

## Another World 111

### Chapter 111 - War Slaves

With shining eyes Zhao said, "This is something we should test, right? Grandpa Green, shouldn't the undead be able to do what you just said too?"

Green's eyes also brightened as he nodded. "Master, we must immediately go to the Iron Mountain castle where there are some spirit beasts we left behind. Let's see if it's effective."

Zhao agreed, and with a thought, he, followed by Green and Meg, traveled to the teleport point in the castle square.

They didn't find Meirin in the living room, nor did they find Rockhead and Blockhead there. They must be busy. At the castle, there were a lot of things to do. In addition to planting alfalfa seeds on the mountain, they were also preparing to plant oil fruit seeds.

Alfalfa seeds had been planted on the mountain and would one day become fertilizer, turning the soil so that other species of plants could be planted. And what they decided to plant next was oil fruit seeds. These seeds had been modified by the space so that it didn't have its weakness of being susceptible to pests. Of course, they could have just gotten rid of any pests with pesticide, but they feared that this would just add poison to the crops.

As well as planting these seeds, the slaves were also doing other jobs like repairing the castle. It was easy to see that there were still many places that needed rehabilitation. It was a big job.

Fortunately, some of the undead were able to help. If a person couldn't lift something, then let the undead do it. To cope with this job, Zhao had deliberately left a hundred humanoid undead in the castle, while the remaining two hundred men were left defending the Stony Mountain estate.

So now, to help out the slaves and keep them safe, there were one hundred humanoid undead and four hundred undead spirit beasts wandering around the castle, guarding it in case someone tried to sneak in.

While Zhao was in the living room, he sent out a message to all of those undead to meet him outside the castle.

After this happened, Ann, who was working with the slaves to repair the castle, saw the undead mages nod to each other, and then they started walking out of the castle. As for the four hundred undead spirit beasts that were patrolling around the mountain, they all started converging together in one location.

All these undead soon went up to Zhao. Once all the undead had gathered, Zhao waved the ghost staff in his hand and said, "Phalanx."

Those undead immediately lined up in neat rows until they formed a square formation. Zhao couldn't help but nod his head before waving the staff again. "Move!"

The phalanx slowly began to move, but there was no mess within the formation. It stayed as neat and sharp as a knife. With Zhao's command, they all started moving faster and faster, but the formation remained in its box shape. No one moved too quick or too slow.

Green grew excited watching all of this. For their clan, this was a windfall. These undead could really march in a formation that didn't break into chaos, forming a cavalry. This was really important. With a cavalry, what would their battles be like? Thinking about it was exciting.

Zhao continued with changing the formation. Once he had an understanding of what this feature could do, he let the undead loose to go about their business, then he followed Green back into the living room.

After Zhao and Green sat down, Meg took the initiative to make them two cups of tea. Green was still excited as he said, "Master, this feature is really useful. As long as we have this, not only will the Buda clan have a cavalry, it will be the best cavalry in the world. This feature is able to maximize the abilities of what a cavalry is supposed to do."

Zhao nodded. Although he had never been in an army before, nor was he ever in a battlefield, he was a fan of things about the military. In his past life, he would frequently watch tv programs about warfare. In the era of cold weapons, before guns and cannons, a well trained cavalry represented absolute power.

If the Buda clan had such a powerful cavalry, then no one in this world would dare to move against them.

In this world, the strongest experts were those at the ninth level. They were so powerful that they could be compared to nuclear weapons back on Earth. However, ninth level experts weren't so easily sent off into a battlefield. They acted more like deterrents. If a clan wasn't suffering from a life or death situation, they would generally not send out their ninth level experts.

Most of the time, these experts would concentrate on closed door cultivation, trying to understand the laws of heaven. They hoped to make a breakthrough to the tenth level. Everyone believed that when you reached the tenth level, you would be among the realm of the gods and become a deity.

For this reason, almost all of the ninth level experts would focus their efforts on cultivation and ignore everything else. Gaining immortal life and becoming invincible was their goal.

So under normal circumstances, you wouldn't see any ninth level experts on the Continent. It was even rare to find eighth level experts sent out to battle. In other words, when it comes to the power of a clan, the most important thing was their soldiers.

In the Continent, the nobility were allowed to have private soldiers, especially in their fiefdoms. As long as you paid your taxes to the Empire and you didn't launch a rebellion, you could keep raising more private soldiers. The king would generally turn a blind eye to this because, after all, these great noble clans have existed for so long that even if the king wanted to control them, he would be powerless to do so.

Most importantly, some of these nobles had ninth level experts behind them. Even if their expert didn't do anything and just acted as deterrents, no one would dare underestimate them.

The Buda clan was banished because of this reason. Their power was too thin. Although they had two eighth level experts, Green and Meirin, that wasn't the same as having a ninth level expert that could protect them from being destroyed.

But if the Buda clan had the most powerful cavalry on the Continent, then no one would dare do what they like against them. Even the king of the Aksu Empire wouldn't easily be able to lay his hands on them.

Green still had a look of excitement even as he said, "But a lot of the undead aren't suitable for riding. See if Drunk and those black mages can catch any large, high level spirit beasts from the carrion swamp, then we would have a lot of beasts to ride and set up a cavalry with."

"Yes, but now we not only lack spirit beasts, but also trained soldiers," Zhao said.

Green's face sank. "Ah, yes, unfortunately we have no one with cavalry training. It seems like this plan must be put off for the long term."

"Never mind. We can just build up a cavalry slowly. There is time. As long as we do some business with Laura, with the support of more gold, we will eventually be able to set up a cavalry."

"It seems that's the only way." Green nodded. "Once we make more money, we can buy some more slaves, and maybe even some war slaves that we can set up a cavalry with."

War slaves were defeated soldiers who had been relegated into slavery. Such people had good fighting skills, there were even those who were warriors at the fifth level. However, their prices were very high. Common slaves could be bought for around ten gold coins, while war slaves had a minimum price of one thousand gold coins. There were even some that were so expensive they had a high price of ten thousand gold coins.

When it came to common slaves, slave owners would generally only feed them things like moldy rice, but that was not so for slaves with military skills. War slaves were generally treated very good, with some even having better living conditions than free commoners. This was the difference between common slaves and war slaves.

It could be said that now it would be impossible for the Buda clan to buy a war slave even if they spent all of their money. To form a cavalry with war slaves, they would need a lot more gold.

In the eyes of those wealthy nobles that had millions of gold coins, the Buda clan was almost like beggars.

## Chapter 112 - Too Optimistic

At noon, Rockhead and Blockhead, as well as Meirin, returned to the castle. The three of them heard from Ann that Zhao and Green had come back. They were surprised since they knew that Zhao was staying in the space.

Finding Zhao and Green in the living room, Meirin quickly went over and asked, "Master, Green, why are you back? Is there a problem?"

Green smiled. "Everything's good. We just came back to test something." He then explained to Meirin what they had been doing, and her eyes shined. Over the years, she and Green had been helping take care of the Buda clan, so she certainly understood what this could represent.

But Green then told her some of the problems they would run into, and like a pot of cold water, Meirin's enthusiasm cooled down, but she nodded. "Ah, yes, these are indeed big problems. However, I don't think we can solve it by buying war slaves. Those slaves are usually prisoners of war or criminals with some skills. They aren't good people. In the battlefield, they are likely not to contribute anything for us. Such people are useless. I think it's better to buy some common slaves and then train them with cavalry skills."

"You say it like it's easy," Green said, "Why can't we buy war slaves, but other large clans can?"

"You old man should not confuse us with other large clans, because they have enough strength to cope with war slaves. Don't we also need money to buy weapons for the slaves? And why can't we train some common slaves to ride a beast and make a cavalry out of that?"

"I guess your way is right. Plus the price to buy common slaves would be a lot cheaper." Then Green frowned and said, "But there is a problem. Those slaves generally don't practice martial arts. Their combat effectiveness would be limited compared to warriors."

Meirin smiled slightly. "I've already thought about that. The reason some people don't know any magic or martial arts is because they never get the chance to study it. Plus they generally wouldn't have anything that could help them with their cultivation. However, Master is able to grow magic vegetables in the space. After eating these magic vegetables, I have observed that the slaves that we had already bought have become more able-bodied. If we buy more slaves and raise them up with these conditions, I think that in a few years, they will become soldiers that could fight for us."

