crescent blades, covered in blood and howling with joy. "COME ON, YOU FURRY DEMONS!"

Reva, from a nearby ridge, crouched behind a collapsed boulder and provided cover fire. Her tail flicked behind her, golden eyes calm as her bullet struck a leopard beast mid-leap. It dropped instantly, paralyzed.

Ryder Night flickered through the field like a ghost, his blade rarely visible, his sidearm used only when a silent kill wasn't fast enough.

Lan Xia floated just above the melee, her palms glowing with frost. She wasn't even firing. She was guiding the cold, adjusting the air pressure itself to make enemy projectiles freeze mid-flight or drop harmlessly to the earth.

Mark watched them all, then looked at the human volunteers holding their own among titanic odds. They weren't just surviving anymore; they were winning.

And he couldn't help but mumble. "My first step to becoming an intergalactic weapon seller is success. Now, once those two frontiers were cleared out, the next step would be dealing with the Sky Pavilion Sect." Then, after a brief pause, he sighed. "But it is a pity that casualties are also higher than I expected. I didn't take their mental fortitude into account. Due to unnecessary panic, many lost their lives. Of 69322 warriors I rose up, only a little more than half remained. sigh..."

Chapter 659: Outpost 47 (part-5)

The valley had quieted by the time the sun dipped beneath the ridge. The light bled across the sky in gold and crimson, painting the aftermath in colors too warm for a field soaked in blood.

Crows circled above the corpses, but no one paid them any mind.

Instead, laughter echoed through the battered outpost.

The survivors—former civilians, untrained nobodies who only just three weeks ago flinched at the sound of steel—now drank together, sang together. They had scars now. Soot. Blood. Shaky legs.

But their backs were straight.

Mark stood apart from them on a ledge, arms folded, watching.

Lan Xia approached quietly, her robe still stained with dried frost and sweat. "They're calling you a messiah, Gege," she said.

Mark didn't respond right away.

"I'm far away from a messiah," he muttered after a pause.

Lan Xia tilted her head. "So, are you going to join them, gege? This is your first victory, after all."

He glanced at her. "We have a lot to do, Sister Xia. This is just the second frontier."

Then he pushed off the ledge and walked toward the inner chamber of the stronghold.

The war chamber was quieter now. No maps. No shouting. Just Captain Ji and a few of his elites are cleaning weapons and reviewing losses.

Mark entered without announcement. His presence alone was enough.

He tossed a storage ring on the table. The City Lord took it in his hands and probed it.

Inside, neatly arranged rows of glowing bullet cartridges. Thousands of them were seen.

The City Lord's eyes widened. "How many are these?" he asked, stunned.

"About 2 million," Mark said casually, leaning back against the stone wall. However, in his heart, he was feeling quite a pain to hand them over as they are worth millions, no, perhaps, billions of gold coins. But then again, he needed this for a startup. "Lord Qi, your people fought well. Consider these the remainder. I believe these would suffice you for a few months, even if you continuously fight the war every day."

Qi Tianchen blinked. "You're giving us these?"

A soft chuckle escaped Mark. "No," Mark replied, shaking his head. "I'm selling them."

The room tensed.

Mark stepped forward. "I'm not a charity. I'm not the Alliance. I don't operate with flowery banners and long-winded speeches about peace."

He placed another storage ring on the table, this one is empty. "You have tunnels. Deep ones. Mineral veins untouched since the days of the old empires. Rare metals. Alloys. Duststones. Things I can use."

Qi Tianchen frowned. "You want us to mine for you?"

"No," Mark corrected. "You want bullets. I want resources. It's an equivalent exchange, Lord Qi. I'm not putting any price on this, by the way. You decide how much it's worth to you. This is your world. Your survival. Name your own price. If I like the number..."

He paused. A subtle grin tugged at the corner of his mouth.

"Maybe we'll do business again when I return."

Qi Tianchen looked at the storage ring. Since the war is over, he seemed a bit reluctant to just nod along. T\$hi#s^ is pa!rt of a se#riles# flr@om\$ My Virt^u#a#! L%i@brar&y% Em.p^i@re (\*).%

But he wasn't foolish enough to think he could just burn bridges. Only the Feline beasts on their planet were massacred; the true war isn't over. He couldn't afford to just offend the savior who turned the tide of the war. He was smart enough to understand that those who can give power can also take it away.

It was a deal soaked in pragmatism.

Mark didn't wait for his reply. He simply turned to leave. "You've got till dawn," he said over his shoulder. "Once I'm gone, no second offers."

As he stepped out, Qi Tianchen stared at the ring filled with ammunition and then at the empty ring. He could only let out a deep sigh in the end. His thoughts were unreadable.

Two more weeks later, the 47th Outpost was no longer a battlefield.

Unlike with the second frontier, the first and third frontier was completely occupied by the feline beast army. No survivors were left by the time Mark and his Team Genesis arrived on the planet.

