

Seller 661

Chapter 661: Six months later; An abrupt confession

Six months passed like a fleeting gust across the shattered stars.

To most, it was a lull—an uneasy peace rippling across sectors due to the war. But Mark was fighting two wars. One with the Feline Forces and another to keep up with the demand for his weapons.

Mark personally hadn't fought on the battlefield since Mulan City's reclamation. He was purely focused on just commanding people or relaying his superior's orders to the captains. Not because he wants to stay from the battlefield, but it is because he is too busy becoming a god of weapons manufacturing.

Across the planets controlled by the Sky Pavilion Sect, whispers grew of a new kind of weapon, compact and deadly. A sleek firearm that spat elemental bullets with the pull of a trigger. No chanting, no sigils. Just aim... and fire.

It makes an ordinary person into a fearsome warrior. This is the immortal plane of existence, basically where all the ascendants/immortals from the mortal realm come here to make their new lives. But instead, a mortal weapon became popular in this plane of existence.

They called it the Five-sevenN.

It looked like a joke to traditional cultivators at first. Until five of their elites were vaporized in a training mishap using the fire variant of the ammo. Then it became gospel.

And Mark?

Mark sold the weapons to the sect, sending thousands of guns every day. In four months alone, he'd handed over 900,000 guns. And one freaking billion elemental rounds.

And in return? He got Stardust ore from the sect as promised.

But what he got is the raw ore itself. And refined cosmic dust/stardust is the one that he needed to forge ether weapons and to make divine grade weapons, i.e., Mythril, Celestial, and god, he would need massive ones. Hence, he tried to amass as much stardust ore as he could.

As for the price, the sect gave him one catty of medium quality stardust ore (0.5kg), of which usually 100gm-200gms of refined stardust can be extracted, for every 100 elemental rounds. As for the five-seveN guns, each one was bought at 4 catties.

In this sense, Mark has truly done a favor on that forsaken second frontier planet of Outpost 47, where Mark had dumped thousands of weapons and two million rounds for just minerals and metals found on their planet.

Meanwhile, the sect priced each weapon and bullet, spreading them across trade routes, military stations, and black markets under controlled exports with their own currency, the immortal shards. Mark didn't care about it anyway. He didn't enquire about how much profit they were making.

He was completely focused on mass producing, letting the AI do the work for him nonstop 24 hours. He didn't even use a single ether particle during the past six months.

Every drop was reserved for creation.

Because of such a sacrifice, not only did he earn a lot of stardust ores, but he also gained mastery over the creation ability. Well, he should say, AI's mastery over the creation has improved.

And now?

Where once a hundred bullets took him thirty to forty seconds, he could now summon that same amount in a single heartbeat. As long as the element remained the same, the AI didn't even hesitate.

In the end, the numbers told a story louder than any war cry.

136,000 piculs. That's how much he has earned so far.

That's 6.8 million kilograms of refined stardust ore—enough to build a fleet of ether tanks, or a satellite ring of autonomous weapons as long as he had enough materials. Luckily, the deal with Yujiang is still alive, and he will soon get all the adamantine available in the mortal plane of existence from that guardian god as per the promise, once he returns. So, he had a lot of things to look forward to in the future.

However, contrary to one's expectations, Mark ceased the productions a couple of weeks ago as their legion entered the Feline Empire.

He sent one message to the Sky Pavilion Sect:

"I'm out of stock. The frontlines demand my presence. Resume production after a year." This content originates from M1VLEMPYR, My Virtual Library Empire.

That was all.

No apology. No justification. Just a fact.

And surprisingly, the reply came within the hour.

Approved.

Orders halted.

All previously scheduled contracts have been delayed indefinitely.

Not a single question was asked.

Because the truth was, the sect had two very good reasons to obey without protest.

First, stardust was not easy to mine.

It wasn't like gold or spirit jade that could be excavated with qi-imbued tools. No. Stardust could only be harvested from planets and asteroid belts orbiting the black hole regions—places where only ascendants/demigods could tread.

Normally, they would mine a few hundred piculs a year, hoard it, and auction it like sacred treasure.

But Mark's deals had come like a storm. So efficient, so fast, so massive—that the sect had been forced to drain their emergency reserves, those stashed away for war or planar collapse. Now those vaults sat nearly dry.

Second, the profit was undeniable.

The Sky Pavilion Sect had turned Mark's creations into gold mines. The moment the Five-seveN guns hit the black markets, royal families, mercenary kings, and even subjugated worlds under magic ban scrambled to acquire them. Where once a noble's power was measured in mana purity or sword ancestry, it now boiled down to:

How many Five-seveNs do you own?

And for those without talent or time to train in cultivation?

A gun in the hand was a revolution.

Some called it the Great Equalizer. Others, the Magicbane.

Of course, the blacksmiths and researchers under the Sky Pavilion Sect began their reverse engineering. Trying to crack the secrets behind Mark's ammunition. Some succeeded in triggering basic fire discharge. Most failed.

Meanwhile, for the army, after six months of endless battles, Legion 52— with the remaining force of 120,000 elite troops—was now resting on an unnamed planet, drifting silently in an uncharted star system. It had no title, no native species, and no glory to offer. The next day, this planet will become a place for a big battle and might not exist later on, but for now, it was a place to rest.

They were right in the middle of the enemy's territory, although they weren't alone. Legions 4, 19, 33, and 47 were also invaded Feline Empire in different directions, making the Feline forces fight against a 5-front war.

With the Feline Forces directly under the White Lion King was on their way to this unnamed planet, half the soldiers slept beneath makeshift barriers and dome shields. The other half kept watch, their eyes flickering with fatigue and tension.

High above the camp, on a jagged cliff overlooking the silver plains, Mark stood alone, though.

The wind was quiet here. Cool. Clean.

He tilted his head up, watching the deep night sky.

Lan Xia's presence approached like a breeze. She didn't speak until she sat beside him, her knees pulled close to her chest, her silver hair dancing slightly in the wind.

"You're far from camp," she said softly. "Can't sleep?"

Mark exhaled slowly, his voice low. "Just thinking."

There was a silence. Not awkward. Just... heavy.

He gestured to the sky with a faint nod. "From here, we're about thirty light-years away from the Palace. Scientifically, anyway. Of course, we don't fly like ships. Still, if you measure by worlds... between us and that place, there are about ten or eleven."

Lan Xia turned her head slightly. "Ten?"

He nodded. "You know what that means? It means we would at least fight another ten big battles before we reach the heart of the empire. So, I'm just wondering whether I should go alone. My hands are itching to fight."

"You can't be serious?" Lan Xia stared at him. "That's reckless."

Mark chuckled, "Of course, I'm just kidding. If I could go alone and challenge the Demon Cat Empress, I would have done that a long time ago. I wouldn't waste so much time."

Lan Xia heaved out a sigh of relief, "For a second. You scared me away."

After a moment of silence, Mark asked. "By the way, do you really not plan on taking the offer to become the vice commander of Legion 33?"

Lan Xia blinked. She then shook her head, "Why would I? I'm not here to fight the war. I'm here for you."

Mark couldn't help but chuckle once again. "You have been following me to these depths of this war for the past six months, even though I was literally doing nothing interesting here. That's some serious dedication you have."

Lan Xia replied with a straight face. "Of course, I would. I intend to marry you, after all. As a wife, it's my duty to dedicate myself."

"Huh?" Mark blinked, abruptly turning his head to look at her. "What did you just say?"

Chapter 662: After the war, let's get married.

Mark stared at her.

Lan Xia sat there with her knees pulled to her chest, face half-lit by the soft glow of the distant stars above them, expression calm as if what she'd just said had no significance.

He didn't speak for a moment. Truth be told, he didn't know what to say.

"I'm married, Lan Xia," he finally said.

"I know," she replied without hesitation, like she had rehearsed this conversation in her mind a hundred times.