Green had no objections this time. Those magic vegetables produced by the space were indeed amazing when compared to ones grown on the Continent. For example, the magic radishes in the Continent could only be regarded as one of the most common magic vegetable because the magic contained within was too small. If a mage or warrior were to eat one of those magic radishes, they will not gain much benefits.

However, the magic radishes grown in the space was an exception. They contained powerful magic, about five times more than the ones grown on the Continent. At this point, they didn't know what other magic vegetables the space could produce, but the amount of magic they contained shouldn't be any lower than the magic radishes, and in fact, some of it might be higher. Green's strength was about to break through to the ninth level, and this was not unrelated to the magic vegetables.

With this thought, they couldn't help but turn to Zhao, who slightly chuckled. "This should be easy to handle. We just need to wait for the space to level up, then we will have enough magic vegetables for a lot of people to eat everyday. This is not something to worry about." Zhao then added, "And it's not just magic vegetables. It's also possible that the blue-eyed rabbit meat inside the space could also be useful. It would not be difficult to train up some slaves to become warriors."

Green and Meirin's eyes brightened from what Zhao said. With the power of the space, they would constantly be able to feed the slaves with food that contained magic, like vegetables and meat. If they were to use those, then the progress of training soldiers would be very alarming. If those big clans would try such a thing, it would be impossible because even they would be unable to afford to feed their common soldiers so much magic vegetables.

"It seems that the most important thing to do right now is to level up the space, then we will be able to get more land," Green said, "More land means more magic vegetables, and that will also help us gain more income for the Buda clan. But this will take time, so we can only develop slowly. We must not be impatient."

Meirin nodded. "Ah, yes, the foundation of the Buda clan is too thin. We are still too weak to expose our identity. Even now, we have a mysterious and powerful enemy fighting against us. In this case, we can't be too careful."

Zhao agreed. "Even if we have the ability to make a cavalry, we still have to take things step by step, otherwise we will be in danger."

"We can't do too much and must remain low key," Meirin said, "I think what we should focus on is just working with Laura and making some money, so we can buy rare plants that will help Master level up the space. Once the space reaches a high enough level, it will be able to lift the Water of Nothingness from Master's body, then you could learn magic and martial arts. I think that for now, having the lord of the Buda clan learning magic and martial arts is more important than building up a cavalry."

Everyone recognized that what Meirin said was right. If the space could level up a little faster, and lift the Water of Nothingness from Zhao's body a little earlier, then it will revive the Buda clan out of their hopeless situation.

Green nodded. "Ah, I didn't think that this old woman would have a greater understanding than me. Well, Master, we should go back to the Stony Mountain estate. Laura will return in two days, and we must complete our deal before we can talk about other businesses, like selling oil fruits, blue-eyed rabbits, and scaled wildebeests. Working with Laura, it's not impossible to make some money and develop the clan silently. We should silently accumulate money and power, waiting for the day when we can soar!"

"Yes, the most profitable business in the world is a monopoly business. If our unique magic vegetables could be sold at a good price, then we will have a monopoly on the market throughout the Continent. It will be easy to make more money. We don't need to rush," Zhao said.

Green nodded. "We should take our time to slowly develop the Buda clan. Ever since we defeated Garan, we have been a little too optimistic. We shouldn't forget that right now we have been banished to the Black Waste with no ability to resist."

Zhao gave a wry smile. They had used the space to beat Garan, and since then they had become too confident. It shouldn't be forgotten that the aristocracy weren't opponents that they could simply deal with. There were some noble clans that had ninth level experts. And for those that didn't, they would be willing to pay a certain price to ask for a ninth level expert's help.

Before, when those nobles were dealing with the Buda clan, they didn't even need to ask a ninth level expert to help them. It wasn't worth it for such a high price. They might as well just banish the Buda clan to the Black Waste and let them fend for themselves. However, if those nobles found out that the Buda clan had made a turnaround, and even had some great benefits that they would want, then maybe this time they would pay the price to send out a ninth level expert.

Zhao saw how strong Green and Meirin, who were eighth level experts, were. Then how strong was an expert at the ninth level? Zhao didn't dare imagine it.

He couldn't just stay in the space forever and never go out. Once he left, a ninth level expert could put him down in a second. In that case, they would be finished.

Thinking about this, Zhao let loose a breath. "Ah, yes, this time we have been too optimistic. It seems that staying low key is good. Grandma Meirin, at night you should rest in the space. Practicing there will be good for you. If the Buda clan had a ninth level expert, then no one would dare lay hands on us."

#### Chapter 113 - Laura Returns

For the next three days, Zhao had been staying in Stony Mountain. In that time, he had harvested his radishes eleven times, plus he gained another two magic peaches and two more batches of oil fruits. Now Zhao didn't have to worry about not having enough radishes. The space had given him ten times the amount that was needed for his transaction with Laura.

In addition, he now had three hundred mature rabbits, with one thousand rabbit cubs, as well as ten adult scaled wildebeests and six hundred of their foal.

Most importantly, Zhao was also able to raise thirty thousand fire fish.

In the entire Ark Continent, thirty thousand fire fish was undoubtedly, not a drop in the bucket. If he really did sell thirty thousand fire fish at one moment, this would cause a huge sensation, because it would take a year to yield thirty thousand fire fishes.

Zhao could imagine what would happen if thirty thousand fire fishes flooded the market. It would compel all the great nobles to try to find out where they came from. If that were to happen, then the Buda clan wouldn't even know how they died.

As for the blue-eyed rabbits, Zhao didn't intend to sell them. He wanted to keep them for their meat so they would provide a good meal for the slaves.



Ah, meat. For the slaves, it was a rare thing. It could be said that their fathers, and even their grandfathers, have never eaten meat before. Of course, this only had to do with those who were born as a slave, because that would usually mean that their family had been slaves for generations. That wasn't the same as Daisy or Ann, who were once free commoners, but then were forced to become slaves. They had eaten meat before, like from blue-eyed rabbits or long-haired pigs.

Within these three days, Zhao used a lot of feed, but for him, that was nothing. He was able to cope with that huge amount with his radish leaves.

This was worth it because not only did the blue-eyed rabbit taste good, the space had also made them useful for those who practiced magic or martial arts. Although the meat didn't have the same effect of magic as his vegetables, they were quite adequate. Especially the fire fish. They tasted great and provided many benefits as well, with effects even more amazing than the meat from the blue-eyed rabbit. Eating the flesh of a fire fish was like drinking a magic potion.

The scaled wildebeests had also been changed. Now they had amazing endurance and their running speed was faster. Previously, they were like pack mules, but now they were almost like horses.

All of these changes was related to the space. It had modified the animals to compensate for their shortcomings. This was definitely good news for Zhao, because this would help him establish a strong army.

In this three day period, Zhao had been keeping tabs on the situation of Casa city. The city had been suffering because now they didn't have an intelligence network, leaving them deaf and blind. That was because they didn't have the manpower since their assassins had become undead and no longer working for them.

At this time, Green had arranged for some assassins to hide outside of Casa city. They were there to prevent anyone from coming to attack Stony Mountain, and they were waiting for Laura.

Right now the most important thing to Zhao was the deal with Laura, so he wanted to know the moment she came back.

Of course, this was also a test for Laura. If she comes back, and then takes the initiative to go see them, this would show her gratitude and will convince Zhao to form a deeper cooperation with her. However, if she doesn't come to see them when she returns, Zhao would still cooperate with Laura, but it would just be casual.

Since they will be working together, Zhao had to come up with a way to explain how he was able to raise so much fire fish so Laura wouldn't suspect anything. In the estate, there were already hot springs with some small fire fish, but now he was planning to put some of the red plants into the ditch in the manor's yard. As for where these red plants came from, Zhao wasn't going to tell Laura, and he believed that she wouldn't ask. After all, everyone has their own secrets.

