

Another World 331

Chapter 331 - They're as close as brothers?

Laura and the others already had their meals when Zhao Hai returned, currently they were in the living room talking with each other. When Zhao Hai came in, they immediately stood up and looked at him. Seeing their reactions, Zhao Hai said, "What are you looking at? Did something happen?"

Laura smiled and said, "Happen? Looking at what you just did, didn't Marquis Robert give you problems?"

Zhao Hai smiled, "It's fine, we drank liquor and became good friends, so how could he give me trouble? Right, what about you? Did you already have dinner?"

Laura replied, "We've already eaten, but what did Robert talk with you?" Zhao Hai smiled and told them about what happened at Robert's mansion. When Zhao Hai said that Robert was someone from the League of Dark Mages, the group became surprised. They didn't expect Robert to be someone from the league, it seems like the league's influence isn't small. No wonder they dared oppose the Radiant Church.

Zhao Hai continued, he also talked about his and Illin's milk wine agreement. Laura nodded and said, "Good, I'm also worrying about this aspect. Currently, we had two businesses, one from the Purcell Duchy and the other is in the Beastman Prairie. Our milk wine is a new venture, we produce about 1000 jin per day and Bell certainly wouldn't be able to handle all of it. It's also not good to have a single channel for this product. With our agreement with Illin, we obtained another outlet."

Zhao Hai and smiled, "Moreover, another important point is that we had drawn a connection with the Shelley Family. You didn't see Robert's expression when he mentioned the Shelley Family, his reaction clearly showed the power of the family. If we can get a relationship going with them, it will be give us an advantage in the future."

Laura agreed, "That would be good, but highly unlikely. The Shelley family is a huge merchant family. They wouldn't just make connections if they don't get a huge benefit. If there are nothing in it for them, then they would not care about you at all."

Zhao Hai smiled then replied, "This isn't bad at all. If we are just ordinary, then Southern King wouldn't deal with us. The League of Dark Mages wouldn't help us at all. Not everything is a benefit anyway. This time's cooperation with the Shelley Family isn't a bad thing."

Laura smiled, "In any case, we already made a deal with them, and we shouldn't hurry our plans. I think that if we go back to the Black Wastelands, we can recall all the bulls and argali from the space. We could also farm some fire fish and try to make more deals with Shelley Hotel. If we manage to get their attention, they might help us. What do you think?"

Zhao Hai replied, "Good. Also, it looks like we need to stay for an additional day, I need to see Bell and discuss about Illin's deal, then we can leave. Right, I plan to have Shue return to Casa City and tell Uncle Evan about Ruyen's situation. I won't dare accompany her anymore seeing how she already tried to harm me once, I don't like to see her every day."

Laura smiled, "That's also good, but I think we should have Shun go. He's small and light, I think we could try to make him ride a blood hawk and see if the hawk could carry him. If we succeed, then maybe we can have some aerial battalions in the future."

Zhao Hai's eyes lit up when he heard Laura's words. Having an air force was his dream. Although the hawks were not that small, carrying humans was still quite troublesome for them. But Shun was different, Shun was light, Zhao Hai believed that if the hawk can manage to carry him, then they would be able to set a standard in the future.

Since it was still already late, Zhao Hai didn't drink again. The group chatted for a while and then rested. The next morning, Zhao Hai's group went to the dining hall to eat. When Ruyen came in, she looked at Zhao Hai and coldly snorted. Then she sat on another table and ordered dishes for herself.

Zhao Hai didn't care whether she joined or not. He and the others ate together instead. This was also the first time Laura and the group ate together in a dining hall since the start of their journey.

At this time, a horse's neigh could be heard outside. Then a person came in, Zhao Hai curiously looked at the person and saw that it was Fernand. Zhao Hai couldn't help but stare, what did he want this time? Last night, Zhao Hai remembered that Fernand had drunk too much, why did he come so early in the morning?

Fernand swept through all the guests in the dining hall, he gave Ruyen a salute first, then ran up to Zhao Hai's table and said, "Brother Hai, I see that you're eating, I didn't have my breakfast yet, so let me join you. Ah, I didn't bring any wine this morning, brother, come give me some of yours."

Looking at the alcoholic in front of him, Zhao Hai didn't know whether to laugh or cry, he said, "Brother Fernand, why are you here? So early in the morning and looking for liquor to drink, aren't you afraid that Uncle Robert will scold you?"

These two people chatting here gave every person inside the dining hall a shock. Most of them knew that the two were in conflict yesterday and Fernand even got the city's garrison involved, forcing Marquis Robert to act. The scene they were seeing today made them all speechless.

In just one night, the two became as close as brothers? Was the world changing too fast? Everyone looked at the two, puzzled and shocked.

Ruyen was more dumbfounded, she knew that Fernand almost fought with Zhao Hai yesterday because of her instigations. How could Fernand disregard her today and instead ran up to Zhao Hai?"

Fernand didn't care about these people's reactions, he looked at Zhao Hai and said, "I'm always scolded daily, I'm already used to it. And aren't you gonna leave? So I might as well go out drink, quickly take it out."

Zhao Hai said helplessly, "Don't worry, I won't be leaving today. Also, when I transport some wine, you can go to Bell and buy from him. I also made a partnership with the hotel to serve the wine here later on. You wouldn't need to fear about not drinking my wine."

Hearing Zhao Hai's words made Fernand's eyes light up, "Really? Fantastic, I actually feared that I wouldn't be able to drink the liquor anymore. But I'm actually poor person, if you don't provide the wine, I'm afraid that I won't be able to afford it."

Zhao Hai gave him a look, "Why are you telling me you're poor? I didn't ask you to lend me money. Really, the successor of the Marquis running to me and telling me he's poor."

Fernand forced a smile, "Brother, you don't know my pain. Although I'm the Mansion's eldest young master, my monthly allowance isn't that great. If I manage to overspend, my father would come and pick me up. But I can't help it, if you were in my position, you will always want to spend as much as you want."

Zhao Hai rolled his eyes, "You have it easy, compared to me who always travelled everywhere, or maybe do you want to change places?"

This time, it was Fernand who rolled his eyes, "Now you're telling me that I have it better. If I had such beautiful women to travel with, I would be willing to be on the road everyday."

Zhao Hai was helpless against Fernand. Fernand wasn't a bad fellow, he just had the problem all rich young masters have. But Fernand was also different, if he liked a woman, then he'd find ways to bring her back home, otherwise he wouldn't have that many wives and concubines. And if he wanted to go out and play, he could find some who are willing. Ruyen, however, was an exception, she was worse than the other women.

Moreover, Fernand's age was close to Zhao Hai's. And since he was spoiled by his mother from an early age, his attitude was just like Zhao Hai's friends back on earth. This made Zhao Hai chat with Fernand comfortably.

Looking at Fernand's appearance, Laura felt it funny. Fernand and Zhao Hai ate their meals, but in the end, Zhao Hai still didn't give Fernand any wine.

Watching them laughing and eating at their table, Ruyen's expression worsened. She didn't understand how this happened. Why did the playboy Fernand not come to her but instead went to Zhao Hai?

After breakfast, Zhao Hai set out towards the outskirts of the city. Although Fernand didn't know what Zhao Hai was doing, he also joined him outside.

Stopping the carriage and seeing that there was nobody around, Zhao Hai made howling sound as a Blood Hawk came down from the Space. The Blood Hawk was naturally released by Zhao Hai, but since Fernand was present, he pretended to howl to call the hawk over.

Fernand, who was with Zhao Hai, was very curious of this majestic hawk that fell from the sky. Zhao Hai didn't bother with him and called out to Shun.

Imagining Shun riding the hawk, Fernand could help but laugh. His short stature, compared to the eagle, was very disproportionate.

Then Zhao Hai turned to the hawk and said, "How is it? Can you carry Shun on your back?"

The Blood Hawk paused for a moment then nodded. Zhao Hai also nodded and then handed Shun a letter, he instructed, "Shun, take the Blood Hawk and go to Casa City. Give this letter to Grand Duke Evan. This is my badge, take it. After handing the letter to him, tell him that I would be waiting for his response."

Shun was skeptical when Zhao Hai told him to ride the hawk. But when he saw the Blood Hawk's appearance, his heart became nervous. Nevertheless, he nodded and carefully received the letter and crawled to the back of the bird. The hawk gave Zhao Hai a cry then flapped its wings and took off. Before long, the two became two black spots in the sky.

Chapter 332 - A Gift to You

Fernand was shocked as he looked at Zhao Hai, "They're gone? Brother, did you raise that magic beast? How can it carry someone easily?"

Zhao Hai smiled, "It's a phantasmal beast I raised, hehe. Also, don't think of riding it, only Shun can do that with his light body. Being too heavy is not good."

Fernand paled while he asked Zhao Hai, "Brother did you know how valuable that hawk is? Except for 9th ranks, there are only few people who could fly, aerial magic beasts are very difficult to subdue, and only 9th ranks are able to do so. Even though they were captured, their bodies would be too small, unable to carry a person. Although you said that only lightweight people can ride your Blood Hawk, how difficult would it be for Great Nobles to find some light warriors? If your Blood Hawk were to be reproduced, they can become an aerial battalion. Brother, you must not reveal this fact willingly, don't blame me if you get into trouble because of it. Also, did you say that the hawk was a phantasmal beast? Is there really a phantasmal beast that big?"

When Zhao Hai heard Fernand warn him, he thought that Fernand wasn't that bad. He also treated Zhao Hai as a true friend, otherwise he wouldn't tell him about this matter. If it were to spread, Zhao Hai will have to change his appearance again.

However, after hearing the other part of Fernand's statement, Zhao Hai couldn't help but roll his eyes and said, "You think I'm lying to you? That is a genuine phantasmal beast. How about I give you one?"

Hearing Zhao Hai, Fernand's eyes lit up, "Are you sure? That's great, where is it? Call it quickly, right, the beast's body is huge, I fear that my little body won't be able to support its consumption."

What Fernand said was reasonable, phantasmal beasts in the continent needed energy to feed on. With the Blood Hawk's build, the amount of energy it needs to feed would certainly be huge, with Fernand's subpar mage talent, he's afraid that he'll be sucked dry.

Zhao Hai smiled and assured him, "It's alright to feed them meat. Don't tell me you can't even feed them meat? You'll make me look down on you."

Fernand was confused, he replied, "You mean that your phantasmal beasts can eat meat? Is it really a phantasmal beast?"

Zhao Hai gave him a blank look, "Do you want it or not? Remember, either you feed it or make it find food for itself."

Fernand's eyes were very bright, "Of course I want it. Why would I deny such great thing? When will you give it to me?"

Zhao Hai gave another howl, then a Blood Hawk came down, it looked like the one Shun was riding on. Zhao Hai turned to the hawk and said, "I'll gift you to Fernand, follow his orders from now on." The hawk nodded, then the hawk went to Fernand and with its sharp beak, rubbed Fernand lightly, expressing its affection.

Fernand did not become afraid of the hawk. Even though it seems to have sharp beaks capable of breaking through metal, it didn't emit any harmful intentions at this time. He excitedly touched and pet the hawk, the hawk didn't have any reactions.

