

The Shadow of Immortality

#Chapter 1: Awakening in the Dark - Read The Shadow of Immortality Chapter 1: Awakening in the Dark

Chapter 1: 1: Awakening in the Dark

The sensation was fleeting yet sharp—a sudden and terrifying void where my past should have been. A beautiful face I once loved... now just grains of sand slipping through my fingers.

All I had left was my name: Clark.

This oblivion was nothing like sleep; it was drowning. I had just broken the surface, gasping for air. My head throbbed with a dull ache. I wore rusty armor, heavy and cold. I forced my eyes open to a small campsite—and the first thing I saw was him. A man. Something deep in my gut twisted with unease.

He sat beside a faint fire, staring at the stars. A cold breeze rustled through the trees, but it couldn't mask the pungent smell hanging in the air: blood. Beside me lay a corpse—mutilated, unrecognizable. Friend or foe? I didn't know.

The man glanced toward me. His voice was disturbingly calm:

"Don't bother reaching for that sword. I didn't kill him. Found him like this with an empty bottle."

Ignoring the dizziness, I pushed myself up, my hand still gripping the sword's hilt. My voice came out as a harsh rasp:

"Who are you? What is this place?"

He didn't even flinch:

"Name's Jin. I woke up in a field of corpses. You were the only other thing still breathing. So I dragged you here."

He paused, his cool demeanor cracking for a moment:

"I was hoping you'd have answers. About me. About any of this."

His words froze me:

"What do you mean, 'about you'?"

He looked down, weighed down by the words:

"I don't know. I've lost... everything. All I have left is instinct. The need to survive. That's it."

I hesitated, then slowly sat near the fire, keeping my distance:

"I don't trust you. But... I'm in the same damned situation. I don't know who I am either."

Jin let out a hollow laugh:

"Then I guess that makes us even."

He lifted a liquor bottle, took a long swig, and offered it to me. I took it, but my eyes drifted upward. The stars... they felt familiar. As if I once knew their names. But my mind was a blank slate.

One question screamed in my head: Why? Why can't I remember?

Exhaustion finally overwhelmed me, and I slept by the dying fire.

Dawn came with a ravenous hunger. My eyes were bloodshot, my stomach a hollow pit. I scoured the campsite desperately—nothing to eat.

Then I turned.

And I saw him.

Jin was hunched over, tearing into the dead soldier's arm with his teeth.

Hunger ruled him. Savage instinct defined him. Survival was his only law.

My stomach churned, but the emptiness inside screamed louder. A monstrous voice whispered: Eat. Eat whatever you must.

Before I could move, a sound cut through the silence—footsteps.

Jin's head snapped up, instantly alert. The wind carried the smell of smoke.

The footsteps drew closer... heavy and unmistakable.

A beast resembling a lion, with a scorpion's tail, two small horns, and crimson eyes. Those eyes terrified me—I'd never seen anything like them. Its roar echoed deafeningly.

Jin stared wide-eyed:

"What is that?!"

Light began gathering in the beast's mouth.

Boom!!

A ball of lightning shot out, shattering the tree behind Jin to splinters.

Jin's head nearly flew off from the shock.

I drew my sword as fast as I could:

"We have to fight! It's us or him!"

The beast charged at me—creatures always attack the first one who moves.

I leaped back, dodging its sharp claws.

Shock gripped me:

"I'm skilled in combat! Why do attacks seem to slow down when they near me?"

I spun quickly and landed a powerful kick to its side.

The beast barely flinched—its rage only grew.

Jin watched intently, calculating his next move.

Then he joined the fray.

The beast sensed danger—neither of us had landed a blow yet.

"What's happening?!" I shuddered.

Wings began tearing through its sides—blood gushed as blue wings emerged.

"Evolving after fighting you, Clark?"

"I don't know... but this doesn't look good."

The beast charged at double speed, aiming for Jin with its horns.

"Damn, it's faster now!"

It slammed into Jin, but I grabbed his shoulder before he fell.

"Jin, listen! Its head is the hardest part. If we strike together, we can kill it—maybe even get real food."

"Fine. But we attack from one side and focus on its head."

The beast lunged again, leaving no time to think.

I shoved Jin aside and blocked its strike.

Sparks flew as my sword clashed against its horn.

Jin yelled:

"Let it come at me!"

I cursed: "If I move my sword, it'll ram me!"

"No! It won't. It's me or this damned beast!"

I flipped sideways, forcing the beast to charge toward Jin.

I marveled at my own reflex: "Did I just do that?!"

Jin stood by the tree the beast had shattered—tall enough to crush it if it fell.

One last push was all it needed.

The beast unleashed another lightning bolt, but Jin dodged at the last second.

Boom!!!

The tree split and crashed onto the beast, crushing it instantly.

I scowled: "How do we get it out now?"

Jin shrugged: "No idea. Maybe there's other food."

"Let's explore. Maybe we'll find something."

We put out the fire and left.

As we walked, something nagged at me:

Two hours passed in silence. Jin was quiet as a grave. Was he hiding something? His calm during the fight was unsettling—he assessed the beast coldly. Would he have fled if I died?

Devious bastard. I can't trust him.

Then I spotted a freshwater river.

I stopped: "Animals will come here to drink. Let's wait and ambush one."

Jin nodded silently, his eyes scanning.

My hunger sharpened—my focus intensified.

One hour... two... three.

We didn't move an inch—silent and vigilant.

Then I heard hoofbeats—a deer.

It appeared across the river.

(Clark's Perspective)

I crept away quietly. Jin watched me, curious.

I tore cloth from my cloak, wrapped it around my hand, and gripped my sword like a spear.

The deer didn't drink—it watched, wary of approaching threats.

Its nose twitched.

It sensed a female nearby.

I smirked: "The male's distracted. The female's the easier target."

Soft footsteps approached.

The deer stiffened—it knew what was coming.

A graceful doe appeared.

She approached cautiously.

Jin watched as I raised my sword—a swift throw! A direct hit to the throat!

I killed the doe—blood spilled out.

The buck fled in fear.

"Clever move, Clark. You waited for the right moment," Jin said.

I didn't respond—unease lingered.

I gripped my sword's scabbard with my teeth and swam across to retrieve the prey.

Jin followed.

My mouth watered—my veins felt cracked from hunger.

We gathered firewood and lit a fire.

Using quartz rocks, Jin sparked a flame.

He stacked kindling to strengthen the fire.

I butchered the doe—cutting her thigh into small pieces to skewer on my sword for cooking.

A primitive method—meat without seasoning. But hunger overrides taste.

Jin approached with two sword-skewered meat slices:

"Here. Cook yours yourself."

I set my sword down and began roasting.

The meat was half-raw—blood still seeped—but we didn't care. Survival was urgent.

"Ah... I haven't tasted meat in ages," I muttered.

We finished eating—then something shifted.

A figure emerged—or so we thought. His skin was deathly pale, veins bulging, eyes dark and hollow.

Worse, he appeared on our side of the river.

A foul stench—clotted blood.

As the smell intensified, footsteps multiplied.

I tensed: "This isn't good."

We drew our swords.

Shadows emerged around us.

Jin paled: "These are the corpses I woke up beside! How are they moving?!"

A massive skeleton towered among them—eyes burning crimson.

The undead charged.

I whispered: "Is this how it ends?"

To be continued...

Chapter 2: 2: Clash with the Undead

The scene was tragic for both of them. Their feet began to sink into the cold river water as the giant skeleton's roar echoed. The undead rushed toward them like an unstoppable wave.

Clark deduced in his bewilderment: "It seems he's the one who brought them back to life... summoned them!"

The smell of coagulated blood filled the air. Jin stood beside Clark, who felt something stirring inside him—was it tension? Or excitement for battle? His instincts screamed one word: "Run!"

But there was no running. Clark attacked one of the undead, but the corpse swiftly turned and countered. Jin's cold eyes met Clark's.

He said: "No escape. We fight... or die and become part of his army."

The air was scorching. Clark's sword clashed with Jin's as they prepared themselves.

Clark whispered his plan: "We'll cut our way through them. It's the only way."

Jin shrugged his shoulders: "Which path do you prefer? Back, right, or straight ahead?"

Clark looked back, aware of the route he wanted. Then they charged.

Despite his amnesia, Clark moved like a seasoned warrior. He gripped his sword with his left hand, dodging a soldier's blow aimed at his face. His sword struck the undead's blade, but Clark's strength shattered the opponent's sword, and he slit the attacker's throat.

He felt something strange. Jin... seemed to enjoy the chaos, stabbing the corpse repeatedly, his face drenched in blood, a wild smile on his lips. But just as the undead were about to surround Jin, Clark reached him.

"Run, you fool!" Clark shouted, grabbing Jin's arm.

Jin looked at him with a savage gaze and replied calmly: "Relax. Why the rush?"

The tension grew. Suddenly, a strange rain fell—not ordinary water, but glowing crystalline shards. Sharp and small, they cut them in several places.

Clark cursed: "Damn it! To that cave, now!"

They moved quickly, their nerves tense. Clark removed his armor to protect his head from the flying shards.

As soon as they entered the cave, Clark spat on the ground: "What the hell happened?"

Jin examined his damaged shield: "The damned rain... caused all this."

The two sat quietly, lost in thought. Clark broke the silence: "I'll keep watch at the cave entrance for eight hours and guard the place so you can rest. After that, you take my place, and I'll rest."

Jin was nervous but didn't show it. He replied coldly, as usual: "Fine."

(Jin's Perspective)

What's wrong with me? I don't know what I did. I felt a strange pleasure, as if something whispered: "Stab... torture him." But he's already dead—why did I lose control? My vision blurred, and a strange light appeared. It was the past, or whatever it was, and dreams had swept me into my memories.

Jin snapped to attention—a speeding car almost hit him.

He muttered: "Thanks, Irina. Seems I skipped breakfast."

Irina replied in her beautiful voice: "You need to focus! Do you want Clark to outperform you again? We need to get into the same university."

"Clark is my friend, but I won't let him surpass me."

Someone mocked him in a provoking tone—it was his friend Clark: "Keep dreaming, Jin! You'd need a thousand years to surpass someone like me!"

Jin pressed his forehead against Clark's and retorted defiantly, steam of rivalry puffing from his nose: "You think you're worthy of that?"

Clark's friend stepped between them: "Stop it, you two."

That strange, orphaned girl, so gloomy... Clark never touched her or even kissed her, though he hid it not because she disliked it, but because she was alone—her mother had died under mysterious circumstances, almost like a disappearance. Her name was Scarlet, her hair crimson, her beauty even surpassing Irina's. But I didn't care—my heart belonged to Irina.