She turned her gaze away, eyes trailing the stars. "Shang Jiao told me... You married two women. One you love, Song Yue. The other, Shen Ling... a princess of a kingdom, you had a political marriage with her, right?" Her voice was even. There was no jealousy, no bitterness. "I also heard you had children with them."

Mark's eyes narrowed slightly. "Then you already know why I can't..."

"I don't see what's wrong with marrying me, though," she cut in softly.

Lan Xia turned to face him fully, her silver hair fluttering in the cold wind. Her tone remained calm, but her words struck like a blade drawn clean.

"I'm an immortal-level cultivator. You'll be going back to the mortal plane one day. With me by your side, you'll not only have an expert watching your back, but our children will be born with unparalleled potential. You carry the bloodline of Blizzard Pegasus and I carry the bloodline of Frost Dragon King...and both were spouses, too. If you think that way, the same destiny flows through us."

Mark blinked in surprise.

She leaned in slightly, eyes still steady, voice unwavering as she continued. "If you marry me, whether you or I becomes the next clan head, the entire Lan Clan will be yours to command. That's more power than any mortal princess could offer. I don't know whether I'm pretty or not, but you said I was beautiful once, didn't you? So... I'm beautiful in your eyes and that means, my appearance isn't a problem for you either."

Mark looked away for a second, exhaling.

He wasn't flustered.

He felt... more like cornered. Because all her arguments made sense. And he had to instill some sense into her to get her out of these silly thoughts.

"I only love one woman in this life, Sister Xia." His voice was quiet, but firm. "Song Yue's the only one I've ever really wanted. Shen Ling... yeah, that was political. But she has her own goals, her own hunger for power. So, she doesn't need my attention either. But you..."

He paused.

"I see you as a friend. A comrade. Someone I trust to watch my back when things go to hell. But love? That's not something I can give you. It's not something I will give. And going back to the mortal realm... It's not a life I would want for you either. You're an immortal. Invincible, practically. But in my world, you'll have nothing to do. No one to fight. No goals to chase. No love to feel. No meaning to live."

He turned back to her. "Do you really want such a boring life?"

Lan Xia's response came with the same quiet defiance that marked everything about her. She didn't flinch. She didn't look away.

"But, you always do interesting things, Gege," she said plainly. "You make machines no one's ever seen. You have this certain set of skills that I just don't see anywhere. Every day, I follow you, and I find things I have never encountered. I don't think I'll be bored as long as I follow you."

The wind blew between them, soft and endless.

Neither of them said anything for a while.

Mark eventually rubbed his temples, a bit frustrated. "You follow me here, however or whenever you want, because I don't mind it. But on Earth, I won't let you do that if Song Yue feels disturbed. Or feel jealous. I don't want another woman in my life who makes Song Yue feel like she is competing with them or worse, feel inferior."

There was a pause from Lan Xia. But then, Lan Xia blinked as if she realized something. "So as long as your wife doesn't feel jealous... I can just follow you around?"

Mark opened his mouth—then closed it. "I guess so?"

"Hmm." Lan Xia nodded, filing that away like she was collecting checkboxes.

She glanced sideways. "If I marry you, would you force me to just stay in the house?"

"What?" Mark frowned. "No? Why would I? I don't oppress women."

"So, if I marry you... Can I take up any profession I want? Like establishing a sect, or maybe taking disciples of my own?"

Mark, already two steps behind in this conversation, replied reflexively. "Of course. That won't be a problem."

It wasn't until a second later that his eyes narrowed slightly.

Wait... what?

"And," Lan Xia said smoothly, eyes still on the stars, "if I marry you, you'll give me a child, regardless of whether you like me or not?"

Mark blinked. Slowly.

Then rubbed his forehead again.

"That goes without saying," he muttered. "But he won't have any rights over the empire I built. I promised, only Shen Ling and her descendants would inherit the throne. No exceptions."

Lan Xia stood up, brushing imaginary dust from her robes.

"Alright then," she said plainly. "After this war ends and we return to the sect, let's get married."

Mark looked up, dazed. "What?"

Lan Xia turned and walked back toward camp, her silver hair catching the moonlight. She didn't even look back.

"Huh?" Mark was still sitting there, jaw half open. "What just... happened here?"

He looked at the stars. They didn't answer.

For the rest of the night, Mark didn't sleep.

Every time he closed his eyes, Lan Xia's voice echoed in his mind like a contract he'd accidentally signed.

After this war ends... let's get married.

He didn't even remember agreeing.

But somehow, he had.

To forget the whirlwind Lan Xia had left in his head, Mark did what he did best.

He worked with his Creation.

But not on guns or bullets. He channeled his Creation Ability—this time, into Explosives.

Not just any explosives.

These were compact, rectangular, and matte black, eerily reminiscent of C4 from Earth. But inside? They didn't carry thermal or kinetic payloads. They were laced with anti-matter particles, some only have like 1-10g while some have as much as 100 kg. With his enormous ether reserves, almost instant recovery ability, and the AI's help, he made a couple of hundred of them every hour.

By dawn, he had more than a thousand units tucked away in his inventory, each one ready to be planted across the battlefield. He became fully focused on the war, a new plan emerging in his head.

As the orange haze of morning stretched across the barren plains, Mark returned to camp. His boots crunched against the scorched soil as he made his way toward the command tent.

Two guards stood at attention. They straightened when they saw him.

"Vice Commander," one of them saluted.

"The Commander's still asleep," the other added with a respectful tone.

Mark didn't break stride. "Wake him."

"Uh... sir?"

"I've got something important. Wake him."

There was no room for doubt in his voice. The guards exchanged a nervous glance and hurried into the tent.

Chapter 663: The Trap for Feline Forces

Twelve hours later.

The unnamed planet had become a chessboard.

Legion 52 was split cleanly into two forces.

The first half, nearly eighty thousand strong, remained in the same location they had camped for days. A wide, open plain now cleared of structures—no shields, no barriers, no visible defense mechanisms. Just tents, bare dirt, and soldiers in loose formations.

To an outsider, it looked abandoned. Exposed.

A perfect target to even strike.

On the opposite side of the planet, 9,000 kilometers away, where night still cloaked the terrain, was the second half of the army. The camp was a fortress.

Layered seals shimmered like faint ripples in the air. A barrier hummed like a restrained beast. At every point, mages stood guard, maintaining the perimeter.

At the center of that night camp, Second Vice Commander Fang Zhou stood atop a steel observation tower, monocle glinting in the moonlight. He was making sure to keep the barrier active so that the enemies wouldn't be able to sense their presence unless they saw them with their own eyes.

Back on the first side—under the full glare of the sun—the silence was finally interrupted by a deep hum in the air.

The soldiers stopped what they were doing and looked up.

A circular portal unfurled high above the sky like an opening eye.

And from within... emerged a fleet of flying boats—sleek, wooden, bearing the golden crest of the Feline Empire.

Each vessel was packed to the brim with elite soldiers in silver-white armor, their weapons radiating a terrifying aura. Even though they were practically beasts, many of these feline creatures had flying mounts, but of another race.

In the center ship, a larger figure stood at the prow, white robes fluttering in the wind, mane-like hair trailing behind him.

Around the White Lion King stood six Vice Generals, each a monster in their own right. Behind them, an army of ascendant and transcendent-level beasts awaits the command. Feline archmages in sleek robes. Panthra dual-blade assassins. Massive tiger-kin berserkers with ether-draining chains wrapped around their arms.

In the center command tent below, the Sky Pavilion Sect Commander stood stiffly, peering through the scrying mirror. The reflected image of the fleet glowed against his dark eyes.

"I can sense at least a hundred transcendents (11-circle)," he murmured. "And a dozen first stage transcendents (12-circle)"

His brow twitched slightly as he felt the oppressive force radiating from the white-gold barge.

"and him. The White Lion King. A true second-stage transcendent (13-circle) was also here.)

He gritted his teeth.

"They sent their royal elite, going all out to face our legion. I wonder what's going on with the other legions."

He then turned slightly to the side, toward the viewing slit in the tent that pointed toward the distant cliff edge.