However, Fernand said while looking at the Blood Hawk, "How would I bring this thing back? It couldn't ride inside the carriage, the horses would be too scared to move."

Zhao Hai chuckled and said, "No need to place it on a carriage, just let it follow you back to the mansion. But you need to prepare a suitable place for it to stay."

Fernand nodded, he looked at the Blood Hawk happily and said, "Go fly!". The Blood Hawk was very obedient, it immediately flapped its wings and flew.

Fernand laughed and said, "Good! Fantastic! This hawk is very obedient. I must say brother Wales, why do you have such good things?"

Zhao Hai faintly smiled, "Well, isn't it good to have nice things? Since you already had the hawk, let's go back. I still need to see Bell and discuss the matter with the milk wine. Originally I only had him sell the wine, but Illin unexpectedly suggested to serve it on the hotel."

Fernand smiled, "Look, how about you also do milk wine business with my Family? I can talk to father."

Zhao Hai looked at him and said, "Don't talk nonsense, if I supply you with milk wine you'll end up drinking all of them. Forget it, let's return." Soon after, the carriage returned to Sarte City. Zhao Hai immediately headed for Spring Grass Residence.

At this time, not only did Fernand forget about yesterday's matter, he also accompanied him like a friend. Also, his cheeky attitude made Zhao Hai admire him.

Zhao Hai met Bell and discussed about the new developments on the business. Bell didn't object, the Shelley Hotel only intended to serve the wine to their customers. Guests drinking in the hotel wouldn't put a dent on his business. He also knew that his capabilities still aren't enough, it was natural for Zhao Hai to find another partner.

Moreover, Bell understood that there was no way to compare his capability with the Shelley Family. If Zhao Hai and him weren't fellow members of the league, their partnership won't probably even happen. Shelley Family, on the other hand, is famous throughout the whole continent. With their business, not to mention his 1,000 jin per month, they could even swallow more than 10,000 jin.

Supplying 10,000 jin to the hotel each month sounds a lot, but as Robert said, the Shelley Family has more than 10,000 hotels in the continent. Later on, if the wine were to be divided, each branch would have less than a jin of wine each, this quantity is sufficient enough.

It was because of this that Bell didn't become disappointed and agreed to Zhao Hai's request to supply the wine. In Bell's mind, if he helped Zhao Hai supply the liquor, he could make connections with manager Illin. With this relationship, even if Illin gave him a small business deal, it would be much better than trading in the prairie.

Zhao Hai was glad when he saw Bell agree. Then, Zhao Hai asked Bell to prepare some dishes to eat. Bell didn't decline, and ordered his servants to prepare a meal. Fernand also stayed and ate with them even though he didn't have any business with Bell. Fernand joined their talks and also laughed with them.

Bell understood human nature and also understood Fernand's temper. He had a child's temper since he was spoiled from his youth. And only Robert could scold him, no wonder he turned to be what he is today.

With Bell's constant contact with Fernand, he knew all about Fernand's quirks. So he didn't take yesterday's matter to heart. Fernand also seemed to forget about yesterday as he joked around with Bell, surprising Zhao Hai.

Regarding Fernand's disposition, Zhao Hai was helpless. After having lunch, Zhao Hai took the drunk Fernand back to the mansion.

After handing Fernand milk wine to give to Robert, he left and returned to his room at Shelley Hotel to take a good rest. At around 2 in the afternoon, Shun returned bringing with him a wax sealed letter and handed it over to Zhao Hai.

Inside was a letter written by Evan. Zhao Hai opened it and read the contents inside. The letter didn't say anything else other than telling Zhao Hai the he didn't need to take care of Ruyen anymore. He also stated how disappointed he was at his daughter.

Zhao Hai also couldn't bear travelling with Ruyen anymore. If Ruyen keeps bringing him trouble, he wouldn't know what to do. If it were another person, he could just shout at them when he gets annoyed, but he couldn't do that to Ruyen. She was Evan's daughter, and Zhao Hai was indebted to the Grand Duke, to shout at his daughter was unjustifiable.

Zhao Hai just wouldn't care about her anymore. For the young lady, he could only ignore her. He also couldn't just wait it out, Zhao Hai saw that Ruyen intends to keep following him since she still hadn't left Sarte City. Her waiting made Zhao Hai sigh.

That evening they rested well. Early next morning, the group ate their breakfast and set out. As Zhao Hai expected, Ruyen followed his convoy closely, annoying Zhao Hai.

Without noticing, they arrived outside the city. When they exited the city, they saw two carriages waiting for them, one was Bell's and the other was Fernand's.

Seeing Zhao Hai's carriage, Bell and Fernand immediately went and gave Zhao Hai a greeting. When Zhao Hai walked out of his carriage, Bell smiled and handed him something, "Here, it's the letter of introduction for Sky Water City's lord, when you arrive there you can hand it to him."

Zhao Hai nodded his head and didn't say anything to Bell. There were a lot of people present, so it was inappropriate to discuss their secrets. In any case, the business with Bell had already been settled anyway.

Fernand looked at Zhao Hai and his eyes looked a bit red. He had lost friends in the past because of his identity, but Zhao Hai didn't care about who Fernand is. Although Fernand couldn't follow him, he was given a lot of things by Zhao Hai. He had the milk wine as well as the hawk, Fernand was sad, it was hard to find such a friend.

Fernand patted Zhao Hai's shoulder and said, "Brother Wales, I'm not like you who could travel the world. My only great talent is appreciating the good things in the world, so if brother manages to find

something good, you can keep it for me. Right, now that you're leaving, how about giving your brother some wine."

Zhao Hai slapped Fernand's hand and said, "We're already on the road, yet you still want to drink? If you keep being like this then we'll have to leave immediately."

Fernand seemed to not hear Zhao Hai, he smiled and took something from his carriage, "This is an emblem of our Iksa Family, take it, it makes you become someone from the Iksa Family. Yesterday I had father register your name to the Empire. Although it doesn't hold any title, it is still an emblem. Use it if the Purcell Family takes away your title."

Chapter 333 - Send-off

Hearing Fernand warmed Zhao Hai's heart. Although Fernand was impulsive and extremely valued his face, when you become his friend he'll treat you like a true brother. When he saw that Zhao Hai wasn't with Ruyen, he was afraid that the Purcell Duchy would take Zhao Hai's title away, making Zhao Hai's travels inconvenient. So Fernand gave Zhao Hai his own carriage's emblem.

One must know that a Noble's emblem cannot just be used by anybody, only immediate family members could bring it. And all who used this emblem would have to be registered to the Empire.

Zhao Hai knew that it was impossible for Fernand to know his relationship with Evan, Fernand did this for Zhao Hai's good. But Zhao Hai cannot just casually use this emblem, since it may be involved in future troubles.

For example, if Zhao Hai used the emblem while encountering some problems, the matters would be recorded under the Iksa Family on the Empire's register.

This was different to the title bestowed by Evan. Even though Evan gave the title to Zhao Hai, it was Zhao Hai's own insignia that was presented, so his actions would be independent from the Purcell Family. Whether he was innocent or guilty of crime, the Empire wouldn't give the responsibility to Evan. This and using a family's emblem was quite not the same.

Zhao Hai carefully received the emblem, then he patted Fernand's shoulder and said, "You have to take care of yourself, brother. If there are any important matters, you can write a letter and send it through the blood hawk. He'll be able to find me and give the letter."

Fernand nodded and gave Zhao Hai a hard hug, Zhao Hai also returned the hug. After the two let go, Zhao Hai gave Bell a salute and went to his carriage. He waved his hand to the two and departed.

Looking at Zhao Hai's carriage disappearing, Bell sighed and said, "He's an eagle of a man, possessing a heart as big as the sky."

Fernand smiled, "An eagle of a man indeed, he's a good friend. Right, Uncle Bell, come visit the mansion with me today, Wales left behind a few bottles of liquor for me, we can drink some cups."

Bell laughed and said, "Forget it, this old man couldn't keep up with you. You go back and drink slowly. I still have some accounting to do."

Fernand smiled and said, "You're very much like my father, I really can't deal with that kind of boring work. I'll be returning then, I still have some wine to drink." Then his carriage drove back to the city.

Bell looked at Fernand and smiled wryly, "Go live properly, you won't know how long you can keep being like that." Then he got on his carriage and drove away.

Zhao Hai was sitting in his carriage and stared at the emblem for a long time. After a while, he sighed, he really didn't have a good impression of Fernand the first time they met. But now it looked like he was a friend worth keeping.

Laura was also present when Zhao Hai and Fernand exchanged words, they didn't think that Ferdinand would show extreme care for them. Laura looked at the emblem and said, "You really can't expect that Fernand is also a good-hearted man."

Zhao Hai smiled and put away the emblem. Then he took out a map and spread it on the table. He pointed at the mark on the map and said, "This is the outpost that Bell told us about. I think we should send him wine as soon as possible."

Laura nodded and the group continued to look at the map. The map was very detailed, it showed how far the outpost was from the Iksa Domain. It showed the tribe's name, its banner and the names of the people present there so they would never get the wrong one.

Zhao Hai turned to Laura and said, "What do you think we should do? I think we should have a Blood Hawk bring the Ghost Staff, and when it reaches the prairie, we'll release the carts to deliver the milk wine."

Laura nodded, "That is best. And to avoid unnecessary attention, we shouldn't have all of them be undead. Instead, we should have some drive the carts with Shue leading."

Zhao Hai smiled and said, "Good, let's send Shue. In any case, they could just return to the Space and rest."

After the plan was made, Zhao Hai called Shue over and told him the situation. Shue didn't complain, although the prairie was cold, he wouldn't be there for long. And when he finished his business, they could just return instantly, so he naturally agreed.

Without Ruyen knowing, a hawk flew to the skies and headed to the prairie's direction. They were still fairly close to the prairie, so it only took two hours for the hawk to arrive.

Zhao Hai immediately released the carts, ten of them. Each cart carried milk wine, totalling to about 11,000 jin of wine. Then Shue went to the prairie through the space and led the carts and horses and headed to Bell's outpost.

Zhao Hai used Cai'er to its full advantage. Cai'er can be considered to be another ghost staff. With Cai'er, Zhao Hai could essentially send and receive to and from the Space at the same time.

The rest of the day was spent while quietly travelling. Soon, they spent the evening on a small town. There wasn't any trouble this time. Ruyen behaved and didn't bother Zhao Hai.

Zhao Hai didn't comment on the matter. He had no complains if Ruyen followed him honestly. Although Zhao Hai wanted to drive Ruyen away, thinking about Evan's letter, he couldn't act on it, the situation can only be like this.

The next three days were very calm. On the third day, Shue found the tribe with Bell's outpost. He also met the person that Bell told them and handed to wines over to him.

However, Shue wasn't able to get the payment, he still had to wait next month. But this was also in Bell and Zhao Hai's agreement. So after sending the supplies, Shue immediately returned. Although he disappeared for a couple of days, Ruyen didn't say anything. Nowadays, Ruyen and Zhao Hai didn't talk too much, everyone was just quietly hurrying along the peaceful road.

Half a month of restless travel later, the group finally arrived at the central area of the Aksu Empire, making Zhao Hai extra vigilant. They were hurrying along every single day, attracting as little attention as possible. Every time they pass a big city, they didn't stop, they only stopped when it became late.