I walked beside Clark as the two girls led the way. We talked about typical teenage stuff: video games, novels.

But Clark brought up something interesting: "Listen, Jin, I finished a novel last night. It was about a hero's journey to immortality. His actions were evil but justified—he lost everything but managed to return and change his fate. But what struck me at the end was: Did he deserve immortality? I mean... he said he could do anything after achieving it. Was it symbolic or physical immortality? Like being immortalized in people's minds. If symbolic and more, he feared nothing, not even death, even after achieving his dream. His will never wavered."

I replied: "I don't know, but you're right. No one wants to die. But it's strange that someone wouldn't oppose death."

We reached school. Clark and I were in the same class, the girls in others. But Clark was still pondering the topic.

He asked me: "Sometimes I wonder: Will my love for Scarlet last, or will it fade with our high school days? Sometimes I feel like everything could evaporate like water."

"Just live your days happily, Clark. Why overthink?"

I truly felt sad for Clark, and my sadness deepened when I learned the truth.

School ended. I couldn't find Irina, and Clark couldn't find Scarlet.

I said: "Let's go look for them."

Clark looked at me with a sorrowful gaze, as if he wanted to say he'd suppress any attempt to contact them, or perhaps he just thought it. But his phone vibrated with a message. Clark ignored it and left with me.

I returned home, my mind heavy with thoughts. I felt uneasy, sensing something was about to happen. But what broke everything was Irina's call: "Come to the school alley at ten." I heard the tension in her voice.

I panicked and arrived half an hour early. I hid behind a wall, watching to see if anyone entered the alley.

Then Scarlet appeared, frightened, constantly checking the time.

I wondered: "What's going on?"

Then Irina arrived, wearing a jacket and covering her head. Her gaze was cold, terrifying even me.

Irina said to Scarlet: "Are you ready for this?"

Scarlet replied: "Yes, Irina. That's how I recognized you. Remember when you thought I was a prophet? But I've lived this moment over and over. Every time I die, time resets. I knew many things—even in one of my deaths, I died by your hand."

I was shocked. Scarlet continued: "Remember when I told you the police would catch you because someone would film you doing it? In truth, I killed myself to turn back time and save you, no matter the cost. I wanted you to kill me—I never expected we'd become friends, or that you'd hesitate."

Irina's eyes were dry, as if she'd run out of tears long ago.

I kept watching, unsurprised that Irina was a killer. In fact, I knew, and it excited me. Watching her torture people, her eyes full of life and vitality, made me feel alive too. But now, she felt none of that.

I coldly asked one question: "Will time reset immediately after you die?"

Scarlet replied: "I don't think it'll reset right away. Also, I've told Clark everything. I need one last favor, Irina: Take my body back home."

Irina cried: "Okay."

She pulled a knife from her pocket, hesitating. But Scarlet grabbed Irina's hand and stabbed herself.

Irina bit her lip, crying, and continued stabbing. She stabbed with rage and bitterness, an overwhelming fury in her heart.

I tensed up. I didn't know—my tongue tied from the horror.

I started seeing something... my vision distorted. Something pushed me...

It brought me back to my harsh reality.

It was Clark saying: "Hurry! A battle broke out—let's go see."

I felt something strange, unsure what it was. I didn't care about what I'd seen—it didn't stir my emotions, only curiosity. I wanted to know what had happened and what might happen. Was this my memory? Or something distorted?

Clark grew annoyed at my distraction and silence: "Hurry!"

And then I saw...

To be continued...

Chapter 3: 3: City of Stars

In a distant land Clark had never seen,
stood the City of Stars in the nation of Drangelic—
known as the City of Lovers.

Its grand palace loomed over everything,
unmatched anywhere in the world.

A terrified secretary dashed through an artifact-lined hall,
bursting into the minister's chamber.

The room was simple, far from lavish.

She spoke, voice trembling:

"Sir... the undead army is advancing."

The minister froze.

"What? How? Report everything."

"They're slaughtering everything in sight..."

The sealed cave—the Inheritance—has appeared.

The Statue of Light and Darkness is glowing intensely."

The minister smiled.

"The prophecy unfolds. The heirs have come..."

They will restore Drangelic's glory and break the curse."

He recalled the ancient curse that plagued the city for centuries,
after the rulers of Light and Darkness, Ornstein and Lucifer, vanished.

Few families capable of magic and aura kept their gifts.

Those who still wielded magic held weak powers,
and worse, the Sunbreaker's legacy had emerged.

The minister commanded:

"Send soldiers to hold back the undead.

Bring me any living thing you find in the forest."

"Yes, sir."

But that was six hours ago...

Now, the battalion had arrived.

Clark and Jin stepped out to assess the chaos.

Clark said:

"Look... they're searching for survivors.

Maybe we can't trust them fully, but let's see.

I think they're here for us, not just to fight the undead."

Jin nodded.

"You're right. We'll watch from the ridge and assist if needed."

Clark charged down the hillside.

Their bloodlust still burned, hungry for battle.

Hidden among trees, Clark watched the fight with Jin beside him.

Clark said coldly:

"They can't win. It's a lost battle.

Only their leader seems to know what he's doing."

Jin replied in horror:

"Look over there!"

Undead corpses merged into a new form.

Bodies fused into a three-meter-tall monster.

Clark broke the silence:

"We have to step in. If they die, we're next.

We can't hide forever in some tiny cave."

They moved together.

A soldier stood before the beast.

His grip tightened as corpses squirmed in his hold.

Clark lunged, pulling the soldier back, saying:

"Get your squad over here while we handle this."

Clark cut cloth from his outfit,
wrapping it around his hand and sword hilt like a hook.
He leaped onto the monster's chest, stabbing wildly.
But the bodies weren't fused—just held together by force.

Clark yelled to Jin:

"How do we kill this thing?
If they're separate, let's burn them!"

Jin shouted back:

"Do it!"

Clark cursed their bad luck.

The monster attacked.

They dodged blow after blow.

Though large and strong,
it couldn't land a clean hit.

Clark weaved away from a strike,
twisting like rubber—but couldn't avoid a crushing blow
that sent him flying onto a corpse.

Someone pulled him up.

Clark shoved them back:

"Stop! I'm fine—just a cracked rib. Back off!"

The man demanded:

"Who are you? You're not one of us."

In truth, he wasn't helping—he was looting the dead.

He'd mistaken Clark for a fellow scavenger.

"I'm Clark."

"Clark? Let me treat you. I'm a medic."

Clark snorted:

"Sure. Let's go."

"Think I'm stupid? I know your game—but thanks! Take me to your group!"

Jin watched, puzzled:

"Where's he going?"

They reached piles of corpses

being dragged away by Fyodor.

Clark ignored it, eyeing the supply wagons instead.

Perfect, he thought.

The soldier introduced himself:

"Name's Fyodor."

Clark replied:

"Why so many dead? These your comrades?"

Fyodor panicked inwardly:

How'd he guess? I'll play along—then kill him.

He pretended to stitch a wound,

but the "patient" was already dead.

He crept behind Clark, whispering:

"Go to hell!"

He swung the sword hilt at Clark's head.

Clark found tar oil in a wagon box.

"Good," he muttered.

He hid the oil, tied up Fyodor,

and cut his hand to draw the lion with blood.

Two minutes passed—no sign of the beast.

Then, footsteps thundered close.

Clark hauled Fyodor onto his back and ran.

The lion followed the scent, hunting its meal.

It chased them,

but Fyodor's weight didn't slow Clark's powerful frame.

Back on the battlefield, Jin was exhausted.

Clark shouted:

"Clear out!"

He tossed Fyodor—who woke, screaming at the corpse pile—

and doused them both in oil.

Corpses tore into Fyodor as he shrieked.

The lion appeared,

seeing others stealing its prey.

It blasted lightning from its mouth,

igniting the oil in a fiery explosion.

The undead burned to ash.

Even the summoner felt it from afar.

Enraged, he decided to fight—

but the lion struck first, stabbing his staff into its back.

He tossed the beast aside like trash.

Clark and Jin stood fearless.

Clark grinned:

"Ready for round two?"

To be continued...

Chapter 4: 4 Soul shackles

The summoner's steps were calm, and the forest air was heavy, while the blood of the fallen soldiers stirred Clark's anger.

But what the summoner did was even more terrifying; suddenly, the corpses scattered around Clark, Jean, and the other soldiers exploded, sending blood and debris flying in every direction. Clark and Jean fell to the ground, dizzy and wounded, while Clark's leg suffered deep cuts. The air became dusty and tinged with the scent of blood, and tree trunks were stained crimson. The summoner raised his hands to the sky as if chanting a dark incantation.

A small moon appeared in the sky, and the summoner's frail hand began producing a sound akin to crying. The scene was simultaneously strange and terrifying, and the worst part was that both Clark and Jean had been severely injured by the blast.

The battalion commander rushed toward them, and seeing them wounded, he pulled them to a safer place.

Clark said in pain: "What kind of terrifying power is this?"

His leg was bleeding heavily, and Jean was no better; his left hand was broken, and being left-handed, he relied on that hand for sword fighting.

Everyone hid behind a massive tree.

Jean writhed in severe pain, his forearm bones protruding grotesquely, but he managed to bind his wound with threads from his armor. The pain was unbearable, and he felt a severe dizziness accompanied by flashes of bright light before his eyes.

Jean slipped into a brief unconscious state, finding himself in a strange place with wide streets filled with fast, unfamiliar vehicles and people in foreign attire. Beside him stood a girl and someone resembling Clark. He couldn't make sense of the scene. The sun and the moon moved across the sky at an astonishing speed.

Suddenly, a distorted voice said, "Now we can rest."

"Ah! What is this?" Jean exclaimed, struggling to process the vision. He regained consciousness when Clark pushed him.

Clark alerted him, "This is no time to sleep. We must find a way out."

Jean weakly replied, "Okay."

The commander said: "You've been here for two days. Surely you know something about this monster's weaknesses."

Clark responded: "I haven't chased this summoner before; I was fleeing from him and his army, and he did not follow us. But who exactly are you, and why are you here?"

The commander replied, "I apologize for not informing you. I am Lord Karrez II, sent with my battalion to bring you here and eliminate this Death Curse. But it seems the summoner defeated my battalion instead."

Despair began to take hold of everyone. Suddenly, rain poured heavily, and lightning struck a nearby tree close to the summoner, igniting fires around him. Everyone then heard the summoner's screams as he burned.

He screamed loudly, while the remaining followers panicked, trying to extinguish the flames.

Clark, Jean, and Karrez cautiously returned to the battlefield, all injured and exhausted, but Clark did not hesitate; he suddenly charged at the summoner.

Karrez shouted: "Stop! He's still dangerous!"