Hence, only five of them started cleaning up. But they also knew that it was too time-consuming for them to target a beast by beast. So, they only targeted the beast camps, wherever feline beasts were gathered together. The first frontier took fifteen days to capture, but the third frontier only had one beast camp, and it only took a single attack to take out all of them.

Finishing their mission, they were now back at the Sky Pavilion Sect.

Mark stood still as the ceremony concluded—robed figures bowing, elders murmuring, tributes offered.

Only when the Sky Pavilion Sect Leader, the one who looked like a ten-year-old kid, descended onto the platform did silence finally settle like mist over the crowd.

"I heard of your heroics at 47th Outpost," the Sect Leader said, staring at Mark. "So... what do you want as a reward? A spirit weapon? A noble rank? Tell me?"

Mark's eyes didn't waver.

"I want a permit," he said simply.

The words rippled across the platform like a dropped stone.

"A permit?" the Sect Leader repeated, eyebrows lifting.

"To sell firearms," Mark continued. "On your worlds. Under your flag."

Murmurs began instantly among the disciples, the elders, and even the guards stationed along the perimeter.

Mark held up a hand calmly. "I'm not trying to replace cultivation. But these weapons can allow anyone, a baker, a miner, a mother, to protect their home from beasts and minor threats. High-level cultivators don't need guns. But not everyone can become one."

"You speak of empowering the ordinary," said Elder Mu, tone dry. "It could make it tougher to control the society."

"But survivability is more important, Elder Mu," said another elder. "If it can help out civilians, it is a good thing."

"No, it is not. Lu Zhen here is taking advantage of the situation."

"Please, War is always a business opportunity for weapon makers. How many blades have you ordered in the smithy?"

"That's different. Blades can be made by any fine blacksmith, but we know nothing about these firearms."

"Then, we can just pass the law of using those weapons only during the war if you are worried so much."

Several elders scowled. Some argued. Others leaned forward, intrigued.

Amidst this, Elder Xi stayed silent. He seemed a bit dissatisfied to see not only that Mark had completed his mission successfully, but his men never even got a chance to assassinate him.

Seeing the elders arguing against each other, the sect leader raised his hand, and the commotion stopped instantly. Leaning his elbow on the armrest, the sect leader looked at Mark and asked, "How much do you intend to charge for these weapons?"

"No currency," Mark replied.

He reached into his coat and placed a small metal cube on the table. A sample of unprocessed volcanite, a rare ore he got from Qi Tianchen.

"I want raw stardust ores."

A beat of silence.

One of the younger elders scoffed. "Stardust is one of the rarest elements you can find in this realm. Aren't you taking too much of an advantage?"

"I haven't fixed any price, Elder," Mark cut in gently. "Whatever the sect deemed fit, they can put a price tag on the firearms and ammunition I provide to take down beast hordes across all the outposts."

Chapter 660: Vice Commander of 52nd legion

He leaned forward, placing both hands on the stone table of the Pavilion's council ring, taking back the ore.

The Sky Pavilion Sect Leader studied Mark with a gaze that had seen centuries.

Then he smiled faintly with a nod.

"Very well. You have your permit. You may sell within our territories. No restrictions. But," he said, raising a single finger, "you are also under our protection now. And our laws. However, I need you to submit to us the clean records of your sale. What did you sell to whom, and for how much... Is that acceptable?"

Mark replied. "Then, I ask the Sky Sect pavilion to be the middleman. My plan is to open a firearm store across all territories of the Sky Sect Pavilion, where your branches are located. You can directly take the orders from the customers and record them in your accounts, then relay those orders to me through the store I open here at this main branch. This way, we both get what we want."

The moment felt quiet, but it had shifted the mountain.

As the elders murmured again, some in disapproval, others in grudging acceptance, the Sect leader nodded. "That is acceptable."

He then glanced at the servant standing beside him. "Roulan..."

The servant immediately nodded and walked toward Mark, taking out a polished wooden box bound in silver thread.

Without a word, the servant held the box out with both hands.

Mark looked at it for a moment, then opened it.

Inside was a round medallion, forged from black soulsteel with a golden inlay of a roaring beast engulfed in flames, encircled by the word Vice Commander in ancient characters.

As his fingers closed around it, a faint pulse traveled through his palm. He felt it imprint into his ether like a seal.

The Sect Leader regarded Mark with calm eyes. "In regard to your achievements at Outpost 47 and your future collaboration with the sect, I appoint you as Vice Commander of the 52nd Legion," he announced. His voice wasn't loud, but it carried across the platform like thunder wrapped in silk.

Mark said nothing.

The Sect Leader gestured to the medallion. "With that, you may recruit any cultivator below the Transcendent Realm into your direct command, without requiring permission. You are also granted one direct line to your commander and the command center at the sect headquarters, through it."

A pause.

"And once per year, the medallion will activate a soulbound defense seal if your life is in true danger. But only once. After that, it must recharge through celestial time flow."

Mark rotated the medallion in his hand. It gleamed under the lantern light, reflecting his unreadable eyes.

"Who's the current commander of the 52nd? And where should I report to him?" he asked.