Zhao Hai thought that Ruyen would want to stay at a hotel for two days, but he didn't think that she would endure and kept following Zhao Hai's convoy. This made Zhao Hai very uneasy.

This time, Zhao Hai didn't want to go to the capital of the Aksu Empire. It was the place where Zhao Hai used to stay, and there were too many people familiar with him. Although the Ghost Staff provided him with disguise, he still needed to be careful, so he avoided that place.

After another ten days of travelling, they finally arrived at the border between Aksu Empire and Rosen Empire, the Kolan Mountains!

The Kolan mountain range was the continent's biggest mountain range. It stretched for almost the entire span of the continent and was the natural border between the Aksu and Rosen Empires. This mountain range, like the Purcell Duchy and the Black Wastelands, only had one canyon, which became the only main route between the two empires. They call this route, the Lifeline Canyon."

However, different from the Black Wasteland's situation, there were small routes inside the mountain range. These routes were used by merchants to smuggle some goods. There were plenty of carts and carriages going through these side routes every day to cross between Aksu and Rosen Empires.

Zhao Hai already had some understanding of this situation, but they didn't plan on taking these side routes. They were going to pass through the main route to Rosen Empire.

With this, they could only pass through the Lifeline Canyon. Before the travel along the canyon, they still needed to pass through two fortresses on both ends of the road. One was Aksu Empire's Cold Wind Fortress, the other one was Rosen Empire's Hundred Battles Fortress.

In preparation for the travel, Zhao Hai's group stayed inside Cold Wind Fortress. And since they're going to travel on continuously for many days, they decided to rest well.

Cold Wind Fortress was big, its walls reached 200 feet in height and was a hundred percent made of stone. There were six gates along the north and south sides of the fortress, the widest of them was more than 20 meters wide and ten meters high. The smaller gates were 12 meters wide and eight meters high. The fortress gates were made of cast iron, making them very sturdy.

There were a hundred thousand guards present here all year round. The army belonged to the Aksu Empire's famous Magic Beast Cavalry Army. All magic beasts used by the army were all captured from Kolan Mountain Range. There were numerous magic beasts present in the mountains, there were even rumors that 9th rank magic beasts were present, but there was no proof of it until now.

Because the mountain range had a lot of magic beasts, it also made it impossible for large armies to pass through it. This contributed to the Kolan Mountains being the two empire's natural barrier.

Cold Wind Fortress was a heaven for adventurers and mercenaries who came to hunt for magic beasts. This also led to its chaos, making the fortress garrison to police the place and maintain public security. The garrison was also had two other purposes, to prevent invaders from the Rosen Empire and to collect tariffs.

Zhao Hai entered Cold Wind as low-key as possible. He didn't have any choice, Cold Wind Fortress was under Southern King's control, they were now inside enemy territory.

There was also a Shelley Hotel in Cold Wind Fortress. So naturally Zhao Hai chose to stay in the hotel. In such a place, his safety was backed by the Shelley Family. If you go to another hotel, it was possible that you'll get into a bandit's hotel instead.

After spending one night in the hotel, Zhao Hai didn't immediately take off. Instead, he went to some bookstores and bought a map of the Rosen empire as well as miscellaneous books about the empire.

Chapter 334 - Lifeline Canyon

It was not only Zhao Hai who hadn't gone to Rosen Empire, Laura and the others also hadn't gone there. So no person on their group had any understanding of the situation inside the empire.

The exception was Shue, he wandered around Rosen Empire for a period of time. When he arrived at Aksu Empire, he already had basic knowledge of the place.

Zhao Hai made Shue brief them about Rosen Empire's situation. Rosen Empire was the continent's most powerful nation, in Hundred Battles fortress, there would be 150,000 soldiers stationed every year, 50,000 of which were magic beast cavalry while the other 100,000 were normal soldiers. Their infantry were also deemed to be a first rate soldier all throughout the continent, even if they defend against a cavalry charge, they could still hold their ground securely.

Mages are prevalent inside Rosen Empire, so there would be mages positioned in the fortress all year round. And there would be Dark Mages among them. It was because unlike other nations, Dark element magic wasn't being suppressed in the empire.

Rosen Empire was worthy of being called the continent's most powerful nation. They were connected to the sea, of which their navy had gained their fair share of fame, to their north was the Aksu Empire, while they have the Lyon Empire to the south. And its territory was seven times the size of Aksu Empire, one could imagine how enormous the empire was.

The Rosen Empire's territory was also gifted when it came to terrain. To their south was the Accra Mountain as well as the Magic Beast Domain, having a single route towards Lyon Empire. To their north was Kolan Mountain Range, with also a single road towards Aksu Empire. Such geographical advantage made it hard to invade the empire.

It was because of these advantages that the citizens of the empire developed their prideful personality. They think that since their nation was the best in the continent, the citizens of the other nations were inherently inferior. They even call the people from the Aksu Empire barbarians while those in the Lyon Empire were called southern barbarians.

From these names, one could see their attitude towards the citizens from the other empires. It can be said that the Rosen Empire citizens were born with an arrogant heart, looking down on people from other nations.

Therefore, for people like Zhao Hai who obtained their titles inside Aksu empire, respect wouldn't be something that they'll receive in the empire. Even commoners won't give them a salute.

After knowing these circumstances, Zhao Hai couldn't help but frown. He thought that his noble title would act as his self-defense, that he would be received with good intent. Now it seemed like that was false.

After a two-day rest inside Cold Wind Fortress, Zhao Hai's group finally embarked on their journey across Lifeline Canyon, heading towards Hundred Battles Fortress. They didn't encounter any big problems when they started out, but it was said that Lifeline Canyon would place among the top ten busiest roads in the continent. Although the fortress gate was very wide, the volume of people lining up to go in and out of the fortress was very long, there were a lot of people present.

Zhao Hai was well-mannered while lining up to leave the fortress. He also learned that the distance between Cold Wind Fortress and Hundred Battles fortress was about 300 li(150 km), although the Kolan mountain range was very long, Lifeline Canyon's width only amounted to a couple hundred li.

At this time, Zhao Hai saw many convoys along the way. On the carriages on these convoys were insignias of nobles, some were even of famous Great Nobles. These convoys filled the entire scene, some even comprising of several hundred to a thousand carts and carriages, with guards reaching thousands. With each and everyone talking and shouting, the entire scene was very lively.

Comparing Zhao Hai's convoy to these huge ones would be like comparing a single drop to a huge ocean. Basically nobody paid any attention to them, much to Zhao Hai's delight.

It wasn't known whether Ruyen was afraid, but she became quite behaved these past few days. When she wasn't in her room, she would stay inside her carriage and didn't come out. This situation made Zhao Hai feel even better.

Despite being low-key, there were still some people who took notice of Zhao Hai's carriage, especially the giant-horned bull pulling it. After all, this magic beast was quite rare in the continent, it was unavoidable that it attracted a few pairs of eyes.

But as time passed by, nobody cared anymore, this was because in addition to the giant-horned bull, there was also another bull pulling Zhao Hai's other carriage. People thought that the giant-horned bull was just a variant of the other common bull.

Traversing 300 li would take a bull-pulled carriage more than a day's travel. So in the evening, the group had to camp inside Lifeline Canyon. And it was clear that the other travellers were very prepared as they built their tents and made a temporary camp.

Zhao Hai was also looking for a place for their camp. After their camp was constructed, Shue found Zhao Hai and said, "Young Master, we have to be careful tonight. In Lifeline Canyon, small convoys disappearing suddenly is a common occurrence. Here, no matter if you're from Aksu or Rosen Empire, bandits wouldn't care, thus the amount of robberies were also high. Moreover, magic beasts would also find opportunities to attack during dark.

Zhao Hai froze for a moment then nodded, "Good, we'll pay extra attention. Also, go remind Ruyen about this as well to keep them on guard. Grand Duke Evan provided us with help. So we still need to keep Ruyen in mind." Shue nodded, then turned away.

Laura looked at Shue's back and sighed, "I must say, Ruyen is quite a pitiful. A single girl going to an unknown place to study. Also her status would be demoted from a young lady to a commoner, and may even get looked down. This wouldn't make anyone feel better."

Zhao Hai also sighed, but Ruyen's situation was only brought upon by herself. She was intelligent, but she didn't know where to use it, therefore she reached her current situation.

She thought that her father was incompetent, that he wouldn't be able to provide her with a good life, so she gave her father sarcastic comments often, never giving him face. She thought that Adam wouldn't live a good life, so she wanted to break their engagement. She thought that with her wit, all men would submit to her, therefore she acted as though she was an empress, ending up discrediting herself. Finally, Grand Duke Evan made her go far away to study, one could say that she brought this upon her own self.

People say that hateful people end up in pitiful situations. These words were fully reflected on Ruyen. She's currently very pitiful, but she did do some hateful things.

Because they were camping outdoors, the other people were very vigilant of each other, so there wasn't much contact between fellow travellers. In fact, this situation was present all along Lifeline Canyon. Except for those extremely large convoys, general convoys were alert, afraid of being attacked by others.

Like what Shue said, convoys regularly vanish in the canyon, so people were very wary of their surroundings.

After Zhao Hai and the group entered the tent, they immediately went to the Space. Tonight, it was Blockhead who was assigned to watch the night while Rockhead drove the carriage outside. This was also Zhao Hai's plan, to have Blockhead and Rockhead switch places from time to time. Today. It was Rockhead's turn to drive the carriage while Blockhead stayed inside the Space.

This made it so that one of them could be assigned to be the night guard, making Zhao Hai relax. Shue also told Shun and Rockhead about the situation. So the three prepared their weapons and didn't take off their armor, so that they would be prepared to battle at any time.

In the middle of the night, Blockhead noticed some shadows closing in around their camps, but their goal didn't seem to be them, instead it seemed to be Ruyen.

Zhao Hai's camp was near Ruyen's, but they still had quite a distance between them. This made the other travellers inside the canyon confused whether they were travelling together or not.

Seeing the situation, Blockhead didn't know what to do. He wasn't sure if he should wake Zhao Hai up or not. In the end, he decided to wake Zhao Hai, he was afraid that those outsiders would also attack them.

Deciding on his action, Blockhead stood up and walked outside Zhao Hai's room. He knocked at the door and whispered, "Young Master, Young Master, something's happening."

Zhao Hai was a light sleeper, so when Blockhead knocked on his door, he immediately woke up. He wore his clothes and opened the door, "What's the matter?"

Blockhead lead Zhao Hai to the living room and pointed to the monitor. Zhao Hai looked at it and nodded, he turned to Blockhead and said, "Go wake Shun, Shue, as well as Rockhead. No matter what, Ruyen is with us. It isn't good for her to suffer an accident now. I wouldn't have any words to tell Uncle Evan if Ruyen gets into harm."

After that, the two went out from the Space. They didn't wake Laura and the others, they couldn't help them anyway. They would only worry if they woke up.

In order to keep them secure, Shue, Shun and Rockhead didn't go to the Space to rest but just slept outside.

Zhao Hai directly appeared on the three men's tent. When the two appeared, Shue and the other two woke up. The trio was surprised to see Zhao Hai, Shue whispered, "Young Master, did something happen?"

