

## **Magic Era 271**

### **Chapter 271: Stepping**

“Shut up...” William suddenly turned pale and quickly reached to block that mouth reeking of wine. “You are courting death...”

In William’s eyes, he was indeed courting death.

‘Jason, you bastard, do you even know what you are talking about? Even if you want to be annoying, how could you dare ask him to personally greet you? Can you even afford his greeting? Do you know who he is? He is the one at the top of Thousand Sails City!’

‘Which of Thousand Sails City’s powerhouses isn’t someone formidable? Peak 9th Rank High Mage Solomon, Master Alchemist Lys, the millennial Monchi Family, Sauss with his strongest underground force... Yet what is their attitude in front of this person?’

William has been following Lin Yun for almost half a year.

He was very clear about his status.

Why were all the leaders of Thousand Sails City’s major forces bending at the waist when entering the Gilded Rose? Wasn’t it because the leader of the Gilded Rose was this person? He wasn’t a kind-hearted fellow. When he was blocked at the entrance of the Poison Fog Canyon, he certainly didn’t treat Sauss politely.

“Jason, shut up...” William turned even paler as he thought about this and dragged him back while covering his mouth.

William didn’t have much choice.

He had seen Lin Yun frowning.

After following this younger cousin for half a year, how could William not know that something would definitely happen whenever he frowned?

It wasn’t that William wanted to protect Jason...

It was just that William knew that his younger cousin was someone who hated trouble...

And it would be troublesome if Jason ran out of luck.

Following their history that had been buried in the dust, the Merlin Family rose in the Andlusa Kingdom and founded a country. Over a millennium had passed since then, and over time, it became a behemoth. The descendants of the Merlin Family covered almost every corner of the Andlusa Kingdom. But during that millennium, only the descendants of three main branches could control the Merlin Family.

Only these three branches’ descendants could have a seat at the Elder Council and be qualified to obtain the position of Patriarch. They were the Okland Merlin, the Palatine Merlin, and the Lorraine Merlin

branches. Not only were they the three strongest branches, but they also had the purest bloodline in the past millennium.

For the past thousand years, the three main branches took turns to wield the Merlin Family's authority, and the fate of countless descendants was in their hands.

The Okland Family had been in charge for the past three hundred years.

Although the highly respected Judd, Mafa Merlin's grandfather, had strangely left, Ofran, who replaced him, did a pretty good job. He cautiously and conscientiously worked hard for decades and raised the Merlin Family's prestige higher than ever. And although his three sons weren't outstanding geniuses, they inherited Ofran's diligence, allowing them to obtain shocking achievements in their respective fields.

Then there was William's generation...

Aube Merlin and Leon Merlin could be described as the twin stars of the Merlin Family. They were young, but one was already a High Mage while the other was a Master Alchemist. There were very few geniuses that could compare with them in Okland.

The Okland Merlins were the most impressive.

But the other two main branches weren't weak. The strength they gathered over time was something that other forces couldn't imagine. There might not have been a genius with earth-shattering talent in the past hundred years, and neither did any shocking major events happen, but if anyone approached these two low-key main branches, they would find that these two branches were only hibernating, and that sooner or later, they would return to the highest stage of the Andlusa Kingdom.

Jason Merlin came from the Lorraine Merlins.

It could be said that the beautiful and rich Lorraine City in the western part of the Andlusa Kingdom was the private property of the Lorraine Merlins. Over there, the name Merlin meant everything. Even if a king wanted to appoint a city lord, he would have to convene with the Lorraine Merlin Family.

Jason had an extremely pure bloodline. He was one of the three grandsons of the leader of the Lorraine Merlin Branch, Logan. Unfortunately, Jason didn't inherit Logan's wisdom and ability to scheme, and was a famous wastrel in Lorraine. He relied on his family's status there to do anything he wanted. Over the years, few people wouldn't become pale and scared when the name Jason was mentioned.

His bad habits didn't change when he was sent to Okland after he turned eighteen.

The only fortunate thing was that Jason was only a Great Mage. The people he came into contact with weren't very high ranked, so if he ran in trouble, the Merlin Family could always settle it.

This was how William became acquainted with him.

At that time, William had already revealed outstanding talent in the Merlin Family and would frequently be sent out to help resolve Jason's issues. After a few times, Jason could be considered an acquaintance.

But an acquaintance was only an acquaintance, as William was very disgusted by his antics.

In William's eyes, he was just a waste waiting to die. The only thing Jason could do was to leech off of the Merlin Family until his death.

But even if he was disgusted by him, William still had to deal with the situation.

His grandfather was Logan and the Lorraine Merlin Branch had five seats in the Elder Council. Five seats meant that as long as Logan could pull in two or three allies, he would be able to gain the right to oppose any decisions.

