

Carefree 841

Chapter 841: Dearborn

The Golden Sea Route was the paradise of adventurers.

Ever since the beginning of the Great Voyage Era, pirate ports proliferated and the number of pirates increased.

Some ports only accepted pirates, and they were particularly targeted by the navies of various countries.

And some ports were purely known for their high level of freedom. They allowed pirates to enter very easily, but public order was still extremely well-preserved in the ports.

These were typically the best places for pirates to sell off the goods they had plundered and spend on entertainment. The pirates brought endless fortune and business opportunities to the ports.

Every grain of pepper from the Spice Archipelago was worth one gold coin, but pirates would sell the pepper at two or three silver coins per grain. The goods could then be sold again at double the original price!

The attraction of 100% profits allowed these private ports to survive and thrive.

For these enormous profits, those port owners could become connected to great noble families and even royal families, thereby concentrating strong powers.

Even navies would not dare eliminate such a port unless they wanted to make half the world their enemies!

“Dearborn Port!”

Mockingbird dragged the merchant ship and slowly sailed toward the port.

Through a spyglass, Fang Yuan saw a good port built beside mountains and water. It was surrounded by many ships, and numerous buildings could be seen on the mountains.

“This is the Dearborns’ private port. The first Viscount Dearborn was a great voyager. He acquired this island after retiring from the navy and built Dearborn Port here, which is now the entire family’s greatest source of income!”

Bill murmured to Fang Yuan obsequiously, “Of course... this is only a lie told to the public. The Dearborn family is merely a tool used to launder money. At the very least, the traces of a duke can be found involved in the commercial activities of this port, and it has deep connections with the palace! Therefore, the navy seldom interferes unless wanted pirates blatantly appear here or there’s any large-scale public disorder.”

“Hmm! As long as it’s safe.”

Fang Yuan was not surprised at all because he had witnessed many cases where exalted nobles had covertly groomed men to launder money and participate in illegal trade indirectly.

“Safety is definitely not an issue. All fights are forbidden within twenty nautical miles of Dearborn Port. Otherwise, they’ll become enemies with the entire Dearborn Family! And they’ll definitely offend the navy as well!” Bill said while thumping his chest.

Although the pirates in this world were powerful, the navies of Ettoman and other large coastal countries were by no means useless.

For example, the navy of Ettoman was known to have the largest fleet in the world, and it could be expanded without limit when necessary.

Even pirate governors would not want to offend such powerful navies and wage war against them.

In fact... even a pirate governor with legendary pirate ships may not be able to defeat the Ettoman Royal Navy... Fang Yuan thought silently. In this world, the relationships between pirates and navies as well as between pirates and countries are indeed profoundly intriguing.

However, nobody seems to have noticed the nuance. Perhaps I can catalyze the change...

These subordinates were not all he had. He still had other people concealed in Ettoman and various pirate teams.

This was sufficient for him to accomplish many things at the right time.

Bill watched the ship enter the dock and advised Fang Yuan about the port. “Captain... Dearborn Port isn’t a pure pirate port. The ship behind us belonged to the Rose Chamber of Commerce, which is run by nobles, so it may be somewhat troublesome to sell the goods. Moreover, this place isn’t very suitable for selling that captive...”

If he had been the navigator, he would definitely not have chosen this port.

But what could he do after Fang Yuan had given the order? As a second officer who had just been promoted, he had to do anything ordered by the captain, no matter how dangerous it was.

“Hmm... I understand!” Fang Yuan nodded and said calmly, “Even if we can’t sell the goods, we can still rest here temporarily to replenish other resources and manpower!”

Having just been through two fierce battles, his subordinates were in dire need of a place to relax and recuperate.

Although Dearborn Port was unsuitable for other things, it was the closest one to them.

An armed merchant ship dragging a large ship immediately attracted a lot of attention upon reaching the port.

Even the most stupid sailor could tell that it was a pirate ship that had just plundered another ship. Some merchants’ eyes were already glistening.

And some people gazed at the symbol on Merchant Ship Rose and pondered.

“Good morning, respectable captain!”

Fang Yuan came onto the wharf, and a tax collector wearing a wig approached him. "Entrance registration!"

"Hmm!" Fang Yuan nodded in a reserved manner and tossed out a bag of coins.

"We are from the Rose Chamber of Commerce. We have just encountered pirates and need a good rest!" Bill stepped forward and started to make up a story.

"All right, captain of Merchant Ship Rose, Roger! Welcome to Dearborn Port. We wish you a pleasant experience here!"

As expected, he did not investigate the validity of this explanation at all, passing a completed file to them directly.

"Let's go to the market!"

Fang Yuan left Butcher behind to guard their base and brought Bill along with him. "And... next time, don't fake my name!"

"I apologize, Captain!" Bill kept silent immediately.

"Captain! If you want to sell any goods, please consider the Violet Chamber of Commerce!"

"Captain, do you need strong sailors?"

"I've got the best bar and the hottest women in Dearborn Port here..."

...

As soon as Fang Yuan left the dock, he was immediately surrounded by enthusiastic merchants. They might have even pounced on him if he had not been followed by a few muscular subordinates.

Truly great pirates had their own ways of selling plundered goods, and some even ran chambers of commerce covertly.

Even a small group like the Ferocious Tiger Pirate Team had regular traders that they would sell their goods to at relatively higher prices.

Fang Yuan looked askance at this lackey from the Violet Chamber of Commerce, who was a plump man with an oily face. He was certain that if he really did business with this guy, he would need blessings from the Luck Goddess to sell his goods at even thirty percent of their value.

"Move aside! Move aside!"

In this situation, Bill took the initiative to clear the path and bring Fang Yuan out of the dock.

"Captain, Mockingbird has some connections as well. Although Fred is dead, that is absolutely normal for pirates..."

Having made sure that there were no strangers near them, Bill told Fang Yuan about this, his eyes glistening.

“Oh? So Mockingbird had ways to sell plundered goods here. Very well, you can contact them!” Fang Yuan nodded. “And... if I want to purchase a ship, what can the shipyard here provide?”

“I’m afraid that it has, at best, an armed merchant ship like Mockingbird. After all, this is a small port...”

Bill observed Fang Yuan’s expression. “If you want larger and more powerful warships, such as the third-level battleships used by the navy, the best place to go to is the Nightmare Ocean. It seems there will be a large-scale auction at Bloody Mary Port soon, and the shipyard there can build third-level battleships or other ships according to the buyer’s needs...”

“Nightmare Ocean, Bloody Mary Port?” Fang Yuan rubbed his chin.

The most prosperous sea route in this world was the Golden Sea Route from Ettoman to the East, passing through the Nightmare Ocean, the Golden Ocean, Pirate King City, the Coral Ocean, and the Spice Archipelago.

After entering the Nightmare Ocean, ships would be completely away from inshore waters, so it would be much more likely to encounter giant sea monsters and other dangers.

But at the same time, the chance to get rich would also instantly rise.

“The Nightmare Ocean is part of the Golden Sea Route, and even the weakest pirates there are by no means inferior to the Ferocious Tiger Pirate Team...”

Fang Yuan said with a hidden meaning, “Of course... if we enter and leave quickly, we won’t even encounter them unless we’re too unlucky...”

The pirate governor of the Nightmare Ocean should be Blackbeard. He’s known to be extremely bloody and ruthless... And that acquaintance of mine, Orlando, is in the Octopus Marauder Team, which used to be active on the Nightmare Ocean but was forced to leave after going through a crisis...

He brought to mind even more information.

...

While Fang Yuan and the others were walking in the market...

A dark silhouette gazed at Merchant Ship Rose for a long time before turning around, going through streets and alleys, and finally entering a grand villa.

This was the Dearborn family’s residence.

This piece of intelligence was soon passed to this generation’s Viscount Dearborn.

“A ship belonging to the Rose Chamber of Commerce...”

The viscount was about fifty years old, and some of his hair had turned white at his temples. He had a cold, hard, and sharp expression, thin lips, and a hook-like nose. “Was it plundered by pirates?”

Honestly, such things would not normally draw his attention.

After all, in order to attract more pirates to sell their goods here, Dearborn Port had to be strictly impartial.

However, if there was a noble lady on the ship, it would be worth his consideration.

“Viscount Quinn’s daughter, Elizabeth... That’s the noble lady who’s about to marry Viscount Charlie...”

Viscount Dearborn pursed his lips.

Viscount Charlie was not only handsome, but he possessed many assets as well. Moreover, he had a rich and powerful family backing him in Ettoman.

Strictly speaking, Elizabeth was going to marry someone at a much higher station than herself.

Furthermore, Viscount Dearborn knew clearly that Charlie’s family and his own backer had many complex connections.

Although others did not know about it, there were plenty of reasons for him to lend a helping hand.

“I’ve just learned that Elizabeth was to take Merchant Ship Rose to return home... It’s unexpected that they would encounter pirates...”

The viscount was a bit uncertain.

First, in order to maintain his reputation and protect his businesses, he could not oppose Fang Yuan openly.

Moreover, he had not confirmed Elizabeth’s situation. Was she killed, captured, or did she undergo anything else? Or perhaps she was on another ship and did not experience anything unpleasant?

Deluged with numerous thoughts, the viscount was having a headache.

Chapter 842: Recruitment

In a market at Dearborn Port.

Bill was rather astonished looking at Fang Yuan, who was squatting in front of a small stall.

Although this market was very bustling, its management was very chaotic. There were numerous stalls occupying the roads, making it nearly impossible to walk. This was also a favorite place for informants.

Fang Yuan was visiting a book stall.

There were all kinds of books messily stacked together, emitting some kind of moldy smell.

Among them, there were tomes that used bovine leather as the cover and sheepskin parchment for its content. There was also a huge mass of papyrus papers and even some bizarre scrolls.

But they were not really in good condition. Apart from being damaged by worms, there were also many traces of seawater stains and unknown filth.

Evidently, it was no different from a pipe dream for pirates to understand the principle of protecting knowledge.

"Hmm, very strange characters. They seem to be from different countries..."

Fang Yuan took a few glances, discovering that some of the characters on them were quite interesting.

"Of course, Sir... My books are from the mysterious East!"

The vendor was an emaciated middle-aged man, who revealed his black and sparse teeth when he smiled at Fang Yuan.

Simply from the signs in his appearance, Fang Yuan could determine that he was an experienced sailor and most likely a retired pirate.

"Enough of that..." After hearing what he said, Bill immediately rolled his eyes and interrupted. "I can't be sure about the others, but these books are obviously using characters from the Star Clusters Archipelago!"

These vendors liked to make their goods be involved with the East to multiply their value.

"I swear that the majority of the items here were really obtained from a merchant ship from the East!" The vendor made a solemn vow and pulled at his collar, revealing a centipede-like scar on his abdomen. "Do you see this? In order to obtain them... my chest suffered from such a ruthless cut!"

"..." Fang Yuan was speechless. "Are you sure you didn't stick this scar on yourself? The top part has already begun to peel off. Next time, remember to find someone with better workmanship..."

"Oh... Damn it!"

The vendor's face reddened, yet he covered the front of his coat as though nothing had happened. "To think that Dalaman claims to be the best tattoo artist in this area."

"All right. I'm not someone who would buy a pig in a poke anyway. You must be dreaming to be trying to sell one book for three gold coins... However, I do indeed have some interest in the East's culture!"