Zhao Hai nodded, "Some people encircled us, they're probably after Ruyen. Shun, go inform Ruyen, make them prepare."

Shun complied then vanished from the tent. Zhao Hai didn't notice how he left, the tent's curtain didn't even move.

Zhao Hai brought up the image projected on the monitor and the group looked at it seriously. The team that came seem to not belong to any convoy. It looked like they had come down from the mountains, they number about 700 people.

Looking at their appearance, it was possible that they were mercenaries. They wore leather armor with varying types of weapons that looked like they were used for a long time. Some weapons even seemed to be damaged but not even replaced.

Zhao Hai looked at the situation and relaxed, "Looks like these people were waiting in ambush since this morning, just waiting for some fat sheep. But do we really look like fat sheep?"

When Shue, Blockhead and Rockhead hear what Zhao Hai said, they couldn't help but chuckle. Shue smiled and replied, "We're not, but Ruyen does."

The trio's reaction made Zhao Hai ask, "Why? Everything seems to add up, we only have a few people, while Ruyen has a hundred guards. What's wrong with that?"

Shue smiled faintly and said, "All travellers inside Lifeline know that only those with absolute confidence in their strength travel without guards. Our group only has two carriages and seem to have nobody acting as guards. Thus, for these mercenaries, only an idiot would not think that an expert was present inside one of the carriages. If these weak mercenaries provoke a hidden expert, they would only be courting death. Because of this, they didn't target us. But Ruyen was the exact opposite, she had a hundred guards with her, along with several carriages. Moreover, the mercenaries could see that the strength of her guards are only on par with them, so they branded Ruyen's group as fat sheep."

Zhao Hai smiled and said to Shue, "I didn't think that there's such a thing, but it seems right. Not counting anybody else, you alone number more than the group outside, if they come attack us they would certainly be courting death."

Shue smiled, to be honest, he was very satisfied with his capabilities. In the entire continent, the name Shue of a Thousand Shadows was very well-known.

At this time, the tent's curtain moved slightly, then Shun's form appeared inside. He told Zhao Hai, "Young Master, I've already informed Jill of the situation, they had prepared but they are not optimistic."

Zhao Hai thought for a moment and said, "Let's go out, make sure to prevent your weapons from making any noise, we don't want to alarm too many people." Shun nodded and held the tent curtain up, Blockhead and Rockhead walked out first, then Zhao Hai, and finally Shue.

When the group went out of the tent, Zhao Hai waved his staff lightly and a one meter diameter Fireball appeared at the top of the staff. Zhao Hai made the Fireball rise in mid-air, making sure the vicinity of their camp was well lit.

The mercenaries didn't expect Zhao Hai to immediately reveal his hand. While they were overwhelmed, Zhao Hai calmly said, "Dear friends, no need to hide, I want to speak to your representative."

The mercenaries made a ruckus, then a fully bearded man came out of the crowd. He glanced at Zhao Hai and then the Fireball. The man had extraordinary vision, and he can see from the Fireball that Zhao Hai had the power of at least a 7th rank mage. And 7th rank Fire element mages were especially an absolute nightmare for small mercenaries.

The bearded man walked up and bowed to Zhao Hai, "This one didn't know that mister is here. I ask mister to forgive us, we'll immediately retreat and not disturb mister's rest anymore."

Zhao Hai smiled faintly and said, "Good, very good. You and your people also didn't have it easy by coming out at night. Shue, give them 1,000 gold coins to buy drinks with."

Although Shue didn't understand what Zhao Hai was planning, he still turned around towards the tent and fetched a bag of coins. Inside the bag was exactly 1,000 gold coins. Shue took the bag and headed for the bearded man, then he placed the bag full of coins on the ground.

The bearded man examined Shue and finally wasn't able to stop himself from asking, "I'm not sure, but is mister Shue of a Thousand Shadows?"

Shue looked at the man and knit his brows. He doesn't seem to remember this person. He couldn't help but ask, "You know me?"

When the man heard Shue's confirmation, he couldn't help but reveal a panicked expression, "So it really was Mister Shue. Please forgive us Mister Shue. We really didn't mean to bother you this time."

Shue faintly smiled, "Forget it, this is a gift given by the Young Master. Go buy yourselves some drink. The young master's mood is good today and your responses have satisfied him, otherwise you people wouldn't be able to go back alive." Then he returned to Zhao Hai's side.

The bearded man didn't know if he should take the coin bag or not, the other people in his group were also helpless. Zhao Hai looked at the bearded man and said, "I have kindly given you this money, but you

cannot just take it. I don't want to be bothered this evening anymore. I'll have to trouble you to be my night guards. Are you willing?"

The bearded man froze, then he immediately said, "Of course, of course we're willing. Mister can rest assured, we guarantee that even a mosquito wouldn't be able to enter mister's tent."

Zhao Hai smiled faintly and said, "Good." Then he returned to his tent in silence.

Zhao Hai's move attracted the admiration of the other people in Lifeline Canyon. His move was too brilliant. First, he used his strength to shake the minds of the bandits then not only did he bribe them with money, he also hired them to be his night guards. This was a very clever method.

All the merchants who travel here knew that you shouldn't offend thieves and bandits inside Lifeline Canyon. Even if you are strong, it's also best not to offend them. Even if they weren't capable of fighting strong people, they had a lot of crooked ways to annoy you.

They can harass you at night, and even if you managed to defend, they could still make you suffer some losses. They could also find a way to direct magic beasts down the mountain to attack you. Without even using a single person, they could still make you suffer. One could say that these bandits were like insects, unless you exterminate them in one fell swoop, they would annoy and attack you constantly until you feel very uncomfortable.

There was also another reason why these merchants didn't dare offend the bandits inside Lifeline Canyon. These bandits were linked to some people inside Cold Wind Fortress and Hundred Battles Fortress, if you push them back too much, the garrison troops of the two fortresses may even cause you a bit of trouble, causing you to suffer more losses. So the general travellers in the canyon didn't dare to offend these bandits. They would regularly send some protection money to them so that they wouldn't be attacked.

This time, in this area, there were seasoned travellers of the canyon, and they could see at a glance that Zhao Hai's group were newcomers and had never passed by the canyon before. And looking at the strength of Zhao Hai's group, they wanted to know how they would deal with the bandits. Therefore, there were quite the number of people keeping track of Zhao Hai's campsite, looking at how they would deal with the situation.

These people didn't expect Zhao Hai to make such a brilliant move. With a thousand coins, they didn't only erase the crisis, they also developed some connections with the bandits. If they pass through this canyon again, these bandits would certainly give them some face.

Because of Zhao Hai's action, he managed to attract a lot of attention. They wanted to see where these people came from, their way of doing things was very unique.

That evening, nothing else happened inside Lifeline Canyon. The next morning, Zhao Hai got up and saw that the mercenary bandits were really acting as his night guards, moreover they were very spirited while doing so.

This was especially true for the bearded man, when he saw that Zhao Hai had come out, he immediately welcomed him with a salute, "Mister, you've woken up. We brothers should also leave now. I ask mister to take care, I can guarantee that as long as mister continues to use the same carriage to pass through, nobody would disturb mister."

Zhao Hai smiled faintly and said, "Good, you've worked hard. Right, I have something to give you, Blockhead, go get two bags of rations." When Blockhead heard the command, he went to their supply carriage and fetched two big bags of food, weighing a few hundred jin each, sufficient for these group to stuff themselves full a couple of times.

Blockhead placed the bags in front of the bearded man. Zhao Hai smiled and said, "These rations were made by the beastmen. If you want to consume it, just take a piece and add it to a pot to boil, then you can eat it. Don't underestimate these two bags of rations, the two of them were made from four agralis worth of meat each. These two bags should be enough for your brothers to eat for three or four meals. Take it, it's my small gift to you."

When the bearded man heard Zhao Hai, he couldn't help but be stunned for a moment. Then he gratefully said, "Thank you very much, Mister." Although these bandits weren't far from Cold Wind Fortress and Hundred Battles Fortress, they still need to control the roads and perform raids. So generally, they would live their lives in the wilderness, feeding on dry flatbread for food. Hearing about Zhao Hai's rations, they couldn't help but get happy, for them these rations were rare delicacies.

Zhao Hai didn't care about their reactions and only smiled, "Good, you can go. We should also be hurrying along." The bearded man called two brothers over to get the bags of food, then they bowed to Zhao Hai and retreated to the mountains.

At this time, Laura and the others walked out of the tent. Laura looked at Zhao Hai and smiled, "For bandits to be like this, it's my first time seeing it. Interesting."

Zhao Hai didn't say anything, he faintly smiled then replied, "It's not that easy. Forget it, let's eat something then let's get ready for the road."

At this moment Jill arrived, he bowed to Zhao Hai and said, "We thank Mister Wales for last night, the young lady has sent me to represent her in expressing our gratitude."

Zhao Hai waved his hand, "Forget it, it's only a small matter, no big deal. You guys should also get ready. We'll be on our way soon." Jill nodded then returned to their camp to get ready as they needed hurry along to arrive at Rosen Empire's territory.

Chapter 336 - Freewind Merchant Company

Soon, Zhao Hai's camp started being collected, after which they will immediately leave. But at this time, they saw a man walking towards their camp.

The person wore elegant garments, but not the type worn by Nobles. Although he wore commoner type clothes, Zhao Hai could see that the man had quite the temperament hidden inside. Additionally, if one were to closely investigate the material used to make his garment, one could see that it costs an entire year's worth of income for ordinary mercenaries.

Zhao Hai looked at the person walking towards him curiously, the person didn't bring a weapon and he wore a smile on his face, he didn't look like a threat.

Well aware of customs, the man stopped about 5 meters away from Zhao Hai's carriage and bowed to Zhao Hai as he said, "Mister, this one is Freewind Merchant Company's servant. I didn't have any other purpose coming today other than to wish to accompany mister on his travel. I don't know if mister can agree to this one's request?"

Zhao Hai was surprised, even though the man looked ordinary, his convoy wasn't small. Looking at it, Zhao Hai could count about more than 200 carriages.

The man looked at Zhao Hai's reaction and quickly added, "Mister, please don't misunderstand. We didn't offend any bandits inside the canyon. Our Freewind Merchant Company had a hundred years of history doing trades between Rosen Empire and Aksu Empire. I have become familiar with the other travellers in the canyon, this time, I wanted to accompany mister and get to know you, I bear no ill intent."

Zhao Hai looked at the man as he showed a faint smile and said, "Good, this is my first time travelling towards Rosen Empire and we don't know the local custom, so I may ask mister about them. This one's name is Wales, mister is?"

The man quickly replied, "This one is Freewind Merchant Company's servant, Storm. We'll follow mister immediately when mister's camp gets settled."

Zhao Hai faintly smiled then replied, "Very well, we'll go set out together, mister Storm." Storm smiled then returned to his convoy.

Zhao Hai didn't understand Storm's intentions. Why did he want to suddenly travel together with him. After entering his carriage, Zhao Hai asked Laura, "Laura, have you heard about Freewind Merchant Company?"