Clark replied, "Why hesitate? A clever predator waits for its enemy to falter. The enemy is distracted by the fire—why waste this chance? I'm only wounded in the leg, while you are far worse off."

He continued running toward the summoner, surpassing Jean.

Jean said to Karrez, "If you are just going to watch, I'll fight with him. He's right; one shouldn't miss an opportunity like this."

Clark's mind swirled with questions, but the thrill of combat overwhelmed everything.

He reached the summoner, who was surrounded by a sinister black aura.

Karrez shouted: "Beware! He's not just a monster! He's a malevolent spirit in flesh!"

As Clark attacked with his sword, the summoner blocked him with a thick staff that withstood the blow unharmed.

Clark exclaimed in shock: "How?!"

Yet the strike was insufficient.

Clark thought: If I don't dodge his next strike, the staff would split my side in half. I don't know if I would survive.

Jean shouted: "Duck!"

Jean leapt from Clark's shoulder in an acrobatic maneuver, delivering a strong sword strike despite his broken hand, compensating for his weakness with a full spin in midair, managing to finally break the summoner's staff that was protecting his face.

The summoner retaliated with a strong punch to Jean's chest, sending him flying like a doll.

Clark rushed and caught Jean before he hit the ground.

Jean spat blood and laughed hoarsely: "What power! Watch out."

Jean extended his sword to Clark, saying, "Take my sword! Fight!"

Clark laughed: "No need for a sword. As long as he's unarmed, I can fight him with my bare hands."

Jean, blood still flowing from his mouth, said: "Ha! I want to help, but I think my left rib is broken."

Clark gently placed him on the ground and said: "Rest now."

Clark removed his torn armor and threw it aside, raising his fists in readiness.

Karrez said in astonishment: "Does he intend to fight a superhuman with bare hands?!"

The summoner pulled out a strange talisman from his clothes and said: "I've only used this power twice, and everyone who saw it died immediately. Prepare to perish, humans! You shall die at the hands of the Black Death Saint!"

Clark shouted: "What is he talking about?"

The summoner explained: "I used my ability 'Harvest of the Dead,' reclaiming the souls of my fallen soldiers, which raised my power to the 'Lamiet' level (the lower undead), transforming my face from skeletal to human. In other words, I became almost immortal."

Clark laughed mockingly: "Lower level? And what a grand title—Black Death Saint, lower level?"

A dense black aura spread around the summoner.

Karrez shouted: "Do not underestimate him! His power is real!"

Clark thought: Anger causes you to lose control of your power. I must provoke him to attack recklessly.

The summoner charged Clark again, aiming a direct punch at his head, but Clark bent at the last moment and dodged.

He seized the opportunity and delivered a powerful kick to the summoner's chin, knocking him to the ground.

The summoner suddenly calmed strangely, his eyes glowing with an evil red light.

Clark said: "It seems he regained focus."

The summoner laughed hoarsely: "You are an amusing opponent!"

Clark replied calmly: "Even if you regain focus, you face someone who has survived countless struggles."

Clark's killing intent intensified to the point that Karrez gasped: 'How can this young man have such lethal intent? How many lives has he taken?'

Clark became eerily calm, provoking the summoner: "Attack."

The summoner charged again, but Clark's agility and reflexes allowed him to dodge all attacks.

Clark discovered a flaw in the summoner's movement, twisted his arm around the enemy's, and slammed him to the ground, raining blows upon him.

Clark shouted, "Shut up!" Suddenly, the summoner bit his arm, saying: "Your spirit is too strong! I will absorb it!"

Karrez's face turned pale with fear, everyone felt the weight in the air. Clark was in grave danger; the summoner was truly absorbing his soul.

Clark struggled to free himself, continued striking the summoner with his free hand, pinning him firmly. His eyes became foggy, and his consciousness began to fade.

Karrez observed Clark and was astonished: he looked almost dead!

Clark's consciousness gradually disappeared, and he suddenly found himself elsewhere. Darkness engulfed everything, yet his soul radiated a mysterious black light. He stood on murky, muddy waters, with a dark eclipse reflected above him.

Blue apparitions resembling him appeared around him.

The countless spirits charged to kill him, but he realized they were merely manifestations of his negative thoughts, instincts, and the seven deadly sins:

Gluttony!

Greed!

Sloth!

Envy!

Pride!

Lust!

Wrath!

He had to overcome these inner obstacles, known in ancient beliefs as the "Chains of the Soul."

Lust attacked first, but he did not know how to fight an idea.

A thought crossed his mind: Is this my punishment? My conscience coming to haunt me before death?

He received multiple blows from these manifestations, yet accepted the challenge and faced his buried evils.

All six sins dissipated one by one, but "Greed" remained, merging with Clark. He began seeing himself as a semi-transparent spectral form, yet his memories in this spiritual body were shocking.

A soldier in a strange uniform entered, saying: "Sir, we could not locate the lady..." (the name was distorted and unclear).

Clark, in his spectral form, said: "What are these unintelligible words?"

Whenever the soldier mentioned the lady's name, Clark could not hear it clearly, as if a hidden power prevented it.

Clark said to the soldier: "You've accompanied me for years. You always saw me as kind, I never kill without reason, and I abhor injustice. Yet you never objected when your commander ordered the killing or sacrifice of innocents."

The soldier replied: "I am just a soldier, following my superiors' orders."

Clark laughed: "Foolish! You sacrificed for a corrupt world unworthy of protection."

He drew his sword and thrust it into the soldier's mouth, blood spurting. "Fool, you know nothing but blind obedience. Excuse me, but in the end, I will surrender to my greed and do what must be done... I would have protected you if we had grown up together, but now I must act."

He opened a small music box, and his spectral vision began to warp and distort.

He suddenly returned to his previous location in the spiritual realm, seeing a vast sea radiating a pure aura, and a sun with black flames but a white, brilliant light. The place became illuminated, and the water clear and pure.

In the real world, the summoner's hand suddenly stopped absorbing Clark's soul.

The summoner thought in astonishment: "What is this immense soul? I cannot contain it!"

A terrifying black aura appeared around Clark, and in front of him, a decorated black panel inscribed with golden letters appeared:

Path: Greed

Level: 2

Power: 5

Agility: 10

Mana: 2

Sturdiness: 10

Chi: 1

Skills:

Black Flame: A spiritual flame of extreme heat, non-material, attacks the soul directly. May harm the user if not controlled fully.

Warning: This skill is destructive and indiscriminate. Its sole purpose is to annihilate the enemy. It extinguishes once the target dies and does not follow if the target escapes.

Grants the ability to control the aura and manifest it as desired.

The celestial overseers are watching. The world itself commands: "Kill your enemy!"

Clark suddenly stood, placing his foot on the summoner's chest, pulling his injured hand from the monster's mouth: "Your game is over."

A massive shadowy phantom appeared behind Clark, striking the summoner's face, but the summoner dodged in the nick of time.

The summoner screamed in fury, retreating ten paces: "What was that attempt to strike me? It was a phantom! No, no! I am the great sorcerer! How can I die at the hands of a mere human who just awoke?!"

Clark asked in disbelief: "What did you try to use against me?"

Clark raised his finger, pointing: "The dead have no right to ask questions."

He unleashed a black fiery beam from his finger, piercing the summoner's body instantly.

The summoner screamed in excruciating pain: "What is this?! It's burning my soul from within! Damn it!"

Clark ignored his screams, and the beam continued until the opponent's body was incinerated.

Karrez asked in a trembling voice: "What happened to him?"

Clark replied coldly: "I burned his physical soul. This means the soldiers he absorbed will vanish, and he himself will perish. When I wake, make sure we are served a good meal."

Clark then collapsed from exhaustion.

Clark awoke suddenly, facing a handsome man exuding a joyful aura. The man gently pushed him.

Clark looked around, searching for his sword: "Where am I? And who are you?"

The man replied: "Just rest. You and your friend are important guests here."

Clark said: "What?"

To be continued...

Chapter 5: 5 Secrets of Heaven and Earth

Clarke was stunned by the view surrounding him. He was now on a very comfortable bed, and in front of him stood a man dressed in elegant clothing.

The man broke the silence, saying, "I am the Minister, the one who sent the battalion to you."

Clarke replied, "Where am I, and what happened to me after I fell?"

The Minister laughed: "You are in the capital city of the City of Stars, in the royal palace."

Clarke asked, "What brought me here?"

The Minister answered, "I am the one who sent the battalion that fought alongside you and your friend. Trust me, your importance is beyond description. So I will tell you simply: you and the other one are the Men of Destiny."

Clarke looked at him, thinking to himself: What fool cares about all this? Should my life be sacrificed for others? I don't fight for anyone; I fight for myself. What does it matter to me? I'm not one of them, and even if I were, I wouldn't care. But he came at a very bad time. I want to know about the world I'm in and learn about myself too. I'll play along.

· "Alright, but don't leave out a single piece of information."

The Minister spoke cheerfully: "Well then, what do you say, Mr. Clarke, that we go out together, you and I?"

Clarke replied, "Actually, I wanted to take a tour. Without you telling me how magnificent the place is."

Clarke was amazed by the splendor of the corridors. The crimson carpet, oh its luxury! The artifacts, the artistic paintings, the doors, the imperial columns. Clarke thought: This is truly a masterpiece!

Then they reached a room. Clarke was astonished: two majestic statues of men, their features terrifying. One was made of a strange black metal, overflowing with a sinister aura, while the other had a pure aura that brought comfort, and its material was white diamond-like. Both statues gave off that feeling, but the room itself felt devoid of presence, inspiring awe and terror inside it. How could an inanimate, non-living thing emit an aura that made his heart race so fast?

The Minister broke the silence, saying, "It seems you have sensed Lucifer's energy. He is your ancestor. Forgive me, I didn't ask for your name."

Clarke said, "My name is Clarke. How can he be my ancestor? I don't know if I have a grandfather or any relative."

The Minister replied, "A pleasure, Clarke. Please call me by my name, Francis. To answer your question: before your appearance, a prophecy emerged that in a time unknown to us (due to our lack of information), an heir would appear, and this heir would deliver us from the curse. A curse that befell our people, and no citizen has been able to bear sorcerers or aura users since."

Clarke asked, "How is that? Is there someone capable of doing that?"

Francis answered, "Naturally, the abilities of Lucifer and Ornstein surpassed imagination."

Clarke said, "Perhaps one of them sought revenge or something like that, and inflicted this curse upon you."

Francis said, "Perhaps you are right. Rumors abound; sometimes they say Lucifer did it, sometimes Ornstein. But now, why blame the dead? First, we must get out of our predicament."

Clarke replied, "True."

