

# The People's God: Sacrificing Trillions to Ascend

[ 1,027 words ]

## Chapter 401 - Everyone's Plot

The students heard their conversation and exchanged surprised glances. They had never imagined that Han Wu was hiding something that even Wei En coveted. Their curiosity spiked. What kind of treasure could even stir her interest? One by one, they started pressuring Han Wu to reveal it.

“Junior Han, show us that Transmutation Golem, or whatever that thing is. We want to see it. You won't lose anything by showing it to us.”

“Yeah. We're your seniors. We won't take it.”

“Hey, I traded numerous treasures just to get a lesser golem. Surely it's not too much to ask for a peek, right?”

Han Wu wouldn't succumb to their pressure. Wanting to see the Transmutation Golem was one thing, but what if their greed overtook them? He wasn't about to make a foolish move and draw unwanted attention.

Before he could respond, Elina spoke up on her own, “The Transmutation Golem is a gift that Han Wu will offer to the God King of Light. Who among you is brave enough to touch it?”

Her proclamation silenced everyone. Even Han Wu froze.

“Since when am I offering it to the God King of Light?” he asked in confusion.

Elina ignored him and continued, “Han Wu belongs to the God King of Light's faction from now on. I will not tolerate anyone trying to bully him.”

Han Wu opened his mouth to rebuke her, but Wei En spoke first. “As far as I know, Han Wu stole the Transmutation Golem from the gnomes. Offering stolen goods to the God King of Light would only sully his eyes.”

Elina wanted to argue but couldn't. Wei En was right. The God King of Light was pure and just. How could he be tainted by stolen objects or gifts?

Elina felt a surge of despair. *If Han Wu can't offer it, how can he join the Light faction?*

Wei En seized the moment and pressed Han Wu to reveal the Transmutation Golem. “Han Wu, you’ve stolen the gnomes’ greatest treasure and deserve to be punished. If you return the Transmutation Golem to them in repentance, I will try to shield you from the Gnome Lord’s wrath. I am only doing this because we both hail from Imperial College.”

Her words carried the weight of justice and sounded righteous, but Han Wu wouldn’t fall for it.

“Senior Wei, I may have offended the gnomes, but what does that have to do with you? Aren’t you a guest of the elves? Since when have you been close to the gnomes? It’s not your place to tell me what to do,” he rebuked.

“I...” His rebuttal angered her, but there was nothing that she could twist here. If not for her suspicion that the Transmutation Golem was connected to the Magic Ring, she wouldn’t have wasted so much time with Han Wu.

Huang Shengjun sat patiently, watching the scene unfold. He was still shocked that Han Wu was the mine’s true owner. Everyone had descended here in clones, and yet Han Wu had grown so fast. This was a testament to his talent.

Huang Shengjun regarded Han Wu as his enemy. He had sworn to surpass his enemies or face destruction. He also believed that the enemy of his enemy could be a friend.

He rose and confronted Han Wu, “Senior Wei is worried for you, but not only do you ignore her kindness but even rebuke her. You are a disgrace to the college’s teachings. Today, I will punish you on its behalf.”

As the second-year valedictorian, Huang Shengjun held considerable influence amongst the students. Since he intended to fight against Han Wu, the other second-year students were ready to join him in berating Han Wu. They hoped to gain some benefit in return as well.

At that moment, Xia Tian stepped forward to stand with Han Wu. “Senior Wei is deliberately making things hard for Han Wu. He has no reason to comply. Huang Shengjun, I hate how you toss away your honor for your benefit’s sake. If you touch him, the three of us will fight you to the death.”

Xiang Meng and Ye Ling joined him. The three friends acted as one. While none of them could match Huang Shengjun individually, their combined might was just enough to defeat him.

Huang Shengjun was cursing at them in his heart. The trio had been a thorn in his side for far too long.

Sensing the rising tension, the other factions' representatives readied themselves to flee at a moment's notice. They had secured their lesser golems and completed the tasks assigned by their kings. Now was the perfect opportunity to leave.

Yet some of them hungered for more. They didn't aim to steal Han Wu's lesser golems; instead, they coveted the treasures that Han Wu had obtained, should a fight break out.

Each had their own motives, and all were ready to act when the beating sound of enormous wings echoed from above. Moments later, a pair of massive golden claws shattered the stone palace's roof and crashed into the hall.