Laura nodded, "Of course I've heard of them. Freewind Merchant Company is a medium-sized company inside Rosen Empire. Their scale of operations isn't that big, they trade frequently between Rosen Empire and Aksu Empire, going back and forth. But because Purcell Duchy is quite far, their company's operations didn't reach there.

Zhao Hai nodded and asked again, "What about their reputation? We're currently going blind entering Rosen Empire. It would be great to have someone who clearly knows what's happening inside."

Laura nodded, "Their reputation is very good, their company is famous for their honesty and trustworthiness. Although they aren't a large-sized company between the Rosen and Aksu Empires, they're quite famous in the business community."

Zhao Hai smiled, "That's good, but why do you think they approached me this time? We didn't have any contact with them, and we only have two carriages. And seeing the carriages we use, it was clear that we don't intend to do business."

Laura smiled faintly, "Although we don't look like we're doing business, but you're someone who would become very important in the future. Don't forget that you've not only shown a power of a 7th rank, you also dealt with the bandits brilliantly. In addition to giving them some coins, you also had them act as your night guards, attracting admiration to you. How could they overlook such qualities?"

Zhao Hai smiled a little, "I just don't want to make enemies out of those mercenary bandits. Think about it, there were a lot of groups surrounding our camp, so it was impossible for their night guards to not notice the bandits. But why did they pretend to not see them? It clearly showed that there's some special relationships going on inside the canyon. Therefore, I chose to not offend those bandits."

Actually, when Zhao Hai saw these bandits, the first thing that came to his mind were those protection agencies (Biāojú) mentioned in novels back on Earth. The men from these agencies would set up an area where they'll ask for "protection money", they even inform travellers about their agency.

Just like what novels show, when erecting these agencies, one needs sufficient strength and background. One should make sure that they don't get underestimated, or else the people passing by your territory won't give you much face.

These bandits would steal goods from the canyon and sell them to either Cold Wind Fortress or Hundred Battles Fortress. It's impossible to think that these bandits have no relation to anyone inside those two places. Zhao Hai didn't reach Hundred Battles Fortress yet, and he didn't want to provoke the garrison there, so he decided to just give 1,000 gold coins to the bandits.

Naturally, Laura didn't have anything to say regarding this method. Even though 1,000 gold coins was a lot of money to ordinary people, to Laura and the group, those coins were just spare change. Spending 1,000 gold coins to establish rapport with the bandits, as well as having them act as their night guard was very well worth it.

As soon as their convoy departed, they heard a voice sounding out nearby, "Mister Wales, might I have the honor in inviting you inside my carriage? I have prepared some dishes as well as some fruit wine. How about having a drink?"

Zhao Hai smiled and turned to Laura, "I'll go and take a look." Then he laughed loudly and replied, "I was thinking the same thing." Then he opened his carriage door and walked outside.

As the carriage outside slowed down to a halt, Zhao Hai inspected it. The carriage was structurally the same as his, but this one was horse-drawn. And the horse wasn't any ordinary horse, but instead it was a flaming horse. Storm was sitting inside the carriage smiling at Zhao Hai.

The two carriages were close to each other, as long as one took a few strides they would arrive at the other carriage. Zhao Hai smiled and walked toward Storm.

Storm welcomed Zhao Hai to his carriage. The carriage's interior was similar to Zhao Hai's. All essential furniture were there, it seemed like this kind of design was quite famous in the continent.

On the carriage's table, there were four small dishes present as well as two glasses filled with wine. Zhao Hai looked at the dishes and they turned out to be magic vegetables popular in the continent. They were also cooked very well, although the quantity was small, the dishes looked very refined.

One must know that eating magic vegetables during winter was very hard for commoners to do. For the numerous commoners in the continent, they would only eat rice and pickled food during the winter, some even had no pickled food.

Zhao Hai didn't say anything, Laura once said that Freewind Merchant Company was a medium-sized company. Medium-sized companies held extraordinary status in the continent. Laura's Magic Lily Store back at Purcell Duchy, even though it had quite the number of customers, could only be classified as a small-sized company if placed on the continent's stage.

After Storm invited Zhao Hai to sit down, he held his wine glass and said, "Being able to meet mister on this journey was a kind of fated encounter, so let me offer this glass to mister, cheers." Zhao Hai also held his wine glass and clinked it with Storm's, "Cheers."

Taking a small sip of his liquor, Zhao Hai then placed it down and asked while smiling, "Why did Mister Storm suddenly want to travel with me today?"

Storm froze for a moment, he didn't think that Zhao Hai would go straight to the point, but he recovered and smiled, "The method that Mister used last night was very beautiful. I must be honest to mister, all the people in the canyon knew about these bandits. We saw that mister was a newcomer so we already knew that you would get raided tonight. However, mister handled the matter beautifully. When I saw it, my heart couldn't help but feel admiration."

Zhao Hai smiled, "Mister is too polite. Actually, it was quite easy for me to exterminate those bandits. But I'm afraid that they were related to some people inside Cold Wind Fortress and Hundred Battles Fortress, so I didn't dare make a move on them."

Storm nodded, "Mister is right. These bandits indeed have connections inside Cold Wind and Hundred Battles. Don't think that all of the loot that these bandits acquire would end up entirely as their belongings. Most of their earnings were handed over to the people inside the two fortresses. We're also aware of this kind of thing."

Zhao Hai was confused and asked, "But why do they do this? Isn't it just the same if they ask for tariffs directly at the fortress?"

Storm smiled faintly and replied, "Didn't you notice? Most of the convoys inside Lifeline Canyon belong to great nobilities. Do you think that the fortress garrison had any courage to ask for tariffs to these convoys? The bandits was the plan the garrison thought of in order to recoup their losses. Everyone understood this, so they couldn't just exterminate those bandits."

Zhao Hai nodded, he understood that what Storm said was the truth. One couldn't underestimate the power of the great nobilities in the continent. All the people who did so ended up dead. The great nobles indeed have the influence to prevent the garrison from asking them for tariffs.

So the easiest method to use were bandits. They would be the ones robbing small convoys passing through Lifeline as the garrison wouldn't be able to do so. Even if those great nobles think that using bandits were excessive, it was a good trade-off in exchange of being in conflict with the garrison because of tariffs.

Storm looked at Zhao Hai and smiled, "What does mister intend to do inside Rosen Empire? Looking at the emblem on your carriage, it looks like you're a person from Akus Empire's Purcell Duchy. And from those carriages behind you, it looks like they were from the Purcell Family's direct line. Am I right?"

Zhao Hai nodded, "Correct, I'm a viscount of Purcell Duchy. I came to do something in Sky Water City. The carriages behind me belonged to the Purcell Family's young lady. She's going to Carson City to study."

Storm began to nod and said, "Sky Water City is really a good place, being a port city, it's very good for trade. Moreover, the tax in the city is very low. Going there to do business is a good idea. If you want to do business there, you can tell me."

Chapter 337 - Hundred Battles Fortress

Zhao Hai knew that Storm was probing him, but he didn't care. He was indeed going to do business in Sky Water City, there's no need to hide it. He smiled and said, "It is as mister said, I want to do business there. But since it's still my first time, I wanted to go and see the place for myself first."

Storm smiled and said, "Sky Water City is indeed good. I wonder what kind of business Mister will do there?"

Zhao Hai smiled faintly and said, "I have some business in the Beastman Prairie and I don't want to sell at Purcell Duchy anymore. I want to go and see Sky Water City because I heard that there were ships heading to the prairie from there."

Storm didn't suspect a single word from Zhao Hai. There were a lot of merchants doing business between Rosen Empire and the prairie. There's nothing strange about it since doing business between Rosen Empire and the prairie was legal and the tax wasn't high. Unlike Aksu empire where merchants would resort to smuggling, going through a lot of trouble in order to pass through. So there were a lot of people who saw that doing business inside Rosen Empire was cheaper than in Aksu Empire and decided to transfer.

There's a reason for this. Rosen Empire and the prairie was divided by the Aksu Empire. So when the beastmen performed their raids, Aksu Empire would take the attack first. For the people in Rosen Empire, the prairie naturally wasn't a problem. So they didn't impose strict restrictions regarding trade there. But Aksu Empire needed to heavily restrict trade, because if they didn't do so, they end up helping the enemy beastmen instead.

So every year, there were many merchants migrating from Aksu Empire towards Rosen Empire to do business with the prairie. And as time passes and these merchants settle inside the empire, they would gradually become citizens.

Storm was curious about Zhao Hai's business. He looked at Zhao Hai and asked, "Mister has a business in the prairie? So are you quite close with the beastmen? Is business with the prairie quite profitable?"

Zhao Hai smiled, "Quite profitable, doing business with the prairie is quite good. Beastmen lack grains, commodities, basically everything. As long as you bring some of them in the prairie, you can bring cattle and argali back with you. But when those animals get to the continent, they would generally get sick, making it very difficult to take care of them. So we would slaughter them to be made into products. Wool products in the prairie are also good. They're quite in demand in the continent."

Storm's brow went up and asked Zhao Hai further, "But is there any risk doing business there?"

Zhao Hai replied, "Naturally, there are quite huge risks. Some beastmen may come and raid you at any time, but most of the time they would just steal some food, choosing not to kill anyone. However, most of them would do business with you. In the end, the legend of making easy money there isn't true."

Storm nodded, he agreed with Zhao Hai's words. Although you could make huge profits in the prairie, the risks were also equally huge. He had seen many merchants chasing business in the prairie but failed to do so.

Zhao Hai asked Storm about Rosen Empire. Storm wasn't stingy and told Zhao Hai everything he knew about the empire.

However, Storm's information was quite the same with what Shue said, so Zhao Hai didn't reap quite the harvest this time. The two people continued chatting while the carriage pushed forward. The road was also very peaceful.

Before long, their carriage began to slow down, Storm smiled at Zhao Hai and said, "We must have reached Hundred Battles Fortress. Everyone is lining up to enter, I will not hold Mister, I still need to pay tariffs. Mister also needs to register, you should go back and prepare."

Zhao Hai nodded and stood up to say goodbye to Storm, "Then I'll have to say my farewells. If you have time to go to Sky Water City, don't forget to find me, I may also go to Carson City."

Storm smiled and said, "After Hundred Battles Fortress, there are three roads. The middle road is headed towards Carson City. The left road is towards Sky Water city, while the right path heads to Buli City. I'm headed towards Buli City, so if mister ever heads there, you can look for me. As long as you look for Freewind Merchant Company and inquire for Storm, you will find me."

Zhao Hai nodded, "Good, I'll certainly visit when I have the opportunity. Well then, goodbye." He said as he opened the door and headed to his carriage. Zhao Hai didn't immediately enter his carriage but instead he looked at Hundred Battles Fortress.

Hundred Battles Fortress looked more impressive than Cold Wind Fortress. Its walls reached 25 zhang tall (~250 feet). The fort looked like a giant beast blocking the entire width of the canyon. The carriages entering and exiting the fortress looked like ants compared to the structure.

Zhao Hai didn't think that he would see such high walls in the continent. He couldn't understand how the people in Ark Continent was able to construct such wall.

However, when he thought about the mysterious magics, he relaxed. This world has Magic spells as well as Divergent Abilities, anything was possible here.