Fang Yuan casually picked a few huge books. "All these for one gold coin in total!"

"Oh gods, you might as well kill me!" The vendor's eyes immediately reddened, as if Fang Yuan were going to take his life. "Anything less than five gold coins is absolutely impossible!"

"Two gold coins!"

"Four gold coins and four silver coins. I won't give in anymore!"

...

"Let's go find a pub!"

A moment later, Fang Yuan paid three gold coins and got the items that he wanted.

Following behind Fang Yuan, Bill asked expectantly, "Captain... you can recognize characters from the East?"

"No... I can't recognize them!"

Fang Yuan was using his finger to lightly rub the cover of one of the huge books.

The pages inside the book had used top-notch sheepskin parchment and were laden with history. Furthermore, its dark red cover had an air of mystery to it.

Whoosh!

His right hand exerted a slight force and tore the cover apart. He immediately pulled out a map fragment from in-between the layers.

"A treasure map?!"

Bill and the other pirates' eyes brightened.

After pirates pillaged, they would usually find a hidden place to bury their savings. In order to prevent themselves from forgetting, they would even draw all kinds of treasure maps.

Of course, the value of these things could not be determined with certainty.

Nine out of ten treasure maps circulating in the market were fake. As for the remaining one, even if they followed the map and found the treasure, it might only be a small bag of copper coins or just worn out socks of no value.

Only extremely few people were truly lucky enough to be able to unearth the hidden treasures left behind by great pirates and become rich overnight.

"It's merely a map fragment. Before all the fragments are collected, it's simply not possible to make out where it's trying to lead us to nor know what's going to be waiting for us..."

Fang Yuan indifferently stuffed the map fragment into his pocket. However, he did not make light of it in his mind, unlike how he appeared to be on the surface.

After all, his system had already given him a clear reminder. This seemingly unremarkable treasure map fragment actually had the property of indestructibility. It was an extraordinary item, making it somewhat interesting.

The things that it was supposed to lead to would certainly not be too ordinary.

"Pig's Head and Chimney Pub?"

Fang Yuan raised his head and was rather speechless looking at the pub's name.

It was not yet night, so there were few people in the pub, and they immediately found a relatively spacious corner. They ordered honey roasted pork and huge mugs of beer to enjoy heartily.

"Boss, the merchant is here!"

Just when Fang Yuan was halfway through his beer, Bill returned with a man in black wearing a high collar shirt following behind him.

“Mockingbird’s new captain? I’m Michael. Very honored to be at your service!” Michael said in an enthusiastic yet pretentious tone. “Could I take a look at the list of goods?”

“Of course!”

Fang Yuan passed over a piece of parchment that had a list of their loot along with the respective quantities written on it.

“Hmm?”

Michael had a composed expression, making it difficult to tell his emotions, but Fang Yuan was able to tell from the slight shiver in his body and palms that his mind was not composed.

“These quantities are very large... It’ll be quite troublesome to sell them... But since its the first time you’re doing business with our chamber of commerce, we’ll definitely give you a generous price... Two thousand gold coins!”

The contact bent the index finger of his right hand and knocked on the tabletop.

“Too little... My valuation for these goods is three thousand gold coins, and you can resell them for more than five thousand gold coins at the very least!”

Fang Yuan shook his head.

“However... we also bear the risk of distribution!” Michael emphasized, doing his utmost to lower the price.

“No matter how great the risks are, they won’t be greater than us fighting with real weapons to rob merchant ships!”

Fang Yuan said indifferently, “Three thousand gold coins, it can’t be any less than this.”

“Impossible!” the contact resolutely refused, but he did not get up and leave. This made Bill’s eyes brighten.

When discussing business, it was naturally a mutual exchange and a process of continuously probing each other’s bottom line. Since he did not leave immediately, it meant that there was still room for discussion.

In the end, both parties came to a compromise of 2700 Gold Coins, which was a more appropriate price.

In this regard, the contact was somewhat at a disadvantage.

Fang Yuan had seen through his inner thoughts and knew that this batch of goods was in demand. Thus, he naturally had the advantage.

“We’ve shown a lot of sincerity in this price...” Michael emphasized again. “However, since it’s the first time we’re doing business, our chamber of commerce is willing to make a friend like you!”

“Of course. May our friendship last long!”

Although he clearly knew that in the eyes of pirates and chambers of commerce, the so-called friendship was merely nonsense, Fang Yuan still put on a full show and celebrated with a toast.

“Let me gather the funds and we can deal at the dock. Is that okay?”

More than two thousand gold coins was not a small sum. A fence also needed some time to raise money.

“All right!” Fang Yuan nodded.

He then went over to the bar counter and threw a silver coin over.

“Dear Sir, how may I be of service?”

The bartender behind the counter was all smiles.

People like him usually served concurrently as a source of intelligence. They could be considered the people with the most up-to-date information here.

“Hmm, I’m a captain and I need to recruit some sailors. Also, I need one chief officer and one navigator!”

Fang Yuan was rather sad when he mentioned this.

His people were largely captives, and his authority was not strong enough.

If he had not shown astonishing abilities one after another and was extremely generous with his rewards, perhaps he would have ended up alone after coming ashore this time.

Despite the preparations he had made earlier, he reckoned that when he returned, his manpower would be slightly decreased.

This was still under the premise of leaving Butcher, his loyal follower, to keep watch.

Presently, the people that he could truly count as his trusted henchmen were just his assault leader, Butcher, and his second officer, Bill.

“What requirements do you have for crew members?”

The bartender could see that something was amiss.

After all, as the captain of a ship, how could he hastily head out to sea without even having a chief officer and a navigator?

“Hmm, I need ten, no, twenty well-built crew members. And they all have to be able to fight a little. As for the chief officer and navigator, I need people with ample experience!”

Fang Yuan deliberately emphasized the words ‘able to fight’ and ‘ample experience’. He believed that the bartender would surely understand his meaning.

“I see!” The bartender nodded. “I don’t have a suitable candidate for the navigator role, but Mr. Wilson has had many years of experience sailing and being a chief officer. Currently, he’s rather hard-pressed for money, so perhaps he might accept this job! I’ll help you contact him and other sailors. You should be able to meet them tonight at the latest...”

At this point, he became rather hesitant to continue.

“You can tell them that if they come for the interview, they’ll at least get a free dinner!”

Fang Yuan naturally caught the implied meaning and threw a gold coin over. "This is your remuneration this time. If I'm satisfied with the candidates tonight, I'll give you an additional reward!"

"Hmm, I think I can go and get Mr. Wilson now!"

After receiving the tip, the bartender immediately displayed his exceptional initiative.

Fang Yuan withdrew to a sofa and watched his subordinates abandoning all restraints, flirting with the curvy bargirls.

Barely half an hour had passed before the bartender returned with a man following behind him.

This man had distinct features and was approximately thirty-five years old. The joints on both of his hands were thick, and his forehead already had some wrinkles.

"Sir, this is Wilson!"

The bartender briefly introduced them and soon retreated, giving them space.

"Hmm, have a seat. Would you like a drink?" Fang Yuan pushed a glass of alcohol over. From his clothes, this man was definitely financially hard-pressed. However, some matters still had to be confirmed. "You should know... the nature of my work, right?"

"I'm aware!" Wilson's face twitched and nodded. "However, I need money. I need to raise a large sum of money in a short time! Even if it's a contract with a devil, I can only accept!"

Chapter 843: Warship

"Very good, Mr. Wilson. Welcome aboard!"

After a brief chat, Fang Yuan was already certain that Wilson was indeed a talent. Not only did he have ample experience sailing the sea, he even unexpectedly had a little management ability.

Such caliber was more than qualified to be a chief officer.

"I'll hire you as my ship's third officer!"

Fang Yuan certainly could not promote a new member to chief officer right from the start. Otherwise, how would the older members like Bill and Butcher feel about it? They were still senior despite only joining a few days earlier.

"As for remuneration, it will be one hundred gold coins as a settling-in allowance in addition to bonuses!"

Pirates naturally did not have wages. Their earnings were totally dependent on the division of the loot after each pillage.

"A hundred gold coins?" Wilson's eyes brightened. With a tone of urgency, he asked, "Mr. Roche... could I get a thousand gold coins in advance? I truly need it, I..."

Fang Yuan gestured for him to stop, interrupting his words. "Of course I know that you definitely have a tragic story, given that you're in this state and urgently need a huge sum of money. However, how does this concern me? You're only a crew member that I'm hiring. A hundred gold coins for a settling-in allowance is already a large sum that I could've used to find a whole group of sailors to cross oceans anywhere..."

"You're right!" Wilson smiled bitterly. "Sorry..."

"As for the rest... believe me, as long as you show enough talent, you can quickly earn a thousand gold coins."

Fang Yuan smiled. He also really needed someone to take on the role of the ship's steward.

So much so that if Wilson had sufficient value, he could possibly take action and help resolve his difficulties. Of course, now was not the time for this.

"No problem, Captain!" Wilson saluted respectfully.

"Great. I appoint you as my ship's third officer. Now, you have one thing to do..."

Fang Yuan looked up and happened to see the bartender leading a bunch of sailors over. "You're to interview them and select suitable members!"

This was both to test him and to cultivate him.

After Wilson heard what Fang Yuan said, he immediately replied in excitement, "I understand. I'll certainly do a good job."

Fang Yuan was evidently giving him a free hand to cultivate his own people.

Otherwise, if a third officer were to head to the ship alone, especially to a pirate ship that was like a dark forest, the best outcome would be becoming a mere figurehead.

He also has some martial skills. That should be enough to keep those unruly sailors under control!

Fang Yuan watched Wilson heading toward the sailors and shouting loudly among them. Losing interest, he turned away and sampled the fine liquor on the table.

"Captain, there's a situation!" After some time, Bill squeezed in, his face pale. "Michael backed out of our deal!"

"Hmm?"

Fang Yuan looked down, his eyes gleaming.

It was extremely unlikely to renege on a business deal that was already agreed upon unless he was facing external pressure that he could not defy.

"Wilson!" With this thought, Fang Yuan immediately got up. "How's it going?"

"There are ten people that we can use!" Wilson replied calmly.

"Do you have any matters tying you down here?"

“No!”

“Good. Take those willing to leave with us right now to the dock!”

Fang Yuan took a deep breath, and there seemed to be a hint of bloodthirst in his eyes.

...

This night, the dock was particularly tranquil.

Only the dock and some ships still had some lights.

Fang Yuan took a deep breath. In the night breeze, he could sense numerous eyes spying on them.

“Captain?!” After seeing Fang Yuan board Mockingbird, Butcher was astonished. “Boss, I thought you were going to spend the night in the port!”

“There’s no need for that now! Immediately gather our people and prepare to set off!” Fang Yuan said in a deep voice.

“... Now?” Butcher was rather astonished.

“I won’t repeat my command twice!” Fang Yuan’s voice was cold.

“Understood!”

Butcher licked the huge cutlass in his hand, seeming to have a ferocious tiger roaring within his body.

Suddenly, Wilson’s scalp became numb, feeling as though he had made a mistake but was in too deep to leave.

However, at this moment, not only Wilson, but the other sailors recruited had also already lost their chance to back out.

...

The breeze blew gently.

With Fang Yuan steering the ship personally, the ship slowly sailed out of the port and was soon far into the distance.