There, standing like a lone spear before the storm, was Mark.

Hands in his pockets. The coat flapped gently in the breeze. His posture was relaxed, but his presence was like a mountain. Steady and calm.

The Commander's expression darkened. "Let's hope," he whispered, "this Lu Zhen's insane plan actually works."

His fingers clenched behind his back. "Because if it doesn't, we'll all die in minutes without any protective barriers."

Meanwhile, on the White Lion King's flagship...

"Since when did these humans become this reckless? No protective barriers at all?" asked one of the Vice Generals, a lean, panther-like figure with twin sabers and a bloodstained tail.

The vast fleet of flying ships cast enormous shadows across the war-torn plains as thousands of feline warriors stared down at the ground troops who... weren't doing anything.

No panic.

No scrambling to take formation.

No attempts at defense.

Just humans, standing there. Almost awkwardly.

At the center of the field, the Commander of Legion 52 stood waving a blue flag, looking incredibly out of place. His back was stiff, face tight with restrained frustration, but he didn't falter.

He swallowed his pride and waved the flag harder.

Across the Immortal Plane, the colors of battlefield flags were a language everyone understood.

White: surrender.

Green: messenger.

Yellow: caution.

Red: war declaration.

Blue: negotiation proposal.

A snort escaped one of the Vice Generals beside the White Lion King, a tall feline general with snow-white fur and jagged scars across his arms. "We shouldn't trust the humans," the Snow Leopard King growled, eyes sweeping the terrain. "It smells like an ambush."

The White Lion King scoffed.

"Ambush? Look at them. Their commander looks like he wants to cry. Barely a hundred of them have enough strength to even qualify for a real battle. I bet they weren't expecting me to bring Elite Fleet 12. They knew

that we would attack them if they had protective barriers. It seemed like they wanted to talk. Perhaps, negotiate to get out of here safely."

At his side, the Sand Cat Demoness—her waist draped lazily across his thick arm like a scarf made of silk and murder—purred into his ear. "Whether the negotiations succeed or not, we should slaughter them afterward," she said with a smile that held no warmth. "The Empress doesn't intend to take prisoners this time, after all."

The White Lion King grinned, sharp teeth gleaming in the light of the sun. "That goes without saying."

But the Snow Leopard King's eyes narrowed. His senses twitched. He scanned the plains, the horizon, and the cliffs. "Something's really off."

The ships began descending. Formations shifted.

Then came the thunder of impact.

The White Lion King, ever the prideful beast, leapt from his flagship in a fluid arc, crashing down to the cracked earth with a boom that sent dust spiraling.

He straightened, folding his arms. His golden fur shimmered with internal ether as he smirked at the human commander.

"So?" he said, voice booming across the field. "What did you want to talk about?"

The Commander didn't reply.

Instead, he threw the blue flag aside.

"Now!"

The shout split the air.

Before the first feline could react, mages all across the barren camp raised their staves as one. Glyphs ignited. Seals burned beneath the ships and troops.

"It's a trap!" the Snow Leopard King snarled. "I knew it."

"Attack," shouted another vice general.

A heartbeat later, it was too late.

Mass teleportation glyphs, etched in invisible stardust and charged through the night, flared to life in daytime.

At once, every single human soldier vanished.

Only the confused, stunned, and suddenly exposed feline invaders remained, thousands of them stranded in an open field.

"Uhh... they ran away?"

The White Lion King's golden eyes widened. "How—how dare you fool me!?"

His voice thundered for a moment, but then he turned, scanning the area in fury—until his eyes locked onto a singular figure standing a kilometer away.

On the jagged cliff above the battlefield.

A lone man. One hand in his coat pocket. The other lifted casually, and a smirk on his face.

"You brought too many toys to death, King Kitty," Mark muttered under his breath. "Now you get to play with gravity."

He snapped his fingers.

"Activate, Gravity Dome: 100,000 g, Radius: 1000km."

Mark didn't hesitate to go full throttle from the skill as no friendly target was around, even including Lan Xia.

The effect wasn't immediate.

It was instant.

Chapter 664: The battle is over?

It was as if the world cracked.

The very fabric of space screamed as a dome of invisible pressure fell like the fist of a god.

Ships collapsed. Hulls snapped like twigs. Entire floating fortresses were crushed mid-air before they could hit the ground, folding in on themselves like paper in a firestorm.

The creatures below didn't even get to scream.

Feline warriors were flattened, bones imploding. Shields failed. armor ruptured. Those flying or standing too tall were driven face-first into the dirt, jaws shattering, organs crushed.

And in the center, the White Lion King staggered back a step.

His knees buckled.

A snarl tore from his throat. "WHAT IS THIS?!"

BOOM.

He dropped to one knee from sheer gravitational pressure.

Even his divine-level physique couldn't resist a hundred thousand times the natural gravity pressing down from every direction.

The Sand Cat Demoness beside him collapsed immediately, her body writhing, skin splitting as her spine gave out.

The Snow Leopard, who was lying on the ground, growled., "I told you before. You can't trust the humans at all."

Above it all, Mark simply stood on the cliff, coat rippling against the updraft.

"YOU—DARE—TO SUPPRESS—ME?!"

The White Lion King howled with fury, golden mane flaring with violent ether. The air warped around him as his power surged, tearing open small rifts in the gravity field. He resisted the gravitational pressure, the sole among thousands of lying felines around him. However, even then, he couldn't move properly. He could only make slow but heavy steps, his gaze was on the cliff, his enhanced sight captured Mark.

Mark, up on the cliff, couldn't help but raise an eyebrow. "Tough bastard. But, it's fine... Gravity Dome isn't the trap. It is to make sure none of you run away."

Then he snapped his fingers. "Let the fireworks begin."

Boom.

One mine went off.

Then a second.

Then a third.

Then, everything, every inch of soil, every ship's underbelly, every carefully planted charge across the entire dome—exploded in a chain reaction that sounded like the end of the world.

Mark didn't wait on the cliff, though.

He shot upward, coat trailing behind him as he surged into the stratosphere, far above the blast radius. The AI had already created a wind tunnel around him for rapid ascent.

Below him?

Hell broke loose under the anti-matter mines' explosion, one after another, covering hundreds of kilometers of surroundings, completely enveloping the feline forces.

The combined detonation created a shockwave so massive it flattened mountains and evaporated lakes within a breath.

By the time the smoke cleared... 28,564 feline creatures were dead.

Slain in a matter of seconds

The ground was gone, a crater spanning ten thousand square kilometers replaced everything. It looked like a meteor had collided. Ships were pulverized. Ash floated in the air like dying snowflakes.

And at the center, lying face down in the rubble, twitching slightly, was the only survivor.

The White Lion King.

His once-pristine armor was shattered. His golden fur was matted with blood and burned. Half his mane had been blown off. One eye was swollen shut. Even his divine core aura was flickering—like a candle struggling to stay lit in a hurricane.

He coughed up blood. Then another mouthful.

"Y-You..." he rasped, barely able to move. "You... lowly mongrel... how..."

Up in the sky, Mark hovered, face unreadable, watching the crater below.

"You indeed have tough skin," he muttered. "But it doesn't matter..."

Buried halfway into the shattered earth, the White Lion King trembled.

His arms refused to lift. His knees no longer responded. His lungs barely worked under the crushing weight of the still-active Gravity Dome.

And then—

Flick.

A soft crack in the air. A ripple of light, and Mark appeared before him.

The White Lion King's eyes barely rose. He growled, throat thick with blood.

"W-Who... the hell are you...?" he spat. "How does... a transcendent human wield this much power...?"

Mark didn't answer at first. He just smiled calmly and casually. Then said, "It's the power of science, when it's combined with magic."

He stepped closer, each movement slow, deliberate, and merciless.

The White Lion King's claws twitched, but his body wouldn't obey. Gravity pinned him like a bug under glass. His mouth moved as if to insult again, but the words caught when Mark raised his hand to the sky with his palm open.