Looking at the carriages in front of him, there were actually thousands of them. He didn't know when their turn will come. But he didn't become impatient. He returned to the carriage to chat with Laura.

When Zhao Hai entered the carriage, Laura stood up and asked, "Brother Hai, how was it? What did Storm discuss with you?"

Zhao Hai laughed and said, "There wasn't anything noteworthy, we just chatted for a while. But it seems like you are right, he thought my method of dealing with the bandits was brilliant. Also, when I mentioned my business in the prairie, he became strangely less enthusiastic than normal people, it's quite strange."

Laura smiled, "Not all merchants in the continent liked doing business in the prairie, and Freewind Merchant Company is one. I heard that from the time they established their business up to the present, they didn't make a single trade with a beastman. Rumors said that the Freewind Company's founder had a grudge with beastmen."

Zhao Hai knit his eyebrows and said, "But Storm asked regarding doing business in the prairie just now. Can it be that they had a desire to do business in the prairie this time?"

Laura thought for a moment and said, "It's possible. In any case, in the eyes of an ordinary person, doing business in the prairie is very profitable. After abstaining for many years, it is normal if they couldn't help themselves from doing business with the beastmen."

Zhao Hai nodded and didn't say anything more. For Zhao Hai, Storm was only a fleeting person in his life. He was not sure if they would meet again in the future. He looked at Laura and said, "I think we need to send Ruyen to Carson City first. Then we'll head to Sky Water City. What do you think?"

Laura didn't object, she nodded and said, "That's also good, no matter what, she's still Uncle Evan's daughter. We should at least send her to Carson City and settle her down. We need to show extreme tolerance."

Zhao Hai agreed, "When we settle Ruyen, we'll send Uncle Evan a letter. Even if we complete the task, we won't know what she'll end up doing. If Ruyen offended someone at school, Uncle Evan couldn't do anything about it."

Laura sighed, this time it was Meg who expressed her opinion, "Young Master, I think that we should just go to Sky Water City directly. It's already good for her to get escorted here, everything from here on out depends on her. We should just leave Ruyen on her own, no need for us to take care of her."

Zhao Hai was silent, he knew that Meg hated Ruyen compared to Laura. This was because Ruyen refused first, giving Zhao Hai an awkward situation, which was the reason why Meg hated Ruyen.

Zhao Hai shook his head, "Forget it, we'll escort her to the very end." After he spoke, a voice came from outside, "To the people listening inside the carriage, please pay your tariff, and if you're not a Rosen Empire citizen, please have yourself registered."

Zhao Hai didn't do anything. These matters were for Shue and Shun to do, they didn't need to worry. No matter what, the garrison troops wouldn't embarrass them since they were still nobles. These small soldiers wouldn't dare go too far.

Shue paid two gold coins as tax and carried on with a simple registration, then they were allowed to continue on by the garrison. For Zhao Hai, two gold coins as tax was not cheap. There were only two carriages in their convoy, they actually took a coin for each carriage. The tax seemed quite too high.

He didn't know that this was because they were people from Aksu Empire. If they were Rosen Empire citizens, a silver coin would have been enough, nobles could even be exempt. But Aksu Empire nobles were not exempted from tax, actually it was quite opposite, they were taxed heavily.

Therefore, when Aksu Empire people did business inside Rosen Empire, they would rather buy a title inside the empire than use their identity as Aksu Empire citizens. This is also one method of Rosen Empire to attract citizens.

Before long, Zhao Hai's convoy entered Hundred Battles Fortress. Once they entered the fortress, Zhao Hai opened his window and looked out. Unlike Cold Wind Fort, where the roads looked very ruined and mercenaries in full armor were ever present, Hundred Battles fortress' streets were very neat. There were shops on both sides of the street. Pedestrians were hurrying along, looking very lively. Comparing here and Cold Wind Fortress was like comparing two vastly different worlds with each other.

Zhao Hai didn't plan to immediately leave Hundred Battles Fortress, he wanted to recuperate here for one evening and then go take a walk tomorrow and take in the customs of the people in Rosen Empire.

Since Cold Wind Fortress had a branch of Shelley Hotel, it was impossible for Hundred Battles Fortress to not have one. So when they were choosing where they would stay, they went directly towards Shelley Hotel.

However, when he arrived at the hotel, Zhao Hai noticed a difference. At Cold Wind City, the Shelley Hotel there was very good and business was booming. But here at Hundred Battles Fortress, the business seemed to be bleak. It looked like this hotel branch was failing.

However, the attendant of the hotel was very enthusiastic, even more than the one back at Cold Wind City. They immediately booked accommodations for Zhao Hai's group. Even their magic beasts were taken care of. This made Zhao Hai feel very comfortable.

Chapter 338 - Spies

Ruyen also followed Zhao Hai's decision to stay at Shelley Hotel. All this time, Ruyen was a bit too behaved. Her silence made Zhao Hai uneasy and wondering what kind of schemes she was concocting.

The group entered their suite. When they sat down, Zhao Hai turned to Shue and Shun, "Shue. Shun, you guys go and find out what's going on in this Shelley Hotel. Find out why this business looks very bleak and empty." The two nodded then walked away.

Laura looked at Zhao Hai and asked, "Why do we need to know? Even if there's a problem, it's Shelley Family's matter. What does this have to do with us?"

Zhao Hai smiled and said, "I want to find out which business managed to choke Shelley Family. If that person belongs to Rosen Empire, we may need to keep our eyes open, as such person isn't ordinary. Since we may even get to meet them in the future, it's better to have prior knowledge."

Laura thought for a moment and nodded, "You're right, people who dared contest the Shelley Family couldn't be simple. For these huge business companies, there are many ways other than pure commercial prowess in competing for the market. If they wouldn't use their other, easier, means, then wouldn't they just be wasting resources?"

Zhao Hai nodded, "So I have to pay attention to who is competing with Shelley Hotel. In any case, we're already inside Rosen Empire, and we cannot continue staying in Purcell duchy, other than here, we don't have any other more suitable place in the continent to stay in."

Laura agreed, "If we're unable to stay here as well as in the Purcell Duchy, I'm afraid we only have to stay inside the Beastman Prairie."

Zhao Hai smiled faintly, "Well, to be honest, I actually liked associating with the beastmen. Mostly because they don't have so much plotting minds as the Humans."

Laura smiled and said, "I also like hanging out with them, they're simpler and didn't overthink about everything. Right, Brother Hai, didn't you say that Ruyen had been quiet lately, probably plotting? Are you sure?"

Zhao Hai shook his head, "I cannot understand that woman's mind. Forget it, we'll just drop her off in Carson City, then we'll set off. She couldn't mess with us any longer after that."

At this time, a knock could be heard at the door. Blockhead immediately went forward and asked, "Who is it?"

Jill's voice could be heard from outside, "Jill seeks an audience with Mister Wales."

Blockhead turned to Zhao Hai, Zhao Hai nodded, then Blockhead opened the door and asked Jill to come in. Jill looked at Laura and the others and froze for a moment, logically, from Laura and the other's status, they shouldn't be allowed to sit along with Zhao Hai. But he didn't care about that this time, he gave a salute to Zhao Hai and said, "Mister, the young lady wants to ask mister whether you'll still be travelling with us?"

Zhao Hai stared for a moment, then he nodded, "Yes. We will go to Carson City first, then head towards Sky Water City. Why did you ask?"

Jill gave a bow to Zhao Hai and said, "There's nothing, Jill wants to thank mister wales. Her highness was not sensible and have angered mister. Please forgive her."

Zhao Hai shook his head, "Consider that matter finished, this time I'll let it go in respect for Grand Duke Evan's face. I don't care about what she did, but I hope that she won't bother me in the future. To be honest, when I told the Grand Duke about what she did, he told me to just leave her alone. But I didn't do it, but only this time. I hope that Ruyen doesn't go and challenge my bottom line, otherwise I wouldn't be polite. I don't care about the title, I'm just grateful for the Grand Duke. But this does not mean that I'll compromise my safety in exchange for her amusement."

Zhao Hai knew that Jill was sent by Ruyen to find out about his mood. So he simply explained the matter that if Ruyen went too far next time, he wouldn't be polite anymore.

Hearing Zhao Hai, Jill sighed inside. He understood Zhao Hai's temperament, he knew that Zhao Hai didn't care about Ruyen's identity. Zhao Hai didn't make a move previously simply because of his relationship with the Grand Duke. If the young lady continues to annoy him, Jill wouldn't know what will happen.

Zhao Hai sighed as he looked at Jill's appearance, "Go back, I know Ruyen wouldn't listen to your words anyway. No matter what, we'll send her to Carson city first. I'm sure the Grand Duke already informed you, Carson City is different from Casa City, although they only differ by one word, the quality of people present differ by a thousand folds. If she can't fix her attitude, her life will be hell. Don't think that you're smart, nobody in this world is stupid. You can leave."

Jill complied, he bowed and headed out. Looking at the door closing on Jill, Zhao Hai couldn't help but sigh, "For Jill to follow such a master, he really is unlucky."

Laura forced a smile, "Actually, young lady Ruyen's situation is very common among the nobility. People like Fernand are already considered good. I heard that there is even something known as a "noble's right of the first night" inside their territories.

Zhao Hai blinked his eye and asked Laura, "Do we have that sort of thing?"

Laura nodded, then Zhao Hai smiled, "Then when we're in our territory, let's do that."

Laura knew that Zhao Hai was joking, She looked at Zhao Hai and said, "Alright, as long as you work hard."

Zhao Hai smiled and said, "Forget it, I still want to live comfortably for two years. But these nobles really are a bit too outrageous. We should never allow that to happen inside our territory in the future."

Laura smiled, "That place is our territory. It'll be what we want it to be."

At this time, another set of knocks could be heard from the door. But this time, it was Shue and Shun who came in. They both gave Zhao Hai a salute then said their report, "Young Master, we asked around, Shelley Hotels have always been like this inside Rosen Empire. Inside Rosen Empire, people are more willing to settle inside Lion Hotels. The Lion Hotel chain was opened by Rosen Empire's Grand Duke Lionheart. He's one of the most powerful grand duke inside the empire, so he didn't need to fear the Shelley Family."

Zhao Hai nodded, it was the typical domestic force versus international force. Seeing that the Shelley Family's headquarters wasn't inside Rosen Empire, it was understandable for Grand Duke Lionheart to go head to head with them, even gaining the upper hand inside his home empire. Even though the Shelley Family can be considered as a strong power, a powerful dragon cannot defeat the local snake. Additionally, Grand Duke Lionheart wasn't the local snake, he was the local dragon.

Laura turned to Shue and said, "Good, you two take a rest. We also need to get up early tomorrow. Also, go tell the hotel to prepare some food for us to eat."

Before ending their conversation, Shun interjected, "Young Master, Madam, I heard those who settled inside this Shelley Hotel had met bad luck. Do we need to pay attention?"

Zhao Hai and Laura froze, Laura looked at Shun and said, "Really? Is this information accurate?"

Shun nodded, "It should be true. I heard that when someone from Rosen Empire once stayed inside the hotel, they suffered an accident later on. Because of this, the hotel's business became dismal."