“Captain...” Bill gazed at this scene and was stuttering. “Perhaps Michael was merely exerting pressure on us to drive down the price... Dearborn Port and the Rose Chamber of Commerce don’t have any relations. And the navy and the friends of the Ferocious Tiger Pirate Team wouldn’t come to attack us...”

In fact, what he meant to say was that after defeating the Ferocious Tiger Pirate Team, they were already the strongest pirate team in the vicinity.

“I only believe in my own judgment... Besides...” Fang Yuan gazed in a direction. “... We’re already a safe distance away from Dearborn Port, right?”

“That’s right!” Bill subconsciously answered. Shortly after, he saw Fang Yuan produce a ball of bright flames in his hands. It then flew up high into the air and orbited around them to illuminate the nearby surroundings.

An alarmed cry was heard.

A warship had unexpectedly emerged in the horizon.

It was a typical third-level naval battleship. It was hanging the navy flag and aggressively charging toward Mockingbird.

“Impossible... why would the navy appear here?”

Bill’s face was full of despair.

No matter how he thought about it, he just could not imagine Mockingbird having a way out and surviving.

Although the enemy only had one ship, it was much larger than Mockingbird. Merely seeing the approximately one hundred cannons arranged in a row could already cause others to feel a chill down their spine.

It only needed one volley, and Mockingbird would shatter into pieces!

“Gods!”

Wilson could not help praying while, beside him, the sailors that he had brought along were already on the brink of breaking down.

If they had not seen the fireball that Fang Yuan released just now and knew that he was an Extraordinary, perhaps they would have already chosen to rebel.

“Dearborn Port has obviously sold us out... If we had waited until tomorrow to leave, what would have awaited us would not just be one ship but a whole army closing in on us...”

Fang Yuan shrugged his shoulders, yet the smile on his face grew increasingly wider. “Just in time... I still lack a warship right now! Attack!”

“Are you crazy?” Wilson stumbled toward him. “That ship is a third-level naval warship. It has two decks, one hundred cannons, and a crew of five hundred! Both of our ships only have a hundred people combined!”

“My third officer, I will now teach you the number one rule—obey commands!”

Fang Yuan stood on Mockingbird’s deck and looked at the naval warship.

Seeing the light orb dancing around in the air, an uproar broke out on the ship. Shortly after, numerous cannons extended and took aim at Mockingbird.

“And the second rule—anything that catches my eye is mine!”

Fang Yuan laughed heartily, spreading his arms wide open.

The shining light orb in the sky was abruptly extinguished. A cloud of thick white fog emerged, enough to even cover the light from the moon and stars.

Bang! Bang!

Continuous sounds of firing could be heard, but the accuracy was poor.

It's night right now, and I've also summoned a fog to cover us. If they could still hit us... then they must be operating a magical ship!

Fang Yuan turned the rudder.

Mockingbird suddenly separated from Merchant Ship Rose and fearlessly charged forward.

Butcher led all the pirates to stand and wipe the weapons in their hands clean. Eyes brimming with admiration, they gazed at Fang Yuan's back.

Their captain was not only an Extraordinary but also someone who continuously brought about miracles.

Fang Yuan appeared as though he could see through the fog, and he suddenly commanded, "Get ready for a boarding battle on the right!"

"Wuu! Wuu! Wuu!"

The pirates howled. They quickly took action and prepared weapons such as flying claws.

"What are you guys waiting for? Get moving!" Wilson gulped down his bottle of rum and kicked the stunned sailor in front of him. "This place is no longer inside the port, and we are now fighting the navy. Once they catch you, there's only one outcome—being sent to the gallows! If you don't want to die, get moving now!"

"I bless all of you!"

With a flick of his hand, Fang Yuan enhanced various attributes in his subordinates.

This isn't enough... the difference between us and the enemy is still too great!

Amid the fog, an enormous shadow emerged. The towering hull immediately caused all the pirates to involuntarily swallow their saliva.

"Dream and Armament Master, Fang Yuan!"

He silently called out the phrase that he had agreed on with his main body. A channel appeared and transmitted powers over.

These powers... have already reached the limit that the main body can provide!

Although his main body was comparable to an Evil God's, it still could not bear the weight of overly strong powers since the channel of faith was rather narrow.

But for Fang Yuan, lasting one battle was already enough.

"Pay attention. Don't damage my ship!"

Fang Yuan snapped his fingers.

Splash!

The originally calm sea surface instantly had waves surging forth and multiple jets of water soaring up.

Kaboom!

The frightening force rammed into the naval warship, immediately making its sailors' well-prepared battle formation fall apart.

Poof! Poof!

A cloud of cold air emerged, causing the water arrows to suddenly condense into terrifying ice blades, resulting in blood splattering everywhere on the deck.

As for Butcher and others, they were stunned seeing ice stairs forming in front of them that led straight to the deck of the naval ship.

In previous boarding battles, it was always the defending side that towered above and held the advantage.

But presently, with Fang Yuan's spells, that advantage immediately disappeared.

"Boss is definitely a sorcerer!"

As Bill was howling and charging forward, this was the only thought that crossed his mind.

"Kill!"

On the warship's deck, a fierce melee battle immediately broke out.

"Damn it! Block their path!"

Among the sailors, there was someone who looked to be a lieutenant. He was wearing glamorous clothes and brandishing an officer's sword.

The next moment, Butcher let out a tiger's roar. His speed rapidly increased, and he waved his huge cutlass once he was in front of a crowd.

Poof!

With a flash from the blade, the lieutenant let out a miserable cry as his body was sliced in half.

Chapter 844: Victory

Even if the lieutenant slashed by Butcher was not the captain of the ship, he was definitely an important person.

After seeing him being cut in two, the naval soldiers screamed and retreated into the cabins, their defense crumbling like flowing sand.

"Boss!"

Butcher knelt on one knee as Fang Yuan approached him.

"Hmm, well done!"

Witnessing the mess on the deck, Fang Yuan took a deep breath.

This warship was a typical large five-mast ship, and it had numerous ropes connecting the tall masts, looking just like a giant spiderweb.

The ship was more than fifty meters long and over six meters wide, much larger than Mockingbird.

Right now, blood flowed everywhere on the deck. There were over a hundred naval soldier corpses, and most of their stomachs had been slashed open by ice blades. Furthermore, there were also a dozen pirate corpses.

Bang bang!

Continuous gunfire was heard from inside the cabins. Bill ran out in a hurry with blood on his head. "Those bastards are resisting stubbornly down there, and their firepower is strong!"

A boarding battle was the most costly battle method in plunder, but once they succeeded, they would obtain the maximum amount of spoils.

And in a boarding battle, it was the nightmare of all pirates to clear cabins like these.

After all, this was a naval battle rather than a land battle. Surrounded by the vast ocean, the losers had no way to escape!

Even with Fang Yuan's sorcery, the pirates from Mockingbird had only managed to occupy the warship's deck, while the naval soldiers took an advantageous position in the cabins, prepared to fight any of the pirates that came in.

Normal pirates could only resolve this situation by sacrificing more lives, and even a single merchant ship could cause a large number of casualties among the pirates.

Furthermore, the opponents this time were a group of well-trained naval soldiers that outnumbered the pirates, so this method would definitely not work.

"Hmm, they're persistent, probably having the extravagant hope that they'll be rescued after a while..."

Fang Yuan knew exactly what those soldiers were thinking down there. "That's better... At least, they won't think of sinking the ship and leaving us with nothing..."

Having just achieved a significant victory, the pirates should retreat if they could not take over the ship and were at risk of being besieged.

When there was a large chance of survival, they would not choose to kill the sailors by sacrificing their own lives.

After all, the pirates could retreat to Mockingbird, but they would definitely die if the sailors sank the ship!

However, these naval soldiers did not know that Fang Yuan was determined to plunder this large ship and make it his flagship ever since the beginning of the battle!

Fang Yuan was too clever to directly attack the deathtrap below the deck.

"Wilson!"

As soon as he shouted, Wilson carried a few bags of materials onto the deck. "Captain, the things you wanted!"

Wilson had displayed his capabilities and gained Fang Yuan's acknowledgment through this battle.

And he was now looking at Fang Yuan respectfully.

This was a sorcerer who could summon fog and manipulate water!

Such an Extraordinary would definitely become a well-known pirate in the future as long as he stayed alive!

A thousand gold coins seemed attainable if he worked for a captain with such a promising future.

"Great!"

Fang Yuan grabbed a handful of poisonous salt and sprinkled it on the naval soldiers' corpses.

Chi! Chi!

The sound of corrosion was heard as he added the materials continuously. A large volume of greenish-yellow fog that had a strange, foul odor emerged.

"This is... poisonous fog!"

Wilson and the other pirates took a few steps back immediately. The smart ones already had a guess of what Fang Yuan was about to do, looking at him with respect and fear.

The greenish-yellow poisonous gas did not disperse, but it moved as if it were alive and formed a large poisonous cloud under Fang Yuan's manipulation.

"Go, Corroded Corpse Poisonous Cloud!"

The next moment, Fang Yuan pointed with his finger and the large poisonous cloud immediately poured through the cabin doors.

Cough cough!

The nearby naval soldiers started coughing and covered their mouths and noses. They tried to rush out, but Bill led a group of musketeers to shoot them dead, turning their bodies into honeycombs.

"Go down there after ten minutes and clear the battlefield. All of them should be dead by then!" Fang Yuan said calmly while sending the last poisonous cloud into the cabins.

"Long live the captain!"

The pirates were all pale-faced and knelt. "Boss, you can manipulate fog and ice, your potions can give us life, and you can summon poisonous clouds. You are the Arcane Trickster! Our eternal master!"

Sorcery was not sufficient to explain the miracles that Fang Yuan had created.

After all, not only did he possess the strong physique of an extraordinary warrior, but he could also cure and bless like a pastor as well as summon fog, ice, and poisonous gas.

He had all kinds of bizarre tricks and deserved the name Arcane Trickster.

Truly great pirates all had their own special aliases.

For example, people all over the world knew Blackbeard, who was in the Nightmare Ocean, by his alias rather than his real name.

“Arcane Trickster Roche? This alias isn’t bad!”

Fang Yuan laughed. After waiting ten minutes, he ordered the sailors to bring the corpses out from the cabins below and throw them into the sea.

Looking at the stiff and distorted muscles on the faces of the naval soldiers, the pirates involuntarily shivered.

There was only a single thought in their minds as they threw the last corpse into the sea—to never betray the captain!

“Boss!”

Bill presented an officer’s sword to Fang Yuan obsequiously.

This should be a treasured possession of the previous captain. The end of the silver sword handle was inlaid with a huge ruby.

Of course, that unlucky captain had been killed by the poisonous gas, and his corpse was currently sinking in the sea.

With a sullen expression, Wilson brought a document to Fang Yuan. “A document was found in the captain’s room. The name of this ship is Hope, and Dearborn Port has betrayed us!”

“Hmm!”

Fang Yuan had already speculated this and appeared composed.

“But from now on, this is my flagship, the symbol of the Purgatory Pirate Team—Fiery Lotus!”

Butcher pulled down the original royal navy flag straight away and replaced it with the Purgatory Pirate Team’s Jolly Roger decorated with flames of negative karma. The pirates cheered together.

“Boss, we’ve gained a great deal this time!” Bill laughed in exhilaration.

Although there were not many gold and silver coins on the ship, the hundred cannons and the piles of gunpowder, guns, swords, and cutlasses were worth the cost that they had incurred.

