

# The Herb King

The Herb King #Chapter 21 – 30

Read The Herb King Chapter 21

Chapter 21: Leric's Plan

“General! Captain Anton Lassiter reporting!” Anton walked in front of General Gavin and did a snappy salute. His eyes filled with the ferocity of a beast who was about to show its fangs! Behind him were about five hundred soldiers standing upright like unsheathed swords!

The General glanced at Anton and nodded his head solemnly. He then stared at Leric and gave him a knowing look.

Seeing this, Leric smiled and stood beside the General. He first looked at his father and then the five hundred soldiers behind him. Leric saw that Samira and her two friends were among the bunch, but he wasn't surprised since the three girls were quite strong despite their young age.

Samira Reynolds in particular was already at the peak of Level 2 Esper. She might be the youngest Esper to ever reach this level of power! Of course, this was only true if Leric wasn't included in the list.

Skylar and Kathlyn on the other hand were newly ascended Level 2 Espers. They might be weaker than Samira, but they would still be considered as top geniuses! After all, people their age were mostly hovering at Level 1.

Anton Lassiter and the five hundred soldiers knitted their eyebrows when they saw the mysterious Level 4 Alchemist standing beside the General. They wondered what he was about to say.

Leric cleared his throat and stared at everyone with a piercing gaze. No one dared to look at him straight in the eyes when they saw this. He was giving off a heavy pressure just by standing there and when they met his gaze, it felt as if they were looking at an ancient beast!

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“After observing the battlefield, I noticed that the Northern Viper Group has set up more than a dozen trenches. If our soldiers fell into those trenches, most of our fighting force would be crippled, leaving us at their mercy. In order to counter this, I concocted a plan together with General Gavin...” Leric paused and glanced at the General.

General Gavin coughed awkwardly, but he didn't let anyone see his embarrassed look. He didn't come up with anything! It was Sir Aethelwolf who came up with the plan! However, he knew that the Alchemist was doing this to enhance his prestige in the army. During this dire circumstance, a General must be reliable!

Leric continued. "At the moment, some of our soldiers are preparing a few things that would make those trenches ineffective. If The Northern Viper Group truly has a wise tactician on their side, he would certainly notice our movements. If he realizes that we have noticed the trenches that they had prepared beforehand, their tactician would send a vanguard force to attack us. This way, we will be forced to enter the battlefield, but that is when you guys will step up..." Speaking up to this point, Leric suddenly revealed a harmless smile, but everyone who saw it felt their hairs standing on end!

"The General has already sent a group of soldiers to set up traps, so we have nothing to worry about the Northern Viper Group's vanguard force. With General Gavin holding the fort, they should be able to hold down the vanguard force in check! During this time, you will go with me to launch a sneak attack on their camp and kill their tactician! Without him commanding those ruffians, they would be like headless flies!"

Anton Lassiter and the rest were shocked when they heard the elaborate plan of this Alchemist. He was brilliant! He even discovered the trenches made by the Northern Viper Group in a short amount of time!

General Gavin who knew nothing about this part of the plan was also stunned in silence. He could only stare at Leric's side profile with a look of awe.

You have learned the skill [Intimidate]

You have learned the skill [Persuasion]

You have learned the skill...

After he told them about the plan, Leric saw a bunch of new skills appearing on his Status Screen. He glanced at them briefly and laughed in his heart.

He was becoming even more powerful as time went by! It might not be long before he would surpass the strongest experts of Leone Kingdom!

"You've heard the plan! Now, prepare to execute it!" General Gavin said in a stern voice.

Anton and the others immediately saluted and prepared themselves. There was a look of anticipation in their eyes as they stared at the harmless-looking Alchemist standing beside the General.

They didn't realize that this handsome young man had already become the pillar of their entire army!

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Meanwhile, in the Northern Viper Group's camp.

Solas was overlooking the battlefield with a deep frown. "Did they notice the trenches?" He muttered.

Standing behind him was a frail-looking old man in his sixties. His murky eyes were observing the battlefield. Suddenly, he raised his eyebrows and said. "They've noticed the trenches... It seems like someone with great eyesight is hidden among their camp..."

The old man moved his gaze towards Solas and said urgently. "Boss Solas, we must send a small force of soldiers to interrupt them! From my observations, they are planning to fill the trenches with boulders! Without the trenches, their army would soon march towards us! The Northern Viper Group might be ferocious, but against Gavin's Flame Tiger Army, it would be a tough battle to win!"

Solas gritted his teeth when he heard the old man's words. "F\*ck! Men, have five hundred of our best fighters attack those bastards! Quick!"

## Chapter 22: Ambush

The old strategist of the Northern Viper Group felt that something wasn't right, but he couldn't pinpoint it. "Just what is going on?" He muttered to himself with an uneasy look.

He was a merchant before he became a strategist of the Northern Viper Group. He used his experience and knowledge to get the recognition of the Northern Viper Group's leader. Now, he was sent here to become the tactician of Solas' army.

At first, he thought that this battle would be an easy one. General Gavin and his Flame Tiger Army might be a strong force, but they lacked a skilled strategist. The old man used this disadvantage to ensure the victory of Solas' army. However, just as he thought that everything was going according to his plan, the ferocious Flame Tiger Army suddenly stopped their charge midway. Their behavior was weird and unbecoming the rumors about them.

"Could it be that there is a skilled tactician on their side?" The old man narrowed his eyes as he stared at the war map on the table.

Just then, he heard the charge of the detachment force of about five hundred soldiers sent by Solas to feel the Flame Tiger Army.

The old man glanced at them with a hint of worry. Those men were former bandits and murderers so they were quite skilled in armed combat. The geography of the area was also studied by them earlier, so they have the advantage. Furthermore, they had already placed more than a dozen traps in certain areas.

The old man could hear the resonating war cry of the Northern Viper Groups detachment force. Their voices resounded throughout the battlefield like a storm!