It was the gold Great Dragon, Smog. His arrival sent waves of fear through everyone present. Great Dragons were the embodiment of violence and strength. Even if those who had never seen a Great Dragon had definitely heard of their feats.

Escaping this place became the crowd's immediate priority, but Smog wouldn't let them flee so easily.

"I've caught the scent of my brethren. Where are they?" Smog's voice rumbled through the hall.

Everyone was stunned. A single Great Dragon like Smog had caused chaos across the Middle Realm, and now there was another?

Smog inhaled the fear thick in the air and savored it. As a gold Great Dragon, Smog relished collecting treasures and the scent of fear from the other life forms since birth.

As Smog was indulging in the fear around him, he caught the scent of a peer. He turned and saw Han Wu. Only then did he notice the illusions of his brethren surrounding him.

"How could this be? Is this human a Great Dragon?" Smog muttered, staring at Han Wu in disbelief.

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[ 1,222 words ]

## **Chapter 402 - Golden Chest**

Chaos erupted as the various representatives abandoned their plans to try and steal more treasures. Their survival came first, and they all fled with their lesser golems immediately. After all, they had to live if they wanted to enjoy the treasures they had.

Only a handful of people remained in the hall; most of them were students from Imperial College. Their eyes locked on Smog, and each one hoped to earn the glory of slaying a Great Dragon.

Han Wu tensed as Smog's glare was fixed on him. He was ready to unleash his full strength at any time. The dragon's gaze didn't inflict physical damage, yet it heavily restricted someone's mental and spiritual focus.

Han Wu felt his mind on the verge of collapse when a refreshing sensation swept through his mind and calmed his heart. He searched for its source and realized that it stemmed from his Willpower stat, which had reached 100. He had once dismissed it as a useless stat, never imagining that it could bolster his spirit and mental resilience during a crisis like this. Now, it proved invaluable!

Jing Jing, Qin Shuang, and Sun Qingnian rushed to his side to share the crushing pressure of Smog's glare.

Smog let out a growl and asked, "Are you a Great Dragon?"

Han Wu shook his head. "I am not, but the blood of the black and silver dragons flows in me. I also bear the esteemed Defier title."

"The Defier!" Smog's roar of astonishment blew off what remained of the hall's roof.

The others didn't understand what that title entailed, but Smog did. As a member of the Great Dragon race, his memories held everything about the Defier. The title's bearer could defy all laws and freely roam the world. Among the Great Dragons, it was a title of the highest reverence.

The person before him wasn't a Great Dragon, yet he had inherited that title, binding him intricately to the Great Dragon race.

Smog carefully sniffed Han Wu's scent and detected not only the scent of a pure-blooded black dragon or silver dragon but also traces of impure blood from ice and lightning Great Dragons.

The scents were intertwined, but they clearly proved Han Wu's close ties to the Great Dragons. If not, his body wouldn't carry so many different scents.

"Defier, I, the Great Gold Dragon Smog, welcome you." Smog's tone softened, treating Han Wu as one of his own and extending the respect due.

Everyone else froze, stunned that Smog had aligned with Han Wu. A Great Dragon had yielded to Han Wu with nothing more than a few words. Could Han Wu truly possess such charisma?

Even Xiang Meng and his two friends felt a pang of envy despite their closeness to him. Han Wu's luck seemed boundless, and it was somewhat frustrating to witness him now having a Great Dragon.

The gold Great Dragon before them was an adult, and his power rivaled that of a God. If Han Wu really accepted Smog as a unit, then he would be invincible in the Middle Realm. Combined with his powerful Transmutation Golem, it was almost certain that he could claim this entire place as his own. Everyone's slice of the pie would vanish.

Every student present was thinking about how to protect their profits in this new reality until someone shouted, "This is the time to fight! Juniors, seniors, who will join me in slaying the dragon?"

The students turned to see Wei En, her body etched with purple, vine-like markings. This was her true Ashuri form, the one she hadn't managed to complete when facing Han Wu the previous day.

Smog caught the strong scent of jealousy and envy before turning his huge body around. When he recognized Wei En, he bellowed, "You despicable thief, lowly insect. How dare you appear before the Great Smog again? Feel the wrath of my flames!"

Golden fire blasted forth from Smog's jaws and incinerated everything in its path. The heat was so intense that everything melted or turned to dust. This was the unstoppable force of pure flames, a power that no one, including Imperial College's students, could withstand.