It was impossible for common pirates to purchase a large quantity of high-quality munitions even if they had gold coins!

Moreover, this Fiery Lotus was worth more than thirty thousand gold coins. It was virtually a treasure hill.

“Have we? You’re satisfied with this?!” A dangerous glow flashed in Fang Yuan’s eyes. “Dearborn Port breached the rules and betrayed us. Aren’t we going to make them pay the price?”

“Boss, do you mean...?”

Wilson was astonished by Fang Yuan’s huge appetite.

“I’ve read their liaison documents. The navy’s force is very weak in this vicinity, and Hope is already their main force. The other ships are all single-mast vertical-sail fast boats, and if we fire the hundred cannons at the same time, we can blast them into pieces from a few hundred yards away!”

Fang Yuan laughed coldly and said, “Since that’s the case, why don’t we plunder Dearborn Port and slay that disloyal family?”

“Attack the port? What about our reputation?” Bill was pale, but his eyes were full of passion. “If we do that, I’m afraid only genuine pirate ports will accept us in the future!”

There were generally three kinds of ports in this world: pirate ports that only accepted pirates, private free ports like Dearborn Port, and large commercial ports that were protected by navies and banned the presence of pirates.

All pirates coveted the commercial ports in the last category and would normally not attack the first two kinds of ports.

“Haha...” Fang Yuan laughed out loud as if he had heard a funny joke. “Who are we? We are free pirates... What can’t we plunder? As long as there’s sufficient gain, we can even plunder Pirate King City!”

“...” Bill was speechless in front of such a captain.

“All right. Let our people change into the naval soldiers’ clothes. We’ll take them by surprise!”

Fang Yuan showed absolute confidence.

The methods of communication at this time were still underdeveloped, and this naval battle took place at night and ended fast. Therefore, the news might not reach Dearborn Port in time, so they could totally disguise themselves and launch a sudden attack.

“And... send another two people to the port to spread the message that Viscount Dearborn has contacted the navy to capture all pirates at once. Together with our action, there’ll definitely be chaos among those pirates when they hear the sound of the cannons... Even if the pirates are clever, they won’t be able to resist the temptation to plunder something in the chaos!”

“Then... we’ll take this opportunity to slay everyone in Viscount Dearborn’s mansion and plunder all their fortune!”

Whoosh whoosh!

Almost all of the pirates started to breathe more intensely.

How much fortune would have been accumulated in a free port that had run for so many years?

Even though the Dearborn family needed to spend a lot on red tape, such a well-established noble family should still have overflowing wealth.

Even Wilson's eyes reddened as he thought about the tremendous fortune.

This was because he found that that unattainable dream seemed to have become more realistic after he joined this pirate team!

Chapter 845: Privateer

Glass City.

There were numerous factories set up in the outskirts under the gloomy sky. New capitalists went to all lengths to exploit workers, including child labor, to minimize production costs.

It was said that an adult working in such a factory would not be able to survive more than five years, but it was these very factories that brought about the prosperity of Ettoman.

In the downtown area, Gothic buildings stood erect like a forest of towers, and the bell in a huge bell tower sounded to indicate the current time.

There were always people hurrying along the streets. They were wearing black top hats and grey coats and holding canes, which was the mainstream clothing for gentlemen at this time.

A magnificent carriage drawn by two black horses passed over a classical-styled bridge.

Donald opened a window and frowned when he saw a street full of black garbage giving off a foul smell and a seriously polluted river.

As an Ocean Warlock, he hated this kind of place, particularly the behavior that jeopardized water sources.

Unfortunately, he was only an economist that had just risen to fame. He could not make any difference even if he articulated his criticism because it was the trend of this era.

The carriage stopped in front of a manor that was as exquisite as a royal palace.

Birds sang, flowers blossomed, and numerous servants clustered inside the manor.

All of this made Donald feel dreamy, as if he had suddenly left hell and arrived in heaven.

"Are you Mr. Donald?" A butler in a tailcoat opened the carriage door for him and bowed slightly. "The duke has been waiting for some time!"

This was Duke Ham's house.

Superficially, the royal family ruled Ettoman, but a large portion of the power actually belonged to the parliament and the prime minister.

Of course, the king had great power as well. There was a delicate balance between the king's power and the prime minister's power.

Duke Ham's family not only had royal bloodline, but it was consistently active in the political arena as well. There had been a few prime ministers in this top noble family of Ettoman that had countless political allies.

Since such a great noble wanted to meet Donald, Donald naturally had no other choice but to make it here as soon as possible.

Donald met the contemporary Duke Ham in a meadow.

Duke Ham was a white-haired, energetic elder wearing a loose silk robe and enjoying afternoon tea.

"Mr. Donald... I've heard a lot about you. I had the honor of reading your book, the Wealth of Nations, and found many points in it very impressive!"

After seeing Donald, the duke stood up to welcome him. "Give my guest a cup of black tea. I've recently hired a new pastry chef, and he's good at making desserts. Try them!"

"Thank you!" Donald expressed his gratitude reservedly and took the delicate ceramic teacup.

The ceramics here were from the Eastern Continent. They had the tint of glaze and enamel, delicate like a work of art.

And the black tea was from another colony of Ettoman—Zealand Kingdom.

And the sugar cube was produced in tropical plantations.

"To great Ettoman..."

All of this seemed to be narrating the rapid growth of a powerful country, as if Ettoman was about to become the king of the world by means of the Great Voyage!

"To our Queen!"

Duke Ham smiled and took a sip of the black tea. "Mr. Donald, do you know why I've invited you?"

"Of course!" Donald stood up and bowed again. "I'd be honored to become your personal consultant!"

"That's brilliant... A lot of annoying things have been happening recently. My burden will be much reduced with your help..."

The duke smiled and passed a newspaper to Donald.

Donald received it carefully, knowing that it was to examine his ability.

He calmed down and read the first section.

The printing ink gave off a pleasant fragrance but was not sticky at all, and the huge title was eye-catching—"Outrage! Dearborn Port Plundered by Pirates!!!"

Below the title, there was a black-and-white photo where a large amount of wreckage and corpses could be seen despite the low resolution.

"... It was reported that other than the pirate attack on Dearborn Port, a riot erupted among the civilians there at the same time. The royal navy has set off for Dearborn Port to pour oil on troubled waters... It's

estimated that there were over a thousand civilian casualties, and Viscount Dearborn's entire family was annihilated... Consequently, the stocks of a few companies that had been trading with the Dearborns slumped today...

"Pirates! It's the damned pirates again!"

Duke Ham covered his forehead with his palm and sighed. "Look... How rotten has our seemingly prosperous country become? Hehe... Civilian riot, who doesn't know that pirates make up the majority of the population in Dearborn Port! That viscount shot himself in the foot. But... the dignity of Ettoman must not be tainted. In any case, pirates who kill Ettoman nobles have to pay the price!"

Donald calmed down and asked, "Which group of pirates did it?"

"It seems to be a pirate team that has just appeared recently. Their leader is known as the 'Arcane Trickster' and is an Extraordinary. His ability looks very complex, as he has displayed many strange methods..."

Given this era's communication technologies, it was remarkable that this duke could collect so much intelligence.

"... A few consortiums that suffered losses have collaborated to push through the decision to arrest these pirates. They offered a bounty of... ten thousand gold coins!"

Donald nodded, knowing that the Arcane Trickster would most probably shoot to fame.

After all, such a huge sum was not offered for many pirates who were wanted for the first time.

"Frequent pirate activities are only one aspect of the problems. The other is the intense competition from other countries..." Duke Ham continued, "Our country has earned tremendous amounts of fortune through marine trade, and the other countries in the Opher Continent have been coveting the wealth for a long time. If I remember correctly, Cecil has been expanding the scale of its shipyards continuously, claiming that it's going to build a trump fleet that consists of over a hundred warships and more than ten thousand crew members in three years!"

"Meanwhile, all countries are relaxing their restrictions and encouraging civilian capitalists to sail overseas... Their marine capitalists will become the most significant rivals of Ettoman merchants in the future!"

...

The duke was talkative, probably due to his age, but he expressed his points clearly.

Donald was silent for a moment and thought of Fang Yuan's teachings. He could not help saying, "Pirates and foreign countries seem to be two separate problems, but they're actually two aspects of one issue, which is hegemony on the ocean! There only needs to be one real king in the world!"

"That's right, and it can only be our Ettoman!" Duke Ham said immediately.

"Frankly... Ettoman is an island country with an advantageous position and accumulated experience over the years. It'll be very hard for other countries to catch up to us, and the shipyards still have their trump cards, don't they?" Donald blinked.

“But even if we have an invincible fleet, maintenance is still a big problem. We can’t do all the business using warships, nor can we blockade all the oceans!” Duke Ham said. If this was all Donald was capable of, he would surely be disappointed.

“Yes. Therefore, we need to suppress the pirates and, on the way, suppress the merchant ships of other countries...” Donald whistled. “But Ettoman is blessed by the heavens. Our location is favorable, just like a huge ship that will never sink, and guards the inshore areas near the Opher Continent... If my memory serves me right, in the inshore regions, even among the pirates active in the Nightmare Ocean, Ettoman citizens make up a significant portion, right?”

“Indeed!”

Sailing was a tradition in the island country, and the many fishermen who were used to making a living at sea would not mind earning some extra money.

“In fact, not only fishermen but also bankrupt nobles seem to have taken up some dirty jobs...”

Donald sneered. “Then things are much simpler. How about issuing pirate permits to pirates from our country? As long as they plunder any ships but those from Ettoman, their profits will be protected in Ettoman!”

“Permit?” Duke Ham felt a bit dizzy. “Are you saying... that we should negotiate with pirates? No-No way...”

“The pirates at sea are by themselves a strong force. If we can bring some of them under control, it’ll be highly beneficial to our expansion!” Donald said firmly. “Moreover, we can use them to hinder the maritime development of other countries. Even if they fail, we won’t suffer any loss! At critical moments, we can even let them join naval wars... When the pirates get old, we can even let them pay taxes in exchange for amnesty...”

In Fang Yuan’s previous world, England had adopted this strategy.

But the English navy was not very powerful at that time, and England had to do so in order to cope with Spain, which had the greatest naval power.

Ettoman had the strongest navy in this world, but it could still choose to do so in order to suppress the maritime development of other countries!

Although the initial goals were different, the final benefits were the same.

Therefore, while Duke Ham kept shaking his head, Donald was completely confident in himself.

“All right... I think this idea still needs to be discussed carefully...” Duke Ham said with uncertainty.

“Umm... Mr. Donald, I hope to invite you to have dinner with me. Will you?”

The butler beside him was holding a teapot. Upon hearing this, his hand shivered, as he knew that the economist had gained a closer relationship with the duke. He felt admiration for this economist.

“It would be my honor!” Donald smiled and bowed.

"If... and I mean if..." Duke Ham asked slowly, "the suggestion about permits gets approved, what will you name it?"

"Privateer Permit. I think that using this for an official name isn't bad!" Donald suggested. "And the pirate ships with Privateer Permits can be partially supported by our navy. Perhaps we can call them... royal pirates?!"

Chapter 846: Ransom

Rumble.

The rage of the sea arrived all of a sudden.

It had been sunny just a moment ago, but after Fang Yuan ascended to the lookout and gave an order, the entire world immediately darkened and a storm formed, engulfing the area.