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Meanwhile, Solas could sense the unnatural look of the old man. He furrowed his eyebrows in displeasure when he saw this. He didn't like this old man at all. If not for the leader's stern command, he wouldn't even bring this guy with him. The only thing good about him was his strategies, but other than that, the old man was timid, feeble, and weak-minded.

Suddenly, Solas heard the distraught cries of his soldiers. He immediately stepped out of the commander's tent and stared at the watchman as he roared. "What happened?!"

The watchman stood atop the watchtower while overlooking the battlefield through a monocular. His face fell as he stuttered. "O-Our bro-brothers... They were ambushed! Some of our brothers are still fighting back, but most of them are already wiped out!"

"What did you say?!" Solas bellowed in rage upon hearing the watchman's words. How could this happen? They prepared traps for several days, but his men were the ones dying?

The old tactician also stepped out of the commander's tent with a stunned look on his face. "How could this be? How did they manage to ambush our soldiers? Gavin just came here, so how come he knows where to perfectly place his soldiers for an ambush?" He muttered in shock.

Slap!

Solas sent the old tactician flying with a brutal slap to his face!

"You old bastard sent my men to their deaths!" He shouted angrily as he pointed at the old man.

Several bandits held Solas back and prevented him from hurting the old man.

"Boss, don't hurt him! He was sent here by the leader! You will be punished if you kill him!"

"Shut up you bunch of fools! Scram out of my sights!" Solas pushed them and sent his men flying. Although his soldiers were just a brigand of killers, he treated them as his

brothers, so how could he not be angry when they were killed because of the old man's commands?

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Hundreds upon hundreds of arrows suddenly blotted the skies and descended towards the shaken army of Solas.

Miserable shrieks resounded in the entire camp as the soldiers of the Northern Viper Group were caught unprepared by this surprise attack.

More than a hundred bandits fell from the onslaught of arrows, and a few hundred more were covered with heavy and light injuries!

Solas grabbed his battle axe and waved it in front of him, preventing the arrows from puncturing him. After the volley of arrows, he slowly moved his battle axe to the side and glared at the small force that attacked them.

They wore the armors of Gavin's Flame Tiger Army. The man leading them looked quite young and he had a gentle smile on his face as he stared at Solas.

Looking at the young man's hateful smile, Solas lifted his battle axe and charge toward him with a look of rage. "Brothers, avenge our fallen comrades!" His loud voice roused the shocked Northern Viper Group's soldiers. They immediately lifted their weapons and followed the charge of their boss, leaving the old tactician who was still lying on the ground with a bloody face.

Seeing this, Leric's smile deepened. "Commander Anton, you handle Solas. Miss Samira, take your sisters and kill that old man right there." He commanded them calmly.

Anton Lassiter nodded his head upon hearing the command. He then shouted at his soldiers. "You heard him, follow me!"

Samira and her two maids stared at the collapsed figure that Leric was pointing to. They didn't know who this unlucky guy was, but they still followed the command.

"Let's go!" Samira dashed with her sword in her hand.

Soon, a bloody exchange took place.

This was Leric's first time seeing such a brutal scene and he could not help but feel slightly nauseous. However, a strange force calmed his heart and removed the nauseating sensation he was feeling. His face regained calmness not long after and he stood there unmoving, looking at the battle with indifferent eyes.

You have learned the skill [Provoke]

You have learned the skill

You have learned...

Leric glanced at the Status Screen and saw a few new skills appearing. His strength was continuously increasing at a terrifying rate!

## Chapter 23: Collapse

Solas was a veteran Level 3 Esper with years of experience in warfare. Although he wasn't proficient in the planning department, his strong battle abilities balanced this weakness.

With quick and large strides, Solas pounced towards Anton like an enraged bull. The death of his comrades further intensified his wrath. After gaining momentum, he suddenly leaped and held his battle axe with both hands as he smashed it in Anton's direction.

The sheer power of his strike caused the air to puncture and produce a violent tearing sound!

Anton Lassiter narrowed his eyes upon seeing this attack. He would be cut into half if forcefully block Solas' battle axe.

After a split second of hesitation, Anton immediately rolled to the side to avoid the strike.

Bang!

A small crater was formed right where Anton stood earlier.

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Seeing this, Anton gasped a deep breath of cold air. He couldn't help but feel slightly nervous while facing this fellow.

Solas' strength was beyond his imagination!

Anton thought that the man might be slow because of his size and the weight of his weapon. However, reality proved him wrong! Solas was much faster than he had anticipated!

"A Level 3 Esper? I thought Gavin was the sole high-rank Esper in his Flame Tiger Army. Who would have thought that the bastard actually hid someone of your caliber in his army. Even so, this doesn't change things. Even if the two of you fight me together, I would still win!" Solas said with a fierce glint in his eyes. Though he was a bit surprised

to see a hidden expert in General Gavin's army, he was confident that he could still triumph over them!

A drop of sweat trickled down Anton's forehead.

Solas' words were full of arrogance, but he couldn't bring himself to retort. Just that one strike from Solas already informed him about the great difference in their power.

Despite his uncertainty, Anton didn't reveal even an ounce of fear. He glared back at Solas and spat out coldly. "Bandit, you're destined to die under my sword today!"

Roar!

Solas bellowed in rage after hearing Anton's words. He raised his battle axe and struck with full power! The air trembled and the ground beneath his feet sunk under the abrupt release of his power!

Anton quickly dodged to the side, barely evading the destructive attack. He then brandished his sword and countered with a stab to the front.

To his surprise, Solas didn't even bother to block his sword. The giant bandit took the stab without even breaking a sweat and used his sharp elbow to strike Anton's face!

Pa!

Anton felt his world spinning after that unexpected attack. He nearly dropped his sword as he wobbled from left to right.

Solas smiled evilly after seeing this. He then tightly grabbed his battle axe and swung it towards the wobbling Anton.

Swoosh!

A figure suddenly pulled the dizzy Anton from death's door!

Hm?!

Solas frowned when he realized that his prey was taken away in front of him. He then took a clearer look at the man who saved Anton. It was a handsome young man who looked to be in his twenties. He had a faded and sleek long black hair. His sword-like eyebrows were knitted into a frown as he glared at Solas.