Unexpectedly, Wei En, the flames' intended target, had long since evaded the inferno. She leapt across the shattered hall, using debris as stepping stones, and moved like a beam of purple light. Her sights were set on the golden chest hovering above Smog's head.

Wei En wasn't the only one who had seen the golden chest. Many students used their Skills or Divine Powers to charge toward Smog's head. Only Xia Tian and his friends held back and chose to retreat to the sidelines. Staying neutral was the best they could do, and even that offered Han Wu crucial support.

Smog scoffed at the approaching humans, snapped his jaws shut, and swung his claws, which were harder than almost any weapon.

The wind pressure from each swing blew away the weaker students. Only two people managed to land on Smog's body: Wei En and Huang Shengjun. Both were valedictorians of their respective years. Even while inhabiting clones right now, they still managed to expand their territory with ease, using their Divine Powers and experience.

Wei En viewed Huang Shengjun as her competitor and shouted, "I saw the golden chest first. What kind of man fights a girl like me over this?"

Huang Shengjun ignored her. His focus was entirely on the golden chest. He didn't even consider killing Smog, as the Great Dragons were a powerful race that shouldn't be provoked. Even though he had a good chance of slaying one, he wouldn't do it unless cornered. He didn't want to be marked by a Great Dragon and hunted to the ends of the world every time he encountered another.

Realizing she couldn't intimidate him, Wei En suddenly sprinted toward the golden chest with all her might. Her Ashuri form boosted her speed to unparalleled levels, and she was confident that she would reach it before Huang Shengjun.

"You two, don't forget that this is my domain!" Han Wu shouted. He transformed into a Thunder Sparrow and released two bursts of lightning in their direction.

"Get away!"

"Screw you!"

Huang Shengjun and Wei En attacked simultaneously to disperse the lightning. Naturally, Han Wu wouldn't back down and used his most powerful Skill: Nine Falling Heaven. Nine huge swords plummeted from the sky and formed an iron barrier that barred the duo from advancing any closer to the chest.

Wei En and Huang Shengjun wasted precious time to circle around the obstacle. Just as they broke free from the nine swords' entrapment, they saw a Thunder Sparrow extending a claw toward the golden chest.

"How dare you!" they shouted in unison.

They were so focused on the Thunder Sparrow that they failed to notice the huge figure looming behind them. Han Wu clasped all four Swordwind Arms on his Ju Que, forming a huge wind blade, and slammed it down. With a thunderous crash, the two were swatted away like flies.

Seizing the opportunity, the Thunder Sparrow reached the golden chest. In an instant, it disappeared and all its treasures were transferred to Qin Shuang.

"Han Wu, I've got it! There's so much treasure in the golden chest!" Qin Shuang exclaimed, beaming with delight.

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## Chapter 403 - Second Transformation: Black Dragon King Transformation

[ 1,141 words ]

### Chapter 403 - Second Transformation: Black Dragon King Transformation

After being swatted away, rubble pinned Wei En and Huang Shengjun. They clawed their way out and looked at the top of Smog's head simultaneously.

Qin Shuang's appearance had stunned them. They had assumed that the Thunder Sparrow was Han Wu and lowered their guard, which allowed Han Wu to ambush them from behind. They had never imagined that Qin Shuang would take Han Wu's place as the Thunder Sparrow while he would circle behind them.

"Damn it!" Huang Shengjun snarled.

His feud with Han Wu started while the latter was still on the reserve list. The two had clashed numerous times over conflicting interests, and Huang Shengjun had come to treat Han Wu as his archnemesis. Now, however, he had another enemy to defeat: Qin Shuang. For Huang Shengjun, it was unforgivable that Qin Shuang had snatched the golden chest he believed was rightfully his.

The purple markings on Wei En's body grew denser and spread until they threatened to cover her entire skin. Her jealousy toward Han Wu and Qin Shuang intensified with each passing second, gnawing at her consciousness until it started to waver. Slowly, a darker, more vicious ego started to seize control.

"Damn... Damn... Damn..." she mumbled, then howled. "Those who are stronger than me must die!"

A savage surge of energy erupted from within and accelerated her speed even further. She turned into a blur of purple light that was almost impossible to track. In the next instant, she appeared beside Qin Shuang, yanked her collar, and shrieked, "Hand over all the treasures, except the points, or I will kill you!"

Han Wu wouldn't let her harm Qin Shuang. He dashed forward and attempted to slash her with his black dragon claws.