Wilson broke out in a cold sweat when he witnessed this scene.

If they had not changed course under Fang Yuan's command, they would have bumped into the storm.

"This is the Nightmare Ocean. It is filled with ferocious and ruthless pirates, frightening giant sea monsters, and large-scale tropical storms that can form and disperse at any time... Even the most experienced voyager will find it hard to cope with... But one can only enter the Golden Sea Route by entering the Nightmare Ocean. We're at two entirely different levels compared to before!" Bill murmured, gazing at Fang Yuan's back in admiration.

Originally, these pirates on Mockingbird would have spent all their lives on the inshore waters.

But now, Fang Yuan had undoubtedly brought them into a whole new world.

In this new world, opportunities co-existed with challenges. They might die at any moment, but so what? They were pirates anyway! They risked their lives all the time for freedom and adventure!

"Onward! The destination is Bloody Mary Port!"

Splash!

Illuminated by the lightning, the world was as white as snow.

In the pouring rain, Fang Yuan stood at the helmsman's position, one of his hands holding the helm steadily.

Fiery Lotus indeed had the quality of a naval battleship, breaking the waves as it sailed forward in the rough seas.

Of course, even so, the horrible power of the sea still made it sway from side to side. As the terrifying waves beat against the ship, even Butcher, who had always been careless, had a lingering fear. "If this were Mockingbird, I'm afraid that it would have already fallen apart..."

"Helmsman, continue in this direction!"

After the wind had subsided slightly, Fang Yuan called for the helmsman, while he himself went to the deck.

In reality, what he had done was extremely dangerous.

After all, the wind was strong and the sea was rough. If a sailor had fallen into the sea due to the shaking or the beating waves, he would have been as good as dead. Even if the others wanted to rescue him, they would have been unable to.

But Fang Yuan and a few capable subordinates of his did not care much about it.

“Hmm?” At this moment, with his astonishing psyche, Fang Yuan detected something. “Below the ship... is some giant creature drawing near?”

Splash!

The next moment, a bolt of lightning struck right in front of Fiery Lotus.

Woo woo!

The sobs sounded like something from the ancient era. Suddenly, the water surface was torn apart by a long, black silhouette that looked like a giant snake.

Its head reached high above the water, and the bulging sea suggested the presence of a small hill underwater.

Splash!

With another bolt of lightning, the monster suddenly leaped back into the sea. Its long and slender neck, its four claspers, and its streamlined body resembling a drop of water were all clearly revealed.

“Plesiosaur? This shape...”

Fang Yuan’s pupils contracted.

The next moment, horrifying waves built up and beat against Fiery Lotus.

Ah!

A pirate screamed as the rope he used to fix himself to the ship broke and he was thrown heavily into the sea.

Wilson looked uneasy and suddenly shouted, “It’s the giant sea monster—Brasley! Everybody, don’t move! This kind of sea monster has a mild temper, so as long as we don’t irritate it...”

“Fire the cannons!”

The next moment, Fang Yuan’s order was heard.

“Boss?” Wilson was extremely shocked. “Why?”

“Because I want to... Hahaha!!!” Fang Yuan’s laughter was even louder than the thunder.

Bang bang!

On Fiery Lotus, no pirate dared to defy Fang Yuan's orders.

Within a short while, dozens of cannons sounded together, and at least half of the shots hit the giant body.

Woo woo!

A large volume of blood exploded in the dusky seawater.

Meanwhile, the giant creature below the water surface quickly approached the ship.

Obviously, given the Brasley's immense size, which was over twenty meters long, smaller sailboats would be directly ruined if it struck them.

"Prepare for impact!"

Fang Yuan went to the ship's bow and set up a huge ballista.

It was a ballista specially designed for fishing and could be used to capture whales in the inshore waters. This equipment was originally on Mockingbird. When the pirates were free and had nothing to do, they would not mind playing the role of fishermen occasionally.

Furthermore, the materials from some whales were very valuable in this world. Sometimes, the income from fishing could even exceed the income from plundering!

After all of the crew had moved to Fiery Lotus, Fang Yuan had transported all the high-quality equipment from Mockingbird onto Fiery Lotus, which turned out to be useful now.

"Weakness! Corruption! Fear!"

He waved his hand, shrouding a harpoon with the light of some extraordinary magic.

Accompanied by the roar of the ballista, the dreadful barbed harpoon was shot out at lightning speed. The rope tied to it stretched out like a viper thrusting its tongue as it accurately hit the Brasley's spiky back.

Woo woo!

Anyone could hear the agony in its deafening roar.

A strong pulling force was felt. Even though the Brasley was injured, it could still drag Fiery Lotus and swim onward.

"Wanna go deeper? Too late!"

Fang Yuan laughed coldly and gave an order. "Hold up against it!"

He was naturally confident in the harpoon that he himself had shot out. It absolutely went into the bones, and the curse on it would significantly weaken this giant sea monster's strength.

The enfeebled sea monster could only drag Fiery Lotus while swimming quickly on the sea.

And the loss of energy and blood would continue to worsen its injury, exhausting it until its death!

One day and one night passed in the blink of an eye.

The dark clouds dispersed and the rain stopped, no longer showing any signs of a storm. The sky was blue and the clouds were white. Seagulls flew close to the ocean in the sunshine.

On a deserted island, the giant corpse of the Brasley was stranded on the beach, revealing the huge wound on its back and the pale skin and muscles near the wound.

Twenty-four hours of hard fight had completely exhausted this sea monster.

In the end, it could only dash onto the beach, hoping to kill the hunters before its own death. Unfortunately, even this humble wish could not be realized.

Wilson bowed and congratulated Fang Yuan. "Congratulations, my great captain! You've hunted and killed a Brasley. Your name will be spread and remembered among pirates for eternity!"

"I know you don't find that worthwhile... I actually have other ways of using this sea monster's corpse!"

Fang Yuan ordered the small boats to be placed into the water and went to the beach. "Butcher, dismember it... I want the blood from its heart, its eyeballs, the tendons near its spine, and its spinal marrow. You can distribute the rest to eat!"

The materials from some giant sea monsters were a favorite among sorcerers, warlocks, and other spellcasters.

But to Fang Yuan, they only had a single use: creating Ocean Warlocks!

Since he was prepared to become a powerful pirate all across the ocean and even the Pirate King, he had to have at least a few capable subordinates.

Fang Yuan was the only Extraordinary on Fiery Lotus.

Butcher was merely a mortal relying on a few extraordinary items, and a real Extraordinary could readily defeat him.

This batch of pirates had followed him for the longest period and was the most loyal to him, so he would naturally start promoting them first.

Creating Ocean Warlocks, which he had already experimented with, was the best means.

And this promotion ceremony was simple, with only sea monster blood being relatively difficult to obtain.

Given the Brasley's giant body, it should even be sufficient to promote all the pirates on the ship.

However, Fang Yuan was not going to promote too many of them.

Anything that was large in quantity would become worthless.

Things like promotion to Extraordinary were rewards for only the most loyal members.

Moreover, abilities in other aspects were indispensable as well.

When it comes to who I should promote, Butcher, Bill, and Wilson are all pretty good candidates! But despite Wilson's excellent capabilities, he still has a lot of concerns. I need further observation. Otherwise, I may end up getting nothing from him...

With that thought, Fang Yuan asked Wilson directly, "Third Officer, I still haven't asked you what you want one thousand gold coins for."

Wilson had proven his value to Fang Yuan through his good performance.

Moreover, the dividends from the plunder of Dearborn Port had made this third officer rather affluent, and he was very close to his target.

Therefore, it puzzled Fang Yuan why Wilson did not look for an opportunity to leave.

"I want to... ransom someone! A slave... in Bloody Mary Pirate Port..."

Wilson took a deep breath.

"Oh? Don't tell me that this person is a woman!"

Fang Yuan was prepared to listen to a melodramatic story.

"No! It's a man!" Wilson said. "His name is Helga. He's an excellent voyager and my best brother, but unfortunately... his personality is problematic and he likes to gamble. He had to work on a pirate ship because of his debts... Recently, I received the news that he had lost a huge sum at Blood Mary Port and was deprived of his freedom, becoming a slave."

"Therefore... you want to raise the ransom as soon as possible?" Fang Yuan looked at Wilson. "You're really... a good brother!"

Bloody Mary Port was a pure pirate port. It had more freedom, but it also had stricter rules in some aspects.

Such ports had to be protected by powerful pirates, or else they would not survive for long.

And as far as Fang Yuan knew, the backer of Bloody Mary Port was the pirate governor of the Nightmare Ocean—Blackbeard!

Any pirate who caused trouble at such a place would be courting death!

In the Nightmare Ocean, Blackbeard was almost as frightening as an Evil God.

"Oh? Then it seems that we need to hurry to Bloody Mary Port as soon as possible!"

Fang Yuan nodded.

"That's right. Helga is considered a high-level slave because of his voyage skills, so someone will definitely buy him in this auction..." Wilson's voice was full of sorrow.

Behind his back, however, Bill and Butcher looked at him with strange and indescribable expressions...

Chapter 847: Auction

Blood Mary Port.

A bird's-eye view of the port would reveal its U-shape, which suggested its geographical advantages.

There were numerous batteries arranged on the hills on both sides of the port, with many frightening cannons aiming at the sea. Giant chains and other apparatuses were also in place to defend the port against any enemies.

After observing Bloody Mary Port, Fang Yuan had to acknowledge that this port was not a few times larger than Dearborn Port, even if he had ten times the amount of men he had now, it would still be difficult to attack and take over this place unless he did so at full strength.

When Fiery Lotus just arrived at the line of defense, there was some commotion on the batteries.

Obviously, if the Jolly Roger with flames of negative karma had not declared their identity, the pirates would have thought that a navy was here to capture them.

After clarifying their identity and making them pay a huge sum for mooring fees, a dinghy slowly led Fiery Lotus into Bloody Mary Port.

"A busy and dangerous place..."

Fang Yuan heard a gunshot as soon as he disembarked from the ship.

"Lad, don't run! How dare you steal from Dark Crow! I'll mince you into meat jam..."

When Fang Yuan just passed the port entrance, a skinny figure dashed past Fang Yuan while a pirate wielding a cutlass chased after him.

"Bloody Mary Port doesn't forbid personal fights. Only a few places like bars, hotels, and auction venues are protected by Blackbeard. Anyone who makes trouble at those places will be skinned as punishment!" Bill explained to Fang Yuan in detail and pointed at a huge wall near the port.

The human skins swayed in the breeze like kites.

"This is a good method. Pirates are an unruly bunch of people... To ban fights completely is to cause trouble for oneself..."

Fang Yuan nodded. "We'll settle down in a hotel first and then have a day of free activities to collect information about the auction!"

Seemingly because of the well-known auction, all the hotels in Bloody Mary Port were full, and even the prices of drinks increased by fifty percent.

Fang Yuan had to let the majority of the crew stay on the ship, checking in at a bar named Roaring Flame and Iron Hammer with only Butcher and a few other trusted subordinates.

This bar also ran a hotel as its business, and it only had a few empty rooms at this moment. Of course, they could expect the rooms to not be very comfortable.

What surprised Fang Yuan slightly was that the boss of the bar was a dwarf who was less than four feet tall and had extremely stout arms and legs.