Three days quickly passed, and they had been busy. Everyday, he had been improving the land in the canyon on Iron Mountain. Also, he arranged for Meirin to help him with a test. If nothing was growing in the Black Waste because of the toxins from the carrion swamp spirit beasts, then would the water from the moat help the corn seeds germinate and grow? The space had improved the water around the castle, giving it a detoxification effect. However, this water was more diluted than the spatial water, so the effect might not be as good, but Zhao wanted to try and see if it could solve the problem of fixing the black soil.

Since this was outside the space, he would have to wait a few days to see the results of whether or not the corn would grow.

Also during this three day period, Zhao would often get in contact with Drunk and the other black mages to check on their progress in the carrion swamp. They had managed to go in fifty yards, and they also encountered a number of undead spirit beasts. Unfortunately, the levels of these undead spirit beasts were too low. There was no use for them, so they didn't catch them.

There were also some plants in the swamp, but they were nothing special, so they weren't collected. Anyway, Zhao didn't hurry them. No one knew anything about the carrion swamp, so Drunk's job was just to explore and understand it.

As for Green, over these three days, he had been searching for plants in the forests. Unfortunately, the plants that he found were mostly the same as the ones he previously discovered. None of them allowed the space to level up.

The forests around Casa city had been trampled over, so there simply wasn't a lot of spirit beasts. There were only a few low level spirit beasts, and they weren't of much use for the space. When Green

brought any of these spirit beasts back, hoping that they would level up the spatial ranch, the space would say that they had no merit, and would obliterate them.

Zhao knew that leveling up the spatial ranch would be difficult, but he didn't worry. Right now he could already keep one thousand animals in the ranch. This number was certainly not low. Even if the ranch doesn't level up, it was enough for him to use.

He wanted to focus on raising blue-eyed rabbits rather than scaled wildebeests. In addition to their meat, he could also use the rabbit's fur to make winter clothes. If he could go into business with Laura with these blue-eyed rabbits, then he was ready to breed them in large quantities.

As for raising these rabbits in the mines of Iron Mountain, he wasn't in a hurry to do so. He was prepared to wait until he could buy some tools, like a bellows or an oil press machine. It wasn't just radish leaves, he could also feed the blue-eyed rabbits with any number of things, like the excess parts of oil fruits after he used the machine to press out the oil. But since he couldn't do that now, he was prepared to wait.

Three days later, at night, outside of Casa city, the waiting assassins had just sent news to Zhao that Laura had returned!

## Chapter 114 - Grandpa Kun

Laura was calmly sitting in the carriage, while Nier was sitting beside her. This carriage wasn't like the ordinary one they had used to get to Montenegro Fortress, where they had to remain low key. This carriage was an ornate one pulled by four snow stallions.

Snow stallions were fourth level water spirit beasts. They looked like ordinary horses, but they had a white body with some water magic elements. These horses were docile, so they were easy to tame. The only problem was that they were very expensive. There were even some nobles in the Continent that couldn't afford them. Snow stallions were like status symbols.

As for the carriage that Laura was sitting in, it was an ornate one built with two layers. The outer layer was made of iron driftwood. Not only was it as hard as steel, but it could also block most magic attacks. The inner layer was made of bread cotton. This material came from a very particular plant, soft as cotton

but also highly elastic. It was excellent for making a variety of furniture. Unfortunately, bread cotton had a very low yield. In the Continent, an average person wouldn't be able to afford it.

In other words, you would need thousands of gold coins to buy this carriage. And the total value of the four snow stallions were worth fifty thousand gold coins.

While riding in this expensive carriage, Laura had a calm face. Her transaction had been completed. However, her losses were not small. She had lost a total of three hundred guards, and if it weren't for Zhao, she might not even be alive herself.

And Laura noticed another thing. Someone from her clan must have found out about her trip to Montenegro Fortress and arranged for people to mess with her business. This wasn't a surprise since she knew that the road wouldn't be peaceful. However, Laura didn't want to retaliate yet. She didn't know if the ones who were against her was from the upper echelons of her clan or just one of the other heirs.

If it was the upper members of the clan, then that would be troublesome. Those people represented the entire clan, so no one would help her if she decided to fight back. But if it was one of the heirs, then that wasn't a big deal. She was ready to fight them to see who was more powerful.

With this thought, Laura couldn't help but frown. She wasn't afraid if it was a battle of wits, but she also knew that she was missing something: a master.

Her father, Kevin, wasn't a good choice because although he was a seventh level mage and could be considered an expert, he had very little actual combat experience. Even though his level of magic was high, he wouldn't know what to do in a battle. It was like her father had chosen the wrong career. Instead of a mage, he should have just been a alchemist.

Thinking of choosing a master, Laura couldn't help but think of Zhao. He was a mysterious black mage that was really amazing. Not only did he save her life, he was also able to defeat all obstacles and settle down next to Casa city.

Laura had done a background check on Zhao, but she came up with nothing. It was as if he came out of nowhere. Still, she was able to find out what happened to Zhao around Casa city. It was precisely

because of this that she had kept up with recent events. Now she knew of two fights that he had been in, but to be honest, she didn't expect such an outcome on the last battle.

She had seen Zhao's strength so she knew he was very strong, but she still didn't expect that he would be able to deal with someone like Garan. Everyone knew that light mages had an advantage over black mages, but in this case, the light mage was defeated and had vanished without a trace, leaving many people scared.

To tell the truth, Laura didn't feel entirely at ease with Zhao. His timing was too coincidental, and he seemed to be living outside Casa city as if he was waiting for her. This made her skeptical of what his motives were.

Although Zhao did rescue her, do not forget that it was the undead black mages of the Immortal Mercenary Group that attacked her, and Zhao himself was a black mage. Who knew if there was someone kind of collusion between them.

As Nier sat beside Laura, she saw her frown, so she couldn't help but ask, "Miss, what unhappy thing are you thinking of?"

Laura turned around, saw the look on Nier's face and gave a slight chuckle. "Nothing, Nier. After we get home, get some rest. Tomorrow we'll be going to visit Mister Zhao."

"Miss, aren't you worried of what he might do to you? Why do you have to go see him?" Nier felt surprised.

Laura smiled slightly. "First, we have to thank him for saving us, and second, to deepen our connection with him."

Nier nodded. She didn't know many things, and left these sort of machinations up to Laura. She was as simple as a piece of paper. This was what made Laura feel a desire to protect her.

Just then, the carriage stopped. Searle, the driver, said, "Miss, we're home."

Nier immediately opened the carriage door while Sergio put down the foot board, allowing Laura to walk off the carriage.

Laura's home was in the Xicheng District of Casa city, a wealthy aristocratic neighborhood where rich people lived. Although Laura was only part of a branch family of the Markey clan, in the Continent, no one would dare underestimate anyone in that clan, especially in such a small territory like the Purcell Duchy. After all, Laura's father, Kevin Markey, was the second heir to the clan, which was an even higher position than the Grand Duke of the Purcell Duchy.

The power of the Markey Company spans across half the Continent, making it a lot more prestigious than a mere duke from the Aksu Empire. Because of that, Laura's home was placed in the best position in the Xicheng District, a gorgeous area that covered acres.

Just as Laura got out of the carriage, an old man went up to meet her. This old man was the housekeeper of their home, but to Laura, she respected him like he was her grandfather. Laura's mother died when she was small, and this old man had raised her as if she was his own grandchild. He taught her a lot of things, and if it weren't for him, she wouldn't have accomplished any of today's achievements.

When Laura saw the old man, she immediately greeted him. "Grandpa Kun, you didn't need to personally come to the door. You could have just let others to do it."

Kun gave a chuckle. "It's okay. I heard that someone tried to deal with you. Of course I wanted to take a look to see if my little Laura was hurt. Well, the Immortal Mercenary Group? Those bastards, just thinking of them makes me mad. Sooner or later, I'm going to go destroy them. Since they dared to fight against you, I think that they don't want to live."

Kun's words weren't light. He was strong with the strength of an eighth level warrior. In fact, Laura's martial arts skills were learned from him.

Laura smiled. "Grandpa Kun, you don't need to worry about the Immortal Mercenary Group. Anyway, where's my father?"

From the mention of Kevin, Kun couldn't help but give a wry smile. "He's in his laboratory. He wanted to pick you up, but you know how it is. Once he starts with his experiments, he will forget the time."