Suddenly, Clarke felt a strange sensation. He wanted to touch the statue of Lucifer. He felt a strange energy pulling him toward it, glowing with a radiance that only he could see.

Clarke approached and felt a strange repulsion. The statue's own aura reacted more and more intensely the closer he got. Despite this, he resisted and moved closer. And when he placed his hand on the statue, a flood of information rushed into his mind. So intense was it that he was thrown backward.

He felt a tremendous change within himself, not in his strength, but in his mind. As if he understood himself, or something of that sort. Something that had been shackled in his heart—the will that had been imprisoned.

The Minister helped Clarke to his feet, saying, "Will is inherited. Many have long tried to do the same thing, yet the statue never reacted to them. It chose to react to you."

Clarke was stunned. Now he understood himself and knew what he wanted. And the first thing that crossed his mind was immortality. He felt a strange exhaustion, as if his soul had risen to the sky and then forcefully descended back to earth.

Clarke asked, "Where is Gene now?"

The Minister answered, "With Lady Alisa."

Clarke asked, "And who is this Alisa?"

The Minister answered, "She is one of the most mysterious beings. We do not know, but she possesses a strange entity within her. We all believe she is the hope."

Clarke said, "I want one thing: to get to the library, if possible."

The Minister replied, "Why?"

Clarke answered, "I don't know, but something is driving me. I want to read it, something there. I am certain I will find it if I go there."

The Minister said, "Very well, I won't ask too much."

He called his secretary and said to her, "Escort Mr. Clarke to the library."

As they headed to the library, Clarke was lost in his thoughts. He didn't know what was wrong with him, but something in his mind was screaming to be found.

They arrived. Clarke entered and asked the secretary to leave.

Clarke's mind was boiling; he felt extremely tired and weary. He sat on one of the chairs.

And suddenly, he fainted. He began to see a series of events like a fast dream.

It was a terrifying battle. Clarke couldn't see the faces clearly, but their clash was so horrifying that the fight he witnessed surpassed his understanding. The battle was extremely fierce, making his heart pound with excitement. But what was this power? Does something like this exist? Their collision alone created gaps in the sky, and the dust was thick due to the scattered debris. They destroyed the City of Stars, completely.

Then the person possessing the dark energy stood before Clarke's spiritual form. Clarke was terrified, thinking he wanted him, but soon that person turned and saw him, and knew what he wanted.

Clarke stepped past the person in front of him, as they were merely memories. Was that Lucifer? he asked himself.

Then Lucifer was struck by a lightning arrow. Thick smoke spread across the horizon.

They were speaking words that Clarke couldn't understand, as if something was preventing him from hearing.

Suddenly, Clarke felt he was about to exit the memories. "No, damn it! There's still a little left. I want knowledge. No!"

Clarke woke up terrified, shouting, "No!" His heart was racing. He felt as if he were on solid ground.

But his feeling grew stronger. He began to move, following this feeling in his soul, as if it were guiding him with directions. He found a bookshelf at the bottom. There, he found a strange book consisting of 300 pages, named "Secrets of Heaven and Earth." Clarke was astonished that he could read it. Was it because of the information that had flowed into his head? He didn't care; he thanked Lucifer for helping him.

And then he was amazed by the first page, which spoke of immortality.

He read the page aloud: "To the reader, this is a message for the aware. For the world is no longer fit for living. We are merely insects now. I have faced unknown enemies and suffered a tremendous number of injuries. They are trying to protect the passage to the immortal world. They do not want any human in that world."

"You who are reading, you are likely the heir to my teachings. Your journey begins now. Let me first tell you about your first destination: my inheritance in the forest of the City of Stars. It activates automatically with the will and the statues of the rulers, meaning every 500 years. There are no friends in this world. The inheritance is very difficult, divided into three levels. And you must know what is coming for you. Focus well!!!"

"The first thing you will face: an army of the dead, a lowly sorcerer. His soul was used to turn him into a slave. You must kill him before he allies with any of those who will

confront you, and it is the beginning of everything. Not much time will pass until the second stage begins, likely two days."

"The second stage: an army of orcs and ghouls. Do not underestimate them."

"The third stage: The Mimic Horse, and this is very dangerous. It is not the type that attacks, but it deceives you with your memories. It uses the darkest memory in a person's heart and attacks the weakest mental state and the most tense among those present."

"After that comes the fourth stage, which is the attack of the giant sun, the will of the lord of the blaze of madness."

"A person I killed. I added his will is a great sun that controls the minds of humans and beasts with the effect of madness. Currently, I cannot tell you what to do, so discover it for yourself. It will not be difficult for you." But I have one last piece of information about this stage.

"The effect of madness will not activate; instead, it will eat your mind, and after that, you die. The will consumes everything to the point of satiety. Therefore, I gave it a special name instead of the Will of the Mad Sun, but the Will of Gluttony."

"After that, you will be able to reach the giant cave. At that point, you will begin three tests. I know you are smart and will solve them!!! For now, I will tell you many things that no one has told you about."

Clarke's heart raced from the amount of information. He had absorbed so much, and there was still more.

To be continued!!!!!!

Chapter 6: 6: Fang Yuwei's Village

Elsewhere, after Clarke woke up, Gene was with Lady Alisa von Bach—a beautiful nineteen-year-old woman. But Gene didn't pay much attention and immediately asked:

· Why am I with you, exactly?

She replied with a frown:

· Do you think I care about you? The Minister tasked me with looking after both of you. But now your foolish friend is with the Minister.

Gene's face darkened with anger:

· What? How did that happen? Why is everyone interested in him?

- Ask yourself: who killed the Death Callers? He did!
- But I fought alongside him! How does he get all the credit?

Gene's eyes gleamed with murderous intent, his anger palpable.

- Fine, take me anywhere far from this palace before I kill someone here!

Alisa wanted to retort to his arrogance, but she didn't bother.

Alisa ordered a carriage to take him to the city.

Gene kept looking at the city's sights. It was truly mesmerizing: marble sidewalks, simple lamp posts, the unique architecture of the shops, the alleys, and the river. Truly a creative design.

Alisa broke the silence, asking:

- Have you eaten anything since you woke up? There's a good restaurant nearby.

Gene replied with a grimace:

- Honestly, I don't think my anger is from hunger. When I woke up, no one offered me anything. There was a foolish secretary hovering around me, telling me where to go. I suppose that idiot Clarke is now enjoying delicious food.

Alisa replied:

- Is that all you think about? You've forgotten the main point. Why do you hate him so much? Didn't you both lose your memories? And you were together! Anyway, we'll stop at this restaurant. They serve good lamb soup.

In her mind, she thought: You're just obsessed. I don't even want to hear anything from you.

Gene nodded in agreement, and they stepped down.

Gene was stunned and said, "Wow! This is really a luxurious restaurant."

The chairs were comfortable and padded for customer comfort. The menu was very simple, even though Gene couldn't read their language, but according to Alisa and what he chose, the food was delicious and simple.

They ate, and then Gene started the conversation:

- What's that strange power Clarke gained, from what I heard?

· That's called an "Aura." They say even a weak Aura user can crush any fighter or knight in a duel. But Clarke is extraordinarily talented. From what I heard, he's the heir to one of the former rulers who were considered the guardians of our land.

In Gene's mind, the words stirred intense jealousy.

· What about me? Am I an heir?

She replied:

· Currently, I haven't heard anything about you. But from what I've heard, you're important too, no less than your friend. But there's an important reason why the Minister approached Clarke before you: because he woke up before you.

The iron fork in Gene's hand bent due to his anger.

· Are you looking down on me?!

She replied calmly:

· I'm not looking down on you, Gene. If I found you uninteresting, I would've gone to Clarke too and left you. Forget about that now. I have an important question: who are you? And where did you and the other one come from?

He answered, looking at the ceiling thoughtfully:

· Honestly, I don't know. My memory is fuzzy. Sometimes in my sleep, I see strange things: weird vehicles moving on wheels, myself with people I don't know. I don't know what to call this, but I feel like it's another place I've been to. In other words, I don't feel nostalgia, if that makes sense.

Alisa was shocked because she had read about such things, but it was just a hypothesis. So she answered him:

· I've heard of such things. Sects in the state of Qin and their culture generally call it "Reincarnation" or "Karma." It's something too complicated for me to understand, but as far as I know, they're just myths, and no one has ever seen examples proving it. Meaning, you and the other are evidence of this hypothesis.

Gene's pupils dilated in shock. He spoke, saying:

· So, what does the dream I saw mean?

· I don't know what you mean, but maybe it's a life I lived before being reborn. Many times, meaning it might be the beginning of everything. But explain more so I can understand and give you my answer.

He replied nervously:

- A completely different world from ours. As I said before: strange, fast vehicles around me, different people. Except Clarke was in those memories, but he had a strange lover. From what I saw in those memories, every time she died, time reversed. And this saddened her. But according to my analysis, she found a solution to that cycle... I didn't know what the solution was, but I think it's beyond my understanding.

- Wait! You say a "solution"? Look, reincarnation returns you to the same world. Do you mean you're from another world? Couldn't it just be hallucinations on your part? Like drinking too much alcohol and starting to imagine things?

Gene got angry, stood up, and clenched his fist:

- I'm not imagining! Are you calling me crazy, woman?!

The restaurant owner looked over in surprise:

- Look, if you're a couple and having a dispute, take it outside!

Alisa replied with a coldness that provoked Gene:

- Don't worry, my friend here is calm. He won't start a fight, especially not with a noblewoman like me.

Gene was angry, but he knew she was forcing him to calm down. He sat back down, saying:

- I apologize, I lost my temper. But I don't need a reason to lie.

- Don't worry, I know that feeling: when you feel alienated, and no one wants to believe or understand you. Nine years ago, I used to run away from my family and go to a friend of mine in a refugee camp. He would climb up to my balcony and take me, crossing the forest alone. I wasn't afraid because he was with me.

Gene asked:

- Who was it?

She replied with sadness in her expression:

- A boy my age. He always told me there was a better life outside the luxurious palaces. Actually, I'd rather tell you there.

- You mean in that village? Do you really want me to see him now? Won't he feel jealous?

Alisa laughed:

- Maybe! Let's go. They're like my second family or something like that.

They took the carriage to the forest. There, they stopped and continued on foot.

They started walking. The autumn cicadas appeared, lighting up the dark night, giving the forest a kind of pleasant atmosphere.

Alisa broke the silence, saying:

- We come here sometimes to hunt or clean up.
- What do you mean?

She replied:

- There's something called the "Hunter's Guild." We get tasks like killing orcs and wiping them out from the forest or returning them to their caves, and sometimes killing chimeras.