The row of dwarven warrior guards at the gate all wore leather armor and held huge hammers, axes, and other heavy weapons, giving the guests a sense of security.

Although they had already known that there were different species on other continents, Bill and some others still looked back at the dwarves curiously, causing Fang Yuan to stop and scold them.

As far as he knew, the dwarves in this world had a temper, especially when others sized up their heights.

In Roaring Flame and Iron Hammer, Fang Yuan and his subordinates occupied a table and ordered a meal.

Dwarves were quite good at cooking. There were roasts, wheat tortillas, and honey wine. Bill and Butcher both greatly enjoyed the meal.

But Wilson looked worried and kept frowning, as if he could not wait to collect intelligence outside once he finished the meal.

Fang Yuan took a few bites of the roast and then held a wine glass, drinking honey wine in a leisurely manner.

Given his sharp senses, he could hear all the whispers among the pirates and get a lot of intelligence:

“The Pablo Pirate Team encountered a storm and suffered heavy losses!”

“Blackbeard intends to head to the Gold Ocean to battle with the Pirate Prince. His final aim is definitely to take over Pirate King City and become the new Pirate King!”

“A new batch of good targets is approaching from the sea route to the East. Rumor has it that a caravan with an entire ship containing gold and silver from the East was plundered!”

“The Octopus Marauder Team returned and vanquished their enemies! Surprisingly, their original third officer, Orlando, is a really capable person. He’s become the leader of the pirate team and annihilated the Fierce Shark Pirate Team that had driven them out of the Nightmare Ocean. Now he has three huge ships, and the official bounty for his arrest has reached twenty thousand gold coins. Sorcerer Orlando’s name is spreading all over the Nightmare Ocean...”

“I swear I saw Giant Octopus together with that giant octopus at the dock just now! It seems to have betrayed its original master and become Orlando’s contract partner!”

...

He heard all sorts of information, but Fang Yuan paid more attention to the last piece.

“The Octopus Marauder Team, I’ve heard of them!”

This topic was not as sensitive as the news about Blackbeard, so the pirates discussed it loudly. Bill heard it as well and whispered to Fang Yuan, “Their warship is Giant Octopus. Rumor has it that their leader had the ability to summon a giant octopus, but they were ambushed by the Fierce Shark Pirate Team and had to retreat and recover in inshore waters. It’s surprising that they made a comeback so soon...”

A pirate who had only one pirate ship was totally different from a pirate who had three.

Of course, Fang Yuan had not had sufficient time to develop, nor did he have enough men working for him. Earlier, he even had to sink both Mockingbird and Merchant Ship Rose.

And now that he was in a real pirate port, he could finally get lots of supplements.

The Nightmare Ocean was pirates' heaven.

In this place, with sufficient fame and fortune, he could readily call for crowds of pirates to follow him.

Although the caliber would be a big issue in that case, the scene would be overwhelming.

"I didn't expect... Orlando to be here as well. His level should be higher than mine? But that's meaningless..."

Fang Yuan was not bothered about his Pirate System at all.

After all, when he needed power, he could just pray to his original body without paying any price.

But Orlando had to complete all kinds of quests assigned to him and experience countless difficulties before becoming a sorcerer.

He should be going to the auction as well? I can't let this continue, as the plan on Donald's side still needs pirates to collaborate... Fang Yuan thought casually, finishing his meal slowly before he dismissed his subordinates for free activities.

After receiving the order, Bill and Butcher started to flirt with a few gorgeous barmaids, while Wilson sneaked out like a rabbit.

...

Early in the next morning, Fang Yuan saw Wilson drinking at the bar counter with a dejected expression.

"What happened? Didn't succeed?"

Fang Yuan frowned.

Wilson had the dividends from their previous activities, and together with the amount he had borrowed yesterday, he should have more than a thousand gold coins. This amount of money was enough to ransom ten slaves.

"That's right..."

Wilson looked melancholy. He ordered another glass of 'Lava', the strongest liquor here, and finished it in one go. "That damned slave trader Heathfrey. He saw that Helga is my friend and raised the price to 1,500 gold coins! Otherwise, he'll sell Helga to an illegal mine!"

"Come on!" Fang Yuan rolled his eyes. "Helga is a high-level talent who has mastered voyage skills. If he sells Helga to a mine, he'll incur a huge loss."

"Boss, could you..." Wilson was having a hard time asking. "Lend me another five hundred gold coins... I'll definitely return it to you, and Helga's ability is useful as well! Aren't we short on voyagers now?"

"That's true, but I don't want to be ripped off!"

Fang Yuan's intuition told him that if Wilson went to find that unscrupulous merchant again, the price would be even higher.

And these slave traders were most probably backed by someone associated with Blackbeard, so they had nothing to fear.

"I'd rather wait until the auction... Given the greed of that merchant, his slaves may end up unsold. In that case, there won't be any issue! And I promise that I'll definitely get him if there's any competition."

Fang Yuan did not want to be cheated like a fool.

"Sigh..." Wilson nodded. "That's the only option. Poor Helga!"

"What happened this time is a lesson to him as well. Also, private gambling is strictly forbidden on my ship unless notarized by the captain or the chief officer! This will be a way to resolve some conflicts!"

Fang Yuan casually added to his rules.

...

The largest auction house in the port was called Bloody Mary, and it was said that Blackbeard owned it.

When Fang Yuan arrived with two subordinates frog-marching their merchandise, the auction was yet to start.

"You dirty, despicable pirate! How dare you sell me as a slave... I swear on the name of Elizabeth, I will take my revenge on you!"

Elizabeth's face was haggard, but she was still like an enraged lion.

Of course, in Fang Yuan's mind, she was only an angry little cat.

"Miss Elizabeth, your value seems to have exceeded my expectations..."

With a hidden meaning in his words, Fang Yuan gazed at Elizabeth.

He did not expect that a marriage between two mere viscounts would make Viscount Dearborn breach rules and get his entire family killed as a consequence. The potential influence of Elizabeth was not to be underestimated.

Nevertheless, with Donald acting as his spy, Fang Yuan had learned a lot.

If extortion had not been too troublesome, he really would have planned to extort a huge sum from Viscount Charlie.

"Your Excellency, I'm the appraiser here!"

As Elizabeth was about to continue struggling and say something, the room door was pushed open and someone wearing a smart gentleman suit entered and bowed slightly. "May I ask whether your entrusted commodity is..."

"It's her!" Fang Yuan pointed at Elizabeth. "She's a viscount's daughter, about to marry Viscount Charlie of Ettoman... I hope that the reservation price is... ten thousand gold coins!"

“Hmm...” The appraiser did not take him seriously, sizing up Elizabeth professionally. “Beautiful woman... But a mere viscount’s daughter isn’t worth this price. However, as the root cause of Dearborn Port’s doom, she’ll attract a lot of interest...”

Chapter 848: Making An Enemy

After entrusting the goods, Fang Yuan was automatically granted admittance to the auction.

Of course, since the auction was due to start in the evening, Fang Yuan and the rest were first invited into a splendid private room, where there was an endless supply of wine and delicacies.

As Butcher was munching on chicken drumsticks, one in each hand, someone knocked on the door.

“Who’s there?” Fang Yuan frowned.

“Sorry... Sir, Mr. Heathfrey wants to meet you!” An attendant entered, the helpless smile on his face suggesting that he had no other choice.

“That slave trader?”

Fang Yuan shrugged and took a look at Wilson’s expression. “Let him come here!”

Heathfrey was swarthy, obese, and short. He had a ferocious expression on his muscular face and an extremely ruthless glow in his small eyes.

Rumor had it that he had instigated civil strife in two small indigenous countries that eventually led to their collapse just because he wanted the thousands of strong slaves and a beautiful princess in the countries.

“Arcane Trickster Roche!” Heathfrey rudely sat down opposite Fang Yuan, irritating Fang Yuan slightly. “I want your female slave. Give me a quote!”

“Hehe...”

Fang Yuan cast a fierce glance at the auction house attendant at the side.

Evidently, the commercial firm of this pirate team was blatantly faithless, leaking information about the lots before the start of the auction.

Of course, from another point of view, he could tell that this slave trader possessed tremendous power. He might even be in the same firm as the auction house.

“You mean Elizabeth... I’m auctioning her only for gold coins. The reservation price is ten thousand gold coins, but if she’s in great demand, the price may rise to twenty thousand gold coins... However, if you’re willing to pay fifteen thousand gold coins, you can take her away.”

“Fifteen thousand gold coins? Are you joking?” Heathfrey stared with his small eyes wide open. “I can buy hundreds of pretty women slaves with this amount of money! That woman is at most worth five thousand gold coins...”

He took a glance at Wilson and sneered. "Of course, since this is the first time I'm doing business with Captain Arcane Trickster, I can't make you suffer a loss. How about five thousand gold coins plus that slave named Helga?"

"Do you think that a mere voyager is worth ten thousand gold coins?" Fang Yuan pointed at the door. "If you're here to joke with me, this joke is unusually clumsy!"

"Lad! Bloody Mary is not the inshore waters where any pirate can wreak havoc!" Heathfrey banged the table, his eyes emitting a fierce glow. "Do you know that everything here belongs to the great Blackbeard! And I, Heathfrey, am an important merchant serving Blackbeard... As soon as I demand it, the auction house will hand that woman over to me!"

Bill's expression changed when he heard this, looking at his captain worriedly.

Wilson also clenched his fists nervously.

Obviously, they thought that Fang Yuan had been too reckless.

"Go ahead!" Fang Yuan gestured. "She's just a woman, so do anything you want... However, from tomorrow onward, a story about how the auction house extorts and plunders commodities will circulate in the entire port!"

Even though this auction house was associated with Heathfrey, it could at most leak some information about the sellers and commodities in advance.

If it really dared to plunder the goods to be auctioned, it would definitely be courting death!

Which pirate or merchant would dare trade with the auction house once it did such a thing?

Even a hundred Elizabeths could not make up for the resulting losses. Furthermore, if the backer of the auction house—Blackbeard—learned about such deeds, Heathfrey would only end up as a skin floating in the wind at the dock.

"Very good... You're quite daring!"

The two bodyguards behind Heathfrey had taken out their weapons, but Heathfrey restrained their further actions. He said to Fang Yuan balefully, "Do you know that a dead person can't talk?"

"Unfortunately, it looks like we can't agree to a deal!"

Fang Yuan shrugged, not caring about the threat at all.

"You'll regret it! I swear!"

Heathfrey took one last stare at Fang Yuan, as though he wanted to etch Fang Yuan's appearance into his mind, before slamming the door behind him.

"Captain..." Wilson wanted to say something but hesitated.

"You're afraid that he'll torture Helga?" Fang Yuan was somewhat speechless. "This would have been likely to happen if I had appeared more concerned about Helga. But now... he won't do that. After all, he still needs to sell this high-level slave tonight."

Of course, even Fang Yuan felt more surprised now.

Heathfrey's attention clearly implied that there might still be some secrets in Elizabeth or those close to her.

"In this case, she can be sold at an even higher price tonight!"

A trace of anticipation flashed in Fang Yuan's eyes.

...

Bloody Mary Port looked more prosperous and bustling in the evening. The entire place was brightly illuminated.

Noise, quarrels, and even the sound from fights echoed continuously.

In the hall of the auction house.

Good-looking attendants moved through the crowds like butterflies moving through clusters of flowers, receiving pirates and merchants one after another.