"Never mind." Laura knew what kind of person her father was, so she didn't care. "Grandpa Kun, did you prepare something delicious for me?"

Kun laughed. "I know what you want when you come back. Rest assured, I have prepared something delicious. I deliberately sent someone to purchase two small fire fish. Do you think those are good enough for a meal?"

Having heard of her favorite thing to eat, Laura couldn't help but cheer loudly. "Great! There's fire fish!" She pulled Nier with her as they ran inside. At this moment, she displayed herself as a true teenage girl, nothing like the high and decisive front she showed to outsiders.

Looking at Laura, Kun couldn't help but smile as he followed her into the house.

## Chapter 115 - Businessman

After dinner, Laura went to her living room. This wasn't the large living room used to entertain people. This was more like an inner chamber that only Laura's most trusted men could come into. Now there were only three people here: Laura, Nier, and Grandpa Kun.

Laura and Kun were sitting on the sofa, holding a cup of tea in their hands, while Nier was standing beside Laura.

Laura drank her tea, then she turned to Kun. "Grandpa Kun, tomorrow I will be making a trip to Stony Mountain to visit Zhao. Do you think this is a right decision?"

Kun also drank his tea, and nodded his head. "It's okay. After all, he did save your life. Recently, Zhao's name can always be heard in Casa city. You should know that just a few days ago, he had asked us for help with a shipment of blue-eyed rabbits, although I don't know what he would want them for. Right now Stony Mountain has become restricted, and most people will not even get too close, but tomorrow I will go with you."

No matter what, Laura will always ask Grandpa Kun for his opinion. This just shows how much she respects him.

Because of what he said, Laura felt relieved. Kun looked at her and smiled. "Do you have doubts about Zhao?"

Laura nodded. "Ah, yes, I started to have a little bit of doubt about him. It's just that his emergence was just too coincidental. Plus, he is a black mage, so I'm afraid that he might have ties to the Immortal Mercenary Group."

Kun was still smiling. "That is unlikely. I did a deep background check on the Immortal Mercenary Group and it seems like they belong to a secret organization. When Zhao was attacked, it was probably related to that organization, which included Garan and the three advanced level warriors. Although I can't find out more than that because this organization is very large and mysterious, I am certain that Zhao has absolutely nothing to do with them."

Laura's face changed. "There is such an organization? And the black mages of the Immortal Mercenary Group is part of them? But since Garan is a light mage, it is unlikely that he is in league with this organization."

Kun gave a slight chuckle as he looked at Laura. "Silly girl, nothing is impossible. This world is not as simple as you think. Do you think that all light mages are enemies against black mages? In fact, in this world, black mages aren't necessarily evil, and light mages aren't always clean. It's only because black magic doesn't have a good reputation that many people misunderstand it."

Laura nodded, understanding his words. "Then if this mysterious organization has control of such strong forces, then why don't they lord it over us? Why has no one on the Continent heard of them before?"

"Those with real strength doesn't need to lord it over this world's people. Any dynasty will face destruction eventually, but a force that hides underground will be difficult to destroy. The presence of these large forces have been there since ancient times, penetrating into every aspect of this Continent. They are definitely a force that you can't make light of."

This was the first time Laura has heard of such a thing, so she couldn't help but feel surprised. "Who can control such a force?"



Kun smiled. "No one knows."

"Well then, we just have to deal with them with our own hands," Laura said.

Kun shook his head. "That is impossible. If those big forces wanted to deal with us, we wouldn't be sitting here now. Do not underestimate their power. If they really wanted to destroy us, then we would be unable to resist even if the entire Markey clan came together."

Laura was surprised. "They have that much power?"

"Yes, they are that powerful. The Markey clan could be considered a strong clan on the Continent, but compared to those big forces out there, if they wanted to deal with us, we would most likely be dead."

"They sound very dangerous." Laura frowned. "Now that Zhao has defeated the Immortal Mercenary Group, wouldn't that usher in revenge against him?"

Kun gave a slight chuckle. "This Zhao is not so simple. I doubt that he doesn't also have a large force supporting him, otherwise as a black mage, how would he be able to summon so much high level undead. Do you think that a mage without any background would be able to do such a thing?"

Laura froze for a moment. "Grandpa Kun, are you saying that Zhao is also that powerful?"

Kun nodded. "It is possible. From the way he's doing things, it's likely that he is part of some other large underground force. If we could get in contact with them, maybe we could gain some benefits."

"But would those benefits be worth it?" Laura asked. "If Zhao represented a vast underground force, and they do battle against the forces of that mysterious organization, wouldn't we just be in danger if we get caught between them?"

"Little Laura," Kun smiled, "After so many years in business, if you haven't yet understood that sometimes you'll have to make risky investments, then you're not qualified as a businessman."

Tomorrow, we will go see Zhao, and that is tantamount to making an investment. I believe that he is suitable to invest in."

Kun calmly explained. "You have to remember, as a businessman, life has two kinds of people. Those that are worthy enough to invest in and those that are not worthy enough to invest in. This includes your friends and relatives. If your friend deserves an investment, then you can invest in him and help him, and one day you will gain some benefits. But there are people that are not worthy of your investment, and these people could even be your relatives. You can help them, but your help must have a limit, because these people will not give you anything in return."

Laura looked at Kun in a sly way. "Grandpa Kun, what kind of person am I?"

Kun coughed twice, then stared at Laura. "You are a special circumstance, not one of those two kinds of people."

Laura laughed.

Kun was looking at Laura, but he had a wry smile on his face. He knew that Laura was smart and very decisive in her work, but she was also too soft-hearted. Sometimes you have to be heavy-handed in business. But Kun understood the reason for this. After all, Laura was only eighteen years old, and was just blooming as a girl. It was impossible to expect more out of a young girl.

Kun sighed. "Whether or not Zhao is part of some large underground force, his strength is still certain. If we befriend him, it can only be good for us."

Laura nodded, then she frowned. "Anyway, Grandpa Kun, Zhao did save my life. Tomorrow, we should have some gifts ready to give him. What kind of gift do you think we should bring?"

Kun also frowned. "I don't know. What if we sent a bad gift that Zhao wouldn't like. This is really not easy to handle."

"Ah, but when I first talked to Zhao, he seems like a man that you could get along well with. And he is a mage, so I think that we should choose a robe and magic staff as gifts. The last time I met him, his robe

and staff were ordinary ones, so I think that something with the wind element or moonlight will be good."

Kun nodded. "That's a good idea. We could give him a moonlight robe, since it's a dark robe perfect for black mages. And a wind element magic staff could increase the strength of black magic. The total value of these two gifts will be more than fifty thousand gold coins. I think Zhao should be satisfied."

## Chapter 116 - Formidable

Moonlight robes were a type of dark robe. This dark robe was woven from the hair of a dark eagle, which was a seventh level spirit beast. Not only did it fly fast, what was most notable about it was its strong defense. Generally, magic and martial art attacks would have no effect on it. Dark eagles were known as the black kings of the sky. They were elegant and a little rebellious.

This robe could defend against fifth level magical attacks, as well as fourth level or less martial art attacks. It was a high level magic item with a market price of twenty five thousand to thirty thousand gold coins.

As for the wind magic staff, it was made from a century old willow tree that had been soaked in the blood of a wind spirit beast. Not only did it increase the strength of wind spells, it also made black magic spells stronger. The entire staff was blue with a crystal set at the head. The market price for this magic item could be about twenty thousand to twenty five thousand gold coins.

Laura was going to give these as a gift, but the price wasn't low, and reached fifty thousand gold coins. This was equivalent to half the tax of a small territory.

The next morning, Laura, Nier, and Kun were riding in a carriage on their way to Stony Mountain. This time they were followed by twenty guards with Sergio as the leader.

Laura was quite confident that no one in Casa city, including the Purcell clan, would dare to attack them. Because of their identity, if someone dared to attack them, that was tantamount to angering the entire Markey clan.

Right now they were sitting in a carriage that was pulled by snow stallions, while Sergio was riding a third level horse spirit beast. They were moving fast. Normally it would take two days to go from Casa city to Stony Mountain, but for them half a day would be enough.