Gene asked curiously:

- What's a chimera?

She answered his question:

- A lion with wings, two white horns, a scorpion's tail, and blood-red eyes.
- Really? Actually, Clarke and I faced one in the forest here. Its weak point is in the lower abdomen; it's easy to penetrate there. Also, if we classify monster intelligence, it's really stupid. We used the forest terrain to kill it one time.

She replied, shocked:

- Really? You managed to defeat it? How? I've never heard of anyone who could kill a chimera! And I mean an ordinary human, not a power user.
- It was easy, actually. Fighting and confrontation aren't just about brute force, Alisa. If you can analyze situations and fight the right way, you can defeat the fiercest monsters. Clarke, even though I hate him, surpassed the lower-level sorcerer in hand-to-hand combat and beat him badly. So, the sorcerer used a spell to absorb his soul, but he couldn't. I think that has something to do with your prophecy.

Alisa replied:

· Truly amazing! He managed to repel a sorcerer with just his hands? But don't belittle yourself just by mentioning his strength. You don't know what the days hold for you.

They fell silent until the end of the road, where they finally arrived.

It was a village at the foot of a mountain, destroyed in the worst way: burned. There was a huge number of graves.

Gene looked at Alisa, stunned.

· Is this the village you told me about?

She replied with a cold face:

· Yes. At some point in our lives, we will learn that life shows no mercy, and nations can be cruel in some decisions. And one of those decisions destroyed this place. As I said before, this is a refugee camp. And because the state of Qin was angry that a village of 500 people had fled, wanting to leave the state due to high prices and the persecution they faced because of the urbanization movement, and also because of sect followers.

Gene asked in astonishment:

· What did they do? Them too?

She replied angrily:

· They possess life-extending techniques called "Dual Refinement": it deepens your refinement and steals the lifespan of the other party. They take women and kidnap men to exploit them, and also men come and kidnap women. They were fought from all sides, so they preferred to flee here.

Gene asked:

· And what was the state's response?

Alisa walked to her old friend's grave, then answered Gene:

· They gave them a short deadline: two months. Either return or be exterminated. Two choices: either this or that. They thought it was just an empty threat and that they wouldn't do it on another state's territory. Let me tell you the story from my perspective.

Sweet and bitter memories flooded Alisa's mind from nine years ago.

Little Alisa was running away from her father's palace with her friend from that village, named Fang Yuwei—a handsome ten-year-old boy. On the way, Alisa wanted to stop and play a little in the river.

Fang Yuwei agreed. Alisa wasn't afraid of monsters or anything coming because she felt safe with her friend, for whom she had feelings.

They started playing in the river and laughing together.

Soon, Fang found a small frog. He grabbed it to tease Alisa, but she got very scared and said, "Please throw it away!"

She started running away from him. Soon, he started running after her, laughing.

But soon, Alisa fell due to a rock, and her ankle twisted.

With a red face, he knelt beside her, trying to help her up:

· Sorry, Alisa, I didn't expect that to happen.

Alisa replied, her forehead red from the fall:

· Ah, it hurts! I can't stand.

Soon, Fang Yuwei carried her, saying:

· This is when a man's duty comes!

She replied nervously and stammering:

· Um... wait! Am I heavy?

Fang replied, his cheeks red:

· No, you're light as a feather! Let's go.

Alisa felt comfort in his arms. She knew these were her true feelings, and she didn't want to be an aristocratic lady marrying a foolish nobleman; she wanted to be with Fang.

They finally reached the village. Fang took Alisa into his house—the home of the Yuwei family.

Fang's mother came and said fearfully:

· What happened to my daughter-in-law? Is she hurt?

Fang replied fearfully:

· What do you mean, Mom? We're not married!

Alisa felt embarrassed by the word "marriage," but she didn't mind, saying:

- Actually, I don't mind that.

Fang said: "What's wrong with you? Do you have a fever or something?"

Alisa hit Fang's chest angrily:

- Don't you like me?!
- What kind of question is that, Alisa? You know you make me nervous!

He put her on the bed, saying, "I'll get a doctor."

The mother came and sat beside Alisa and started talking:

- Since we escaped from that place, and Fang lost his father, he hasn't felt happy or smiled like these days. I really love you, Alisa, and consider you one of us. —In the middle of her speech, she started crying.

Alisa said:

- Calm down, aunt. I love you too.

Fang's mother replied:

- Thank you, Alisa. I know this is a selfish request, but please stay with us.

Alisa was embarrassed. She knew Fang's mother almost wanted to betroth her to her son, but this pleased Alisa from the start, and she hated her home because of her brothers who treated her badly because she was the daughter of a commoner woman her father married. Even her father, after her mother's death, no longer cared about her. She lost everything, so why would she want to stay in a house like that?

Alisa finally replied after a long silence:

- I want to think tonight, and I'll stay here.

The mother replied happily:

- Of course, stay! Consider this house your home! From now on, it is your home!

Alisa was happy with these words, which she had never heard from anyone in the world.

Fang came with the doctor.

· He cleaned the blood from Alisa's forehead and covered the wound with a bandage.

He said:

· Well, it's just a minor injury. You only need two days to walk without help.

Fang spoke, feeling inadequate:

· Sorry, Alisa, for what happened to you. I know there are sorcerers in your palace who can heal your wounds.

Alisa replied:

· Don't mention that place to me. I don't care about it anymore.

Fang asked:

· What do you mean?

She replied, her face red:

· I will live with you and your mother from now on.

Fang replied, grabbing his hair in shock:

· What?!

Alisa said:

· Don't shout like that! Don't you like the idea?

He replied:

· Of course I like it! I really wished for it!

The two laughed.

And so two weeks passed with play and happiness.

But on that fateful day, Fang and Alisa were playing in the river and talking happily.

Fang started speaking seriously:

· Alisa, if I become a man worthy of you when we grow up, will you accept me?

She replied, scared:

· Are you joking or being serious?

He replied with a frown:

· Does my face look like I'm joking?

She was shocked because it wasn't his habit to joke with her and make her answer, only to say in the end, "I made you admit it." But he wasn't joking at all. She relaxed on his shoulder and replied:

· You've known the answer from the beginning.

Fang was happy and smiled at her:

· Then let's return to the village.

They held hands and started walking. It was the season of glowing cicadas that lit up the forest and made the atmosphere beautiful.

But as they approached, they smelled fire and blood.

Fang was shocked.

Alisa said:

· What's that smell?

Fang feared and said, "I don't know. Let's take a look from above."

Fang climbed one of the trees and started seeing... then he was shocked.

His village was completely burned! There were many corpses in the streets. He saw his mother being dragged by her hair by masked, angry people.

Fang tensed. The blood drained from his veins. He climbed down, wanting to rush to his village.

Alisa grabbed his hand, crying.

· What happened, Fang? Tell me! Will we separate or what?

Fang replied: "Don't worry, we won't separate. I'll take a look and come back to you."

She held his hand: "Don't go again! Please, I'm scared!"

Fang replied: "Okay..." but he knew it was his end. It was a brave decision for a ten-year-old boy.

He let me go forward... then hit my head hard to knock me out and hid me behind a distant tree, and left.

And now, after nine years, Alisa is here in front of her old friend's grave, her first love, telling her story.

She said:

- After I woke up, I found Fang with his neck broken in front of his mother, who, according to doctors, was killed after her son. Cruelty! They didn't leave any child or woman! They killed them all without any exception. It turned out my father had been searching for me for two weeks.

He found me here lying down, embracing the corpse of the real family that loved me.

Grief consumed my heart. In the end, I buried this village next to its dead and made it one of the secrets known only to a few.

Gene was shocked by the matter, saying: "What a brutal massacre!"

Alisa replied to him:

- Don't bother comforting me. In the end, you don't need to comfort me. I just used you to vent my grief to someone who might not care or react.

She walked past him, ignoring him.

Gene turned to her, raising his hand sadly. He felt her feelings, as if he had lived through a similar experience, but he couldn't express it. So he lowered his hand and walked behind her in silence until they returned to the city.

Alisa asked:

- Do you have a place to stay or something to shelter you?

Gene replied:

- No, but the Minister's secretary gave me some money. I'll get a room in a hotel and spend the night there.

- Well, goodbye.

Gene wanted to comfort her, but he lowered his hand. He said in his heart: "In the end, she didn't want anything from me, as she said. She just wanted to vent what was in her heart to someone who would listen."

He started walking and reached a hotel. He asked himself: "What is the purpose of life if everything is fleeting or may die? In the end, it's just a fleeting life without any goal. Perhaps in that dream was a message to me: that I must reach eternal life!!!"

To be continued....

Chapter 7: 7: bloodlust

Jin woke up the next day with a strange feeling in his heart: a violent desire to torture and then kill.

This urge screamed from within his will, a hunger that could only be sated by blood. His face was pale.

He left his hotel room and began to walk when he bumped into someone. Jin grew furious and wanted to tear this man apart.

The man he bumped into had the appearance of nobility and the arrogance they often display. The man spoke, looking Jin over scrutinizingly: "Alex! I've been looking for you! I've been searching for you for so long!"

Jin wondered to himself: Is he crazy or what? But fine, I'll play along, and then... hehehe... who knows what will happen?

"Hey, man! I forgot you... I drank too much, I don't know what happened!" Jin let his head loll onto his shoulder, pretending to be drunk and unable to stand straight.

The man replied, "You forgot me?! I'm Eileen! It's been two years since I last saw you! You haven't changed a bit!"

Jin thought to himself—while pretending to be half-conscious—"Oh, good! So he thinks he's run into me by chance? Excellent!"

Jin pretended that due to his excessive drinking, he wanted to hug him.

Eileen spoke while pushing Jin's face away: "What's wrong with you, Alex? Calm down! I never expected you to overindulge like this!"

In his mind, Jin said: "Shut up! If I didn't want to torture or kill you, I wouldn't give you the time of day!"

Jin spoke: "Come on, let's go to my room, man! It's been so long! My life has gone downhill without you!"

Eileen replied: "It's strange that you showed up early too! Did you rent it yourself? Huh? You have a room?!"

In his mind, Jin said: "What a fool I am! I almost talked too much! I nearly gave myself away like an idiot! Let's take things slow."

Jin replied: "Yeah, man, I know! But you know, I live here, and I thought it couldn't hurt to take a walk before you arrived!"

Jin opened his room door, saying: "Welcome!"

Jin brought out some alcoholic cocktail drinks, saying: "Let's drink!"

They began to talk, laugh, and tell fake stories.

Eileen said: "I have good news, Alex!"

"What is it?"

"At the university I attend, I found two girls with great figures. I kept persuading them to go to a hotel and have fun together! And I succeeded! I told them to come to this street too!"