The auction house in Bloody Mary Port was very famous in both the Nightmare Ocean and Ettoman.

This was because the goods here were very cheap, and Blackbeard would absolutely ensure the safety of the guests. Therefore, even some large chambers of commerce in Ettoman would send people here for a shopping spree.

Merchants were crucial to the continued prosperity of pirates.

Fang Yuan asked for a round table in a corner. Dreamy light rays were reflected from the bottle of red wine in front of him.

"This bottle of red wine is from the leader of the top ten wineries in the Opher Continent—St. Joan!"

An attendant in a tailcoat introduced the wine first, displaying the label and the cork, before he uncorked the bottle and allowed the wine to breathe.

"A bottle of wine from the cellars of the top ten wineries should cost at least ten gold coins, right?"

At the side, a few people who looked like merchants exclaimed in a low voice, "We're feeling even more eager for this evening."

Even though they were merchants doing small business, nobody dared look down upon them because no one knew which large chamber of commerce or important noble family had sent them here.

"Do you want some extra money?"

Fang Yuan looked at the attendant who had opened the wine bottle and opened his hand to reveal a few gold coins glistening between his fingers.

"I'm at your disposal, sir!" The attendant bowed calmly. "My job is to provide better services for you!"

"It's simple. Introduce everyone you know among these people. This is your tip!"

The pirates on Mockingbird had never dared to enter the Nightmare Ocean, and Wilson had no other choice but to make a living within inshore waters.

“No problem!” The attendant heaved a sigh of relief. “Those at the table in the front are from the Trident Pirate Team... On their left is an important businessman from Cecil named Formosa. I don’t know the ones on the right, but they should be from Ettoman’s leading commercial firms... Oh, the group who just entered is the Octopus Marauder Team, which has recently shot to fame. Their team leader, Orlando, is a powerful sorcerer!”

Fang Yuan would notice Orlando’s team even without this mention of them.

The young man’s aura and influence had changed drastically. He was wearing a gorgeous robe with a golden cutlass tied at his waist.

This lad seems to be thriving...

Fang Yuan nodded silently and opened Orlando’s stats window directly.

“Name: Orlando

Level: Civilian Level 5, Sorcerer Level 2

Strength: 3

Speed: 3

Physique: 2.5

Psyche: 6

Identity: Pirate (Team Leader of the Octopus Marauder Team)

Specialization: Sailing (Normal), Musket Manipulation (Proficient), Cutlass Techniques (Master), Spell Casting in Battle (Basic), Sorcery (Basic)

Experience: 500 (Experience required before reaching the next level: 2000)

Pretty good. He’s become a sorcerer, enhanced his psyche, and obtained two more specializations?

Fang Yuan nodded in approval and thought mischievously, *If at this time he’s assigned a quest to spoil the auction, I wonder if he’ll do it...*

Perhaps Orlando felt that someone was looking at him, so he looked back and examined Fang Yuan.

Of course, Orlando was totally unable to recognize Fang Yuan now. He only saw a few pirates that he did not recognize and nodded to them reservedly before sitting down close to the front.

The great slave trader, Heathfrey, entered immediately after Orlando. He smiled at Fang Yuan ferociously, like a viper, and made a throat-cutting gesture.

Hehe... Fang Yuan smiled coldly.

No matter how many powerful associates this slave trader had, the outcome of naval battles still depended on combat strength.

He would not fear anyone in this aspect.

“Everybody!”

After Heathfrey seated himself, all the seats in the hall were occupied and an emcee in formal attire came to the center of the stage. “Welcome to tonight’s auction! My name is Pielberg, and I’m honored to serve you all... Next, let’s bring lot number one onto the stage—an extraordinary sword, the ‘Tiger of Fire’! This sword was cast purely using legendary Valian steel in elven-style workmanship. A sorcerer gave it a magical attachment when it was completed, allowing fire attacks to be triggered thrice per day. Starting price... five thousand gold coins!”

“It’s actually a weapon with magical attachment!” A pirate team leader exclaimed. “Six thousand gold coins!”

Evidently, the first lot in the auction was used to warm up the atmosphere.

Both pirates and merchants liked these kinds of things which could immediately enhance their power. The price soon exceeded ten thousand gold coins. Eventually, a pirate from the Gold Ocean bought it at twelve thousand gold coins.

“Next is lot number two, a diamond—the Crimson Tear!”

The emcee pulled a red cloth and revealed the huge diamond on a plate. It glittered increasingly brighter under the light.

“The Crimson Tear is from the Spice Archipelago. It’s said to be an ornament from the crown of an indigenous king. Starting price... six thousand gold coins!”

Pirates were uninterested in jewels like this, but it was a favorite of the nobles. A few chambers of commerce immediately bid against one another and warmed up the atmosphere.

Chapter 849: Raising the Price

In the end, the Crimson Tear was sold for nine thousand gold coins. The pirates were apparently still rational, while the merchants got a good deal.

A diamond like this could readily be sold at double the price.

If it was cut and made into elegant jewelry, the profit could be as much as dozens of times the cost!

And only such huge profits could attract the merchants here despite the dangers on the way.

Bill and Wilson stared wide-eyed at the precious and rare commodities, each one sold at five thousand gold coins or more.

Of course, some peculiar items with no practical use remained unsold in the end.

“Next is lot number thirteen, the incomplete piece of a treasure map...”

The emcee tried to incite excitement using his voice. “As everyone knows, pirate teams like hiding their fortunes on deserted islands so that they can be unearthed in the future... And although only an

incomplete piece of the treasure map is being sold at tonight's auction, the seller disclosed that it's from the Soro Pirate Team! The auction house can guarantee the authenticity of this information!"

"The Soro Pirate Team? Isn't that the pirate team that used to dominate the Solomon Strait?" The great merchant Formosa stood up, looking excited.

"Oh my... The team leader of the Soro Pirate Team was known as the man most similar to an Evil God! His power horrified all the nations with strong naval forces, and he almost became the Pirate King!" An exclamation was also heard from the Trident Pirate Team.

" *Cough cough* ... However, while the auction house can guarantee that this treasure map is from the Soro Pirate Team, we're uncertain about the profits it can bring... Nevertheless, based on the extraordinary power on this piece, it shouldn't be pointing to a small treasure trove..."

Having aroused everyone's enthusiasm, the emcee was satisfied, but he immediately emphasized the risk. "... I only have an incomplete piece in my hand, which is about one-fourth or one-fifth of the original map. However, our appraiser said that the treasure map has the blessing of destiny, which will let its pieces reunite one day!"

He was the auctioneer of the auction house after all, so all his words served to maximize profit and minimize risk.

"All right, the incomplete piece of a mysterious treasure map. The starting price is one thousand gold coins, and at least one hundred gold coins must be added in every bid!"

The emcee waved his hand.

"Two thousand gold coins!"

As soon as the emcee finished his sentence, Formosa waved his hand.

"Twenty-one hundred!"

The Trident Pirate Team raised the price immediately.

"Twenty-two hundred!"

...

Fang Yuan watched the scene coldly, extending his hand into his coat and gripping the incomplete piece of a treasure map in front of his chest.

This piece he had picked up from inside a book cover had an aura extremely similar to that of the one being auctioned. He was sure that both pieces were from the same map.

"The Soro Pirate Team dominated the Solomon Strait... They were famous in history as well. Their leader was a godlike man and possessed a famous legendary ship..."

Having made sure that the treasure map before his chest was related to the Soro Pirate Team, Fang Yuan decided to do something.

In terms of financial capability, he would not be poorer than anyone at the scene, as he had just plundered a port.

The intense bidding subsided when the price was around five thousand gold coins.

Evidently, the pirates and merchants were not idiots. They all knew that this was already the maximum value for a piece of a treasure map.

Even though it was a treasure map from the Soro Pirate Team, it was only an incomplete piece, which significantly reduced its value. Moreover, there was a lot of uncertainty in the destination it pointed to. These two factors together meant that this treasure map fragment could not be auctioned at a high price.

“Fifty-three hundred gold coins going once! Any higher prices?”

The emcee pulled his collars in excitement, as the price had far exceeded his expectations.

“Fifty-three hundred gold coins going twice. It seems that this treasure map will soon belong to the great merchant from Cecil, Formosa...”

When he was about to pound the gavel, a voice intercepted him. “Wait a moment. I bid fifty-four hundred!”

“Hmm?” Formosa’s peaceful smile suddenly disappeared. He gritted his teeth as he looked at Heathfrey, who had just bid. “Six thousand gold coins!”

Heathfrey did not even blink and offered a higher price right away. “Seven thousand!”

Formosa was stunned.

After all, although he was rich, an incomplete piece of a treasure map was not worth so much money.

With that thought, Formosa raised the price again. “Seventy-one hundred gold coins! This is my final bid. I’m simply interested in everything related to Solomon. If you offer an even higher price, I’ll let you have it!”

“Since you’ve said that!” Heathfrey touched his trim mustaches. “Seventy-two hundred gold coins!!!”

Hearing this, Formosa sat down with an emotionless face.

“All right. Then this treasure map belongs to...”

The emcee coughed and was going to announce the final outcome, but Fang Yuan’s lazy voice sounded. “Ten thousand gold coins!”

“What?” The emcee almost choked on his own saliva. “Sir, are you sure your bid is ten thousand gold coins?”

Fang Yuan glanced at Heathfrey and said in a contemptuous tone, “That’s right... I’m not like some miserly people!”

The slave trader’s entire fat body was shaking in anger.

“Good, very good!” Heathfrey cursed and continued bidding. “Eleven thousand gold coins!”

“Twelve thousand!” Fang Yuan followed up directly.

Formosa and the other initial bidders now realized in surprise that there were still people truly interested in this fragment. Their expressions were complex at the thought.

...

“Fifteen thousand gold coins!” Heathfrey uttered a number in a rage, staring at Fang Yuan with bloodshot eyes.

“Since you’re looking at me so sincerely, well...” Fang Yuan spread his arms and shrugged, sitting back into his chair. “I’ll let you have it then! Come, cheers for the generous slave trader, Heathfrey!”

Pirates were all people who liked chaos, and many of them started whistling in a funny manner.

In their minds, the Arcane Trickster had a grudge against Heathfrey and had played verbal tricks on this slave trader.

Forcing him to purchase this seemingly worthless treasure map fragment at a higher price was indeed a splendid scene to behold.

“Good, very good!”

If the slave trader had been looking at Fang Yuan with bloodshot eyes earlier, then his eyes were like knives now, as if he wanted to cut Fang Yuan’s flesh directly by staring at him.

” *Cough cough ...*” The emcee tried to make peace in a hurry. “Everybody... Next up is the routine program of our auction house—the slave auction. The first set is plantation slaves, one hundred slaves per group. Each of them is good at planting crops, and they’re all docile and won’t resist. They’re definitely the top choice for plantation owners. There are ten groups in total, and they’ll be auctioned separately. The base price is one thousand gold coins!”

Slave trading was strictly forbidden in Ettoman, where people considered themselves to be civilized.

More than a decade ago, the king had signed the law to absolve all the local slaves and grant freedom to them.

Of course, the workers being exploited in the factories might get worse treatment than slaves in plantations, but that did not matter too much.

However, although Ettoman banned the use of slaves in its territories, there was always a strong demand for slaves in tropical plantations and the factories of foreign countries.