"But before you die," Mark then said, "I want you to know why you're dying. I want you to know why this war suddenly blew up, all of a sudden. Why the Feline Empire is falling."

He stared down at the beast who once ruled armies. "It's all because you took Anan away from me. My Anan."

The White Lion King blinked.

And for the first time since the battle began, his expression changed.

"Anan?" he rasped. "Prince... Anan?"

Mark's gaze hardened, his calm smile fading into something colder.

The White Lion King's eyes widened in sudden realization. Rage began to fill the cracks of his pain. "So... you're that thief," he growled. "The one from the mortal realm... the bastard who..."

Mark cut him off, stepping even closer.

"You're the thieves," he said, voice like ice. "You're the ones who dared to snatch away what belonged to me."

He didn't give him time to react.

With a single flick of his wrist...

"Activate, Thunderblast."

The sky split open.

A bolt of purple lightning descended like divine wrath. It didn't crack with thunder. It didn't flash. It just descended straight to the target's head.

Zzzz

The White Lion King didn't get an opportunity to scream.

The moment the strike connected, his entire body disintegrated. Muscle, fur, bone, even his core, were erased.

All that remained was ash.

Mark stood over it.

Then he exhaled slowly and turned his eyes toward the far horizon and muttered. "You're next... Demon Cat Empress."

After a while;

At the night campsite on the other side of the world, the Commander and others were quietly waiting in the barrier, hiding their presence. Lan Xia was there, standing anxiously.

It had only been a few minutes since they entered, and the Commander's medallion glowed suddenly, and a message was received in Mark's voice. "Commander, the enemy is defeated, none escaped, and none are alive. You may return to the site."

As the news was relayed to the rest, many cheered and others were awed. Lan Xia clutched her chest in relief.

Chapter 665: The Eternal Pagoda (part-1)

With the battlefield quietened, and Commander informed him that they would continue camping there, on the side of the world, Mark took this opportunity to explore.

Of course, due to using anti-matter mines, which caused complete annihilation, their bodies didn't leave behind anything, except for a disgusting piece of flesh with bones protruding out. However, inside those pieces of flesh, he could sense a tremendous amount of energy.

Big ones. Small ones. Some of the sizes of melons. And some are even the size of a house.

"Didn't expect this," he muttered.

Despite the chaos, thousands of spirit cores had survived the bombardment. Their owners? Obliterated. But the cores? Just sitting there, waiting for him to claim them.

Mark paused, holding one in his hand, confirming that it was indeed a spirit core, but its slimy blood smeared his hand. "Okay, that's disgusting," he said under his breath, throwing it into his inventory and wiping off his hand with his sleeves.

More importantly, Mark couldn't help but wonder. "The antimatter mines... destroyed their bodies, but not their cores?"

He tapped his chin. "Is it because the core contains life force? Ugh... I missed out on a potential 13-circle spirit core..."

His eyes narrowed. "But then again, why should I even bother? I can't use the spirit cores anyway. My cultivation method is different from the norms, none of my beasts could digest a 13-circle beast spirit core at this moment, and it might take a while for them to be qualified. Moreover, I also can't kill a 13-circle beast without going all out. That's a powerful beast. If I focus on not letting its spirit core get damaged, who knows what would happen? And there is no guarantee that it won't get blown up itself to take me down, letting everything go to waste and.... And... and..."

And a sigh escaped his lips.

"Who am I kidding? I obviously screwed up. I didn't think this would happen."

He pinched the bridge of his nose. "A 13-circle realm spirit core..." he groaned. "And I vaporized it. Just exchanging it with any powers will give lots of stardust... ugh... Anyway, can't do anything about what's already happened..."

After picking up cores, all of them at the same time, and tossing them into the inventory, Mark counted their numbers.

28,564 cores were collected in his inventory.

Just as Mark was smiling big with the collected loot, fine ashes, still warm, lifted into the air by a gust of wind that passed by.

The scorched ground where the White Lion King had perished shimmered.

And then, something caught Mark's eye.

"Where in the hell did this pop out from?"

Ark replied to him with a notification.

*Ding! Master, the object seems to be under the ashes all along. Nothing previously detected. Object is now visible.

"How thought? We were literally standing on top of it, just a while ago."

*Ding! Unknown anomaly. Divine concealment is possible. Visual barrier possibly lifted by White Lion King's death.

Mark narrowed his eyes and walked forward.

Half-buried in the cracked ground... was a small seven-story pagoda, no taller than his chest. Its eaves were tipped with silver, its base carved with intricate celestial runes. Each floor had a unique symbol etched on it, glowing faintly.

It pulsed with... authority.

He activated Eyes of God, scanning its details.

The Eternal Pagoda

Grade: Celestial

Status: Soul-Bound Item – No current owner

[Would you like to claim ownership?]

"Hell yes."

[Binding with the soul. Please put your hand on it.]

The pagoda trembled slightly as the AI processed the soul-binding process. Mark felt a sharp pulse go through his hand, as if it recognized him.

Then the interface popped up:

The Eternal Pagoda

Grade: Celestial

Size: Expandable (palm-sized to fortress-scale)

Functions:

Imprisonment Dome

Ethereal Storage Vault

Beast Chaining Prison

Combat Arena

Library

Energy Conversion Furnace

Spatial Relay Gate

[Enter]

*

Mark stared at the glowing interface for a full five seconds.

Then blinked. "Okay... Let's see what this baby holds..."

He bent down and gently lifted the pagoda, which shrank down and floated obediently into his palm.

"And here I thought the beasts don't own any treasures..."

The moment Mark clicked Enter, he disappeared and appeared in the first floor. A suffocating silence hit him like a wall.

It was massive—like the interior of a city-sized dome. A dull, grey emptiness stretched in every direction. There were no cages, no restraints, no visible guards.

However, it wasn't empty. If anything, there are thousands of bodies here.

He froze. "They are alive..." He gasped. "But looks dead..."

All those 45662 bodies, spread all over the place, were all women. All young. Of all shapes and races. Elves, beastkin, druids, even some pure-blooded humans from foreign star systems. Some had horns, some had tails, some had feathers or glowing skin. And all of them... were naked and bruised. Covered in dried blood, or worse.

Their eyes were glassy. Their gazes were empty. No one flinched. No one looked up. They simply sat or lay on the cold ground as if their souls were already broken.

A cold fury coiled in Mark's gut. "This..."

He didn't even need to ask questions about what happened to them. He was familiar with those purple lotus marks glowing faintly on every one of their foreheads. He read about those in the Lan Sect records. They were standard divine-grade slave brands, although he remembered them being scarlet lotus marks though, not purple.

"That bastard..."

Mark didn't even realize he was clenching his fists in anger. "Ark, we need to break those seals. Can you select all of them and use the Seal Breaker skill?"

*Ding! Denied.

"Eh?"

"Master, the seal is unleashed by the pagoda. It cannot be broken. As the master of the Eternal Pagoda, Master can only disable it. Please go to the panel."

"Open the Eternal Pagoda Panel."

He clicked on one of the functions, the Imprisonment Dome, following its instructions.

There was a set of skills that opened.

The Divine Slavery: The prisoners of the Eternal Pagoda are automatically branded with the Divine Slavery and are at the whim of the pagoda's master.

Chapter 666: The Eternal Pagoda (part-2)

Forever Prisoner: The prisoners who serve a sentence in the Eternal Pagoda for more than 1 heavenly year will forever be bound to the Pagoda.

Forced Mortality: The Prisoners below 11-circle will have cultivation deteriorate over time and lose their Qi/Ether permanently after 1 heavenly 1-year sentence.

"Damn these two skills... just who made this prison..." Mark's eyes widened at its abilities. "Forever... that's too much harsh but at the very least, that divine slavery has a toggle on/off switch, unlike the other two."

He went ahead with the toggle off.

And in that moment...

The entire prison floor rippled.

The brand shattered like broken glass on one of them. A soft hum rang out from the pagoda.

Then another mark was shattered.

Like a chain of dominoes, all of those marks were shattered one after another.