"Scram!" Wei En howled like a deranged demon. A flash of purple light burst forth and stopped Han Wu's dragon claws midstrike.

Meanwhile, Qin Shuang was struggling to break free from Wei En's grip and used the first Divine Power that she had unlocked here: Lightning Armor. Her entire body turned

into pure electricity. She not only freed herself from Wei En's grasp but also electrocuted her.

Wei En's body convulsed as the high-voltage current coursed through her.

This time, Han Wu pushed his transformation even further, unleashing Black Dragon King Transformation, and attacked again. Barbaric strength and limitless Dark Energy surged from his body and plunged the entire surrounding area into utter darkness.

The darkness carried a powerful, sucking force that tore Wei En's body apart. Her arms and legs were sucked into the Dark Pocket, crushed instantly, and absorbed as energy to fuel Han Wu.

The excruciating pain jolted Wei En and broke the paralysis that had gripped her. Assessing the danger, she severed her limbs and escaped to safety in a flash of purple light.

Han Wu's True Demon King Transformation had limits, so he didn't pursue her. Instead, he turned his gaze toward Huang Shengjun.

A chill ran up Huang Shengjun's spine under Han Wu's Black Dragon King Transformation glare. It felt eerily familiar as if Smog himself was leering at him. Huang Shengjun sensed the bloodlust radiating from Han Wu and knew that retreat was his only option now. As such, he quickly fled with the goblins.

Seeing both Wei En and Huang Shengjun escape, the other student realized that they couldn't defeat Han Wu and fled as well. Only Xiang Meng, Xia Tian, and Ye Ling remained.

Han Wu ensured all his enemies had vanished before reverting his transformation. The moment he did, fatigue swept over him. Even lifting a single finger felt like an impossible effort.

Jing Jing, Sun Qingnian, and Qin Shuang quickly moved to guard him. Smog also settled beside Han Wu because of his intricate relationship with the Great Dragons. Anyone seeking to harm Han Wu would have to go through Smog first.

The three seniors assured them that they harbored no ill intentions. Qin Shuang was aware of Han Wu's close friendship with them and relaxed her vigilance.

Han Wu returned to his room and rested through the night, only recovering the next day. After the previous day's battle, he finally grasped the toll of his transformation. With his current body, he lacked the strength and stamina to use True Demon King Transformation without backlash, much less the Black Dragon King Transformation. Each transformation placed immense strain on his body and left him utterly fatigued afterward.

He shivered at the memory of his weakness. It had been unbearable. He swore to use the True Demon King Transformation sparingly because he loathed how it rendered him incapacitated for an entire day.

Despite the auction's minor hiccup, he successfully sold all the lesser golems and gained numerous treasures. He selected a few of the treasures and gifted them to Jing Jing and Sun Qingnian in gratitude for their aid.

He offered none to Qin Shuang since she had already acquired the golden chest. The treasures inside were so insanely valuable that she had no need for Han Wu's lower-ranking treasures.

Upon learning that Han Wu was awake, Xia Tian, Ye Ling, and Xiang Meng paid him a visit. They exchanged a few items and treasures before asking if he had managed to uncover any information about the Magic Ring.

Unfortunately, Han Wu had received all knowledge of the Magic Ring from them during their time in the first palace, so he told them that he knew nothing new. Despite this, Han Wu still gifted each of them a lesser golem, ensuring that their visit was not entirely fruitless.

After seeing his seniors off, Han Wu rushed to Smog, who was currently watching the Transmutation Golem absorb energy from the ores to manufacture more lesser golems. The process appeared simple, yet Smog studied it intently.

Han Wu was intrigued and asked, "Smog, is there something wrong with the Transmutation Golem?"

Smog regarded him with a mix of shock and interest. "Do you really not know the Transmutation Golem's secret?"

"I don't," Han Wu answered truthfully. "Please tell me."

Smog's eyes gleamed with a sly grin. "I could, but I need a favor first."

*What kind of monumental task is Smog going to give me?* Han Wu had a feeling that the Great Dragon's task would be impossibly difficult. "Please, state your request."

Smog nodded. "I possess an inconceivably powerful physical form and am considered the pinnacle of dragons in terms of raw strength. Yet in the Middle Realm, there still exists a weapon forged specifically to kill me. Destroy it, and I will reveal the Transmutation Golem's secret."

"Alright. Smog, what kind of weapon is it, and where is it located?" Han Wu asked.