The moment Laura left Casa city, this news was directed towards Zhao.

This result was what Zhao wanted to see. In the living room of his manor, Zhao smiled as he sat next to Green. "It seems that Laura is worth cooperating with. Just after she got back from Montenegro Fortress, she is coming to visit us."

Green smiled slightly. "Yes, they seem to actually have quite a bit of conscience. But if we want to further cooperate with them, we still have to test them to see if we could work together."

"I was thinking the same thing. After all, we have too many things that other people would be jealous of. Even if Laura is credible, there is no guarantee that the people around her won't be greedy. We still have to be careful," Zhao said.

Green nodded. "Then shouldn't we go prepare to greet them?"

"Ah, yes, you should get ready."

Shortly before noon, Laura asked, "Sergio, how much time before we get to Stony Mountain?"

While riding his horse next to the carriage, Sergio at once said, "Miss, you can already see the mountain rocks by now. But the mountain has gone through a big change."

"Oh? Really?" Laura opened the front of the carriage to take a look.

The carriage had two doors, one in the front and one in the back. There were two rows of benches on the left and right side of the carriage, with a small box in the middle, containing things to eat. The box was designed with ice magic, keeping the stuff inside at a lower temperature. There was also a magic lamp in the carriage that was used to heat things. It could be said that this carriage was like a room that

was a full six square meters, three meters long and two meters wide. It was big enough that you could sleep comfortably in.

Because of this design, the cost of this carriage was very high. Only those with identity and status would be able to afford it.

Laura looked out of the carriage and saw Stony Mountain. However, it didn't have its original look because the whole mountain was surrounded by a cloud of black fog. She then understood why Sergio said that Stony Mountain looked different.

The reason why Laura knew what Stony Mountain originally looked like was because it had a hot spring. When the merchant that owned Stony Mountain wanted to sell it, he mentioned that it had a hot spring that could be used to raise fire fish. Of course, Laura as a businessman wouldn't let such an opportunity pass by, so she came to Stony Mountain to examine it. But in the end, although there were a few small fire fish, the hot spring simply didn't have the ability to raise them at a large scale, so Laura gave up on it.

However, she still remembered what Stony Mountain was supposed to look like, but now it was covered in black fog.

Kun couldn't help but chuckle as he looked at Stony Mountain. "To cover up a whole mountain with a blanket of darkness would require a black mage to at least be at the sixth level. It seems like Zhao really is very powerful."

On the Continent, it was recognized that a black mage that had managed to reach the fifth level was very powerful. That was because black magic was very weird, so almost no one was willing to challenge a fifth or higher level black mage.

Laura smiled slightly. "Of course, Zhao's strength is stronger than a sixth level. He was able to deal with the Immortal Mercenary Group. Plus he could summon more than a thousand undead, and each of those undead were very powerful. A sixth level mage couldn't do that, right?"

Kun nodded. "Ah, it seems like his rank should be at the eighth level, otherwise it would be impossible for him to defeat Garan. But then again, what happened to the one hundred assassins of the Purcell Duchy that were with him? It's not very likely that they were all killed. Some of them must have fled.

Yet, none of them have come back. If they're not alive, then they would be dead, but no one has found their bodies."

"Those assassins might not be easy to kill, but don't forget that Zhao could summon more than a thousand undead, so wouldn't those undead thirst for flesh? Or maybe Zhao used his abilities as a black mage to turn them into undead? It's not impossible for Zhao to kill Garan's army and bring them back as undead."

Kun's face changed, then he nodded his head. "That is most likely what happened. It seems that Zhao is more ruthless than I thought. I am now even more curious about him."

The carriage stopped at the bottom of Stony Mountain. Just then the black fog became more volatile, and then it split apart, revealing a road that went up the mountain. In the middle of the road was a man that had a helmet covering his face. Laura recognized him. He was one of Zhao's followers.

The man standing in the middle of the road was of course Green. Zhao had sent his assassins to track Laura's every move ever since she left Casa city. When she arrived at the mountain, he ordered for the black fog to separate.

Green bowed to Laura, and said, "Welcome, Miss Laura. My master knew that you were coming here today, so he specially ordered me to come greet you. Please follow me." Having said that, the black fog split again and out came Alien. Green jumped on its head, then it turned its huge body and walked straight up the mountain.

Laura didn't know what to do for a moment, but as she saw Green walking away, all she could do was tell the carriage driver to follow him.

Kun's face didn't look so good as he watched Green. "Laura, this Zhao isn't so simple. It's likely that he really destroyed Garan. He was actually aware of our whereabouts, so he would have known in advance if Garan had tried to set up an ambush."

Laura nodded. "I didn't think that Zhao would be so powerful. Oh, but the more powerful he is, the better. We need a formidable ally."

Kun was sullen as he muttered. "Allies that are too formidable might not necessarily be a good thing."

Chapter 117 - Surprised

Pamela (US)

Dylan (Australia)

Jaimie (UK)

Cody (US)

Robert (US)

Thank you everybody!!!

The guards surrounded Laura's carriage as they walked up the road. The black fog enveloped them from behind, like a monster that had swallowed them, making everyone unconsciously speed up.

Soon they saw the manor at the top of the mountain. The last time Laura was here, she saw how shabby the manor was because no one had taken care of it for a long time. But since Zhao lived here now, she thought that it would have been renovated, but there seemed to have been no renovations or maintenance. From the outside, everything still looked shabby.

The doors of the manor were opened. Inside were two rows of humanoid undead standing in line. The bodies of these humanoid undead were dark green, like they had been carved from jade. They were scary looking, but far from the point of terror. On the contrary, these undead almost looked like a work of art.

These two rows added up to nearly one hundred undead, each of them wearing armor that was usually worn by mercenaries, and they were carrying weapons.

When Laura and Kun saw how they were dressed, they couldn't help but look at each other's eyes as they understood. They knew that sometime ago, Garan had brought a lot of mercenaries to deal with Zhao. And Laura remembered that the first time she met Zhao, he had summoned a lot of undead, but very few of them were humanoid ones. Yet suddenly there were so many humanoid undead. If you add in their outfits, it was natural to figure out where they came from.

Green was sitting on Alien at the back of the yard. When Laura's carriage stopped in front of him, he jumped down and stood next to the carriage, then he bowed. "Please, Miss Laura, my master is waiting for you in the living room."

Laura nodded, then she, Nier, and Kun got down from the carriage. Green then turned to her and said, "Miss Laura, please tell your men to follow the undead. They will take them somewhere to rest." He pointed his finger at the undead, and they all immediately bowed to Laura.

Laura and Kun were surprised for a moment. They were very well-informed, but they had never seen a smart undead before. Although they were surprised, Laura turned to the leader of the guards and said, "Sergio, follow them and go rest."

Sergio nodded as he and his men followed the undead.

Green led Laura, Nier, and Kun around the yard. Along the way, Laura stole some glances to look at everything. Although it wasn't much, the yard did go through some renovations, making it cleaner. As the four continued on, Laura's and Kun's eyes found the ditch where the hot springs flowed through.

The last time she was here, the hot springs weren't anything to take note of, but this time, it was all she could see. That was because of the fire fish.

Dense. They couldn't count the number of fire fish that were packed inside the ditch. Seeing this scene stunned both Laura and Kun. They were very clear about the situation of Stony Mountain. These hot springs were unsuitable to raise so many fire fish, but not only were they alive and well, they were even bigger than the average-sized small fire fish. How was this possible?



Green couldn't help but smile as he watched the two stop and stare. Of course, he had deliberately led them here. After seeing the fire fish, it would ease their talks of cooperation. Green then turned to the three and said, "Miss Laura, my master is waiting for you inside."

Laura snapped back to reality, but then she pointed at the fire fish and stammered, "This, this, how did you do this?"

Green smiled slightly. "This is our home. Please come inside." Then he led them into the reception room of one of the buildings.

Laura could see that Green didn't want to say, so she didn't ask anymore questions. She just exchanged a surprised look with Kun as they followed behind Green into the reception room.

Zhao and Meg were standing in the reception room, waiting for Laura and her group. When he saw Laura enter, Zhao said, "Welcome, Miss Laura. I didn't think that when you just got back yesterday, you will be able to see me today. I am really honored."