Leric felt his anger slowly subsiding as a mysterious power calmed his heart. Even so, he could not forgive this fellow who had almost killed his father!

“Initially, I planned to keep a low profile to avoid unnecessary attention, but it seems like I have to change my plans.” Leric muttered in a cold voice devoid of emotions.

For some reason, Solas felt a wave of alarm when he looked at the young man’s calm gaze.

Leric raised his right arm and opened his palm towards the direction of Solas as he muttered. “I’ll test out my skills on you...”

The surrounding temperature suddenly spiked as dozens of flaming arrows as long as spears materialized in front of Leric!

You have learned the skill [Flame Arrow]

Leric ignored the notification and fired the burning arrows toward the shocked Solas.

Fu! Fu! Fu!

Solas could feel the power behind the Flame Arrows. Only now did he discover the color of the flame aimed his way.

“Golden flames! Level 4 Esper!” He cried out in shock that he almost lost his grip on his weapon.

Solas was only a Level 3 Esper and he could still not control the world essence in his Hegel to wield the power of nature! Only Level 4 Espers were capable of doing that!

(Hegel is an Esper’s organ found at the center of the eyebrows. It is used to store world essence.)

Solas hastily reinforced his body using the world essence stored in his Hegel! He also raised his battle axe to shield his body from the rain of burning arrows!

‘Shit! Why is there a Level 4 Esper here?! His proficiency in wielding the power of flame is also advanced and even the leader might not be his opponent!’ Solas was on tenterhooks after the sudden display of Leric’s power. He didn’t even notice that the energy behind the Flame Arrows was nowhere near the power of a true Level 4 Esper. However, Solas was too anxious to notice this.

While the giant bandit was still occupied with the Flame Arrows, Leric changed position and summoned a huge bow that was twice his height!

Leric did a pulling gesture and a huge burning arrow suddenly appeared, nocked on the giant bow!

He then released the arrow and fired it straight at Solas!



You have learned the skill [Augmented Flame Arrow]

Swoosh!

The spear-sized flaming arrows had already struck Solas and damaged a portion of his body, burning his trousers and even damaging his leg guards! Just as he was about to celebrate surviving the Flame Arrows, he suddenly felt an unprecedented sense of danger. When he moved his gaze, his eyes widened in horror.

“Fuc-”

The gigantic Flame Arrow struck his body, puncturing a huge gaping hole in his chest!

Solas dropped his battle axe as strength slowly left his body. He could see a fountain of blood gushing out from his chest. He smiled bitterly as he stared at the figure of the young man who was looking at him with an indifferent look.

Thud.

Solas, a Level 3 Esper of the Northern Viper Group collapsed, swimming in his own blood.

Chapter 24: Complete Victory

Anton who had already regained his composure was stunned after witnessing the scene.

This young Alchemist who looked to be in his twenties killed a veteran Level 3 Esper in just two moves! How could he not be surprised by this?

In truth, it wasn't just him, everyone else on the battlefield stopped in their tracks after seeing the collapse of Solas. Such a domineering figure was actually defeated in a matter of seconds!

After seeing the corpse of their boss, the bandits lost their will to fight. They dropped down their weapons and kneeled as they surrendered. Some of them even sobbed as they could still not fathom how their powerful boss was killed.

“Sir Aethelwolf, we've captured the old man. What do we do with him?” Samira arrived at the side of Leric while pulling a bedraggled old man. Her eyes revealed a tinge of respect and awe as she stared at Leric's side profile. She was still quite skeptical about his identity, but after witnessing how he easily dispatched a Level 3 Esper, all doubts about him vanished.

Skylar and Kathlyn were also looking at him with looks of adoration. It was the first time they witnessed such proficient control of wielding world essence! They even started comparing him with the patriarch of the Reynolds Family, Viscount Harold Reynolds!

Leric stared at the old man with a calm look as he muttered. "Let the General deal with him. If I'm not wrong, this old man should be the tactician of this bandit army. That means he was responsible for the deaths of General Gavin's men."

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After hearing his words, Samira and the two ladies were a bit surprised. Their gazes towards the old man also turned colder. Although they only joined the Flame Tiger Army to gain experience, the three girls were still angry about the loss of more than a hundred soldiers throughout the conflict between the Flame Tiger Army and the Northern Viper Group.

"Alright. We will take our leave now, Sir Aethelwolf." Samira bowed her head lightly at Leric. She might be the daughter of a high-ranking noble, but this man was more than worthy of her respect.

Leric nodded his head at her with a smile. He then turned his gaze to his father.

"Commander Anton, we should regroup with the General and the army. There are still remnant bandits scattered throughout the battlefield. With their leader gone, it would be easier to make those bandits surrender."

Leric was thankful that he joined the expedition. If not, he didn't dare think about what would have happened to his father if he met Solas on the battlefield. Even General Gavin might have a hard time winning against such a man.

Anton recovered from his dazed state when he heard the calm voice of the young Alchemist. He nodded his head and stared at the young man with a grateful look. "Yes, Sir Aethelwolf. Once the battle is over, I will find you and offer my most sincere thanks."

Looking at his father's serious look, Leric could only smile. "Alright."

He felt slightly guilty for hiding his identity, but there was nothing he could do. It would be too troublesome to explain his circumstance to his father. So to prevent himself from being branded as a crazy lunatic, this was the best he could do.

Anton gave Leric a salute before he left to gather his men.

"Brothers, there are still a bunch of bandits scattered on the battlefield. I want fifty of you to deal with them, while the rest will follow me to help General Gavin! Move!" Anton commanded his soldiers with a stern voice.

Leric placed his hands behind his back as he watched the rest of the battle unfold. The sounds of metal clanging and the hoarse voices of the soldiers and bandits traveled to his ears.

Despite it being his first time seeing such a gruesome scene, Leric felt strangely calm throughout the whole ordeal.