Jin replied: "How did you tell them? I didn't see you do it!"

"Haha! And that's where the great invention comes in! Ta-da!"

He pulled out a strange jade slip.

Speaking: "Look, Alex! This is the invention of the generation! It's called a Jade Slip! Wherever you are, as long as the other party has a jade slip with your imprint, your message will reach them, no matter where you or they are!"

"Truly amazing! I didn't know something like this existed!"

"You always buried yourself in your own cave, Alex! But do you have good clothes for tonight? Don't tell me you're going to show up in that outfit!"

Jin replied with an arrogant look as he drank his alcohol: "Of course not, man! Let's go buy some trendy coats! Let's go!"

They left. They were silent for a while, but Eileen broke the silence: "I know a great clothing store! It's for the rich! Did your father give you an allowance or money?"

"Of course I have some! Why do you ask?"

Jin showed him his pocket full of money, saying: "Don't worry!"

"Insane! Alex! I didn't expect that from you! You've become even more awesome!"

Jin thought to himself: "If your measure of a friend's awesomeness is appearance and money, then you are a vile wretch who deserves torture! I will not spare you tonight!"

They reached the store. Jin started trying on random clothes until he settled on a black coat made of leather imported from Alabaster bulls from the Gothic Kingdom. It had wide pockets. He chose a black inner outfit to match the look. Eileen saw his appearance.

Eileen replied: "I didn't expect you to look so handsome! You truly amazed me!"

Jin pushed her away, laughing "Heh" because of her excessive clinginess: "Why should I care if you're impressed or not! Let's return to my place!"

In front of the apartment, there were two beautiful girls: the first had crimson red hair with supremely beautiful green eyes, the other looked ordinary, like any other woman.

Jin approached the red-haired one, kissing her hand: "Welcome, madam! May I know your name?"

Her cheeks reddened, and she stammered: "Lina, that's my name."

"A pleasure, Lina! Please, come in!"

In the apartment, Jin and Eileen were preparing the drinks. Eileen said: "It seems, Jin, that you got the beautiful one! Your looks captivated them!"

"You see? Am I not good?"

Jin set the glasses and poured drinks for each of them.

They began to talk and laugh, but Jin wasn't pleased. He felt bored too! The bloodthirsty instinct he started his day with had returned, stronger than before! Jin brought out a knife, pointing it at Eileen's face: "Take it!"

Eileen replied: "What do you want me to do with it?"

Jin replied, bringing his face close to hers with terrifying features: "Put your hand on the table, and stab between your fingers, trying not to cut them!"

Eileen replied with a mix of confusion and fear: "Alex! This isn't fun!"

Suddenly, Jin yanked his hand forcefully and cut off Eileen's finger, who screamed piercingly.

The girls were terrified! They said: "What's wrong with you, you madman?!"

Jin replied: "Those who disobey me will, of course, receive harsh punishment!"

The other woman, Lina's friend, replied: "Let's run away! They're crazy!"

Jin quickly threw her to the ground, grabbing her neck: "Don't you like that? It's fun too! A weak creature like you, with an ordinary appearance, has no right to talk back to me! I am the master of the game here, the final authority!"

Eileen screamed: "You're not Alex! You bastard!"

Jin replied: "Of course! Remember! You're the one who bumped into me! You thought I was your friend, and now you're blaming me too? Scream all you want! All the neighbors know we're violent and have girls here, so they'll ignore your screams!"

Jin moved the chairs! He set up three chairs, each facing the others! He dragged them violently, saying: "Now we will play a fun game!"

He blindfolded them all, then said: "Now you will play a selfish game! I will distribute numbers! Each even number will be a pair, and among you will be an odd number! The one with the odd number will kill one of you, and then we repeat, but with new numbers! To avoid screaming, to keep it surprising, I will stuff numerous rags in your mouths! To avoid excessive talk, I will cut out all your tongues! Just to avoid ruining the game!"

Blood flowed everywhere! Jin's coat was stained with thick blood! They all tried to scream and talk, but Jin sealed their mouths forever!

He went to Eileen, who got an even number! Jin opened his blindfold so he could see!

Eileen was terrified! He wanted the odd number so he could kill and survive this round!

It was the other girl's turn, and she was also even! Then Lina, who also had an even number!

He opened all their blindfolds! They were inwardly happy that they had survived! Suddenly, Jin raised the odd number, which was six!

He laughed, saying: "You forgot I'm here! I forgot to tell you: I am a participant in the game! I won't leave the fun just to you, of course!"

He drew a knife and headed towards Eileen: "Sorry, my friend, but rules are rules, as you know!"

Eileen began to cry, wanting to beg, but Jin had stolen his voice! What did he have left?

The two girls began to cry! Their faces changed color from fear! Jin slit Eileen's throat calmly.

"Now, girls! The next round! Hehe!"

He opened the first girl's blindfold, and she got an even number! Jin laughed, then covered her eyes! He tried his own luck, but also got an even number! He laughed inwardly, knowing what would happen! "Ah, how I love this game! Unpredictable and full of emotions!"

But a better way! He untied both girls and placed a knife between them, saying: "Let one of you win, or I will end it all myself! But a winner must emerge!"

The two girls looked at each other with fear mixed with terror! Their faces grew pale!

He watched, saying in his mind: "This is what happens when you rob someone of their voice! They will make a decision instantly! Because even if they want to express themselves, how can they?"

Suddenly, Lina's friend pounced and grabbed the knife, trying to fend off her friend while crying! A strange aura had taken hold of the girl! The will to live! She didn't want to die! It was pure, instinctual fear!

Lina's hands weakened until the knife pierced her heart! And she died!

But Jin pierced the other girl's neck with another knife! He said: "You forgot I'm a player with you! You all lost, and I won!" Jin laughed madly! "I gave her hope, then snatched it away quickly! This is the pleasure!"

"Now I need to clean my clothes! Hehehe!"

Jin took a shower, then cleaned the place. He wiped away the scattered blood, then cut up all the corpses! He threw them in the room's storage closet!

He sat on his sofa, laughing: "It was a good day!"

But at the beginning of the next day, Clark was standing in front of a burning book! It was "Secrets of Heaven and Earth"! He had memorized it by heart! The features of his face changed, adorned with calmness and malice!

The last page of the book came out; Clark read it before returning it to the fire!

Speaking in a low voice: "I have now taught you everything! I expect that you are now burning my final work, and that is what I want from the one who will inherit me! That was

a smart move! And if you did it, you prove your worthiness! Now listen to my final words: Never be satisfied with the role of the victim! Because what hurts the victim the most is the silence of people watching them without any feelings of grief or fear! Why? Because if you hate someone, how easy it is to slander them! Don't let fools tell you that the devil's path is evil! No! Don't let those who claim the righteous path pollute your mind! In truth, they are the first to betray you! Walk the path of individuality! Let your obstacles develop you and your soul! Strengthen your heart! There are no friends in this world, only interests! Humans are merely small boats in the river of time, tossed by waves; they hold onto each other so their boats don't capsize! Drown the entire world before you drown! Seize your opportunity, no matter how vile! Now, I bid you farewell! This is the last thing between me and you, my dear reader! Good luck...."

To be continued.....

Chapter 8: The venerable Inheritance(1)

Jin left the hotel, returning to the palace. He hailed a carriage for the journey. Upon arrival, he found Karlz, whom he hadn't seen in some time.

"Hello, Lord Jin. I have been assigned a mission, and I am your escort."

"My escort? For what?"

"You and I are going to clear a forest of a goblin and orc infestation!"

Jin replied with a scrutinizing look: "And what do I get out of it?"

"In truth," Karlz said calmly, "what you'll gain is beyond your imagination."

Suddenly, an excited man approached, showing no signs of majesty or nobility. The Minister had arrived.

"Hahaha! My dear guest, Jin! Please, come inside. I will tell you everything."

Jin looked at him angrily, thinking to himself: Now you want to meet me?!

They entered the hall—the Hall of the Two Great Statues.

Jin was shocked. "What is this? And why do I feel this strange sensation?"

The Minister replied, "This is your inheritance, Lord Jin. It is reacting to you just as it reacted to Clark before."

"What?!"

Jin began to see a massive beam of light erupt from the white statue, shooting towards the sky. The Minister exclaimed, "What is this?! The statue is directly demanding that you touch it!"

"What?!"

All the inhabitants of the city, Clark, and Elisa, without exception, saw that immense light... the sacred light that split the heavens.

As for Jin, who was at the heart of the event, he felt this light calling him... the sacred energy was guiding him. Jin approached involuntarily and touched the statue.

Sacred light began to burst from Jin's eyes and mouth as he screamed in agony. The Minister shouted to Karlz, "Hurry! Call everyone you can to prevent chaos!"

But Jin had already descended to the deepest point of his soul... pitch black, eternal darkness. Several forms, similar to Jin, emerged, each representing one of the Seven Deadly Sins, just as had happened with Clark.

But at that moment, a terrifying light appeared, jolting Jin awake from his unconscious state, preventing him from fully awakening his power. The Minister came to Jin's side. "What happened? Are you awake?"

Jin's eyes widened in shock and anger. "I... am I less than Clark?!"

Jin was stunned to feel his clothes were soiled and his body had become extremely pale. A flood of information rushed into his mind, making him dizzy. As Jin moved to leave the room, the Minister said, "Wait! Stop! Tell us what happened to you!"

Swiftly, Jin punched the wall with immense force. The wall split in two. His power had increased madly, even though it hadn't fully awakened. The Minister wasn't angry; he was delighted. "His power has increased!"

Jin spoke as dust billowed everywhere: "I will go to the forest." The Minister replied, "Very well. Karlz, go with Lord Jin and be his servant."

Jin thought to himself: Something inside is telling me to go to the forest. I feel my soul guiding me to the place Clark desires!!

Elsewhere, a man stood dressed in luxurious clothes, his handsome appearance radiating confidence and calm. It was Clark.

He exited the library to find a waiting for him... Elisa, whose beauty or any such "trivialities" he paid no mind. In the end, that beauty would turn to dust or become natural fertilizer. Why bother with such details? That was Clark's perspective.

Elisa looked at him angrily. "You're very late!" He replied with a condescending gaze, "And did anyone force you to wait? I know the way; I'm not a little child."

He continued in his mind: After touching the statue of Lucifer, I know everything... the paths, what I must do. I even hold the experience of the 'Venerated One, the Great Sun Queller' within my mind. It's unwise for everyone to know my needs.

She retorted arrogantly, "Do you think you're that important? Everyone wishes for my company!"

He stepped past her, saying, "Fine, go accompany them then. What is it to me?"