Laura bowed to Zhao. "Mister Zhao, compared to your life-saving kindness, this is nothing. I feel happy that I haven't disturbed you with my abrupt visit today."

Zhao gave a slight chuckle. "Miss Laura is too polite. Please come in."

They all went into the living room, where they sat on two sides so they could face each other. Meg brought a pot of tea and gave each person a cup. Laura didn't pay attention to the tea, but instead noted the Iron Book that Meg was carrying.

Laura and Kun were well-informed people, so naturally they would recognize the Iron Book, but they didn't think that a servant of Zhao would actually be holding it.

Zhao noted where the two's eyes were looking, but he didn't say anything about it. "This is a small place, and we don't really have anything to entertain you with. Please, won't you two try our tea?"

The two recovered and politely took a sip from their cups. Zhao looked at Kun and asked, "Miss Laura, who is this?"

"Sorry, how rude of me," Laura said. "This is my housekeeper, but I respect him like an elder. He is my Grandpa Kun."

Kun stood up, and then he bowed to Zhao. "I would like to thank Mister Zhao for rescuing Miss Laura. She is like family to me."

Zhao waved it off. "It's not worth mentioning. Sit down, Mister Kun."

Kun sat back down, while Laura looked at Zhao and asked, "I have a question, but I don't know if it is improper for me to speak."

"What do you want to ask me, Miss Laura?"

Laura looked at Meg. "Mister Zhao, your maid is holding the Iron Book. But where did it come from?"

Zhao gave a slight chuckle. "Oh, I just took it from someone who wanted to come here and make trouble. It's not something I can do anything with, so I just rewarded my maid with it."

Laura and Kun carefully glanced at Meg. Those two could be considered experts, so they were able to detect a strong wave of magic fluctuating off of her. It seems that she wasn't anything less than a fifth level mage.

The two couldn't help but feel surprised. Ever since they came to Stony Mountain, they were overcome by too many surprises. Whether it was a whole mountain covered by black magic, the courteous undead that could understand people, the large number of fire fish, or a maid that was also a fifth level mage, all of these things surprised them.

Laura and Kun could see the glimmer in each other's eyes. Kun paused for a moment to take a deep breath, then he turned to Zhao and asked, "Mister Zhao, what happened to the man who attacked you?"

Zhao smiled. "Haven't you seen that he has become my servant?"

Although they were kind of expecting it, to hear Zhao tell them, they still felt very surprised. "Mister Zhao, are you saying that you made a light mage your servant?" Kun was well-informed, so naturally he knew that it was difficult for a light mage to be turned into an undead. There was a high probability of failure, but even if they succeeded, it would only become the lowest level undead. Did Garan, an eighth level light mage, really become an undead? If Garan didn't become an undead, then how did Zhao get his hands on the Iron Book?

In the Continent, Garan was a famous light mage. It wasn't just because he was at the eighth level, he was also best known as someone who was specialized in fighting black mages. As long as Garan finds a black mage, he would challenge him. Those black mages would only have a little chance of surviving once Garan sets his sights on them. Because of this, Garan gained a nickname: Black Mage Killer.

Garan had been able to win so many battles that many black mages feared him. Apart from being an eighth level light mage, he also had the Iron Book, which could seal a lot of light spells. A lot of black mages had died because of the Iron Book.

Zhao smiled at Kun, then he turned to Green. "Go call Gamma."

Green saluted, then he turned and walked out. Laura and Kun gave Zhao a puzzled look, but Zhao just smiled and didn't say anything as he took a sip of tea. Soon footsteps were heard, and Green came back in with an undead behind him.

When Kun and Laura saw that undead, they were stunned!

## Chapter 118 - Special Dishes

This was the first time Laura and Kun saw such a strange undead.

It was a humanoid undead that had a white, almost transparent, skeleton. It wore a gorgeous white robe and it was holding a white magic staff. It didn't take much to figure out that these were a light mage's equipment.

A white skeleton was not worthy of attention. However, the bones of this skeleton wasn't simply white, but a crystal clear color that sometimes shined with a holy light. This skeleton was indeed worthy of attention.

An undead that gave off a holy feeling? Were the gods living in hell?

Laura and Kun were stunned by the skeleton that was standing behind Green. They really didn't know what to say to describe this undead. Its skeleton was really too strange.

Zhao looked at the two's expressions, then he looked at Nier who was standing beside Laura. She was a petite maid with very little presence, just like how Zhao was. The look on her face wasn't the same as Laura's or Kun's. They had a look of shock, but Nier's expression was more of curiosity. Yes, it was curiosity, not surprise.

Zhao couldn't help but think that Nier was interesting. Her eyes were pure, clearly reflecting the thoughts inside her head, like a pure crystal. This was the first girl Zhao had ever seen that had pure eyes. Don't forget that Meg would sometimes have a sly look in her eyes. But Nier's eyes were pure, like she could heal your soul.

Eventually, Zhao recovered, and then he smiled at the white skeleton. "Gamma, say hello to Miss Laura and Mister Kun."

Like in a traditional aristocratic ceremony, Gamma extended his greetings to them like a gentleman. He was so graceful about it that for a moment, Laura and Kun forgot that he was an undead, and they greeted him back. Afterwards, they both felt a little embarrassed about it.

Curious, Laura asked, "Mister Zhao, you mean to say that this undead was Garan?"

"He's no longer Garan. In the future, the world will only know him as Gamma," Zhao said. "Okay Gamma, you can leave now."

Gamma bowed to them, then turned and walked away.

Laura stared at Gamma's departing back, then she faced Zhao. "Mister Zhao, what level of undead is Gamma?"

Zhao thought about it. "I think he's at the seventh level, but I'm not quite sure."

Laura and Kun saw a glimmer of shock in each other's eyes. They were very clear on the fact that a black mage turning a dead man into a high level undead was very difficult.

"Mister Zhao, does Gamma still have his memories from when he was alive?" Kun quickly asked.

Zhao shook his head. "This is not so. At the beginning, he just became an ordinary undead, but then I used an arcane magic that allowed him to remember how to cast light spells. Although this made it so that he's no longer low level, it still didn't help him recover any other memories."

Laura and Kun didn't really understand, how could an undead be able to use light spells? They really wanted to know what secret law that Zhao had discovered.

It was very clear that a lot of black mages had been searching for ways to turn their low level undeads into high level ones, but after so many years of research, they had made little progress. If those black mages were to know that Zhao had a way to do this, they would all go crazy.

The two looked at Zhao, not understanding why he was telling them this momentous thing. But then they saw how Green and Meg were watching them with a determined look, and although Zhao's face was covered by the veil of his black hat, they could feel that he was watching them as well.

Suddenly, Kun was able to figure it out, and he quickly said, "Please rest assured, Mister Zhao. No word of what we see or hear will leak from us. I guarantee this on the honor of the Markey clan." Laura quickly nodded, agreeing with what Kun had said.

Zhao smiled. "The two of you don't really need to make such an oath. To tell you the truth, although I can increase the level of an undead, it only works under precise conditions. It is simply impossible for others to learn how to do it."

Kun and Laura certainly didn't believe him, but they both nodded. After that, Laura waved at Nier and directed her to walk out of the room, then Laura turned to Zhao. "Today, we have bothered you, Mister Zhao, because I wanted to thank you for saving my life. So we prepared two small gifts. I hope that you will accept them."

Soon, Nier ran back in while holding two long boxes. One of them had a dark robe, which Laura took out. "Mister Zhao, this is a moonlight robe, which is a fairly decent equipment for a black mage." Having said that, she presented it to Zhao.

Zhao stood up, looked over the robe, and then he nodded. "Then I'll be polite, Miss Laura." He took the moonlight robe and gave it to Green to hold.

When Laura saw Zhao take the dark robe, she couldn't help but feel relieved. She then grabbed the other long box and gently opened it, revealing a magic staff. "Mister Zhao, this is a wind element magic staff, but because it has been soaked in the blood of a wind spirit beast, it can also strengthen black magic as well. I hope that you will accept this as well."