Smog's voice rumbled through the hall. "It rests in a small village at the base of a lone hill. Its name is... Rivertown."

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[ 1,135 words ]

## **Chapter 404 - Rivertown, Bart's House**

Han Wu first instructed Qin Shuang to defend the mine against potential foes before setting out for Rivertown with his new companion, Akanzor. During their journey, Han Wu occasionally transformed into a War Eagle and carried Akanzor through the skies to shorten their travel time. Before long, they reached Rivertown, where Han Wu reverted to his human form. The two then boarded a boat to enter the town.

They had to pay a steep fee before they gained entry. Rivertown lay at the base of a solitary mountain, or rather, within a valley formed by its slopes. A broad river to the east provided the town with fresh water.

The town's tall buildings and clock tower revealed its prosperity. Humans made up most of the population, so the townspeople showed little hostility toward Han Wu and Akanzor. Some of the merchants even beckoned them to browse their shops.

Han Wu wouldn't pass up the chance to gather more information and motioned for Akanzor to follow him into a toy shop. Inside, he took in the wide variety of intricate toys on display but was struck to find that almost half were shaped like a Great Dragon. Picking one up, he asked the shopkeeper about it.

The shopkeeper sighed and recounted Rivertown's story. Long ago, a dwarven castle stood on the hill above the town, and the humans and the dwarves lived peacefully together. They had no conflicts of interest. The dwarves would usually come down to Rivertown to sell their forged goods, then purchase alcohol and food. At times, they would even recruit some of the smarter humans to work as their apprentices at the forge.

It could be said that the two races had thrived in mutual benefit until the day the gold Great Dragon appeared out of nowhere. Smog reduced Rivertown to ashes and claimed the dwarven castle as his own. The dwarves were driven from their home, but Rivertown's resilient humans rebuilt their homes from the ashes and wreckage.

Akanzor was confused. "Wait, aren't you guys afraid that the Great Dragon will return?"

The shopkeeper smiled and explained, "When Rivertown first burned, one apprentice descended from the hill. They gathered the bones of the humans Smog's fire had killed and forged three Black Arrows. Each arrow was coated in venom so potent that it could kill even a Great Dragon. Smog fears those arrows and has never returned."

Han Wu's eyes lit up. He hadn't expected to find information on the weapon that could harm Smog so soon. "Are the Black Arrows really that powerful? Who has them?"

The shopkeeper shook his head. "It's been ages, and I have no idea where they are now. However, if you are willing to purchase some toys, then I'll gladly point you to the house of the family that forged those arrows."

Without hesitation, Han Wu pulled out a huge sack of gold and purchased all the toys in the shop. The exhilarated shopkeeper clutched the gold, refusing to let go.

"Shopkeeper, shouldn't you be telling us which family forged those arrows?" Han Wu pressed.

The shopkeeper smiled absentmindedly and answered, "Bart's family. They live south of Rivertown. You can find them there."

After getting the information, the two picked some of the pricier toys and set off toward Bart's house. Along the way, they asked for more details, but all they managed to learn were Bart's nicknames. Some called him the Divine Archer, while others called him the Wandering Bart.

Han Wu's curiosity about this person only grew. They asked for directions and eventually reached Bart's house. He knocked lightly on the wooden door, which creaked open only after half a minute.

A young girl with messy blonde hair stood in the doorway, and she asked curiously, "Are you here to see my father? He went fishing, and I don't know when he'll be back."

Han Wu smiled at the cute girl and handed her a toy. "Can we wait for him inside?"

The little girl eyed the beautiful toy and drooled. She adored it but wasn't brave enough to let two strangers enter their home. Just then, a voice called from inside, "Sigrid, who's there at the door?"

A slightly older girl appeared. Han Wu studied her delicate features and could tell that she would grow into a beautiful woman in the future.

"Sis." Sigrid hugged her elder sister, Tilda, and explained their intentions. While speaking, she snuck glances at the toy in Han Wu's hands.

When she heard they wanted to enter, Tilda glared at them and said firmly, "No. Our house does not welcome strangers."

Han Wu smiled helplessly. He had the power to easily enter the house and take them as hostage to force Bart to reveal the arrows' location, but he refrained. He still hadn't gauged Bart's true strength.

"Sorry for intruding then. We'll find a nearby place to rest and wait for your father," Han Wu said.