In other words, Logan might not be able to make decisions outright, but he could easily become an obstacle.

Thus, even if Ofran was the Patriarch, unless he needed to, he wouldn't offend Logan.

"Okay, okay, Cousin William, don't drag me. I know who he is, isn't that the kid from outside? The one from Thousand Sails City."

Jason had drunk too much. He pushed William to the side as he slurred, just like an ordinary drunkard. He was also staggering and seemed like he might fall to the ground anytime if he didn't pay attention.

"I heard that this kid asked for many conditions and requested to go to the Ancestral Land..."

"Jason! You are drunk!" William became mad and grabbed Jason with both hands. If this wasn't the place where the Merlin Family held official discussions, William would have already slapped him. 'Are you trying to die? Can't you see his expression? Do you think you'll be able to leave this place unharmed? Even Suyass would lower himself in front of him...'

'Do you know who Suyass is!?'

'One of the most outstanding disciples of the Mercury Tower, a Master Alchemist and an Archmage. Someone who led puppet legions to campaign through the Golden Forest Plane and killed more underground elves than you could ever imagine. Jason, since when are you courageous enough to be rude to a person that Suyass would humble himself before?'

Unfortunately...

Jason couldn't understand William's thoughts...

"Move, William, I need to have a discussion with that kid. He thinks that Okland is Thousand Sails City, and he doesn't put the Merlin Family in his eyes. To dare to request something like that from the Merlin Family, I have to teach him a lesson..." The drunk Jason staggered as he randomly waved his staff with both hands.

"You are crazy!"

William felt his blood run cold.

William no longer cared where they were and directly slapped him. He then blinded Jason with a Light spell while pointing his magic staff and also releasing a Vine spell. The tough vines flew out fast and coiled around Jason's magic staff.

Jason fell heavily to the ground.

The vines had powerful momentum and Jason was drunk, and thus, he ended up with two of his front teeth broken.

“William... You... You... You dare to attack me... Don’t think I won’t-,” Jason wheezed from the ground.

“I believe you,” William said as he stepped on Jason’s head.

“Uuuh...” The pitiful Jason didn’t even finish his words before his mouth reached the floor and issued some unintelligible sounds, as he could no longer speak.

“Okay let’s go.” Lin Yun shook his head. Someone like Jason simply didn’t enter his eyes. He hadn’t even paid attention to his words, just wondering what the lunatic was raving about.

At this moment, William was stepping on Jason and Lin Yun didn’t even spare him a look as he walked over him before entering the stone tower.

“Haha, it looks like the Merlin Family is still curious regarding my arrival...” Lin Yun said with a smile after turning a corner.

“What do you mean?”

“There were two High Mages in the courtyard when you stepped on that guy, and first-rate High Mages too...”

At this point, Lin Yun took back the Mage Eye he had quietly released.

Because it was no longer needed.

Lin Yun already knew who these two High Mages were...

But Lin Yun felt a bit strange. ‘Didn’t William say that the competition between those two was very intense?’

## **Chapter 272: Title**

‘Forget it, it doesn’t matter whether they team up or not...’

Lin Yun shook his head and walked to the 3rd floor of the stone tower. The floor was made of white Moonstone and appeared clean and tidy. Some paintings were hung on the walls, and although Lin Yun didn’t know the name of the expert craftsman who painted them, he could make out from the colors and lines that these weren’t cheap...

“Knock knock knock...”

William softly knocked on the door to the study before hearing an aged voice from within, “Come in.”

The study was quite huge, eight neat and tidy bookshelves surrounded the room. The flames in the fireplace were roaring, and even though it was late autumn, they couldn’t feel any chill in the room. A short old man was sitting on a chair next to the dancing flames, the shadow of youth could still be seen on his roughly seventy years old face. As the two of them entered, the old man smiled, “The journey must have been exhausting, please sit down.”

“You are too polite, Sir Ofran...” Lin Yun smiled back as he nodded towards the old man, and sat down without being modest.

“Haha...” The old man was startled at first, because he noticed that the other side had called him Sir Ofran and not Grandfather or Great-Uncle.

Ofran had stepped in the Archmage realm ten years ago and occupied the position of a peak existence in Okland, there was nothing improper with Lin Yun calling him Sir Ofran.

But today was the day of Lin Yun’s return to the Merlin Family.

The Family’s power was based on blood relationships, thus, the 3rd generation of the Merlin Family would usually call Ofran Grandfather.

But Lin Yun was politely calling him Sir Ofran.

Ofran knew by hearing this way of address that getting the other side to return to the Merlin Family would prove a lot more complicated than he had surmised.

Ofran’s head hurt as he thought of this.