Zhao laughed. "Miss Laura sure is determined. To be honest, this staff is of no use to me, but my maid just so happens to be a wind mage. I have been searching for an appropriate magic staff for her, so Miss Laura's help has just come at the right time." He picked up the magic staff and gave it to Meg.

Laura didn't think that Zhao would give this staff straight to Meg, but she didn't say anything about it. After all, technically Zhao still accepted the magic staff.

Meg had a happy face as she held onto the wind magic staff. "Thank you, Master," she said to Zhao.

Zhao nodded, then he turned to Laura. "Since Miss Laura gave us these two gifts, of course I can also not be stingy. We should head into the dining room for lunch. Please follow me, Miss Laura, Mister Kun, and young lady." Having said that, he led the way.

Laura and Kun politely followed behind Zhao. Soon a few people arrived at the large dining room, where Meirin had prepared lunch.

When Meirin saw Zhao come in, she quickly smiled and said, "Master, the food is ready."

Zhao nodded, then he said, "Miss Laura, Mister Kun, young lady, please sit down. Here we're not like those big aristocracy where they are too many rules. We all sit together to eat."

Although Laura and Kun were a little against this curious practice, they didn't say anything. They both sat down along with Nier.

With Meg's help, Meirin brought out the meals for everyone. Today's food was very rich: roasted rabbit with some fire fish, and vegetables that had been produced by the space. Meirin went all out for this lunch.

Earlier, the Buda clan had a discussion which resulted in this meal to give Laura a taste of these vegetables, all in order to further their cooperation for the future.

Laura and Kun took note of the dishes on the table. In addition to the roasted rabbit meat, the fire fish, and the magic radishes, there were also some vegetables that they were unfamiliar with. Not only that, but the cooking method seemed to also be a little special.

Soon all the meals were served. These were very special dishes. Laura carefully looked over the table, but she found that she didn't know what cuisine this was.

Kun was also frowning at the dishes. To tell the truth, he considered himself very knowledgeable, but the food on the table was something he had never seen before.

## Chapter 119 - Cooperation (Part 1)

Kun shook his head, and Laura understood that he was saying he had never seen such dishes before, which made her feel even more curious.

Zhao saw the look on Laura's face and slightly chuckled. "Come, Miss Laura, Mister Kun, lady Nier. Try it. These are our specialties."

"Then I'll be polite," Laura said. "Honestly, this is the first time I have seen such big fire fish."

"Miss likes to eat fire fish, but we didn't expect that we could eat it here. Mister Zhao, do you have a lot of experience raising fire fish?" Kun asked.

Temptation!

Everyone knew what Kun was really asking for, but Zhao didn't get angry. In fact, he was waiting for them to give in to their temptation to ask. "Not really. We just came here for the hot springs. I like hot springs, so we stayed, and raised the fire fish as an afterthought. Unfortunately, the environment here stops us from raising a lot."

Not raising a lot? Kun and Laura couldn't help but recall the dense amount of fire fish they saw in the hot spring's ditch. There was a point where modesty could go too far.

Kun frowned. "Mister Zhao, may I take the liberty to ask, did you bring these fire fish from somewhere else? Because I remember the last time I came here to Stony Mountain, there were very few small fire fish in the hot springs, but now they're bigger and there are so much more. Even if you are raising fire fish, it would be impossible to raise that many in such a short time."

Laura knew why Kun was asking this. Zhao had only come to Stony Mountain not too long ago, so there was no way he could raise so many fire fish. The only explanation was that he must have brought them from elsewhere. But where? Maybe his answer would tell them where he came from.

Zhao shook his head. "I'm sorry, Mister Kun. It's a secret." It was clear that he refused to answer, like he was saying, I will not tell you and you will not find out.

At once, Kun said, "I'm sorry, Mister Zhao. I was being rude."



"Don't worry about it." Zhao waved it off, then he smiled, "Now try our vegetables before they go cold."

Laura and her group politely picked up their knives and forks, ready to taste the dishes on the table. Unlike them, Zhao wasn't a native of the Ark Continent, so he was using chopsticks since he wasn't used to knives and forks.

Ever since Meirin started learning how to make Chinese food, Zhao had been using chopsticks. Green and everyone else thought it was strange, but they didn't say anything about it.

Before, Green would tell Zhao not to do anything too strange since he was a noble, but now that Zhao had the space, Green would rarely say anything. Anyway, they lived in the Black Waste, so whether or not you acted like a noble, no one would see it.

These days, if Zhao acted too much like a noble, that would not be a good thing because it would make it easy to detect his true identity. Right now Zhao was supposed to be a black mage. In the Continent, black mages were a very special profession that was recognized as having some quirks. If a black mage acted too normal, no one would believe that he was a black mage.

Laura and her group noticed Zhao using chopsticks. It was made from a branch of an oil fruit tree, shaved down with a knife, and polished until its reddish brown wood became shiny and beautiful.

Zhao didn't take his hat off. This dark robe set was interesting because the veil of the hat could be adjusted, so you didn't need to bother to take it off when you wanted to eat.

Laura and Kun gave Zhao a puzzled look. They didn't know why he was eating this way. When Zhao saw the look on the two's faces, he laughed. "I'm sorry. Because of some special reasons, I do not want others to see my face."

Saying that was worse than giving no explanation. If Zhao hadn't said anything, Laura and Kun would just have assumed that eating with a veil was just another quirk of his. But thanks to what he said, Laura couldn't help but ask herself, why does Zhao not want others to see his face? Was he afraid of being recognized? Was he a wanted criminal in the Empire?

But Zhao gave no further explanation. After all, today was only the second time he had met Laura. So Zhao didn't say anything as he kept his head down and ate lunch.

Seeing as Zhao wasn't speaking, Laura and Kun focused on eating. Soon they didn't feel bored because the things they were eating really were delicious.

They had never tasted food like this before. It was completely different than what you could find on the Ark Continent.

Laura had high requirements when it comes to what she ate. Whether it was cooking methods or ingredients, she was very demanding.

Part of the Markey Company's business was selling vegetables and other types of food. Naturally, they must have the ability to assess the quality of vegetables. After all, the Markey Company's biggest customers weren't the commoners, but the nobility.

The most important thing to nobles when it came to food was that they must taste good. When Laura did any business related to food, usually she would personally taste it herself.

In the Continent, their cooking methods weren't really worth mentioning, but their quality of ingredients was high, otherwise there would be no distinction between ordinary vegetables and magic vegetables.

In addition to increasing magic power, magic vegetables also tasted a lot better than ordinary vegetables.

It was precisely because of this that Laura became very interested about the food on the table. Not only were the cooking methods good, but each dish also had high quality ingredients.

In the beginning, Laura didn't even want to try the dish that was made from magic radishes. In her opinion, magic radishes were the lowest level of magic vegetables, so she simply wasn't interested in eating it. But out of politeness, she ate one and found that it was the most delicious magic radish she ever had. The taste was pure and crisp. It was simply the best.

Laura couldn't help but feel taken aback. She tried all the other dishes and everything was delicious. The most important one was the fire fish. She had eaten fire fish before, so this dish shouldn't be more delicious than any of the other ones she had tried in the past, but it was. It was so good that she couldn't stop herself from eating two portions.

The atmosphere around the table was good with everyone thoroughly enjoying themselves.

Once lunch was over, they all went back into the living room. Meg and Meirin provided everyone with a cup of tea. It was then that Zhao turned to Laura and said, "Miss Laura, you know, if you hadn't come to me, I would have gone to see you."

Laura was surprised for a moment, not knowing why he would want to meet her, but then she quickly asked, "What can I do for you, Mister Zhao?"

"It's no big deal. Miss Laura might not see it, but my people are struggling, plus I'm a black mage so it's hard to earn money for my family. I want to ask if Miss Laura can help me with that."

Laura was surprised, not understanding what Zhao meant. Although the times she had been in contact with Zhao was short, she had imagined that he was a somewhat arrogant man. His pride was something that was deep in his bones. Such people weren't likely to open up to her about their lack of money, and would try to solve their problems by themselves. It was then that Laura immediately thought about the hot springs full of fire fish outside.

"What do you mean?" Laura asked. She was still not sure what Zhao's idea was.