He turned to leave when a frail voice came from a room inside the house. "Tilda, Sigrid, is our father back?"

Han Wu paused upon hearing the feeble voice. He could tell that the speaker was sick and quickly asked, "Is there a sick person in there?"

Tilda remained cautious. "This doesn't concern you."

Han Wu smiled reassuringly. "I am a doctor. I can treat most diseases."

After a few moments of hesitation, Tilda visibly relaxed and opened the door, allowing them to enter.

From the modest interior, Han Wu confirmed that Bart's family was poor. He entered the room and soon saw Bain lying on the bed, his face pale.

Bain was Bart's son and seriously ill. Unfortunately, they didn't have enough money to afford a doctor. Tilda and Sigrid were praying that their father would return quickly with food and money for Bain's care.

Han Wu stepped forward and placed his palm on Bain's forehead. The boy's fever was so high it threatened to fry his brain. He quickly channeled a very small portion of his accumulated Divine Points into Bain's body.

A cool sensation spread from Bain's forehead, and his condition visibly improved.

"Tilda, is this the doctor you found for me?" Bain's voice was still weak, but he looked much better than before.

Tilda was grateful to see her brother recover slightly and treated Han Wu with gratitude. "Thank you, doctor. You've saved Bain."

Han Wu waved her off. "Can I wait for your father here?"

"Yes, of course. Please, let me get some food for you." Tilda went to prepare a meal, and Sigrid happily played with the toy that Han Wu had given her.

Watching the siblings support one another through poverty filled Han Wu's heart with warmth. His curiosity about Bart, whom he had never met, grew even stronger.

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[ 1,082 words ]

## **Chapter 405 - Han Wu's Promise**

After several days of fishing, Bart had a bountiful catch. He sold the fish, bought plenty of food, and happily returned home.

Just as he pulled out his keys to unlock the door, peals of laughter echoed from inside his house. A chill ran down his spine. He kicked the door open without even unlocking it and stormed inside like a madman.

Two strangers calmly sat inside, while his children were joyfully singing around them. There was even a large spread of food on the floor where they were seated.

Tilda was the first to notice Bart and greeted him warmly, "Dad, you are home! This is Big Brother Han Wu and Akanzor. They came to see you. They brought food and even healed our brother!"

The youngest daughter, Sigrid, was clutching a beautiful toy as she toddled over. "Big Brother Han even gave me this toy."

Only Bart's son, Bain, sensed their father's tension. He stood up weakly and approached him. "Dad, do you recognize them?"

Bart shook his head, trying to place their faces among all the people he had met. None of them matched anyone named Han Wu.

"Mr. Bart, we came specifically for you," Han Wu said, rising to greet him. Akanzor mirrored his motion and stood loyally beside Han Wu.

"We can go out and talk." Bart's tone carried a hint of hostility. His family bore the responsibility of slaying a dragon, and he was used to opportunists who tried to exploit that. He remained cautious when it came to strangers.

"Of course." Han Wu nodded and stepped out with Akanzor.

Inside, Bart questioned his children about Han Wu and asked whether he had acted strangely. They all shook their heads, and Bart relaxed a little. Only then did he step outside.

The three men stood on a wooden bridge and peered down at the cold river below.

Bart spoke first. "Why are you here looking for me?"

"We have come to ask about the whereabouts of the dragon-slaying Black Arrows," Han Wu answered candidly.

Bart raised his guard. The Black Arrows were his family's heirloom. How could two outsiders even know about them?

He tried to deny it. "I don't know what you are talking about."

Han Wu cleared his throat. "I am acquainted with Smog, the gold dragon. He requested that I come and find the Black Arrows. I hope you can understand my position."

"You scum! I will never surrender the Black Arrows to you!" Bart swiftly drew his bow, nocking a sharp arrow and holding it ready to fire.

Han Wu felt a flicker of danger as Bart's arrow trained on him. His instincts screamed that Bart was capable of killing him.

"Mr. Bart, let's resolve this peacefully," Han Wu said.

Bart was unwilling to negotiate. "Leave Rivertown or die."

Akanzor brandished his Overlord Sabre at the sight of his god under threat. "I don't care who you are, but you will not insult my glorious God! Apologize!"

Bart loosed an arrow to assert his stance, but Akanzor sliced it clean in half with a swift swing before attacking Bart. While the two clashed intensely on the wooden bridge, Han Wu observed with keen interest.