In no time, all 45,662 women were temporarily freed from the slavery.

Mark wanted to let out a smile and tell them that they are safe, but before he got to do that, the silence was shattered.

It started with a whisper.

Then a moan.

Then a choked sob.

Then—chaos.

The air twisted as the broken husks of women awoke. Not as victims. Not as survivors.

They resembled beasts as their eyes snapped toward him.

"There's a male!"

"A male!!"

"A male! A real one!"

"Alive!"

Mark's pupils contracted as they lunged with a wave of desperation, madness, Hunger, but not for food or affection.

He didn't wait for them to touch him though.

The moment the first of them just neared a 3-foot radius nearby, he unleashed the skill.

"Gravity Dome. 100x, 1 km radius."

Boom.

An invisible pressure slammed down on the entire floor. Screams rang out as thousands of bodies were crushed to the floor, not lethally, but enough to paralyze them in place.

But they still stared at him. Some were salivating. Others laughed. Some just wept, their hands clawing the floor in desperation.

One girl, her ears pointed like a fox spirit, whispered through cracked lips, "Is it real...? Is he real...? Or is it another illusion again...?"

Mark didn't speak.

He just looked at them, at what they had been reduced to. At what the White Lion King had turned them into.

He exhaled slowly and muttered under his breath: "I'm really regretting killing you so quickly without any pain, bastard."

Mark stood at the center, unmoving, watching thousands of broken women pinned to the ground like dolls without strings.

He let out a long, weary sigh. "Ark, scan their status."

«Scanning now...»

A faint hum spread outward from Mark's chest, rippling across the hall in invisible pulses. One by one, tiny sparks danced above the girls' foreheads— flickering to life under Ark's analysis.

*Ding! Mental integrity status: severely compromised. Extensive psychological collapse due to prolonged spiritual and physical abuse. Primary trigger: forced mating rituals... frequency and intensity exceed sustainable limits.

Mark closed his eyes. "So, they've been..."

*Ding! Their cognitive functions are fractured, Master. Emotional centers are desensitized. Speech ability is disrupted. In most cases, the trauma is locked beneath instinctual responses: fight, flee, or submit. What you witnessed was the final phase of psychological degeneration.

Mark's jaw tightened. "Can they be saved?"

*Ding! Affirmative. The simplest solution is to re-enable the slave seal and use it as a bridge to overwrite specific memory clusters. The moment the rewritten narrative stabilizes, normal cognition will resume. Emotional balance will follow. But...

"But they'll be enslaved." Mark's voice was cold. "Even if I'm rewriting the memories to protect them, I'd be rebranding them as mine."

*Ding! Correct. That is the fastest and least destructive solution. Alternatively, I can install individual AI Cores into their minds to stabilize personality fractures...

"No." Mark snapped. He paused. Then added, quieter, "To make one AI Core, through just my sheer will and creation ability, I would need my entire reserves. That means I can only create one per every 70. And there are 45000 of these here. Not to mention, they are forever bound to this pagoda."

"Killing them might be kinder," he muttered bitterly. "At least they'd be free."

But he didn't move.

He stared out across the broken sea of people, all collapsed, motionless, silent. "Still... I don't want to do that either."

He took a breath, deep and resigned. "If we're going to override their minds, then let's do it the right way."

Ark's system clicked faintly, awaiting instruction.

"Keep their core memories. Don't touch who they are... their earlier memories from their birth to their capture must be retained as it is. Just wipe away the atrocities done to them after being imprisoned here. Replace the void with this: they were prisoners of the White Lion King. I appeared, killed him in front of them, and offered them a choice. They swore loyalty to me voluntarily and accepted the slave seal to protect their new identities. That's all."

*Ding! Affirmed. Executing Layered Memory Integration Protocol.

"All emotional states should reflect peace, safety, and personal choice. No romantic connections. No loyalty through affection. I don't want that kind of mess."

*Ding! Noted. Adjusting emotional associations accordingly. Beginning assimilation.

He raised his hand, invoking his Creation Ability again. Robe after robe formed in the air and fell gently onto the silent forms around him. The process was mechanical, steady, and endless.

A glimmer of light shimmered over each girl's forehead as the slave seal reactivated—but not like before. This time, the brand was subdued, non-dominant. A soft silver lotus, its energy humming in sync with Mark's ether signature.

The slave mark, now a tool for stabilization, pulsed faintly.

Then—

One by one, the women began to lose consciousness. Not in fear or panic.

But in stillness.

They collapsed gently to the floor—eyes closing as if slipping into a deep, dreamless sleep.

[Estimated Completion Time: 48 Hours]

[Memory Integration in Progress... 1%]

Mark stood alone again.

Watching forty-five thousand women sleep beneath dim starlight pouring in from the dome's ceiling.

He exhaled. "I don't know what kind of lives you'll rebuild after this... but I'll at least make sure you get to choose them."

Chapter 667: The Eternal Pagoda (part-3)

Floor Two.

As the great bronze door creaked open with a low rumble, Mark instinctively reached up to adjust his breathing mask. The moment the seal broke, a wave of air flooded out, hot, metallic, and wet with the thick scent of blood.

Mark stepped inside.

And froze.

What greeted him was not a room. It was a slaughterhouse.

A vast chamber that stretched like a basin carved into the mountains of hell. Blood pooled across every slope, every crack in the obsidian floor, seeping into trenches where bones had piled up like discarded logs.

The walls were lined with deep claw marks, some etched with fire, others with acid, others clearly made by creatures with raw brute force.

Thousands of corpses littered the space.

Some massive, some small. But nearly all of them shared common features, fangs, claws, and fur. Canine Beast types.

A few had vaguely wolf-like features, others resembled foxes or jackals, and some Mark doesn't know what to make of. One thing that surprised him the most was that there were dozens of 12-circle monsters around. He swore that he could find a 13-circle one if he searched more carefully.

Here and there, dragon corpses rested with scales like fallen armor and horns scorched to stubs. A few looked like juvenile limbless dragons with long whiskers, their eyes still open in frozen rage.

Mark couldn't help but still frown as he could only find carcasses and nothing else. "I thought this floor was a Vault. No treasures, no rare materials or weapons, or artifacts. Nothing here apart from beasts. I certainly have no use for this lot... Suppose I could sell them but still..."

After walking for a while, he stopped and turned around to return to the exit.

But then on this return, His boots accidentally splashed in the shallow blood pooled under a massive black wolf, larger than a house. Half of its fur was burned, the rest clinging to scorched skin.

A notification chime suddenly filled his head.

*Ding! Core density consistent with 13-circle realm. Recommend extraction.

Mark shut his eyes for a moment. "Nah, leave it. It won't go anywhere, anyway."

A while later;

Third Floor – Beast Chaining Prison.

The iron-bound doors groaned as they opened.

A freezing gust washed over Mark the moment he stepped in. The air was thinly laced with traces of soul-suppressing energy. It wasn't a grand chamber like the first two levels. It was a cavern. Dim. Hollow. Bare. No structures. No torches. Just permafrost clinging to every stone surface.

And at the center, he saw a monster.

A colossal white beast, chained by limbs. Glacial fur, as soft-looking as snowflakes, shimmered with unnatural sheen, and blood-red runes wrapped tightly around each paw. The Snow Wolf King lay coiled like a mountain range, easily a hundred feet tall, his head resting between his paws.

But when Mark entered, the beast opened its eyes. "A Primate? Who are you? Did you escape the imprisonment down there somehow?"

Mark didn't respond immediately. He raised a hand instead. "Activate, Eyes of God."

Unnamed

Species: Snow Wolf King

Grade: Ancient

Age: 394,881 Earth Years.

Rank: peak-13-circle

Attribute: Ice

*Ding! Compatible with Host's Blizzard Pegasus' bloodline. Suitable for a contract.

Mark narrowed his eyes. "A contract?"

"I asked Who are you, primate?" As the Snow Wolf King was slightly irritated, visibly, Mark stared at the beast and said plainly. "I killed the White Lion King. This pagoda is mine now. That makes you, my prisoner."