"I want your cooperation in some business, Miss Laura. I don't know whether or not you are willing."

Laura's eyes were shining. "Are you talking about selling those fire fish?"

Zhao gave a slight chuckle. "No, the amount of fire fish is too little now. I can only sell about a hundred a month to you. What I'm talking about is another business: magic radishes."

"Magic radishes? Well, if you're planning to sell a lot, then that is no problem. We of the Markey Company could endure it." Laura was justified in saying this because magic radishes weren't precious things. She believed that if Zhao wasn't selling a lot of them, he wouldn't have wanted to meet her.

Zhao stared at Laura and said, "Miss Laura, I would like to know if you can endure how much magic radishes I'm going to sell per month. As for the quality of the magic radishes, you just have to taste it."

He placed a magic radish on the table.

## Chapter 120 - Cooperation (Part 2)

Laura looked at the white magic radish. She didn't remember how many radishes she had seen before, but this was the first time she had seen such a high quality magic radish.

Kun was also giving this white magic radish a determined look, but what his heart really took note of was Zhao. With just a wave of his hand, Zhao made the magic radish appear. What did this mean? It meant that Zhao had some sort of spatial item.

Spatial items weren't something that ordinary people could have. Only a few large forces in the Continent had spatial items. For example, in the entire Markey clan, there was only one of these items, which was a spatial bag that the patriarch kept close to his body. Kun had heard that this bag contained a spatial area of one hundred cubic meters, which could be considered a lot of space.

Spatial items weren't just special equipment, it was also a sign of your superior status. You wouldn't be able to get a spatial item if you didn't have great strength. That was why Kun's heart couldn't help but feel surprised when Zhao pulled that magic radish out of nowhere. Because of this, Kun had confirmed his belief that Zhao certainly belonged to some kind of large underground force, otherwise he wouldn't have a spatial item.

Kun was now more determined about cooperating with Zhao. That was because he was very clear about their situation with the Markey clan. Although Kevin was the second heir to the clan, he simply didn't raise his own forces, so their position in the clan was small. They needed a powerful ally.

Laura picked up the magic radish off the table and carefully looked at it, then she put it back down. "Mister Zhao, do you have other magic radishes of this quality?"

Zhao smiled. "They're all the same, including the size. Please rest assured, Miss Laura. I want this to be a long-term cooperation, not just a one-shot business deal."

Laura suddenly stood up and bowed to Zhao. "I would like to thank Mister Zhao for trusting me with this proposal. You have now become an official ally of the Markey clan."

Zhao quickly stood up as well, and reached towards Laura. "No, in this case, an alliance with the Markey clan is impossible. What I was interested in was an alliance with you, Miss Laura."

Laura was surprised by what he said. In fact, although Laura told Zhao that he would have an alliance with the Markey clan, what she really wanted to do was ask him to form an alliance with her. However, she feared that Zhao would not go for this because her strength was too small. She really didn't think that Zhao would propose an alliance with her himself rather than form an alliance with the Markey clan.

This filled Laura with joy, but this also raised a wave of doubt in her heart. She looked at the magic radish on the table, which could be said was top quality. No matter who Zhao wanted to cooperate with in selling this radish, the other side would give him the best part of the deal. So why did Zhao choose them to work with?

"Why would Mister Zhao want to ally yourself with me? You should know that an alliance with the Markey clan would get you greater benefits," Laura said.

"I just want to do business with you, Miss Laura. I know you, but I don't know the Markey clan. I had even heard that their big stores would bully people. Even if your strength is smaller, if I cooperate with you, I wouldn't have to worry."

It was as Zhao said. He had a dense amount of fire fish outside. Although they might give him a lot of gold coins, they would also become the root of trouble. If Zhao were to cooperate with a large clan, it was likely he would only get bones that were hard to swallow.

Figuring this point out, Laura said, "Well, I will not do anything of that sort to you. From now on, I will be your staunchest ally. Please believe me."

Zhao smiled. "If I didn't believe you, Miss Laura, then we wouldn't be talking about this today. Now please give me a number on how many magic radishes you can endure per month."

Laura made a quick calculation. "I can't buy too much right now. We already have a store supplier that we have collaborated with for a long time, so I must make some preparations before we can work together. How about I send someone to pick up one jin of magic radishes three days later?"

"Only one jin?" Zhao frowned. That figure was too low, only the equivalent of five thousand catty.

Laura saw Zhao frowning, but she thought it was because he didn't have that much magic radishes. "Is this amount too large, Mister Zhao?"

Zhao had a wry smile on his face. "You misunderstand, Miss Laura. That number can't be considered large, it's too small an amount. I want to know how many magic radishes all of your stores buys per month."

Laura froze for a moment, then her eyes flashed. "If we're talking about all the stores I run in the Purcell Duchy, then we buy about four hundred thousand catty of magic radishes per month. If you can provide magic radishes with the same high quality as this one, then I will pay sixty copper coins per catty. Are you satisfied with this, Mister Zhao?"

Zhao nodded. "I'm very satisfied with this deal. I can assure you, Miss Laura, that if you need four hundred thousand catty per month, I can fully supply that amount, and each of the magic radishes will be the same high quality. Just make sure you have the money when you pick them up."

Laura looked shocked as she quickly asked, "Are you kidding, Mister Zhao? Four hundred thousand catty per month is not a small number."

"Rest assured, Miss Laura. I told you that this will be a long-term cooperation. I would not lie to you," Zhao said. "Four hundred thousand catty per month. Pick them up and pay me according to the price you had mentioned."

Laura had a look of excitement. "It's a deal. Three days later, I will send someone to pick up your magic radishes and give you the money."

Zhao smiled. "Don't be in such a hurry. In fact, there is another type of business I want to do with you. Miss Laura, do you also sell fruit oil?"

Although Laura was surprised, she nodded her head. "This is natural. Fruit oil is the Continent's most common commodity. It's always in great demand. Although you can't get much money per catty, the profits are not small. Is Mister Zhao also selling fruit oil?"

Zhao shook his head. "Not yet. This time I just want to ask Miss Laura a favor. Once you take the magic radishes, can you use some of the money to get me an oil press? I have a large number of oil fruits, but I have not yet been able to press them into oil."

Laura and Kun saw a glimmer of understanding in each other's eyes. There were very little areas in the Continent that was dedicated to growing oil fruit trees. Most oil fruits were gathered from the wild, and that was because of an absence of good land, which were generally controlled by some small elites. As for the nobility, they would not go into this kind of business because they would earn too little.

Zhao now said that he had a lot of oil fruits. Was he a small elite? Ah, no, if he was just a small elite, then he wouldn't have any spatial items.

Looking at the two, Zhao asked, "Will this be difficult, Miss Laura?"

Laura was startled, but then she recovered. "No, there will be no difficulties. Just tell me, what kind of oil press do you require? Wind, water, or animal?"

Zhao was surprised for a moment. He really didn't think that there were so many kinds of oil press. "What's the difference?"

"There's a big difference for oil extraction, Mister Zhao. If you have a spacious place, then wind-powered is the best. If you are near a river, then water-powered is the best. If you have neither, then you can only use an animal-powered oil press."

Zhao nodded, then he thought about the Black Waste. It was a very open place, so a wind oil press would work. There was also the moat with flowing water, so a water oil press was okay as well. And an animal oil press was also not a problem. He had so many undead that would never get tired and could work like machines. Any of the three appeared to be good selections.

But after thinking about it, Zhao overruled both the wind and water oil press. The Black Waste wasn't safe. You'd never know when there would be an outbreak of spirit beasts from the carrion swamp. The Iron Mountain castle still had no defensive capabilities. Even if they built a wind or water powered press, it would just be destroyed.

Figuring this out, Zhao turned to Laura and asked, "You understand these three kinds of oil press better than I do. Is an animal-powered oil press easy to handle?"

Laura didn't say anything this time, and instead she looked at Kun. Obviously, he knew more about these kinds of things than her. "Out of the three, the best oil press is the one powered by water. Wind is almost as good. But the oil press powered by animals is the worst. That is because you can get large volumes of oil from a wind or water powered oil press, and only small volumes from an animal-powered one. However, they are more suitable for handling and transport," Kun politely said.