Leric knew that this had something to do with his skill [Demon Heart].

Not long later, General Gavin and Commander Anton led the Flame Tiger Army to kill hundreds of bandits. With the abrupt death of their boss, Solas, the remaining bandits chose to surrender.

More than three hundred bandits were tied up by the soldiers of the Flame Tiger Army.

Looking at the remaining bandits, General Gavin grinned. After following Sir Aethelwolf's strategy, their casualties were almost negligible. In fact, it was a complete utter defeat!

Initially, he was already expecting a hard fight against Solas, but the sudden appearance of Sir Aethelwolf saved him a lot of trouble.

General Gavin searched the entire area and he finally saw the young Alchemist sitting leisurely under the shade of a tree. He had a peaceful look on his face as he overlook the battlefield. "Sir Aethelwolf, I thank you on behalf of the entire Flame Tiger Army. Without you, many of my brothers would have sacrificed themselves." The General's voice was filled with sincerity.

Leric stood up and shook his head. "This is the least I could do to express my gratitude to General Gavin for making me stay in your camp."

General Gavin smiled humbly upon hearing that. "Let's go back to the camp, Sir Aethelwolf. The camp is planning to celebrate our victory against the Northern Viper Group. As the main contributor to our victory, I hope that you can join us, Sir Aethelwolf."

The young Alchemist's help had already exceeded the General's expectations and he no longer had the thought of having the man refine a pill for him.

"In that case, I shall accept your invitation." Leric let out a smile as he replied.

## Chapter 25: Victorious Return

The Flame Tiger Army and Barden City's local force marched back to their camp with joyous smiles on their faces. They were already expecting a difficult battle against the

force of Solas, but they won so easily! Of course, they knew that their victory was because of the emergence of the Level 4 Alchemist who suddenly arrived in their camp.

The soldiers glanced at the young figure who was riding an Equus with gazes filled with respect.

“What are your plans now, Sir Aethelwolf?” General Gavin asked as he urged his Equus to come closer to Leric.

Since Barden City was now free from the clutches of the Northern Viper Group, Leric no longer needed to worry about the safety of his father and mother. As for his future plans, he hasn't thought about it yet.

“I promised Miss Samira to check her grandfather's condition after the war is over. By tomorrow, we would set out to the Reynolds Family's territory, but before that, I will refine one pill for you, General Gavin.” Leric said with a smile on his face.

The General was pleasantly surprised upon hearing his words, but he hurriedly shook his head despite the temptation of the pill. “I'm very honored that you are planning to refine a pill for me, Sir Aethelwolf, but I must politely decline your offer.”

Leric could not help but glance at the General in surprise.

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The General smiled bitterly when he saw Leric's expression. He then explained unhurriedly. “Sir Aethelwolf, you've already helped us a lot and I'm too ashamed to get more things from you. The complete victory against Solas' army is already more than enough. I hope you don't take offense. To tell you the truth, I feel indebted to you because of your help. Is there any way I can repay you, Sir Aethelwolf?”

Leric glanced at the General and pondered deeply. From the looks of it, General Gavin was someone who didn't want to owe favors. “If you insist, then I won't be polite. I have one request that I hope General Gavin can help me with.”

General Gavin stared at the young Alchemist and waited for him to continue. He wondered what the man wanted him to do. “Sir Aethelwolf, I'm all ears.”

“I hope General Gavin can take care of Commander Anton. He might be a Level 3 Esper now, but he is still a bit lacking in terms of political power and social connections. He has a small territory at the borders of Barden City, but other than that, he has nothing to his name.” Leric was concerned about the future of his father. He might be a strong military man, but aside from his physical strength, he had no other talents worthy to be mentioned. With the General's support, his father's influence would grow.

General Gavin was confused by the young Alchemist's concern about Commander Anton. In the end, he could not control his curiosity and ask. "Commander Anton, is he somehow related to you, Sir Aethelwolf?"

Leric smiled at him and replied. "His son... I took him as my disciple..."

General Gavin was stunned and felt that Commander Anton was truly lucky. His son was actually taken as a disciple by this accomplished young Alchemist! 'Wait. Hold on. If I remember correctly, Commander Anton mentioned that his son is still three years old... What the hell? Is his son a genius?' The General thought to himself with a dumbfounded look.

Leric saw his expression and understood him right away. "That kid, Leric, he might be young, but he has the talent to become an Alchemist." He added to avoid more confusion.

"I see. You don't have to worry about this, Sir Aethelwolf. With Commander Anton's contribution to this war, I'm sure that the imperial family would not be stingy. I also promise that I would the Lassiter Family in their future endeavors." General Gavin patted his chest confidently. He wouldn't lose out if he helped Anton and his family. With a Level 4 Alchemist standing behind them, their future was destined to be a bright one.

Leric smiled at his words.

The army soon arrived at the camp and their celebratory mood erupted, filling the entire camp with joyous laughter and shouts.

Leric smiled as he watched the soldiers celebrating their victory.

Suddenly, a figure appeared before him. It was his father, Anton.

"Commander Anton." Leric called out with a smile.

Anton stared at the young Alchemist and bowed his head respectfully at him. This man has saved his life. "Thank you for saving me, Sir Aethelwolf." He muttered in gratitude.

Leric anxiously stood up and helped Anton adjust his posture. "You don't have to be like this, Commander Anton. To tell you the truth, the reason I came to this camp was because of you." He hurriedly explained, afraid that his father would bow at him again.

Anton Lassiter glanced at the young Alchemist in confusion. "What do you mean, Sir Aethelwolf?"

Leric put on an apologetic look as he said. "You see, I've taken your precious son as my disciple and I felt that it was rude of me not to inform his parents about it."

Anton's eyes widened in surprise. 'That brat told us that it was an old man who refined the pill. Leric that little brat lied?'

Seeing the perplexed look of his father, Leric finally recalled the explanation he told his parents before. He scolded himself in his heart when he remembered that lousy excuse. "I disguised myself as an old man when I traveled your territory and I happen to notice Leric's potential in Alchemy. I observed the kid and discovered that he has a physique unlike any other!" Leric randomly spouted nonsense, but it should be enough to clear up the misunderstanding.