The beast's ears flicked slightly.

Then, it snorted. Followed by a low, rumbling chuckle that echoed like thunder trapped in ice. "You? You, a mere Transcendent? Don't joke with me, Primate. The White Lion King was a 2nd Stage Transcendent. If it is your master or whoever is backing you were who killed him, just admit it. Don't boast around."

Mark didn't rise to the bait. Instead, he calmly walked forward a few more steps, unbothered by the snow crunching beneath his boots.

"That's not your concern," he said flatly. "What my concern is knowing who I'm dealing with."

He gestured to the freezing walls, where remnants of spirit seals pulsed slowly. "You're not just any beast. You're the only one locked up here. Which means you're important. So, tell me your story, O Great Wolf."

"If I'm satisfied," Mark said, pausing, "I might even let you go."

The beast stared at him for a long time. Then, unexpectedly, it sighed. "I am the King of Frostfang Howl, one of the Seven Great Canine Thrones. My kingdom stood at the western edge of the Canine Empire until the White Lion King and his elite fleet razed it to ash."

Mark remained silent. "He destroyed my brothers, my children, my brethren. Killed my Empress before my eyes. Everyone in my domain ended up dying to his sword, except for me. Because I was useful."

Mark's eyes sharpened. "Useful how?"

The Snow Wolf King lifted his gaze, eyes like molten ruby against the frozen world. "White Lion King might look like a loyal feline general, but he is a misogynist. Even in his feline empire, he always thinks that the female species is not fit to rule, regardless of their strength. He dreamed of overthrowing the Demon Cat Empress. But he lacked the power and support to do that. So, he chased after the legend of Sun Wukong, the Monkey King."

"He believed that by gathering Sun Wukong's lost divine relics—Ruyi Jingu Bang, Jin Dou Yun, and the Gourd of Sealing—he could challenge the Demon Cat Empress. After all, the legends say that each of the Monkey Demon King's weapons is a celestial treasure, but when one possesses three of them, they get the power to challenge even the Jade Emperor."

Mark's eyes flickered.

"Those things exist?"

"Scattered. Lost. Some say sealed in different planes. Others believe they were split and embedded into the bloodlines of lesser beasts to protect them.

The White Lion King believed I knew where the Jin Dou Yun was."

"Do you?" Mark asked simply.

"Of course, I know," the wolf said after a pause. "Our Snow Wolf Clan has been given the responsibility to guard the Jin Dou Yun. He locked me here, hoping to breed that knowledge out of me."

Mark's expression didn't shift as he asked. "Where is it?"

The Snow Wolf King narrowed his eyes. He gave a malicious grin. "After being tortured for years, I didn't even give a single hint to my oppressor. What makes you think that I will submit the truth to you?" The beast's scarlet eyes gleamed with contempt and exhaustion, its paws twitching slightly against the invisible restraints that pinned it.

Mark didn't answer right away. He simply folded his arms and watched the beast, eyes unreadable, voice steady as water. "He killed your people. Captured you. Took everything. I didn't do any of that. We have no enmity between us. So, I don't see any reason. Are you that loyal to the one who gave you the weapons or something?"

Kael'Thar chuckled bitterly, a low rumble rolling from his throat. "Alright, I'll tell you, but you have to let me go first."

Mark scoffed. "Oh, please, don't try to fool a human with your pitiful intelligence, wolf. Don't you know that humans are the most intelligent mortal species in the universe?"

Chapter 668: The Eternal Pagoda (part-4)

The Snow Wolf King almost growled as he replied. "You primates always try to boast your intelligence, but then again, that's all you have. You depend on these so-called artifacts, blades, arrows, poison, seals, because you are fundamentally weak in nature."

Mark plainly smiled at that. "Yes, we know that. So, let's get back to the matter. Will you speak about where the weapons are held? If you are worried about betrayal, let's form a soul pact oath to make sure we keep our words."

"Pacts? Those silly things you use heaven as witness? Those don't work once you reach the transcendent stage. Don't you know that?"

Silence returned to the floor, only broken by the faint hum of power drifting from the ceiling sigils. Mark's eyes narrowed slightly as he turned inward, speaking to someone who wasn't there.

"Ark, what are our odds of controlling this beast with an AI core?"

*Ding!

The voice of the AI responded calmly in his head. "Implanting an AI core in this subject is possible. Compatibility rate is low: less than thirty percent."

"If I force the override?"

"With a full energy burst, the AI can seize control for a maximum of ten seconds. After that, resistance climbs exponentially."

Mark's lips twitched. "Ten seconds. That would be enough."

He raised his hand slowly. "Creation."

His entire ether reserves were consumed in an instant, and Ark went on creating the AI Core, identical to that of its own, which is embedded in Mark's body, back when the system betrayed him and left. He was revived because of this AI core.

Every last bit of ether, not a single drop spared, poured into the invisible circuitry of Creation. A whisper echoed across the realm as a complex network of golden glyphs coalesced midair, forming a hovering matrix. Inside that matrix, something began to solidify.

In five mere seconds, a Core, a glowing cube with rune-like circuits all over it, pulsed softly in his hand.

Kael'Thar's scarlet eyes widened in raw disbelief. "That... that's Nuwa's ability," he murmured, voice dry with awe and fear. "You... you possess Creation?"

While his ether particles started recovering, Mark looked back at the Wolf. "Sorry, Wolf King, negotiations fail."

Kael'Thar's pupils narrowed. "You..."

Mark didn't answer.

He waited a few more seconds and then raised his other hand.

"Gravity Dome, 100,000 xg, 200 meters

BOOM.

A colossal force slammed downward like an invisible fist.

The platform beneath Kael'Thar cracked and cratered as the beast was flattened to the ground, chains already sapping his strength now amplified by the unbearable pressure.

"Ugh—ngghh... no... way..." Kael'Thar groaned. "You... you shouldn't... have this power... who the hell... are you...?"

Mark floated forward, silent, calm, the glowing AI Core in his hand lighting up his blank expression. He didn't answer.

A minute later, with the beast rendered immobile, the Core pressed against the Snow Wolf King's skull—and sank in.

The effect was instant.

Kael'Thar's eyes rolled back. His massive frame twitched once. Then went still.

A small holographic timer appeared in Mark's vision:

[Override Initiated: 10 seconds]

Dismissing the Gravity Dome, Mark went on to activate another skill: "Beast Taming Skill, Activate."

Golden energy erupted from Mark's palm, forming the Beast Taming skill glyph. A radiant rope of divine light uncoiled and lashed toward the prone beast like a snake of judgment, wrapping around Kael'Thar's soul signature. The rune circle flared, and...

Ding! Beast Contract Established – Target: Kael'Thar, Snow Wolf King

Ding! Title Effect Activated: Absolute Authority.

Mark smiled faintly. "Alright. You can drop the override. Don't want to deep fry yourself."

As if obeying an unheard cue, the light dimmed. The Snow Wolf King blinked once, eyes returning to normal. He slowly lifted his head, groggy, confused.

Then, his instincts kicked in.

A roar tore from his throat as he lunged with a paw as large as a boulder, claws crackling with icy aura. Mark didn't move. He simply stood there, arms folded, looking almost... bored.

The claw stopped an inch away from Mark's head.

Kael'Thar froze mid-strike, breathing raggedly.

"What's... going on...? My body... it won't obey me..."

He growled in confusion and fury, muscles tensing, trying to resist—but something greater had already overridden his instincts. His claw trembled... but could not fall.

"What did you do... you damned primate?"

Mark lazily glanced at the displaying character interface, especially at the titles.

Title: Absolute authority (Currently in use)

Description: When equipped with the title, every living being that formed an equal or a slave contract will be forced to follow the command of the user without any questions. The contracted beings cannot break the contract through any means as long as the title is equipped. Note: Elder Gods (15-circle) are completely immune to this skill, and True Gods (14-circle) can resist the effect.