When Judd Merlin left the family, only Ofran knew that he had been heading for Thousand Sails City. But before leaving, he kept telling Ofran that no one should know about it. Thus, Ofran remained tight-lipped for many years, clearly aware that if Judd learnt that he couldn’t keep the secret, the consequences would be unimaginable.

It was just recently, when word about a lot of weapons forged out of Nether Iron reached him, that Ofran sent someone to Thousand Sails City and found out that the one in control of the Nether Iron Vein was actually an offspring of the Merlin Family stranded outside. When he heard this news, Ofran sank in contemplation for a long time. Judd who had always been on his mind had already passed away, and even his son, Locke Merlin, seemed to have suffered from a shipwreck...

The only remaining one was a grandson named Mafa...

And that Mafa seemed to be hopeless.

Based on that intel, Ofran sent William over to discuss the transferring of the Nether Iron Vein’s ownership while helping Mafa out.

But he hadn’t expected that after William reached Thousand Sails City, he would find out that the information they gathered was far from the truth. Indeed, Mafa Merlin controlled a Nether Iron Vein, but he had no plan to give up that Nether Iron Vein. Moreover, the alchemy shop that was supposedly in debt was actually extremely prosperous. It completely monopolized the alchemy market of Thousand Sails City and even some merchants and mercenary groups of the nearby Oddrock City would go there for items.

The Merlin Family naturally had some alchemy shops, so how could Ofran as the leader of the Merlin Family not understand how profitable an alchemy shop could be.

Let alone Oddrock City...

Just Thousand Sails City market monopoly was frightening enough. Describing the Gilded Rose as the richest in town was no exaggeration as William even told him that only the millennium old Monchi Family could compete with the Gilded Rose in terms of wealth.

Ofran was a bit regretful when he heard that.

If he had paid attention to Thousand Sails City, to Judd's grandson, early on, then that Mafa Merlin who could compete with the Monchi Family in terms of wealth might have already become a member of the Merlin Family.

Unfortunately, it was already too late.

William's letter clearly stated that Mafa Merlin didn't have much interest in returning to the Merlin Family and that there might even be some conflict. If he rashly sent someone over, he might incur his dislike.

Thus, Ofran refrained from sending someone to Thousand Sails City and only kept William there, to let him build a good relationship with Mafa Merlin and convey the will of the Merlin Family at a suitable time.

Because Ofran knew that he had missed the best opportunity to recruit Mafa Merlin.

Mafa Merlin grew up in Thousand Sails City for almost twenty years and had never come in contact with people of the Merlin Family before. Moreover, Locke Merlin's shipwreck and the Flashing Gold chamber of commerce going bankrupt overnight had all been taken care of by Mafa Merlin, all on his own.

Mafa Merlin had already struck it rich and had enough wealth to attract the eye of the Merlin Family. Sending someone to contact him now would only make it seem like they are trying to seize his belongings.

In the end, it was inevitable for Mafa Merlin who grew up in that kind of environment to not consider himself as a part of the Merlin Family.

As the leader of the Merlin Family, Ofran knew this more than anyone else.

That's right, the power of the Family was maintained through blood relationships, but only those foolish old geezers from the Elder Council who only know how to argue all day believed that they could rely on bloodline to force an affluent merchant to re-enter the Merlin Family.

Ofran knew that the road would be very long if he wanted to make Mafa return to the Family.

Fortunately, after bitterly waiting for a few months, Ofran finally got an opportunity.

William brought back some shocking news.

Mafa Merlin wanted to enter the Merlin Family Ancestral Land!

This was an extremely rare opportunity to let Merlin return to the Family.

This was what he had been waiting for.

Even if the Merlins' Ancestral Land wasn't casually available for entering, this was only to ordinary people. Which of the true core children of the Merlin Family hadn't entered the Ancestral Land? Of the third generation, Aube went in, Leon went in, Ross went in, and even William would go in this year.

Although this didn't conform to the rules, it's not as if an exception couldn't be made to let Mafa Merlin into the Ancestral Land.

As long as the old guys of the Elder Council remained calm and collected and simply embraced the Gilded Rose, Lin Yun's return to the family would go without problem.

At that time, Ofran was overjoyed and accepted a lot of conditions.

Although these conditions didn't have much importance to the Merlin Family, in Ofran's eyes this was a good chance to let Mafa Merlin know his value to the Family.

The conversation through William Merlin also went very well.

But he had never expected the Elder Council to suddenly obstruct the negotiations.

Especially because the disputing old geezers used the argument that they couldn't break the family tradition as a reason to reject Mafa Merlin's request to enter the Ancestral Land.

Ofran almost went crazy on the spot.