Anton was convinced after hearing the explanation. "No wonder. With Sir Aethelwolf's guidance, that brat's future is guaranteed." He was happy for his son.

The two talked for more the ten minutes before Leric excused himself. He might be discovered if he continues to converse with his father.

"Commander Anton, I shall take my leave. I still have to look for Miss Samira to discuss something..."

## Chapter 26: Future Plans

To speed up his search, Leric created a new skill that worked similarly to a map.

You have acquired the skill [Virtual Map]

Skill [Virtual Map] Level 1

– Within a radius of 100 meters, a map of your surroundings will be shown through the Status Screen. Enemies within the 100-meter radius will be labeled with red color, while allies will be labeled blue.

Leric nodded his head in satisfaction after reading the description of the new skill he had created. Although the Virtual Map can only show him everything within a radius of 100 meters, it has the potential to level up. With his experience, the skill would level up after using it repeatedly.

Leric activated the skill and a virtual image suddenly appeared in front of him. It was a map filled with blue dots. Some of the blue dots were moving, while most of them were stationary.

From the description of the skill [Virtual Map], Leric believed that the blue dots represented the soldiers in his one hundred-meter radius. He also discovered that the blue dots on the Virtual Map had different sizes and there were two large blue dots located at the center of the camp. From his observation, the size of the blue dots should be related to power.

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“These two large dots should be General Gavin and father. They might be discussing their future cooperation. It looks like the General is a reliable person.”

Leric went to find Miss Samira’s tent, but after looking at the Virtual Map, he noticed that no one was inside. “Strange... Why are those three not in their tent?” He muttered to himself.

Not long later, he finally spotted three blue dot that were much larger than the others on the Virtual Map. “This should be Miss Samira and her maids.”

Leric saw the three girls seated before a bonfire, chatting happily.

When they heard a series of footsteps drawing near them, the three ladies turned their heads and saw the handsome young Alchemist waving at them with a charming smile on his face.

The three girls unconsciously blushed when they sensed the air of confidence and mystery around this man. It was unknown whether it was the alcohol playing tricks in their eyes, but his graceful bearing and handsome appearance made the man look even more pleasing to look at.

Looking at the drunk look of the three noble young ladies, Leric felt a bit embarrassed in his heart. Luckily, a mysterious power forcefully calmed his wildly beating heart.

No man would be immune after seeing such beautiful young ladies looking at them with fervor. Despite his advanced mental age, Leric was a virgin who had barely interacted with the opposite gender. If not for the skill [Demon Heart] he would have revealed a shy look.

With an electrifying voice filled with ensnaring charm, Leric asked. “Can I sit here with you guys?”

Kathlyn and Skylar dumbly nodded their heads when they heard him. Samira was a bit nervous and shy in Leric’s presence, but she also nodded her head. As the daughter of the Reynolds Family, she had already seen many young lords with handsome looks, but they were nothing in comparison to this man.

When he saw that the three girls were still looking at him silently, Leric cleared his throat and said. “With the threat of the Northern Viper Army gone, General Gavin’s Flame Tiger Army would soon return. Since I have promised to help your grandfather, I will follow you guys back to the Reynolds Household. That is if you don’t mind my presence.”

With no clear goal in his mind yet, Leric planned to explore the Leone Empire. From the clues he gathered, the strongest Esper in the empire should only be a Level 4 or Level 5 Esper. He has to gather more resources and level up as fast as possible to live a carefree life. The territory of his father was only a small village and there weren't a lot of resources there, so his only choice was to go to the central part of Leone Empire where the top experts of the empire gathered.

There should be an abundant amount of resources in there.

After hearing Leric words, the eyes of the three ladies lit up. The health of Miss Samira's grandfather had become a worrisome matter, but they still haven't found a solution to his illness. With Sir Aethelwolf helping them, there might be a chance for the old Viscount, Julius Reynolds, to recover.

Samira was beyond excited. She had seen the power of Sir Aethelwolf during the battle against the Northern Viper Group. This man was her last hope to cure her grandfather's illness!

With an agitated look, Samira grabbed Leric's hands and said. "Sir Aethelwolf, you are more than welcome to join us on our return trip to the Reynolds Household! Everyone in the household would certainly be happy about your arrival!"

Leric didn't expect the young miss of the Reynolds Family to lose her composure, but he didn't pull his hands back. Rather, he enjoyed the soft hands holding him and the delicate fragrance coming from this young lady. 'To think that this body created from my skill would have this kind of reaction...' He thought to himself.

"That's good then, but if I'm able to cure your grandfather, I hope that you can fulfill a condition of mine." Leric didn't plan to offer his services for free this time.

The Reynolds Family was able to cultivate Miss Samira and the two young maids into Level 2 Espers. From that alone, one could already see how rich the household was. In order to gather more resources in the future, Leric already had a plan in mind on how to achieve that.

Miss Samira immediately nodded her head when she heard his words. Sir Aethelwolf is a Level 4 Alchemist and it was natural for him to ask for compensation to get his help. Experts at his level would not accept something of little value, but her Reynolds Family should still be able to hire him. "Naturally! You can rest assured, Sir Aethelwolf!"

## Chapter 27: Long Journey

News about the victory of the unified force of General Gavin and Commander Anton spread in Barden City. Even the neighboring cities have heard of their epic battle. There were also rumors that a wandering Level 4 Alchemist played a major role in defeating the Northern Viper Group that was led by one of their infamous commanders, Solas.



At first, everyone was skeptical about this story, but when many soldiers came and eagerly told them about what had happened at that time, everyone's doubts disappeared.

"General, I will leave with Miss Samira and visit the Reynolds Household. I hope you will do what you have promised."

"Don't worry, Sir Aethelwolf. I won't disappoint you." General Gavin smiled at the young man.

Leric left the General's tent and looked for his father. He would be gone for a long time so he wanted to see him first.