*

The Snow Wolf King snarled, fangs bared, eyes blazing with unfiltered hatred. He tried to stand.

But his knees buckled under invisible pressure. His muscles contracted on their own, and with a low growl of humiliation, his massive body slumped to the ground, sitting on his haunches like a trained hound before its handler.

"Grrrr..."

Mark didn't even turn around.

He gave the order without emotion, as if addressing a console rather than a sentient being.

"Sit."

The beast obeyed. Not by choice—by command due to the Absolute Authority Title, which was basically an invisible purple lotus slavery seal type spell. As long as they were contracted to Mark, they cannot go against him.

If Kael tells him to sit, he will sit. If Kael tells him to jump into the ocean, he will do it. Even if Kael tells him to kill himself, the Snow Wolf King will have no choice but to kill himself.

And in this way, Kael'Thar, the once-feared Frostfang King and a prisoner who didn't bow to the White Lion King's Torture, had now become just another tool in Mark's hands.

"Here's the deal," Mark then said, folding his arms, voice smooth and quiet but edged like a blade. "You want revenge. I want the relics."

"You help me find Sun Wukong's three treasures, Ruyi Jingu Bang, Jin Dou Yun, and the Sealing Gourd."

He paused, then added with deliberate weight: "Once I acquire them, I'll free you. Until then... whether you like it or not, you belong to me."

The wolf's growl deepened into a primal roar.

"YOU FUCKING PRIMATE—! I'LL RIP YOU TO SHREDS WHEN I'M FREE!"

The ceiling trembled. Winds burst outward from his maw. Ice formed on the tiles. The very bones of the pagoda seemed to groan under the pressure of the ancient beast's fury.

But Mark?

He didn't even flinch. He simply walked away.

But just as he reached the exit archway, Mark stopped briefly. He spoke without looking back. "Whether you believe me now or not, I killed White Lion King with these hands without any assistance. And he destroyed your empire, and you couldn't do anything but become his prisoner. If you have even a little bit of brain in that mutt brain of yours, you will understand the warning when I say, don't push your luck." He waved his hand, a goodbye, "I'll be back soon."

Then, he stepped into the light, vanishing into the staircase toward the Fourth Floor of the Pagoda.

Behind him, the Snow Wolf King shook violently.

Anger... helplessness... humiliation.

"Argh..."

He clawed the floor in frustration.

Chapter 669: The Eternal Pagoda (part-5)

Mark continued to ascend the spiral stairway with quiet, deliberate steps. No ornate doors this time. No beasts. No corpses. No chains.

Just a wide, empty chamber... and a single object.

A crystal, as tall as he was. Suspended slightly above the floor, glowing soft yellow, like sunlight caught in amber.

It pulsed with a quiet hum. Not threatening. Not welcoming either. Just... there. Waiting.

He frowned and stopped a few meters away. "Scan it."

[Analyzing...]

*Ding! Resonant Illusion Crystal (Environmental Anchor Node)

Function: Alters the interior environment based on the host's imagination. Illusions are full-sensory and physically simulated. Warning: Not a projection. Fully immersive.

Mark raised an eyebrow. "So, I can reshape this floor just by thinking about it?"

"Yes, Master," Ark confirmed. "It is possible due to a chaos fragment in the form of powder has been mixed during its creation. While it is not strong enough to alter reality itself, it can temporarily bring forth a false reality."

Mark stepped forward, palm outstretched in curiosity. Obviously, he wants to test its effects. His fingers met the warm surface of the crystal. It rippled with light the moment he touched it.

He closed his eyes just for a second.

A flash.

Then—

Wind.

Concrete.

Noise.

Mark opened his eyes and found himself standing in the middle of a familiar four-lane road. The buildings towered on both sides—mirrored glass, steel beams, blinking ads projected across the sky like banners from another era.

Cars honked in the distance. Air was thick with dust, ozone, and the subtle tinge of grilled food. The sky was overcast, gray clouds drifting lazily above.

"Huh? This..." It was... Earth.

No, his Earth from the past life. His city, where he lived for years.

Mark blinked slowly, stunned. The sidewalk to his left was chipped in the exact same way he remembered. The streetlight had that same stupid flicker.

He turned around and saw the pedestrian bridge with graffiti still scrawled across the side—"Life is cruel. Get stronger."

His jaw tightened. He mumbled, almost involuntarily, "It's nice to see home... even if it's just an illusion."

He stood there for a few long moments. Letting everything soak in. A single drop of tear escaped his eyes. He wiped it away.

Then, with a quiet sigh, he shut his eyes again and tapped the crystal once more. This time, he imagined something simpler. Calmer.

A sea.

The instant the thought formed, the world shifted...

Splash.

Water engulfed him from every direction. Pressure slammed into his chest. Salt stung his eyes.

He thrashed for a second, instincts kicking in. Swam upward, toward light. Broke the surface and gasped sharply.

"What the...?" he choked. "This isn't just illusion... It's physically simulated."

*Ding! Master, I have mentioned before, it is not an illusion, it is a temporary false reality.

Waves rolled beneath him. He could feel the cold. The drag. The weight of his soaked clothes. A gull cried overhead. Fish darted beneath his feet.

He shook his head, coughing. "Okay, okay... cancel."

The moment he willed it, the sea evaporated.

In a blink, he stood again in the quiet stone chamber. His robes dripping, hair clinging to his forehead. A faint wet trail pooled around his boots.

With a twitch of his fingers, he summoned ether energy, letting it spread across his clothes. The water hissed into steam and vanished.

He adjusted his collar.

"Note to self," he muttered dryly. "Never imagine a black hole. Or else, who knows what will happen."

Then, without another word, he turned around and exited the chamber.

The crystal hummed faintly behind him, returning to silence, waiting for the next dream.

Mark then ascended the fifth floor and paused.

It was a library.

Massive. Circular. No symmetry. But just utter chaos instead of neatly stacked books.

Scrolls were scattered across the floor. Ancient books were piled haphazardly in corners, some still glowing faintly with protective seals or forgotten enchantments.

He took a slow breath, looking around.

He walked down one narrow aisle, picked up a scroll sealed in black wax, and immediately put it back after seeing a warning glyph carved into the seal—"DO NOT OPEN IF MORTAL."

"Yeah, no thanks," Mark said and turned around. "Even if I'm not mortal, I don't have an interest in reading books now."

It's not that he wasn't truly interested in the books. It's just that he wasn't in the mood.

"Later," he told himself, stepping back toward the staircase. "When I have time to reorganize this junk and let Ark run a scan sweep."

*

The Sixth Floor welcomed him with blazing temperatures. It was like stepping into a volcano right before it erupts. The air was thick, humming, charged.

At the center of the chamber stood a giant furnace, over twenty meters tall. Made of a strange dark alloy laced with deep red veins, it looked alive, breathing in and out slowly, as though slumbering between heartbeats.

Floating near the entrance was a blue crystal, no larger than a child's fist. It emitted a slow, ethereal pulse that resonated in the bones, not the ears.

Mark raised a hand.

"Ark, scan it."

A soft whirr. Then—

[Fragment of the Orb of Creation – Detected]

Location: Contained within Furnace Core

"Creation Orb. That's tempting, actually," Mark said, narrowing his eyes.

Ark replied. "However, it is currently in a dormant state. At the moment, it only works if the recipe is correct and you provide the exact materials for the desired weapon/artifact, Master. To unlock the furnace's deeper functions, you need to override the existing Qi Spirit's will."

"What kind of functions?"

"Unknown. Preliminary data suggests it's more than a smelting device. It could be a cosmic synthesis engine. Possibly capable of combining matter and concepts, not just materials."

Mark took a slow step forward, standing just before the glowing crystal. He could feel it watching him. As if it were waiting for permission.

"How long until you can break it down?"

"Thirty-six hours. I require passive observation before attempting integration."

Mark nodded.

He reached out, brushing his fingers across the furnace's cold exterior. Sparks arced briefly over his skin.