She threw a punch at a blind spot. But quickly, a translucent manifestation emerged from Clark, grabbed her fist, and began to squeeze. Clark said, "Girl, I don't have time for your childish games. And don't think for a second you're my equal."

He then pushed her away. She said in astonishment, "What is that damned thing inside you?!" Clark felt a strange spirit had been watching from within the girl, screaming with a terrifying murderous intent.

Elisa retorted, "Are you afraid of a girl who can't even face you?!" Clark laughed, "Are you trying to provoke me to reclaim your dignity? But I must inform you I possess not a single grain of it. Does that comfort you? My heart is as dry as sea algae."

She stepped towards him, but he walked out of the palace. She followed immediately, not out of interest, but because her curiosity was piqued. She felt a strange sensation she wasn't accustomed to from anyone else.

She broke the silence: "Why don't we take a transport carriage?"

"I don't want to. And also, be quiet. Do you enjoy talking, ?"

She thought to herself: How cruel he is!

As they walked, Clark knew what he wanted and what he needed. Today was the day of the inheritance. Clark wasn't arrogant; he knew they lacked the strength to repel the "Mad Sun," that powerful enemy. The key to his victory was how he used those around him.

He thought: This girl possesses something strange. I don't think it wants us dead. And Jin... I know he's coming. Because the will of Earnestine—who is in truth Lucifer's younger brother, the one who betrayed his elder brother—knows what is on his

brother's mind. The will is inherited. Our souls are linked from now on. Our destiny is to fight, but I will use him. He will come. I intentionally let my desire be known so he would find out.

Elisa was focusing on Clark's strange features, full of cunning and malice.

Clark saw the forest ahead. Its entrance was magnificent. He said to himself: "From now on, the next step will be new to me... a new world, a strange journey. The past won't matter, as long as I am here, alive and breathing. Do I care about people's opinions? I will take a step on this grass, climb mountains, increase my strength, write poetry, and fuel the flame of my will like a wild Phoenix reborn from its ashes!"

His voice was loud. Elisa looked at him, shocked; she hadn't expected him to be a poet. He didn't even look at her and advanced, an air of aloofness around him.

Clark remembered what he learned from the book: releasing his aura in the form of particles allowed him to sense his surroundings within a three-meter radius. Elisa saw this and, not understanding what Clark was doing, asked, "What are you doing?"

"I'm scouting the area around us."

She wanted to compliment him, but he quickly silenced her: "Someone is there." He began to advance to see.

He knew what he found: It was Jin, Karlz, and another person... the "real Alex," who truly looked like Jin.

Jin laughed: "So you enjoyed yourself at the palace, huh?"

Clark laughed inwardly: He knows nothing, like the rest. I can use him well. Let's start with a small strike; after all, grapes are eaten gradually.

Clark replied: "Yes. They lavished me with food, women, information, and everything. They even assigned this beautiful lady to accompany me." He pointed to Elisa. "Show yourself."

Jin was shocked to see Elisa beside him. Elisa retorted, "I am not your friend! Since we left, you've been ignoring me!"

Clark grabbed her chin: "Is that so?" Her face flushed with embarrassment.

Jin was angered but calmed himself slightly: "Do you think I'm not your equal?"

Clark laughed maniacally, his voice loud. He approached Jin until they were face-to-face, his breath on Jin's skin: "In truth, I have never seen you as an enemy or an equal.

You're merely a fool. Also, Jin, do you think I don't know? You hold a secret. Guess what will happen if I discover it? Do you think you'll live after that?"

Veins bulged on Jin's forehead from anger, and his heart was filled with tension. He wanted to draw his sword.

But then they heard strange, screeching laughter. Clark turned: "The game has begun."

A short goblin with red eyes was laughing at their discord. It raised a horn and alerted the tribe to their presence.

Elisa said, "Hordes of goblins are coming!"

Jin's mind was in another world: "There are corpses in the hotel. Maybe the owner will come and find them. Then my deed might be exposed. What do I do then? That bastard will use it against me and take my place. Then it will be my end."

Hordes of ghouls surged forward. Quickly, Jin moved too. It was his instinct protecting him now, but his mind was clouded.

The battle raged. Everyone fought except Clark, who rarely moved. He didn't tire himself, because the real event hadn't appeared yet: the Orc King and the Ghoul King.

There were three aura users: Clark, Elisa, and Alex. The fight was relatively easy for them. Even Jin, whose power had noticeably multiplied.

The one truly struggling was Karlz.

A clever plan formed in Clark's mind. He fired an energy shot from his finger towards an orc about to kill Karlz.

Karlz said, "Thank you!"

"Just... don't die before your time."

Karlz didn't fully understand the meaning and continued fighting. Clark kept laughing: "Yes. Let them all struggle until the main event arrives."

The numbers of the vast orc horde diminished. Suddenly, they heard the sound of very heavy footsteps. Clark's eyes snapped open. He knew what had arrived: the Orc King, standing three and a half meters tall! Clark looked at it, laughing: "Magnificent! But... I won't fight you."

An orc stood before Clark, thinking him the weakest. In a flash, Clark decapitated it without even turning around.

He laughed inwardly: "Even though I've only killed a few, my level has risen nicely. It's now Level 6." His Strength, Agility, Stamina, Toughness, Resistance, and Mana had increased. But his "Qi" had not. He wondered what increased it.

His stats were now:

- Strength: 11
- Mana: 7
- Agility: 15
- Toughness: 9
- Stamina: 13
- Qi: 1

In his mind: "Hahaha! My strength is sufficient. But the one who will fight him is that fool Jin."

Clark approached Jin and whispered in his ear: "The Orc King's core is useful; it will make you fully awakened. And also... why are you afraid and hesitant? Look at this beast before you. Don't you see it represents the weak self within you? The fear that seizes you when you do something wrong? That living conscience inside you? Go on! Kill it! Kill what remains of the human inside you!"

Jin's eyes widened hysterically. His grip on his sword tightened as he thought: "Is it true? I'm always in a cage of fear. I haven't stopped thinking about the consequences. Fear and terror never left my heart. But now... the mask has fallen. Is it my conscience that frightens me, or are they those vile acts I committed while fearing the consequences?!"

Jin saw visions of those he had killed... like gaunt ghosts. Lina and the other girl hovered around him, trying to drag him into the depths of hell. He suddenly screamed: "Silence!"

He charged forward with mad speed, attacking the Orc King with immense rage, his eyes red with overwhelming murderous intent. Madness flowed from Jin incessantly.

Clark laughed: "That is the dilemma of crime and punishment. Humans do what they want, and when things get tough, they feel wronged. I don't know what Jin did, but he feels intense remorse and injustice."

But amidst all this, there was someone else watching with keen interest from among the branches of the trees...

To be continued....

Chapter 9: 9:The venerable Inheritance(2)

The battle between jin and the Orc King intensified. The Orc King was completely different from ordinary green orcs; the King was distinguished by his red color and possessed the skill of "Fear."

Clark desperately wanted that skill, thinking to himself: "One of the traits of the sealed Path of Greed is the 'Eye of Truth' or 'Authority of Truth,' through which I can steal skills. This is what I want! I made that fool Gene fight him so I could observe the skill. The more skills I see, the better my understanding becomes. Now I can see the status window of the monster. But that idiot Gene... I don't know, he's weak."

Suddenly, the Orc King roared in anger; Gene had jumped over his giant axe, delivering a powerful stab to his hand. Jin began stabbing and slicing forcefully, causing the Orc King to scream.

Enraged, the Orc King grabbed the axe with his other hand, attempting to strike Gene. But jin was too fast; he dodged the blow and made the foolish Orc King cut his own hand!

Jin didn't react at all; his eyes remained intensely focused.

Alisa approached Clark and asked him, "What's happening to him? What's wrong? He's so strong like this!"

Clark replied, "He's become calmer. His mental state has solidified."

Alisa responded, "But how?"

Clark stroked his chin and said, "Most people want to solve their problems. Jin has done something neither you nor I know about. But that thing is afraid of being exposed. Why are most people deceived by reputation? You now see jin fighting without fear of death, but the truth is he fears it, and we are about to witness a living example."

The Orc King roared, using the skill "Fear." Jin began to hallucinate that he was on the verge of death; he saw Lina and Eileen dragging him to the ground. Although these were mere illusions, he was terrified to the point of madness.

The Orc King charged, attempting to attack jin, but Clark quickly stepped in, pushing him away, and said, "I can't rely on you for anything!"

The "Fear" skill appeared before Clark and transformed into the "Authority of Will." Clark laughed to himself, "How lucky I am to obtain a hidden trait like this!" But he continued, "Such progress is not enough for me."

Clark gripped his sword and felt in his heart that it was like a pulsating blade; his will transferred to the sword, a phenomenon known as "Qi" or "Sword Energy."

A screen materialized before Clark, stating: "Your understanding of Qi has increased. Your level is now 8."

"You have upgrade points to use."

"All your abilities have increased by three points each."

Personal Status Window:

- Strength: 14
- Mana: 11
- Toughness: 12
- Agility: 19
- Stamina: 17
- Qi: 3

Alert!! Your understanding of the sword has deepened. You have broken through the first layer of refinement and the Path of Cultivation. You are at the first layer, the Birth stage.

Clark laughed, and an overflowing aura surged around him, but its color changed from blue to red, announcing a demonic energy.

The one observing them was shocked, saying, "I never expected someone like him to exist in Dranglik!"

But Clark raised his blade, declaring the "Authority of Will," which angered the Orc King because Clark had stolen his technique.

Everyone watched in astonishment: "What is this overflowing aura?" All fighting stopped: Alex, Calrez, Alisa, and jin, who was on the ground, watched with suppressed anger, biting his lips in sorrow.

The Orc King charged forward, but Clark swiftly launched a quick, cutting swing that split the ground with tremendous force, cleaving the Orc King in half!

A new notification appeared for Clark: "You have learned a new skill: 'Demon King's Sword: Heaven's Partner.' You and the sword have become one, and you have achieved 10% progress in forging a 'Sword Heart.'"

"Clark's levels have increased."

Several cosmic messages emerged. The World laughed, saying, "Such terrifying power!"

The Demon King "Agaris" took an interest in you, saying, "Become my messenger, and I will increase your progress."

"Athena," the Olympian goddess, bestowed her blessing upon you: "Blessing of the Goddess of Battle."

Clark laughed and said, "Who can stand against me?!"

Alisa stepped forward: "How did you obtain this power?"

He did not answer her nor pay her any attention.

Suddenly, several fast-moving figures rushed toward Clark. Everyone stopped to look: they saw an old man, accompanied by a man and a young woman.