Akanzor was one of the geniuses that Han Wu had recruited from among the human slaves, highly skilled with bladed weapons. Under Han Wu's training, his skills had flourished, and he was now as strong as a Lord life form.

Bart matched him blow for blow, one hand steady on his bow, the other gripping a short dagger. Even in close combat, he held his ground against Akanzor, proving that he was just as strong. Additionally, Bart had the Divine Archer title. Han Wu was certain that Akanzor would lose if Bart put some distance between them.

The two fought viciously, but neither gained the upper hand. Bart tried to put space between himself and his opponents to rain arrows down on them.

That was when Han Wu intervened. He transformed into a treant and sent his vines to subdue Bart.

Han Wu's sudden transformation stunned Bart; he had never witnessed anything like this. He combed through his experience and knowledge before asking tentatively, "You are a druid?"

Han Wu could speak even in his treant form. "I am not a druid. I am a God."

"God?" Bart echoed.

Gods were the stuff of legend in the Middle Realm, said to have existed only in the distant past.

Han Wu explained his purpose. "Do not doubt for I am indeed a God. I am here to destroy the Black Arrows."

"No! You cannot do that!" Bart shouted. "They are the only thing that can stop that dragon. Without them, that dragon will come and reduce everything to ashes."

Even though the vines bound Bart, he refused to relent. Protecting Rivertown was a duty passed down through every generation of his family. It was also the reason they had forged the Black Arrows in the first place.

"What if I could convince Smog not to attack Rivertown?" Han Wu needed to destroy the Black Arrows at all costs to gain a lead on the Magic Ring, yet preventing Smog from attacking Rivertown was feasible.

Bart hesitated as he considered Han Wu's identity. If Smog never approached Rivertown again, the Black Arrows would lose their purpose. "Why should I trust you? How can you prove it?"

"I can turn you into a God."

Bart froze. *Can I really become a God? If I do, I will have the power to protect Rivertown. The Black Arrows might no longer be necessary.*

"Fine. I'll tell you where they are if you turn me into a God," Bart said reluctantly.

"Good. I'll make it happen as quickly as I can." Han Wu promised, though the task would be far from easy. Even within the Divine Civilization, Han Wu would need to provide at least five Divine Essence for Bart to become a Demigod. To become a perfect Demigod would require ten.

At present, Han Wu had only a few thousand believers. Gathering five Divine Essence would take ten days or more. His clone was still weak and hadn't become a Demigod yet.

Turning Bart into a Demigod would be challenging, but Han Wu wasn't deterred. He had already devised a plan. If it succeeded, he would not only gain numerous believers but also an abundance of Faith Points. At that point, Bart's ascension into a Demigod would be effortless.

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[ 1,171 words ]

## **Chapter 406 - Conquering Rivertown**

The next day, dark skies loomed over the peaceful Rivertown. A biting northern wind swept through the streets, carrying thick snow in its wake.

The townspeople had grown accustomed to this kind of life. They woke up as usual, boiled flasks of warming alcohol to fend off the cold, and set off for their work as usual, unaware of the danger approaching.

A large ship slowly drifted along the river, steadily heading for Rivertown. The guard at the town's entrance moved forward to collect the usual docking fees, but he froze in shock when sunlight glinted off the ship's passengers.

"Undead! There are skeletons here!" he hollered.

The guard on the watchtower rang the alarm, and the bell's clamor echoed through the town. The rest of the guard squadron rushed to the entrance, where they saw a horde of skeletons wading through the frigid water, marching toward the town.

The squadron leader barked, "Alarm! Evacuate the citizens! All guards, follow me! Kill the undead!"

However, there were only a handful of them. How could they hope to defeat thousands of skeletons?

Within minutes, the skeletons captured the guards, bound them with ropes, and tossed them into Rivertown's plaza. At the same time, the skeletal horde crashed into civilian homes, captured the townspeople, and held them hostage at the plaza as well.

Terror gripped the townspeople as the skeletons surrounded them. They shivered from fear and cold alike and were unable to comprehend that such horror could strike so suddenly. Only yesterday, their lives had been quiet and ordinary.

At the center of it all, a Crystal Skeleton reclined on a throne made of bones, her seven-colored spiritual flames flickering in her eye sockets as she surveyed the plaza. At her command, the skeletons started to draw a vast array around the plaza, marking the ground with fine bone dust.

The townspeople realized that it was some sort of sacrificial ritual and that they were the skeletons' offering!