Zhao Hai calmed down, then he said, "We just arrived at Rosen Empire but it seems like we already offended someone we shouldn't. But isn't Grand Duke Lionheart going too far? Can Shelley Family just turn a blind eye to this?"

Laura shook her head and said, "They definitely won't, Shelley Family's power and influence is much bigger than Grand Duke Lionheart. They obviously couldn't turn a blind eye, but it seems that they couldn't counter-attack yet at this time. It seems like our days ahead wouldn't be smooth."

Zhao Hai looked at Laura and said, "What this Grand Duke Lionheart is doing is so excessive, I think that Shelley Family's counterattack would be tough. If they couldn't overthrow Lionheart, it would be their downfall. We're only accessories, but I want to find out how they would deal with us."

Laura smiled and turned to Zhao Hai, "Brother Hai, do you think that the Shelley Family will use our Milk Wine for their counter-attack?"

Zhao Hai froze, he didn't think of this, but when Laura said it, there could really be a possibility for it to be so. He smiled and said, "Well, if it isn't used, we'll just continue selling. We can't control any other aspect of their dispute."

Laura waved her hand and said, "Alright, you two go on. You don't need to worry about this." Shue and Shun gave their affirmation and then turned away.

Zhao Hai looked at Blockhead and said, "Blockhead, go inform Jill about this and make them prepare. I'm afraid that the road ahead wouldn't be peaceful."

Blockhead nodded, then he walked out. Zhao Hai looked at Laura and said, "What method do you think the Grand Duke's men will use against us? We just arrived from Aksu Empire, they shouldn't be too excessive right?"

Laura shook her head, "I'm uncertain about that, Grand Duke might just have ordered his men to teach the residents a lesson. But it isn't easy to know what his subordinate might do. In any case, we're in some trouble. If it was just any noble from Rosen Empire, they might hold back, but we're from Aksu Empire, we didn't have any influence here. We aren't afraid of them if they move against us in the dark. What I'm afraid of is that they'll use their authority inside Rosen Empire to deal with us. If that happens, then it won't be easy for us to solve it."

Zhao Hai nodded and frowned, "We're Aksu Empire nobles, would they dare accuse us of crime?"

Laura forced a smile and said, "They will, Rosen Empire citizens think that they're above all others. For them to pin some charges on us isn't impossible."

Zhao Hai was helpless, "If they really dared, then we'll make a fuss. Not only am I a Viscount, I'm also a tri-element Mage. Let's see how they'll handle us then."

Laura nodded, "Right, Mages aren't easy to offend inside the continent. If they really wanted to give us trouble, then we'll reciprocate their efforts."

At this time, Blockhead came back. Zhao Hai looked at him and said, "How was it? Did you send the message?"

Blockhead nodded, "I've told Jill, they prepared themselves, but they're evidently quite worried."

Zhao Hai nodded, "Telling them is enough. You also go and rest, tomorrow we'll leave Hundred Battles Fortress. When we leave, I want to see how the Grand Duke's men deals with us."

However, it was a pity that the Grand Duke's men didn't give him that opportunity. They didn't wait for Zhao Hai to leave the next day. They came immediately.

While Zhao Hai's group was eating at the dining hall after resting for a while, sounds of conflict could be heard outside the hotel. Zhao Hai couldn't help but stare at the commotion. Shun immediately went out to find out what's happening, when he came back, he went to Zhao Hai and said, "Young Master, a lot of cavalry came to get you. They said that you are a spy sent by Aksu Empire. The hotel staff stopped them at the entrance."

Zhao Hai stared blankly, then he turned to Laura and smiled slightly, "I didn't expect them to arrive so soon. We should go and take a look. There are people who came to grab us." Then he got up, Laura and the others also closely followed him behind.

Ruyen, who was sitting at another table, was listening to Shun's report. When she saw Zhao Hai's reaction, she knew that it was related to what Jill informed her later. Ruyen couldn't stop herself and stood up to take a look at the situation. She wanted to see how Zhao Hai was going to deal with this matter.

Before long, everyone arrived at the hotel's lobby. As soon as they arrived, they heard a sly voice outside, "Shelley Hotel's attendants, do you really want to shelter an enemy spy?"

A calm voice responded, "No matter who he is, he entered our hotel and thus became our guest. Before he leaves our hotel, nobody could enter and disturb him. Who dares to do so would be waging war with our Shelley Family."

The impudent voice laughed and said, "And how would your Shelley Family wage war? Is the Shelley Family too powerful to circumvent the empire's laws? Know your limitation, or else we won't be polite."

The calm voice replied, "Shelley Hotel certainly follows the empire's laws, but we didn't receive any notification that the guest was a spy before he settled in our hotel. Therefore, he is a legitimate guest at our hotel. And we cannot allow you to bother our guests."

Right to the first smash

Chapter 339 - Retreating

Zhao Hai stood at the hotel's lobby quietly. He didn't expect the Shelley Hotel to be this protective even here. They really didn't want to compromise the safety of their guests.

Zhao Hai took a deep breath and calmly headed outside. As he arrived at the door, he noticed at least more than a thousand cavalry soldiers outside, 2 meters away from the hotel's perimeter. They wore fine steel full body armor, carrying a kite shield at their back, and had a sheathed double-handed broadsword on their waists. Additionally, they had knight's spears inserted on their saddles, with a triangular flag accessory on the spearhead that looked eye catching when blown by the wind.

The horse that they rode in were also extraordinary. Although they were horses, all of them were nearly four meters tall with a pure black body. There were two curved long horns on their head as well as red eyes, they looked very terrifying.

Zhao Hai remembers that he had read about these kinds of magic beasts in the compendium. They were 5th rank horse-type magic beasts with a simple name, Devil Horses! They had the dark attribute, can be as tall as six meters, with high magic talent. They can cast blood magic's 'Siphon', dark element spells 'Weaken', 'Slow', and 'Confusion', they're very difficult to deal with.

Zhao Hai also noted the saddles the cavalry used, they were specially designed with two stirrups on both sides, allowing for easier mounting.

When the leading knight saw Zhao Hai, he didn't take note of him. For the knight, Zhao Hai was just merely a tool used to cause trouble with Shelley Hotel. Even if Zhao Hai didn't come today, they would still find trouble with the hotel.

In his mind, he didn't have any beef with Zhao Hai, only with the hotel. He needed something or someone as an excuse, as to whoever they used, he didn't care.

But he didn't know that he just offended someone he shouldn't. He thought that the other party as just a pawn that he could use casually and then discard at will. He didn't expect that this piece he used today would be covered with thorns.

Zhao Hai looked at the knight and said, "I heard that you are looking for me? May I know why?"

The knight turned his head to Zhao Hai and demanded, "Wales, you're suspected for being a spy, you'll have to come with us." The knight understood Shelley Hotel clearly. He knew that the hotel will not let him take their guests easily. As the matter stands, he has no way to trash the hotel, but the resident can be coaxed to leave.

Zhao Hai looked at the knight and smiled faintly, "I am an Aksu Empire noble, what evidence do you have to prove that I am indeed a spy? If you don't have one, then I'll assume that the Rosen Empire is insulting my Aksu Empire's nobles. It will surely develop into a diplomatic dispute."

The Knight didn't care about Zhao Hai's words, he shouted, "Don't waste your breath, you're in Rosen Empire so you'll need to follow the customs of the empire. Obediently follow us, or else it would be messy."

Just as the hotel attendant was about to say something. Zhao Hai's face sank, "Sir Knight has such great courage, what a pity that you annoyed someone you shouldn't annoy". Upon hearing Zhao Hai's words, the knight couldn't help but stare at Zhao Hai. This was because he couldn't see anything special in him.

At the same time, Zhao Hai waved his staff and one giant golem after another started to appear. In the end, there were more than 20 of them.

When the Knight saw what just happened, his complexion sank. He didn't think that Zhao Hai was a mage, with a high rank at that. Being able to summon this many stone golems without muttering a spell was an amazing feat.

The Knight grabbed his spear and reached for his shield. At the same time he commanded, "Prepare to meet the enemy! Go backwards and prepare the formation."

The knights behind him were obviously well-trained. They quickly prepared like the head knight and drove their mounts to slowly retreat. They slowly drew back and prepared for a sufficient distance for a charge. For heavy cavalry like them, the might of their charges were quite formidable. At minimum, their charge would be able penetrate at least five layers of infantry.

Zhao Hai waved his staff a second time and with a soft voice he said, "Bind!". Strands of wind immediately wrapped around the mount's legs, making them very sluggish. The Cavalry's movements suddenly slowed considerably.

The head Knight's face sank even more. He was a veteran soldier who had experienced a lot of battles. He knew that Zhao Hai just used wind element magic, making him a dual-element mage. No matter where they were, this was a type of person that a small knight like him can't afford to offend.

Unfortunately for him, Zhao Hai's spectacle hasn't ended yet. Zhao Hai waved his staff a third time and said, "Engulf!". The knights, who were slowly retreating, were suddenly surrounded by a huge fiery circle. The fires were roaring, were about a meter high, and seemed to get closer bit by bit, it looked extremely menacing.

Most magic Beasts, with the exception of those with fire attribute, were terrified of fire. When the fires came out, the knights' mounts immediately felt hesitant. But since they were well trained mounts, they calmed down after a time of coaxing. However, the head knight's complexion was extremely ugly, he knew that he just offended a tri-element mage.

Zhao Hai coldly looked at the Knight and in a deep voice he said, "Stop, if you dare move, I won't be polite."

The head knight knew that Zhao Hai was serious. If Zhao Hai really wanted to deal with them, he wouldn't trap them here. He could just have the stone golems directly attack.

The Knight stopped and bowed to Zhao Hai, "We have offended mister, please forgive me. This time it was a misunderstanding, a false report might have been given. Please forgive us."

Zhao Hai looked at the head knight, "Good, since you said so I wouldn't hold you for much longer. I just don't want to be disturbed again. You can go." Then he waved his hand as the stone golems, binding spell, and the fiery circle vanished.

Seeing Zhao Hai retrieve his spells, the head knight could help but release a sigh of relief. He bowed to Zhao Hai and said, "I thank mister, myself and the others will now excuse ourselves." He said as he gave a signal for the others to retreat.

Zhao Hai didn't want to give these knights a heavy punishment. He was clear that he was currently inside Rosen Empire, and their status was that of Aksu Empire citizens. If they had a deep conflict with the knights, he feared that the Rosen Empire wouldn't let him off lightly.

He also knew that the other party only came to cause trouble for the hotel and not to him. Naturally, the other party also wouldn't want to offend a formidable Mage.

Looking at the retreating cavalry, the hotel manager immediately went to Zhao Hai and bowed, "Thanks a lot mister. It was our mistake to disturb mister's rest, please let the payment for mister's room be our apology."

Zhao Hai showed a faint smile and said, "Manager doesn't need to be too polite, me and your Shelley hotel could be said to have a little friendship. I had some dealings with Manager Illin from Sarte City, so we could say that I have some connections to the hotel."

Hearing Zhao Hai, the manager couldn't help but stare as though he remembered something. He immediately expressed his happiness and said, "So you were that Mister Wales, I had been very rude to mister, please forgive me." Then he invited Zhao Hai back to the hotel.