He found Anton preparing for his return to his territory.

Looking at the figure of his father, Leric let out a smile. "Commander Anton." He called out softly.

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Anton jolted in surprise when he heard the familiar voice. He turned his head and stared at the young Alchemist. "Is there anything I can help you with, Sir Aethelwolf?"

"I'll be gone for a long time. Possibly a few months or even longer. Your child will be staying with me as I will train him to become an Alchemist." Leric glanced at his father and observed his reaction. He saw that the man has become a bit emotional when he told him that his child will be gone for a long time, but he soon stared at Leric with a smile.

"Sir Aethelwolf, I hope you will take care of Leric."

"Of course!" Leric assured him with a confident tone.

"Commander Anton, you've consumed the pill I concocted, so there should still be three left. You can use it however you like, but one must be given to General Gavin." Leric wanted to hug his father, but he knew that it would be awkward since he was using a different body, so he could only pat his father's shoulder firmly, his eyes filled with emotions.

Commander Anton felt a bit embarrassed upon hearing his words. He had indeed taken four pills from his son at that time and he had already consumed one pill, so there were only three left. "Rest assured, Sir Aethelwolf." He promised.

"It's time I leave. Goodbye, Commander Anton." Leric smiled and left without looking back.

It was time to begin his journey toward the Reynolds Household. It was quite far since their territory was within the capital city, but the thought of adventure made him a bit excited.

Leric returned to Samira's tent and saw that the three girls had already prepared everything. He even saw a horse-drawn carriage that was made from expensive materials. A team of armored soldiers in their horses surrounded the carriage like faithful knights. These men were the personal guards of the Reynolds Household. All of them were Level 1 Espers!

"Sir Aethelwolf, we have already prepared the carriage. We will depart as soon as you give the command." Samira gracefully bowed at Leric when he spotted him.

Leric shook his head and replied. "You can lead the entourage, Miss Samira."

"As you wish." Samira muttered softly. She then opened the door of the carriage and motioned Leric to enter.

Leric calmly walked inside the carriage and sat on the comfortable cushion. He belatedly realized that there were already two people inside the carriage.

"Greetings, Sir Aethelwolf! We will tend to your needs for the rest of the journey." Skylar and Kathlyn bowed their heads at Leric.

'Is this how Alchemists are treated in this empire?' Leric felt a bit overwhelmed by their reverent attitude, but he didn't show it on his face.

"Thank you, Miss Kathlyn and Miss Skylar." Leric smiled at them.

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The capital city of Leone Empire was hundreds of kilometers away from Barden City. It would take them a few days to arrive even if they took the shortest route. Luckily, Leric was in the company of three beautiful young ladies, so he didn't mind the long journey.

Inside the carriage, Leric glanced at Samira who was seated in front of him. He saw the girl stretching her neck and arms. Her joints must be aching after sitting for several hours.

"Miss Samira, if you don't mind, I can help you alleviate your aching joints. I know a set of massaging techniques that can help in relieving stressed muscles and bones." Leric offered in a gentle voice.

"A massage?" Samira and the two maids stared at Leric's gentle smile.

Samira wanted to turn down his offer, but when she saw his handsome visage, she couldn't bring herself to do it. She was embarrassed at the thought of him massaging her body.

"Oh. I apologize for my impertinence. I only suggested it after seeing your uncomfortable look." Leric let out an apologetic smile.

"No. No. No. I don't mind at all! Sir Aethelwolf, please." Samira moved closer to Leric and stared at him with blushing cheeks.

'This [Charm] skill is truly effective! Hehe.' Leric chuckled evilly in his heart.

## Chapter 28: Skillful Hands

Samira moved closer to Leric. She lightly raised her head to observe his expression and she saw him smiling gently at her.

When she saw his charming smile, she immediately lowered her head, afraid that she would fall completely in trance.

"The long journey would make our spine and neck stiff, but I have learned a massage technique that can alleviate the rigidity of the bones and muscles." Leric explained as he gently placed his hands on Samira's back.

When Samira felt his warm and gentle hands caressing her back, she shivered in anticipation and she could not help but let out a moan. "Mn~"

Kathlyn and Skylar who sat opposite them blushed when they heard their young miss' delightful moan. They could see the redness on Miss Samira's face slowly spreading.

Leric moved his hands softly as if he was stroking the most fragile of jades.

While gently massaging her back, he sent her small amounts of world essence through his fingertips, making Samira feel pleasant currents that seeped into every fiber of her body. "Mn~"

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The stiff sensation on her back was gone and all that remained was a cozy feeling.

Leric brushed his fingers to her back and then moved towards her neck.

Samira yelped in surprise as if she was electrocuted. "Ah!"

She felt ticklish and at the same time, the pain in her neck slowly receded. It felt unreal that a person would have such skillful hands.

Samira could feel her heart beating for unknown reasons and her breathing became hurried.

Leric sensed the change in her expression and the warm air she exhaled blowing onto his hand. 'Good lord! Am I really doing this?'

It was unthinkable for Leric who had the mental age of an old man to show interest in a young person of the opposite sex. Perhaps he had been holding back for too long that all the accumulated longing and desire were poured into this new life.

In truth, he was holding himself back from touching this young lady's most sensitive spots. He really wanted to hold her towering peaks and her slim waist, but his rationality prevented him from doing it. He would be labeled as a pervert if does that and the righteous image that he had painstakingly built up during his stay in the camp would be destroyed.

He chanted the only Buddhist sutra he remembered in his past life to prevent himself from showing his carnal desires. He didn't know why his skill [Demon Heart] was not working properly this time. Perhaps the skill would only activate during special circumstances?

Unknowingly, ten minutes have passed by.

Leric reluctantly pulled his hands off her neck as he said. "How do you feel now, Miss Samira?"

His magnetic voice drifted into the young miss' ears and she slowly opened her eyes.

She was still blushing furiously. The pain in her muscles was gone and the lingering warmth from Leric's hands remained on her body. "S-Sir Aethelwolf is truly capable! I no longer feel the stiffness on my back..." She said with her head lowered.