Blackbeard took up the largest market share in this aspect and was the infamous leader among slave traders

In his territories, slaves could be sold openly.

For example, the slaves were all docile and specialized in some skills, and the prices were favorable as well. The ship owners soon bought them up.

After the slave batches were sold out, it was time to auction the high-level slaves. Helga was among them, and of course, there were a few extremely beautiful women slaves as well.

"This high-level slave, Helga, has mastered voyage skills and is an excellent voyager. The starting price is one thousand gold coins!"

The emcee waved his hand, signaling two strong men to bring a slave onto the stage.

Fang Yuan fixed his eyes on him. Helga was less than thirty years old. He had wheat-colored skin and a sturdy chest. Together with his small mustache, pronounced facial features, and cynical smile, he indeed had some charm.

"Helga!" Wilson shouted loudly at the side, as though he would dash onto the exhibition stage at the next moment.

"Damn it! Butcher!"

Fang Yuan covered his face and made a gesture.

Wilson felt as if a dark shadow as heavy as a mountain fell upon him, making him unable to move.

"Eleven hundred!"

...

The bidding continued. Within a short time, the price had reached fifteen hundred gold coins.

"I bid... three thousand gold coins!" Fang Yuan suddenly said, doubling the price and looking at Heathfrey provocatively.

The slave trader breathed heavily and was prepared to raise the price again, but he suddenly thought of what happened previously.

After all, this slave was only a friend of the third officer, not a friend of the captain himself. Helga might not be very important to him, or else he would have ransomed the slave earlier.

What if this was a trap again?

Why would he raise the price and buy his own slave? Just to let the auction house earn the commission twice?

He hesitated immediately.

And to the other ship owners, three thousand gold coins far exceeded the real value of this slave, so they would not bid a higher price. Moreover, everyone thought that it was Fang Yuan's trap, and they did not want to fall into it foolishly.

After the gavel hit and the auctioneer announced the outcome, Wilson looked at Fang Yuan in deep gratitude.

"Boss, many thanks!"

"You're welcome..."

Fang Yuan waved his hand and stared at the auction stage. The auction of slaves had reached the final climax, and the lot he had entrusted them with was on the stage as well.

"Next is the climax of our slave auction this time. This is a noble's daughter, Miss Elizabeth from Ettoman!" the emcee shouted at the top of his voice.

Chapter 850: Recruitment

Elizabeth walked out gracefully in the spotlight.

She was wearing a black gown, and her hair was tied up in a bun so that the buyers could see her white and slender neck. Her perfect shape and her cold but beautiful face could easily provoke the sexual desire in men.

"Lastly, Miss Elizabeth is Viscount Quaid's daughter and is about to marry Viscount Charlie of Ettoman... The starting price is ten thousand gold coins!"

The emcee said in a tempting tone, "Is there anyone... who's willing to become the master of this beautiful noble lady? Oh, I can assure you that professionals have checked and ensured that this lady is a virgin."

Huff huff!

The last sentence was apparently more provocative. Even Butcher and Bill, who were beside Fang Yuan, started to breathe intensely.

"Ten thousand one hundred gold coins!" a pirate shouted out his bid first, undeterred by the exorbitant price of ten thousand gold coins.

"Ten thousand five hundred gold coins!"

...

The price increased quickly, and even Fang Yuan was a bit surprised. "Are noblewomen captives in such high demand nowadays?"

"Sir, you really don't know?" At this point in time, the attendant beside him looked about to break down. "Viscount Quaid is the most promising competitor for the governor position in the Solomon Strait colony... Merchant ships heading for the East always have to pass through that place... Viscount Charlie is one of the most exalted nobles in Ettoman, and he has a royal bloodline. Otherwise, why would he marry Miss Elizabeth, who's merely backed by the Rose Chamber of Commerce?"

"Hmm, competitor? Looks like the incumbent governor will renounce the position soon?" Fang Yuan nodded. "And Elizabeth hurried to get married in Ettoman at this time. *Tsk tsk* ... I wonder how many trade-offs are involved in this."

"Therefore, this is definitely a hot potato. It's better to get rid of her earlier!" Bill gave his advice. He had obviously thought about it for a long time.

"Fifteen thousand gold coins!"

When the price reached thirteen thousand gold coins, merchants from Ettoman finally started to bid, raising the price by two thousand straightaway.

"Fifteen thousand gold coins. Any higher bids?" the emcee shouted at the top of his lungs.

"Twenty thousand gold coins!"

At this moment, Formosa from Cecil stood up and looked around, speaking in a firm voice.

"Thirty thousand... gold coins!"

But he was soon given a slap in the face. A calm voice attracted all the attention.

"It's him!"

"The team leader of the Octopus Marauder Team!"

"Sorcerer Orlando? Could he be interested in the East Sea Route? If he uses Elizabeth as a hostage, Viscount Quaid will have to compromise, won't he? Of course, he needs to wait until Viscount Quaid becomes the governor of the Solomon Strait colony..."

The onlookers whispered among themselves.

Orlando's expression was solemn, suggesting his determination to get her.

"Thirty-five thousand gold coins!"

Formosa shook his head and continued to raise the price.

"Forty thousand!"

"Forty-one thousand!"

...

In the end, both of them had to slow down their increases in the price, as they were running out of money.

"Forty-six thousand gold coins!" Orlando stood up slowly and gazed at Formosa. "Any higher?"

Thud!

The great merchant from Cecil suddenly sat back into his seat, unable to utter a word.

"Great!" Orlando nodded satisfactorily and glanced at the emcee.

"Then... forty-six thousand gold coins going once! This lady from Ettoman will soon belong to the great team leader of the Octopus Marauder Team..."

The emcee swallowed a mouthful of saliva in exhilaration.

A mere woman slave was actually sold at the highest price tonight. Even he would earn a huge commission.

But when he raised his gavel high in the air and was about to hit it down, Heathfrey spoke. "Fifty thousand gold coins!"

"What?" Orlando gazed at this swarthy, plump guy, his eyes glistening.

"Sorry... Orlando. I must have this person!"

Heathfrey gritted his teeth and inhaled a breath of cold air, apparently distressed at the large amount of money he had to spend.

"Good! Very good!"

Forty-six thousand gold coins was obviously the maximum that Orlando could afford. The sorcerer laughed coldly and sat back down, but everyone knew that this was definitely not the end.

...

"The auction today was really full of twists and turns..."

Helga, who just joined Fang Yuan's team, worked with Wilson and a few others to carry a cumbersome chest, following Fang Yuan out of the auction house.

Minus one-tenth of the fifty thousand gold coins as the commission and the three thousand gold coins used to ransom Helga, there were still forty-two thousand gold coins, which was extremely heavy.

Fang Yuan could even feel many people staring at him like greedy wolves.

"For now... we're still important guests of the auction house, but it's hard to say what will happen after we leave the port!"

Instead of returning to the hotel, Fang Yuan went to the dock directly. "Start recruiting pirates immediately... Fiery Lotus can load five hundred people, but we only have a hundred now. Bloody Mary is a large pirate port, so there are a plethora of impoverished pirates. We need to recruit as many as possible... But there are two requirements—first, they must specialize in at least one skill, and second, their background must be clean. Understood?"

Of course, to have a clean background did not mean to have never committed a crime, but to be free from any association with other pirate teams. Fang Yuan did not want to recruit a bunch of spies.

"Understood, Captain!" Wilson nodded.

Although the second requirement was a bit hard to meet, he had to do it because it was Fang Yuan's order.

"Bill..." Fang Yuan then called for his henchman. "Keep an eye on the slave trader Heathfrey, the Octopus Marauder Team, and the merchant from Cecil named Formosa! And be cautious!"

It was obvious that there was conflict among the three parties during the auction. Although they feared Blackbeard and would not do anything against one another in Bloody Mary Port, no one knew what would happen after they left.

In fact, the slave trader held a grudge against Fang Yuan as well. Otherwise, why would Fang Yuan be in a hurry to recruit people?

“Don’t worry, boss. I’ll find some unfamiliar people!” Bill nodded, implying that he had understood Fang Yuan’s hint.

“Great!”

On the dock, Fang Yuan deliberately had all his crew members disembark from the ship. Then he kicked the huge chest full of gold coins, toppling it onto the ground.

If the gold coins had not been surrounded by over a hundred pirates, those red-eyed sailors and pirates outside would definitely have rushed in to plunder the money.

“Since you chose to follow me, I will naturally give you sumptuous rewards!”

Fang Yuan smiled casually. He had done it intentionally to display his generosity to others, which served as an advertisement for the recruitment later.

“Everybody, now come forward to take your portion!”

There were people shouting ‘long live the captain’ as soon as he announced the decision.

Fang Yuan had always been very generous with money, and those pirates watching the scene were also attracted by it. Some of them immediately approached Fang Yuan’s crew and asked for information about Fiery Lotus’ recruitment.

As for whether other pirate ship captains would curse Fang Yuan for breaching rules and influencing the market, he did not care at all.

Due to the attraction using gold coins, the recruitment plan proceeded smoothly.

After all, Fiery Lotus was rather special among pirate ships. Mockingbird to Fiery Lotus was like a sparrow to an eagle, and any pirate could see the difference.

Moreover, this generous captain had proved by his action that those who followed him would have enormous potential in the future.

Fang Yuan had recruited more than three hundred pirates by nighttime, each of whom was extremely tough and valiant, prepared to fight at any time.

He did not need anyone else to assist him with the overall decision-making, so his subordinates just needed to be bold when it came to fighting and killing.

There were also a few special talents among them in other aspects.

Fang Yuan even found three people who might have extraordinary items with them. They were superior to common pirates and almost comparable to Butcher.

“Welcome, the three of you. From now on, you’ll be my high-level crew members!”

Fang Yuan would naturally meet the three of them in person to establish good relationships.

“It’s my honor to serve you, Captain!”

A swordsman in white greeted Fang Yuan, his every movement fitting the standards exactly, just like a noble.

According to Wilson’s introduction, his name was Danogu. He was a very famous hermit in Bloody Mary Port and had the alias of Rose Swordsman.

“With sufficient rewards, Youne is willing to serve you!”

And the other two high-level crew members were even more interesting.

One of them was almost eight feet tall and had a strong physique. The small scales scattered on his face and neck implied that he was the mixed-blood child of a human and some other species.

In Fang Yuan’s view, Youne should have the bloodline of lizardmen. It was lucky for him to survive until now.

However, repelled by mainstream society, he seemed to have no choice other than to be a pirate.

In Bloody Mary Port, other than dwarves, there were certainly more exotic species. In fact, there were many exotic species mixed among the three hundred pirates that Fang Yuan had recruited.

Of course, a person of mixed blood would sometimes be repelled by both species and face a harsher situation.

“Team leader of the Purgatory Pirate Team, I responded to your recruitment simply because you made an enemy of Heathfrey!” the third high-level crew member said in a distinct voice. She was actually a woman.

Her cloak was slowly taken off, revealing a body in good shape. Her body gleamed in the moonlight like a crescent moon.

Her close-fitting leather clothes revealed large areas of her skin, giving her an untamed charm.

“Moon Elf!?”

Seeing her pointed ears, Fang Yuan could not help nodding.

Moon Elves were an important branch of elves and were active at night. Moreover, due to some problems in their behaviors, they were also known as Dark Elves and Fallen Elves! It was said that their assassination arts were as sharp as their beauty.