After Zhao Hai had his meal, he was invited to the manager's office and sat down. Upon sitting down, the manager immediately said, "Mister Wales, let me introduce myself. My name is Fuin, the manager for Hundred Battles Fortress' Shelley Hotel. A few days ago, I had actually received a message from Illin saying that we had a cooperation with mister Wales. But since there were a lot of things currently going on in my branch, I didn't manage to pay mister any attention, I ask mister to forgive me."

Zhao Hai showed a faint smile and said, "Manager Fuin shouldn't be too polite. I only intend to pass through here, it's no big deal, Manager doesn't need to worry about it."

Fuin smiled as he replied, "No matter what, we had been rude. Along with Illin's message, he asked us to pay special attention to mister, he said that mister doesn't need to pay as long as he stays at our hotels. I had been very busy lately so I didn't notice mister's arrival. In a sense, I had to thank those knights, or else I wouldn't know that mister has arrived. Hehe. If I didn't know, Illin would never forgive me for asking for mister's money. He certainly wouldn't let me off."

Zhao Hai smiled, "Manager is too kind. We're immediately heading to Carson City tomorrow, no need to trouble yourself."

Fuin wore an apologetic face as he talked to Zhao Hai, "Mister Wales, I'm afraid that your travels this time would be a bit troublesome. A strong power inside the empire had been looking for trouble with us. This time, mister offended those knights, so they might retaliate. The person who wanted to get rid of us has a very high standing inside Rosen Empire. I fear that he wouldn't just let mister off lightly, so he might bother mister quite often. I ask mister to forgive us."

Zhao Hai smiled faintly, "You're talking about Grand Duke Lionheart right? Be relieved, we've already mentally prepared ourselves. Nothing bad will happen to us, manager Fuin doesn't need to worry too much. Right, manager, I have to go back and rest. We still need to leave tomorrow." Then he stood up and left after assuring Fuin to not worry.

Fuin didn't think that Zhao Hai would know that the person giving the hotel its troubles was Grand Duke Lionheart. Fuin felt the depth of Zhao Hai's capabilities.

Fuin had known that Zhao Hai hadn't visited Rosen Empire before. He just arrived at Hundred Battles Fortress for less than a day and immediately knew that Grand Duke Lionheart was the hotel's rival? Did he have his own information agency inside Rosen Empire?

Fuin thought that the family needed to be informed about this. Their previous information regarding Wales was quite lacking. Zhao Hai's origin was a mystery, but they were sure that him and Purcell Family had some sort of connection. But now it seemed that it wasn't entirely like what it was. At the very least, Purcell Duchy's arms shouldn't be able to reach Rosen Empire.

Chapter 340 - Planning

Actually, Zhao Hai deliberately mentioned Grand Duke Lionheart to Fuin. He wanted to make Fuin think that he's not clueless about everything, making his image in Fuin's mind a bit blurry. It's a simple trick.

Sometimes people speak a little, but sometimes speaking more can achieve the same result. Just like what Zhao Hai had done, just by mentioning that he knew about Grand Duke Lionheart, he made Fuin wonder even more about his origins. This was done so that the next time he and Shelley Hotel does business, he wouldn't be underestimated.

When he returned to his room, Zhao Hai was met by a frowning Laura, "Brother Hai, although we made the cavalry retreat, it's possible that they wouldn't just let us off lightly. We need to make proper preparations just in case."

Zhao Hai showed a faint smile and said, "Of course they wouldn't just leave it like that. Even if the cavalry is fine with us, the Grand Duke wouldn't, be especially when a lot of people heard the conversation between me and Fuin about my business with Shelley Family. When he hears about this, the Grand Duke surely wouldn't just sit still. But as long as he doesn't use official means to deal with us, I'm not afraid of him."

Laura continued to frown, "You also intentionally told Fuin the fact that we're on the same side as the Shelley Family. Even though Lionheart didn't have an initial intention to give us trouble, now he really had to, forcing us to fully side with Shelley Family."

Zhao Hai smiled, "Actually this isn't a bad thing, we didn't need to befriend the Grand Duke anyway. Moreover, the methods he works with were extremely overbearing, I don't want to work with him. Although the Shelley Family is a bit calculating, relatively speaking, their way of doing business is quite modest. We will not suffer losses working with them. I intentionally revealed our connection with the family so that when the Grand Duke decides to deal with us, the family would feel restless. With this, our relationship with them might get even closer."

Laura relaxed when she heard Zhao Hai's intentions, but she still couldn't help but worry, "But is it really good to offend Lionheart just as we entered Rosen Empire? What would happen if Shelley Family loses the fight against the Grand Duke?"

Zhao Hai smiled faintly as he replied, "Right now, we're currently gambling that Shelley Family would win. If they did, our cooperation with them will advance further. And if they lose, it doesn't matter to us, don't forget that we're headed towards Sky Water City. We can rely on our connection with the Calci Family as fellow members of the league. And with Bell's introduction, the Calci Family would certainly act as middlemen in the conflict, I don't think Grand Duke will overreach his bounds just for us."

Laura saw that Zhao Hai had already thought this through, she nodded and said, "What about Ruyen? If the Grand Duke couldn't deal with us, wouldn't he cause trouble for Ruyen?"

Zhao Hai nodded, "It's possible, but no matter what, Ruyen is the Purcell Duchy's princess. Moreover, she came this time to study. I heard that Rosen Empire's institute holds a high standing inside the nation, I think Ruyen will be fine."

Laura nodded. Even though she didn't like Ruyen, she still needs to consider Evan, thus they just can't ignore Ruyen's well-being.

Although Zhao Hai has stated his speculations, Laura was still worried, "What if they cause trouble inside the institute? She's still a young lady unfamiliar with her surroundings and needs help. I'm afraid that she wouldn't be able to find help when she wants to. If something were to happen to her, we wouldn't be able to face Grand Duke Evan."

Zhao Hai sighed, "We really can't help her. Actually, Uncle Evan had her travel far away because he wanted to develop her sense of independence. If everyone was going to help her, Uncle Evan's purpose would have failed."

Laura stared for a moment, she actually forgot about this. She nodded in agreement, the Grand Duke indeed intends to have Ruyen exercise relying only on herself. If they go and help her in her every need, then there's no difference between having her in Casa City or Carson City.

That night, Zhao Hai's surroundings were very calm. The cavalry didn't find any more trouble with them. But now, every merchant inside Hundred Battles fortress have at least heard of Zhao Hai's name. When they were inside Lifeline Canyon, they already knew that Zhao Hai was a 7th rank Fire element Mage. But they didn't think that Zhao Hai's true strength was much more than that.

These merchants became more and more curious of Zhao Hai. He had strength as well as intelligence. All of these buzz made Zhao Hai akin to a firefly in the dark, but more dazzling than that.

The other large forces also began to pay attention to these people who they had never heard before. These large forces knew that they had no chance of pulling Zhao Hai over to their side, but they still wanted to know about him. So that if by chance they manage to get in conflict with him in the future, they may have some ideas on how to deal with him.

Zhao Hai didn't know that these forces had already began to pay attention to him. He thought that he didn't merit such huge attention. The next morning, the group had their breakfast, and under Fuin's farewells, left Hundred Battles Fortress and advanced towards the direction of Carson City.

Ruyen still kept her low profile while on the road. Now, Zhao Hai wasn't worrying about what she would do. Anyway, as long as they manage to escort her to Carson City, their task would have been finished.

Rosen Empire's territory was very large, and their population isn't small either. Therefore, there was no worry for Zhao Hai's group in finding places to stay the night. Shue had spent time in the empire before, so Zhao Hai had him lead the way. They didn't hurry along, instead they moved slowly to better understand Rosen Empire's situation.

At the same time, Zhao Hai was also very vigilant from the time they left Hundred Battles Fortress. They managed to offend those cavalries, so they shouldn't just allow Zhao Hai's group to leave, more so Grand Duke Lionheart who was behind those cavalry.

Even though Zhao Hai hadn't met with Grand Duke Lionheart, he knew about the overbearing methods the Grand Duke usually used. Such overbearing person couldn't even tolerate disobedient subordinates, not to say Zhao Hai who slapped his face.

Furthermore, with Fuin and Zhao Hai showing their amicable relations, looking like long time friends. Lionheart would surely assume Zhao Hai to be Shelley Family's friend, exclusively helping Shelley Hotel.

Looking at these facts, it was a definite fact that the Grand Duke will certainly find ways to deal with them.

After leaving Hundred Battles Fortress, Zhao Hai felt that the atmosphere wasn't quite right. The road from Hundred Battles Fortress to Carson City should be very busy at this time, but instead they couldn't see a single person, the scene closely resembled the Black Wastelands.

Zhao Hai knew that there were people who wanted to confront them. He just didn't think that they would go as far as emptying out the entire road just to deal with him. As long as one wasn't a complete idiot, it would be very clear as to why those people would do this.

Zhao Hai looked at the situation and immediately had Laura and the others enter the Space. At the same time he had Blockhead go on standby, he also had someone inform Ruyen of the situation. Ruyen's group became very serious, they knew that their strengths fell short compared to Zhao Hai.

Two hours after leaving Hundred Battles fortress, they still didn't receive any attacks. Not only did they not receive any attacks, they also didn't meet a single person. This situation brought great pressure to the group. They were tense since they didn't know when the enemy would attack.

They still aren't that far from Kolan Mountain Range, so the area was still very hilly. Oftentimes, there would be two hills on both sides of the road. Although the hills weren't that high, the everpresent trees on the hills were tall and lush, which was a sufficient area to wait for an ambush.

Of the group, Ruyen's guards were the most tensed while Zhao Hai fared better, he sat down inside his carriage gazing at the monitor. If there was to be an ambush nearby, he should be able to detect it.

After another two hours, he still didn't see a single person on the monitor. This made Zhao Hai confused, he didn't expect the other party to have this much patience. After more than two hours, they still managed to keep their hands.

But at this time, the monitor suddenly showed green spots. The green spots were very dense and seem to contain thousands of people. They were placed on the hills on both sides of the road.

Zhao Hai stared for a moment before he pulled the monitor closer. He saw that the other party was a Magic Beast Heavy Cavalry unit. They wore full body armor, carried a shield on their backs, had their greatswords on their sheaths as well as their spears. They were positioned on the slopes on the sides of the hills. It seemed that they were waiting at a distance for their exhausted prey to arrive.

The knights on the hillside didn't bother to hide themselves. They just stood there with their shining armors that Zhao Hai could see them easily. It seemed like they want to attack Zhao Hai's group in a straightforward manner.

Seeing the situation, Zhao Hai immediately gave his ghost staff to a blood hawk and had it fly to the sky. He wanted to make sure that there weren't any other troops laying in ambush. If there weren't any, he could safely prepare his own counterattack.

The hawk flew at a large circle around their location and didn't spot any other ambush, only these cavalry. It seems like they had extreme confidence that they could kill Zhao Hai, so they didn't prepare any other ambush. This decision helped Zhao Hai since he didn't need to make any other complicated plans, he wanted to have his own Fighting Bull undead cavalry appear. With the upgrades they received, they could be considered as the most elite type of Magic Beast cavalry in the entire continent.