"Oh my god! Help me! Take all my money, but let me live!"

"I don't want to become a sacrifice! I don't want to turn into a monster!"

"Please, let my child go! He's only five years old! He's innocent!"

...

The townspeople pleaded for mercy, but the undead ignored them. They worked in silence and continued etching symbols into the ground to complete the array.

On the throne, the Crystal Skeleton shifted and murmured how unbearably dull it was.

One by one, more people were captured, including the mayor and his entire staff. His position carried no weight before the undead. No matter how prestigious or how much power he held, they remained indifferent and ignored him.

When the captives had all but surrendered to death, reinforcement arrived: Han Wu, Akanzor, and Bart!

To the townspeople, the skeletons they had feared as a natural disaster crumbled like paper mache before the trio, who easily tore through them.

The spiritual flames within the Crystal Skeleton's eye sockets flickered, and she leaped from the throne. With a single punch, she sent Bart hurtling through the air, leaving him heavily wounded.

Akanzor swung his Overlord Sabre, but the Crystal Skeleton met the strike with a backhand that sent him sprawling!

The other two were incapacitated, so only Han Wu remained. The crowd's hope vanished like a moth consumed by an inferno, and despair tightened its grip. After all, the Crystal Skeleton was too strong, and no one could withstand her attack.

Then Han Wu shouted with righteousness, “I will not allow you to harm a single townspeople today!”

Han Wu activated his True Demon King Transformation, and his ten-meter-tall form was a shock to all who saw him. The Crystal Skeleton refused to back down and commanded the skeletons to merge into a giant skeleton matching Han Wu’s height.

The giant skeleton emitted a suffocating death aura, making everyone feel as if a skeletal hand were tightening around their throats.

As Han Wu engaged the giant skeleton, the ground quaked beneath them, and many houses crumbled under the shockwaves. At last, Han Wu triumphed over the giant skeleton. He pulled the Crystal Skeleton from its frame and subdued her with sheer strength. Before everyone’s eyes, the Crystal Skeleton knelt and pledged her loyalty to him.

Rivertown was saved. The townspeople hailed Han Wu with unwavering devotion, and thousands of Faith Points poured into him. In that instant, he gained thousands of new believers.

Still, that wasn’t enough. He needed all of them to submit fully to him. Over the next few days, Han Wu threw himself into the town’s reconstruction. He funded the rebuilding of houses, transformed into the Sanctumbranch to heal the sick, and even placed a massive order of toys when the toy shop’s business stalled.

In just three days, he had earned their full faith. Nearly 100,000 humans generated enough Faith Points for him to condense a single Divine Essence in one day.

He quickly obtained five Divine Essence and gave them all to Bart. The latter absorbed them, and his body parameters improved. He also sensed a strange power awakening within him. At last, he could trust Han Wu completely and became one of his believers.

Once he became his believer, Bart revealed everything about the Black Arrows. When Rivertown had first burned, Bart’s ancestor had collected the ashes and bones of those slain by Smog to forge three Black Arrows. Two of them had already been used to repel Smog, leaving only one. The last Black Arrow was hidden atop Rivertown’s highest clock tower.

With this knowledge, Han Wu quickly flew toward the clock tower and retrieved the last Black Arrow. Despite years of exposure to the elements, it remained intact. A quick dusting restored its sharpness.

Han Wu could clearly feel the deep grudge embedded within it. That grudge’s power had turned into a poison that even Great Dragons couldn’t dispel. He carefully probed the energy within it and whispered, “I see now why Smog said this arrow could kill him.”

As he was about to destroy it to fulfill Smog's request, Jing Jing stopped him. "I like this Black Arrow. I want it."

Han Wu hesitated. "But I promised Smog I'd destroy it."

Jing Jing tilted her head thoughtfully. "Then let me destroy it."

Han Wu considered his promise and confirmed that Smog hadn't specified who must destroy the Black Arrow. Technically, it was acceptable to give it to Jing Jing, so he handed it to her.

The moment Jing Jing touched it, the grudges within the Black Arrow erupted like flood and surged into her body. Even its essence seeped into her bones.

After absorbing the Black Arrow's power, her little finger had turned completely black, and the arrow in her hands crumbled into a pile of black dust. True to her words, she had destroyed it, but a smaller version had imprinted itself on her little finger. From that moment on, her little finger functioned as the Black Arrow that could slay Great Dragons.

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