"A forge that can shape reality itself..." he murmured. "If it works, we won't need Stardust refinement anymore," Ark added. "You could bypass every limitation of conventional forging."

Mark let the thought sit. "Hmm... Understood."

Leaving the furnace room, Mark climbed the final set of stairs.

There was no door this time—just a pale light spilling into the stairwell, dancing across the walls like moonlight on water.

He stepped onto the Seventh Floor and stopped.

At the center of the circular room stood a spatial portal. Not a gateway framed in stone or runes—just a vertical tear in reality itself. Shimmering. Fluid. Silent. A perfect oval of distorted space, like a mirror made from ripples.

No sound.

No aura.

Just presence.

He narrowed his eyes.

"Ark?"

[Analyzing...]

The response came quicker than usual, like the AI had anticipated the scan.

[Type: Interlinked Spatial Nexus]

[Function: One-way or Two-way Transmission Portal]

[Registered Coordinates: 1 active node]

[Destination: 29.3 light-years away — approximate match with imperial energy signature database: 97.6% confidence — Target: Feline Empire's Imperial Palace]

Mark blinked. He stared at the portal for a long, slow breath.

Then a grin tugged at the corner of his lips. "You're kidding me."

"No," Ark replied. "It is currently the only linked spatial coordinate stored in the pagoda's network. The palace node was likely left connected for rapid traversal."

Mark stepped forward, the swirling light casting sharp lines over his face. "I know, I wasn't exactly saying you are kidding... It's just a way of expressing surprise."

"Oh, I was mistaken. I apologize, Master."

"So let me get this straight," he said, a low chuckle rising in his chest. "The bastard White Lion King had a direct backdoor to the throne this entire time."

"Affirmative."

"And now it's mine." He clenched his fist, his eyes gleaming with cold anticipation. "Well then... I guess the Goddess of Luck really is on my side."

Chapter 670: Resigning from the Post

His voice was barely above a whisper, but the words echoed.

"The palace..." he murmured. "Right there. Just thirty light years gone in a single step."

The realization weighed on him—not with dread, but exhilaration.

After all the fighting... the mines, the forging, the supply chains, the warzones, the killing. Now, a door. To the very center of it all.

To the heart of the Feline Empire.

To The Demon Cat Empress.

Mark let the silence hold for another breath before turning away. "We're not going yet," he muttered. "Let's be patient for now. As long as I can get that army into this place, we can strike her Empire straight in the heart."

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Just like that, two weeks passed in the blink of an eye.

The atmosphere on the unnamed planet had shifted.

Where once it was full of tension and urgency, now it sat in anxious stillness.

The wreckage of the White Lion King's Elite Fleet still littered the valley floor, a graveyard of shattered flying boats and scorched earth. The soldiers of Legion 52 rested, healed, sharpened their blades, and repaired armor. But most of all... they waited.

They waited because the higher-ups told them to.. Whether it was for further reinforcements or preparations for incoming forces, they had no idea. They can only wait for further orders.

Mark stood at the edge of a cliff again, arms crossed, looking down at the bustling camp. "We could've been halfway to the capital by now even if we take the normal route," he muttered. "Unfortunately, according to Ark, the energy in that portal is sufficient to teleport only ten people. Too bad... Anyways, Ark is working as fast as it can, creating the antimatter as much as it can. In a few days, I'll be ready to launch a preemptive strike on my own."

One more week later, the order finally came from the Sky Pavilion Sect through a sky-message scroll, glowing runes falling from the heavens.

"Do not advance. Wait until Legions 11 and 29 arrive. Mobilization in three weeks."

It was met with silence in the camp.

But not from Mark.

Inside the war tent, Mark stood face to face with the Commander.

"We have the momentum," Mark said sharply. "We should move. You saw what happened—we can't let this chance slip and let them prepare to send another elite force."

"And risk walking into another trap?" the Commander snapped back. "You got lucky, Lu Zhen. Clever traps don't win every war."

"Luck?" Mark's voice dropped. "You think I decimated thousands of those elite soldiers, killed the White Lion King, while saving every soldier because of luck?"

"You laid landmines and baited a fool," the commander growled. "That doesn't make you a strategist. It makes you a gambler. Had your gamble not worked, we would have seen half of the army would have been lost."

Mark's hands curled into fists, but he kept his voice steady. "If you'd trusted me, this war would've ended sooner. But I'm not going to sit here twiddling my thumbs while the other Legions die."

"We follow orders," Fei Yuan said. "You're not a special snowflake. You want to run off? Fine. But the Sky Pavilion Sect will hunt you down as a deserter."

Mark stared at him a few seconds. He took a deep breath and slowly reached into his robes. "Alright, I'm done."

He pulled out the silver medallion that marked his honorary officer's rank and tossed it, letting it clatter at Fei Yuan's feet. "I'm not your soldier. Commander," Mark said coldly. "I never was."

"I joined the war to kill Felines, not to be someone's dog."

He turned and walked away.

"Lu Zhen! Lu Zhen..." the commander shouted, fury lacing every syllable. "You dare turn your back on your superior?!"

With a snarl, Commander Fei launched forward, ether blade in hand, moving to strike him down.

But before the blade could fully leave the sheath...

"Gravity Dome. 100,000g. Radius: two meters."

A pulse of invisible energy surged out from Mark's body—an explosion of pressure, crushing down like a mountain. Everything outside the six foot radius was untouched.

But within it, the commander collapsed hard.

His knees cracked into the ground, eyes wide, his blade snapping against the sheer pressure as he coughed blood.

Mark didn't even glance back.

"Don't push your luck, Commander," he said simply. "When I was only an ascendant, I killed a second-stage transcendent beast. Now, I'm a transcendent."

The dome collapsed with a quiet shimmer, like air sighing back into place.

Commander Fei Yuan gasped for breath as Mark walked out of the tent.

After resigning his position, Mark walked through the camp, past stunned soldiers and silent officers who stepped aside as he passed. He wasn't wearing armor. No badge. No flag. Just his usual black robe, fluttering with each step.

Lan Xia was waiting for him at the camp entrance. With her arms crossed, she stopped him, asking. "What happened? You seemed a bit displeased."

Mark told her what happened, and her expression immediately changed. "What is our next move? Without an army, we can't move forward. It is too dangerous to go alone. We need the Sky Pavilion Sect's information network, too. Or else, we wouldn't know the situation ahead."

Mark responded with a question. "Do you trust me?"

Lan Xia blinked but nodded. "Yes, of course, what kind of wife wouldn't trust her husband?"

At that, Mark wanted to say that you are not my wife, but he didn't say anything on that and simply said. "I want you to do something for me. Take the four of them with you to the Lan Sect and wait for me."

"Eh? Why?"

Mark replied with a straight face. "No questions."

She stiffened at the order.

He then thought about something and took out a pocket watch from his inventory. "This is something that's been there since my birth. I thought it was no longer important after finding my real parents and heritage, but I still couldn't help but carry it with me. I want you to hold on to it." As he handed over the pocket watch to Lan Xia, she took it and observed. There's indeed nothing special about it, but she could sense that it is at least older than Mark. She nodded, "Alright."

And then two hours later, much to the Commander's anger, Mark personally sent Lan Xia and the other four through the portal back to the Sky Pavilion Sect's controlled realm portal, before they leave for the null point and then to the Plane of Ice and Fire, and then to the Lan Sect.

Once they were gone, Mark flew, finding a remote location in the mountains, and then took out the Eternal Pagoda. With a flicker of thought, he entered it.

There, Tens of thousands of women stood in perfect formation, spanning a marble floor that stretched like an indoor city plaza. Their attire had changed from back when he first found them.

All of them now wore sleek maid uniforms, black and white with crisp edges, subtle frills, and matching dark gloves. The outfits looked like a fusion of combat attire and traditional servant garments, tailored for movement and practicality rather than allure.

And each one of them carried a machine gun across their chest like it was a holy artifact.

Once they saw him, the purple lotus on their foreheads glowed, and they went to one knee in unison.
"Welcome Back, Master."