The Sect Leader's expression remained steady. "Commander Jien. A veteran of sixty-seven wars. You'll report to him at Outpost 2."

Mark nodded once. "Understood."

A flicker of a smile touched the Sect Leader's lips. "At the moment, Legion 52 was in the middle of a battle with the Feline Empire's elite force, commanded by General Leon—the White Lion King. His forces have broken through three lines already. You'll be sent where the cracks run deepest. You know what that means... I'm expecting great things from you, Lu Zhen."

Mark clipped the medallion to his belt and nodded. This content was first released on \*.

Later that evening;

Inside the vice commander's quarters, Mark stood alone by the wide window, watching the lanterns flicker beyond the training fields. Even in peace, the air felt tense. Like something was holding its breath.

Behind him, the room was richly furnished. Polished blackwood furniture, a silken bedding suite, and a hot water kettle that never ran cold. Everything befitting the rank of a vice commander. Yet none of it made the place feel like home.

Mark exhaled softly and turned away from the window.

The conversation with his subordinates earlier replayed in his mind.

Yuan Feng, leaning back with his arms crossed, had chuckled. "You already knew we'd follow you. No need for the drama."

Reva had just nodded, her golden eyes unwavering. "My path's tied to yours now."

Ryder, shadow-wrapped and smiling faintly, had said, "Just make sure it's a bloody good battlefield. I'm tired of waiting."

Three answers. Three lives bound to his command by their own will.

And yet...

As Mark lay down on the massive bed, the silence grew heavier.

He stared up at the ornate carvings on the ceiling—scenes of old battles frozen in wood and shadow. His eyes slowly drifted away from the present.

His thoughts wandered to faces he hadn't seen in years. Song Yue, the love of his life, and Shen Ling, his second wife and the Empress of the Genesis Federation.

Before he left, he appointed Shen Ling as the acting monarch and he wondered how she was ruling the empire now that the power is in her hands.

He also missed his children. He wanted to finish this quest as fast as possible and return to them. He doesn't want to miss their childhood.

Then, his thoughts drifted to Sylvandria, the demigod elven, former priestess who gave up her life and followed him to his world because he had violated her chastity. He wouldn't mind marrying her too but no one knows what happened between them. For Shen Ling, he had an excuse that it is a political marriage, but for Sylvandria, there isn't. Because he doesn't exactly love her and neither she wants to bring up their past either.

And unexpectedly, another face emerged from the haze of memory, belonging to Chang'e.

The memories of him as Houyi from his past life and the Moon Goddess. Her silver eyes, her silence, her sad smiles. Mark got a strong urge to meet her, but he quickly shook away his thoughts and thought about his children again.

"Just a little longer," he whispered into the empty room.

"Let me win this one... Then I'll come home."

Sleep finally took him, slow and dreamless.

Meanwhile, back at Lan Sect;

The grand hall of Lan Sect was steeped in silence.

At the head of the long table, seated on a raised jade throne, was Lan Yujin, the Sect Leader. His expression was calm, but the faint furrow between his brows betrayed the thoughts circling in his mind.

He swept his gaze across the room.

"Any word from Lan Xia or... Lan Zhen?" he asked evenly.

Silence followed.

Elder Yang, the oldest among them, adjusted his sleeves and shook his head. "None, Pavilion Master."

Elder Qiao frowned. "It's been weeks. Are we certain they weren't taken?"

Grand Elder Lan Yuxuan quickly added, "Lan Xia's soul crystal still shines in the Hall of Heart. Bright and steady. If she had been harmed, the crystal would have dimmed. Whatever she's doing, she's alive and well."

A small murmur moved through the elders like wind across dry leaves.

Elder Shan, who was known more for his wine than wisdom, chuckled lightly and said, "Perhaps the two are off on a secret honeymoon?" His eyes twinkled mischievously. "Wouldn't be the first time sect lovebirds caused a stir."

A few chuckles rippled around the table.

Lan Yujin did not laugh.

His fingers, resting on the jade throne, tapped once, soft, deliberate.

The room fell silent again.

"Enough," Lan Yujin said, voice calm, but laced with steel. "Speculation is a game for bored cultivators. We don't play that in this hall."

The elders straightened.

He leaned forward slightly, voice lowering. "Besides... I did not summon you all just for idle talk."

A heavy pause.

"The Imperial Palace sent word."

That got their attention. Eyebrows rose. Sleeves rustled.

Lan Yujin continued, "The Emperor has been... stirring. I've received notice through the Grand Envoy that he is considering reviving the grand expedition of the Chaos Realm."

"Chaos Realm?" The elders couldn't help but exchange glances.

Lan Yujin continued. "We haven't received a formal invitation yet, as it is still in talks. But our envoy at the palace said that the decision will likely take place. If the Emperor makes the announcement, we have to bring back all of our talents to the sect, especially Lan Xia and Lan Zhen. As you all know, Chaos Realm is a land of opportunities for the youngsters. As long as you are below 100 heavenly years of age, you can enter this place. And below such age, we have many prodigies who could benefit from this."