"Good. I'm glad it worked well." Leric smiled at her. He then turned his gaze towards the two maids and saw the ladies looking at him with a look of longing and anticipation.

Seeing their expressions, Leric chuckled in his heart and said. "It seems like Miss Skylar and Miss Kathlyn also want to try my techniques."

The two maids nodded their heads right away. They saw the enraptured look of their young miss throughout the whole scene. If even the stoic and stern Miss Samira could show that kind of expression, then Leric's skill in massaging must be truly great.

Samira didn't stop them. She also wanted her friends to feel the wondrous sensation of Leric's hands.

And so, in the next thirty minutes, Leric used the techniques he learned in his past life to make the two maids feel pleasant. The carriage was filled with their delightful moaning sounds. Luckily, the sound of the Equus' hooves hitting the ground prevented the coachman from hearing anything.

Soon, night came so the group had to set up camp. Although many wild beasts were active during nighttime, this part of the forest was relatively peaceful and with the skilled guards protecting them, they had nothing to worry about.

"Sir Aethelwolf, you can sleep in this tent." Samira pointed at the tent that she had set up for him. This was supposed to be her tent, but she didn't want the Level 4 Alchemist to sleep on a sleeping bag.

Leric stared at her and then towards the tent that she had erected for him. He smiled and shook his head gently. "I'm fine, Miss Samira. I can sleep here." He pointed at the ground that was filled with short grass.

"But..."

"Miss Samira, don't worry about me." Leric tactfully declined. How could he let the young miss of a noble family sleep on the grassy field?

"In that case, I won't force you, Sir Aethelwolf." Miss Samira bowed her head lightly before she entered the tent with Kathlyn and Skylar. It was large enough to accommodate the three of them.

After seeing them go inside the tent, Leric activated his skill [Virtual Map].

Upon checking it closer, he noticed more than two dozen red dots moving in their direction. From the size of the dots, he could tell that three of them were Level 1 Espers. "Are those guys bandits? Are they idiots? Even if they attack us by surprise, those guards could still kill them easily." He muttered silently.

The strength of the Reynolds Household's guards was not to be underestimated. If the red dots were indeed bandits and if they chose to attack their group, only death awaits them!

## Chapter 29: Effortlessly Killing the Bandits

Samira has ten guards with her. All of them were Level 1 Espers who were skilled in archery and swordsmanship. Even their mounting skills were at the level of elite knights. These guards were among the best soldiers of the Reynolds Family!

At this moment, five guards were sleeping in their sleeping bags, while the remaining five were eyeing the surroundings with stern looks.

The forest seemed peaceful, and only the sounds emitted by insects can be heard.

Leric couldn't sleep especially after seeing that the red dots on his [Virtual Map] were showing no signs of retreating. 'Are they planning to attack us?' He thought coldly in his heart.

For some reason, Leric had no remorse about killing other human beings. He was also surprised by the changes in his personality, but he attributed this sudden change to his skill [Demon Heart].

When he killed the leader of the bandits back then, he didn't even flinch. He sighed in his heart and buried these thoughts deeply. There was nothing he could do but adapt to the circumstances. The world in his past life was a peaceful one and there was no war and chaos. However, this world was different. The strong make the rules and the weak could only obey them.

Suddenly, he noticed that the red dots on his [Virtual Map] were moving slowly. From the looks of it, they were about to attack their group!

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Leric moved closer to the girls' tent and silently whispered. "Miss Samira, it appears that we have company."

He heard a rustling sound inside the tent and a few seconds later, Samira came out together with her two maids. Their expressions filled with cautiousness as they observed the surroundings. "Sir Aethelwolf, did you notice something?"

Leric nodded his head. He didn't want to expose his skill to them so he didn't bother to explain how he sensed them. "I sensed more than twenty people moving in our direction. Although I haven't seen them, I'm certain that they are bandits." He could identify enemies because of his [Virtual Map] since it shows enemies in red dots while allies are blue.

The expressions of Samira and the two maids turned grave upon hearing his words. They didn't doubt him at all. Aethelwolf already showed his capability during the battle against Solas and his bandit army. "What should we do, Sir Aethelwolf?"

Leric pondered deeply. He was seventy percent sure that those bandits were from the Northern Viper Group. He thought that they were scouts sent to observe them, but their movements perplexed him. They shouldn't attack them if they were scouts. That means this group has a different objective.

Leric's mind started analyzing the possible situations.

“Wake up the guards, but don’t make the bandits feel suspicious. Tell everyone to prepare for a possible attack. We will act as if we didn’t sense them and catch them by surprise the moment they attack us.” Leric calmly told them about his plans. The bandits seemed weaker than them, but it was better to be cautious. There might be unnecessary casualties if they looked down on their enemies.

Samira and the two maids nodded their heads. They then woke up the guards and told them about their situation.

The guards were elite soldiers so they didn’t panic when they heard that there were bandits in the vicinity. They stood up and acted as if nothing was going on, but their hands were already holding the handles of their swords.

Seeing this, Leric nodded his head in praise. He then jumped atop a tall tree and used his [Night Vision] and [Enhanced Eyesight] to observe the bandits.

He noticed that the bandits divided themselves into three groups. Each group has about eight members and they were led by Level 1 Espers.

From where he stood, he could already see their shadows moving silently behind the greeneries and trees. If not for Leric’s [Virtual Map], the group might not be able to sense the arrival of these bandits.

“Let’s see if the guards of the Reynolds Household can take care of these small fries.” Leric muttered to himself with a light smile on his face. He wasn’t worried about Samira and the others. Now that they learned about the presence of the bandits, even if a fight would break out, the guards alone could kill those bandits.

Leric wanted to observe the combat prowess of the guards. He would only move if someone was in danger.

Suu! Suu! Suu! Suu! Suu!

The bandits fired dozens of arrows toward their resting area, but they heard no cries of agony.