Clark looked on in shock, thinking to himself, "I expected him to do this, but isn't it too soon?!"

Alisa shouted angrily, "They are the scum of the Qin nation!!"

"This matter can only be explained in the royal palace!"

The Minister entered and said, "Your Majesty, how did you do this? These are our nation's assets! Are you sacrificing them to the Qin nation, whose encroachments on our properties never cease?!"

The Emperor replied, "So what? Do you want us to fall under the mad sun that will devour everything? I asked the venerable 'Dok Ling Ouchi' of the Deep Heaven Sect to resolve this matter, as you know. He is at the first stage of 'Void Manifestation.'"

The Minister responded, "But this is the worst of them—"

Suddenly, he remembered in terror that Gene was in the forest, and perhaps even Clark was there! His heart trembled with fear as he said, "That was our only chance, and now it will be wasted before my eyes!"

He quickly left the royal hall, saying, "Summon the Three Venerables and my three disciples: Ethan, Brutus, and Lucille! We must go save them, along with fifty men! Quickly!"

The Minister's secretary replied, "Understood! But preparations will take time."

The Minister shouted, "Hurry, woman! We

have no time!"

But perhaps the Minister was a little too late, for the scum of the Qin nation were already before Clark and his companions.

The sect elder asked, "Who are you?"

Alisa wanted to respond and curse, but he raised his hand, signaling silence. Alisa was angry but suppressed her rage.

Clark said, "I am a disciple of the venerable master, the revered 'Vanquisher of the Great Sun, Revered of Love.'"

"How do you know this name? How dare you lie to my face?!"

Clark replied, "How would I dare lie before Your Excellency? As you can see, I have used one of my master's techniques. Also, I have heard of you. Your stories have spread, sir, from the west to the near east. You are the elder of the Deep Heaven Sect, Dok Ling Ouchi."

Ling Ouchi laughed and said, "Hahaha! Young man, you have a silver tongue! Very well, you speak the truth. But what exactly do you want here? It seems you are no frog in a well?"

Clark replied with a cold gaze, "My master's inheritance!!!!!"

An overwhelming killing intent swelled from the elder, who said, "And you say this in my presence?!"

Clark responded, "I walk the path of ruin, so I fear neither death nor anything else. The path of struggle and perseverance will place you in situations that may cost you your life, so why should I fear as long as I advance? What does revenge matter to me? No! No! If ten people come demanding their rights, I will kill them. If there are a hundred, I will kill them too. If the entire world seeks revenge, I will annihilate the world!"

Ling Ouchi laughed, "Young man, I've taken a liking to you! I'm not lying to you; I want you in my sect, and you have no right to refuse! Also, the inheritance is yours, but remember: do not exploit my kindness against me!"

He unleashed his true killing intent. Everyone felt as if someone were pressing down on their hearts, especially Calrez.

Clark nodded respectfully and said, "I would not dare, sir."

"Very well, remember! I will come for you shortly."

"Very well, sir, but I have a request... Could you leave your companions with me for a while?"

"Why?"

"Because I need them, honestly. They are experts in aura and strong, and there's no harm in them helping their younger brother."

The woman grabbed her master's hand and said, "I don't trust him!"

"He is too weak to do anything. Also, that's good! I want you to keep an eye on him, Yi Lian, and you too, Bai Hu."

They nodded to their master despite their objections.

The elder departed, and the two descended, bowing in greeting. Clark looked at them:

- Yi Lian: Her hair was dark black (from a family close to spirit fairies), and she wore blue men's clothing for ease of movement, though it slightly accentuated her chest.

- Bai Hu: He was exceptionally calm, with red hair swept back, a sharp jawline, and striking handsomeness.

Clark knew whom he should approach. But the third stage had already begun.

Calrez had disappeared!!!!

To be continued....

Chapter 10: 10:The venerable Inheritance(3)

Clark turned around after hearing that. "Karl has disappeared too! And also Alex!"

Elisa said angrily, "Alex disappeared too!" Clark replied coldly, "And what's so important about his disappearance?"

Yi Lian grabbed Clark's arm. "Let's hurry." "Yes, let's move quickly."

Jin placed his hand on Elisa's shoulder. "Don't be sad. I'm not praising myself, but their lives mean nothing to me. They came of their own will and they knew they might lose their lives."

Elisa was sad. Alex had been her dearest friend since childhood. His mother had died a long time ago from a disease called Scarlet Bleeding Fever.

But how did Alex disappear? Let's go back ten minutes.

There was someone else stalking them besides Ling Ochi—it was the Mimic Horse, Phase Three. It can see your memories and influence you. But how was it able to kidnap them without anyone noticing? The answer is simple: the overwhelming killing intent released by Ling Ochi was able to hide its appearance.

Alex was more nervous than everyone else; he was afraid of death, so his mental state was shattered. Most humans suffer from psychological pressure; killing intent presses on the heart and stirs feelings of fear and tension, and this also helped the Mimic Horse appear without anyone knowing.

Since he was young, no one from his brothers liked Alex. The reason caused him suffering or a complex. Losing his mother made him feel weak, as if the world was cruel and wanted to torment him. He never once attended church family events or religious rites because in his mind he would say:

"God watches my suffering and offers me no help." Flimsy excuses to cover up his weakness.

So, the Mimic Horse took the form of his mother and used another lure to attract him. Yes, it was Karl. It used Karl's body to make a puppet, and through that puppet, Alex came desperately to see his mother!

Clark knew something like this would happen, so he wasn't affected. But in his mind, he said: Most people don't know that the Mimic Horse is your greatest ally. It helps the Chosen One, so I don't need to kill it, just subdue it. No one knows the structure of the Inheritance better than it. Keke, this Venerable One's path is proceeding well.

Soon, they reached one of the caves. There, they were shocked by what they saw: a woman whose body was fused with a giant serpent!

Elisa screamed, "It's Lady Joanna, Alex's dead mother!"

Suddenly, Alex appeared. He wasn't dead; he had become a follower of the Mimic. The Mimic Horse's combat power is very poor, so it controlled Alex to fight for it.

Clark looked and laughed, "Yi Lian, what do you think about going to kill him?" She asked, "Why don't you go?" He replied flatteringly, "It would be wonderful to see the

experience of my senior sister right before my eyes, so I want to see your level if possible." She nodded her head in agreement.

Suddenly, Elisa intervened. "Stop! I want to stop him without killing him." Clark wanted to speak, but Jin stopped him. "Let's see what she will do. Maybe she can benefit us if she recovers Alex." Clark replied, "You have only five minutes. That's all I can give you. After that, you will end the fight, Yi Lian." Elisa replied, "Fine," and nodded gratefully to Jin who helped her.

She drew her sword, around which a water aura formed. The sword intensified, and a tremendous aura erupted from Elisa, attracting everyone's attention. Bai Hu asked, "Is this girl that strong?" Clark replied, "Actually, yes. I haven't fought her myself, but there is an ancient soul residing in her body. Perhaps that is the reason for her strength."

Everyone focused on the fight. Killing intent radiated from Alex's face, while Elisa only defended against the blows without any desire to kill or fight.

Yi Lian spoke to Elisa from afar, "At this rate, you're just delaying me having to kill him!" Elisa became tense, not knowing what to do or how to get Alex back.

Clark spoke up. "It seems I must intervene in the end." The Mimic Horse returned to its human form, trying to hide. Quickly, Clark used the "Black Flame" skill with a powerful strike that almost hit the Mimic Horse. Clark laughed, pointing his finger. "There is no escape!" He rushed forward swiftly, grabbed it by the neck, and slammed it against the rocks. Alex screamed, "Mother!" trying to help her and abandoning his fight with Elisa. Immediately, Elisa intensified her attacks, pressuring him.

Clark declared, "Now, do you know who I am? Release the Heavenly Demon Aura!" The Mimic replied, "You are the heir! The Venerable's heir! So you bear the title of Venerable One!" Clark retorted, "Of course. Do you know you have committed a great sin? You are now obstructing the path of the heir, meaning I have the right to kill you." Clark put his foot on the Mimic's face, stepping on it forcefully and grinding his sole into its features.

Alex screamed with power, his energy surging with anger. "How dare you do that?!" He charged fiercely, trying to strike Clark, but Yi Lian's sword was faster. It severed his head. Several beautiful sakura petals scattered. Clark was shocked by the coldness, sharpness, and calmness of her blade. Elisa screamed in horror, "How could you?!" and fainted.

Clark said, "A foolish girl who thinks she can save humans." Jin thought to himself, "Yes, in the end, we can't save anyone. The world is cruel, and we are cruel to ourselves. I won't overthink again; I will live as I want. And also, Clark, go ahead, and I'll be behind your back. I know I won't show you mercy. Suddenly, Clark sneezed powerfully. "Hahahaha! It seems someone is cursing me in their mind."

They moved, with Clark holding the Mimic by its neck, dragging it violently and mercilessly along the ground. The Mimic spoke, "Please, I'm truly sorry." "And what use is your apology? You wasted the Venerable One's time. I lost one of my men, and the girl Jin is carrying might turn on us because of you. Tell me, what will you compensate me with?" "I will tell you everything, just have mercy on me!"

Clark threw it against one of the trees, standing before it with overwhelming killing intent directed at it. "Speak. I'm listening to you. Don't you dare waste my time." "Alright, first: I am not the real Phase Three. The real invasion and attack will begin now! You will be attacked by 'The Undead' and an army of shadow mages and shadow beasts!" Yi Lian replied, "What?! Shadow beasts are classified as Category A!" Clark replied, "Yes, they are indeed very dangerous. They stalk and don't attack; they wait for the right opportunity." The Mimic added, "And last but not least: Category C demons!"

Suddenly, a message alert came to Clark from Agaris, Lord of Demons: "Boy, you are in imminent danger. Become my messenger now, and I will grant you my special grace, 'Oblivion'." "I will never become a slave! I will subdue the demons with these two hands! I don't need you."

Immediately, another alert came to Clark from the Constellation of the World: "Boy, you are in danger, but I will give you one ability for your coming battle. Use it wisely." Suddenly, a skill alert came to Clark: "Phantom World Manifestation". It is said its owner challenged the constellations and eastern gods because of his control over time, but due to system limitations, you can only use its emanation. "With Athena's blessing, who can stand against me? I am Clark the Venerable! Hahahaha! The World Constellation is my greatest ally."

Everyone looked at Clark in astonishment. He became calmer despite hearing all this. Could he really stop all of them? Suddenly, a huge number of enemies appeared. Everyone drew their weapons, looking around, surrounded on three sides.

Clark shouted, "Retreat to that cave! This place is absolutely unsuitable for fighting!!!" But then... Clark was stabbed!!!!

To be continued...