“Kill all the normal bandits and leave the three Espers alive!” Samira’s stern voice suddenly echoed in the silent forest, shocking the bandits who were hiding in the shadows.

“Something’s not right! This is a trap! Retreat!” The bandits immediately fled in all directions when they noticed that it was a trap. However, the guards of the Reynolds Family didn’t allow them to escape.

Puchi!

Ahhhhh!!

Screams of pain resounded throughout the forest as the bandits were slowly cut down by the guards.

Even the three Level 1 Espers among the bandits weren't able to retaliate under the fierce swordplay of the guards. They could only raise their hands in surrender. Their faces filled with regrets.

Not long later, all the bandits were killed and the three Level 1 Espers were tied in chains.

"Miss Samira, the bandits have been killed. These three should be their leaders." The guards kicked the three bandits, making them fall to the ground.

Samira glared at the three bandits. Luckily, Sir Aethelwolf has warned them beforehand or some of their guards might have died. "Who are you people?! Why did you attack us?!"

### Chapter 30: Executing the Bandits

Among the three captured bandits, a middle-aged man with sharp eyes and average facial features laughed as he fearlessly stared at Samira. His eyes roamed around her body with undisguised lust and depravity. He could tell that this woman came from a noble family just based on her stature and bearing. It was a pity that he had strong guards or he would have enjoyed her body thoroughly.

When she saw the naked desire in the bandit's eyes, Samira's expression turned colder. A hint of disgust flashed in her gaze.

"How dare you look at Miss Samira with those lecherous eyes?!" The blonde-haired Skylar slapped the bandit.

Pah!

A crisp slapping sound echoed and the middle-aged bandit immediately fell to the ground face first.

Skylar glanced at the fallen bandit with overflowing killing intent. "Miss Samira, I think this bandit was the one who spied on us. Although his fighting ability is terrible, his movement skill is even better than our guards. Perhaps he disguised himself as one of Barden City's soldiers and entered the camp to gather information about our army and he happened to pass by our tent." She was the one who fought the bandit earlier and this middle-aged man exhibited a skillful talent in his movements and evasion.

The faces of Samira and Kathlyn abruptly turned dark upon hearing this.



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Meanwhile, Leric who was listening at the sidelines revealed a look of surprise. 'How did this young maid come up with such an outrageous conclusion?' He thought to himself, but he felt that it was better this way so that they would punish someone else for the mistake he made. At least his image as a kind-hearted and gentlemanly Alchemist would not be tarnished.

"Are you sure?" Samira's voice wasn't loud, but everyone could sense the anger in her tone. Although it was quite absurd that a Level 1 Esper was able to peep at them and escape without being captured, her raging fury clouded her sense of reason.

In truth, Skylar also felt that this bandit might not be the person who peeped at them. However, the lust he showed earlier towards their young miss angered her. "I'm not sure, but I think it's him." She said.

The middle-aged bandit raised his head. His right cheek was now swollen because of Skylar's slap. He spat out a mixture of phlegm and blood, then grinned at the group. "So what if it's me?! Just kill me! If we had captured you bitches, we would have toyed with your bodies by now! Hahaha!"

The faces of the three ladies warped with fury and disgust when they heard his depraved laughter. Even their guards who usually wear stoic expressions were now glaring at the bandit as if they wanted to tear his body apart.

Pak!

"Shut your damn mouth!" Skylar kicked the face of the bandit, sending the man rolling on the ground.

The other two bandits watched the scene with fear. They regretted listening to the words of the middle-aged man earlier.

Their mission was only to observe the movement of the Reynolds Family's young miss, but the middle-aged man talked them into capturing her instead. Initially, they thought that this was a good plan since they had more men with them and there were three Level 1 Espers in their group. Who knew that the guards protecting this young miss were actually the elites of the Reynolds Family?

"Please spare us! It was all part of that guy's plan! He told us to capture the young miss of the Reynolds Household!"

"That's right! He started it! He was the one who told us about this!"

The two bandits pleaded with faces filled with tears.

However, how could the ladies let go of them?

“Tell us who you are then we can talk about it.” Samira stepped forward and glanced at the two bandits with a cold look. She didn’t trust them even a tiny bit. These men were the absolute trashes of the Leone Empire and people like them must be killed to remove the tumor of the empire!

The two bandits glanced at each other with uncertainty. They were afraid of the Reynolds Household, but they were also afraid of the Northern Viper Group’s boss.

Just as they were hesitating, the middle-aged bandit who was kicked by Skylar suddenly shouted at them. “You bunch of cowards! Don’t even think about betraying the boss! The two of you won’t see tomorrow’s sun if you utter even a single w-”

Skylar punched the bandit, preventing him from speaking any further. “Did I allow you to speak?!”

Looking at their fallen comrade and the guards that surrounded them, the two bandits no longer hesitated. “We are from the Northern Viper Group. We were sent here by Boss Gustavo to monitor the movements of Miss Samira. Some scouting parties were also sent to monitor the movements of Barden City’s soldiers as well as the Flame Tiger Army of General Gavin.”

Leric already expected them to be scouts from the Northern Viper Group so he wasn’t surprised by this. However, he was curious about why the top leader of the bandit group was interested in the Reynolds Family’s young miss.

When the ladies and the guards heard that they were from the Northern Viper Group, their faces abruptly fell. This group was a heinous organization that was involved in many shady operations throughout the whole Leone Empire. Their power was comparable to a large noble household and even the Reynolds Family was wary of them. There were some rumors that a few noble families were supporting them in secret, but this matter was yet to be investigated.

“Kill them!” Samira spat out in a cold voice.

The two bandits were terrified when they heard this and they immediately prostrated on the ground. “T-This... Miss Samira, you promised that you would spare our lives if we tell you everything we know! Please spare us!”

“Since when did I promise something like that? I only told you that we can talk about it. I never promised anything.” She smirked at the two bandits before giving a signal to the guards.

Ahhhhh!!

Ahhhhh!!

The forest was suddenly filled with miserable shrieks, making the birds fly in all directions.