At that time, he wanted to point at those stuck up elders and ask them if they knew how much wealth Mafa Merlin gained in Thousand Sails City and if they realized how much of a loss the family would suffer because of their so-called traditions.

Unfortunately, the Merlin Family was like that. The Elder Council had a lot of power.

Even as the head of the family, Ofran wouldn't dare use the Patriarch's authority to suppress the Elder Council unless he was sure that he could control the situation. His reputation going down was trivial. But he might very well be accused of misconduct by the Elder Council, and at that time, he might even lose his seat as the Patriarch.

At that time, Ofran still thought that Mafa Merlin only asked to enter the Ancestral Land as a justification to return to the Merlin Family. It wouldn't have been difficult if that had been the case, as long as he comforted him and promised him that he would let him in the Ancestral Family Land when the time was ripe, and everything would be solved.

A condition for entering the Ancestral Land was to make a contribution to the Merlin Family.

Even Ofran didn't find this difficult. For a wealthy business, casually helping the Merlin Family with a deal could be considered an achievement.

At that time, he would make him enter the Merlin Family Ancestral Land and everyone would be happy.

But...

From hearing that "Sir", Ofran realized that this Merlin Family's offspring he had just met for the first time wouldn't be as easy to deal with as he thought.

“Regarding the matter of your entry to the Ancestral Land...” Ofran wanted to explain.

But his mind was in a mess at this moment. After all, he was an Archmage and the Patriarch of the Merlin Family. He had agreed to his terms before, yet he had broken his word to a youth decades younger than himself. If this spread out, people would ridicule him.

“It’s fine, Sir Ofran...” Lin Yun smiled, a calm expression on his face, “I only want to know what do I have to do to become eligible to enter the Merlin Family Ancestral Land.”

“This...” Ofran felt embarrassed when he heard that.

Entering the Ancestral Land wasn’t that difficult usually.

But for some reason, the Elder Council was unyielding this time so Ofran didn’t dare to promise anything.

### **Chapter 273: Contribution**

“Sir Ofran, don’t hesitate and just tell me the conditions, whether I can do it or not is my problem.”

“Okay...” Hearing this, Ofran knew that he had to be careful with his words. On one side was the wealthy Mafa Merlin, while on the other side was the unyielding Elder Council. Ofran thought for a few minutes before coming up with a solution.

Delaying...

He would first give Mafa Merlin an extremely hard condition to stall for time before taking advantage of that time to find another method to make Mafa Merlin return to the family.

This was very important for the Merlin Family.

If the wealth of the Gilded Rose was properly used, it could let the power of the Merlin Family reach a whole new level.

Moreover, the Gilded Rose wasn’t just wealthy...

From the information William sent, the Gilded Rose had resources, skill, and talent. And the affiliated mercenary group that appeared out of nowhere had a shocking force of 50 Great Mages. Even in Okland, that would be considered a pretty decent fighting force.

With their amazing wealth, even the Merlin Family might not be able to keep up with them if they had the time to develop.

Only those blind old geezers would push away stranded offspring that controlled such a force. Any other faction would already have been begging for him to enter their Ancestral Land.

As he thought of that, Ofran composed himself. “The Merlin Ancestral Land is different from the ones from other Families and Clans. Only the core children can enter, and as for the others, they would have to be strong competitors for the Patriarch position to have the right...”

“...” William forgot to breathe and almost choked before Lin Yun even said anything.

'Are you joking?

'Who in the Merlin Family doesn't know the conditions to enter the Ancestral Land? What do you mean competitor for the Patriarch position? You are lying through your teeth! And it normally wouldn't much that you are lying... But you are creating huge problems for yourself...

'Isn't there enough chaos with Aube, Leon, and Ross competing for the position? You are making it worse... What if Cousin believes you? This is no joke...

'If he truly believes it, then Aube, Leon, and Ross won't survive. With his temperament, he will most likely get rid of these people so that he could become the successor himself. Many could die because of your casual lie, will you be able to live with this?'

William couldn't help shivering as he thought of that. He looked desperately at Ofran, hoping this old man would retract his words.

Fortunately...

Although Ofran hadn't noticed William's meaningful glance, he hesitated after finishing his sentence and added, "Naturally, if you can make a great contribution to the Merlin Family, you'll also be able to enter the Ancestral Land..."

"Pheew..." Hearing those words, William sighed in relief. 'Thank god, thank god you reacted in time...'

And sure enough, Lin Yun didn't even think about it and directly asked, "What is considered a great contribution?"

"It's very simple," Ofran said with a relaxed expression. "A few hundred years ago, Okland had a Charlotte Family. Although this Charlotte Family's strength and heritage were a lot inferior to that of the Merlin Family, a genius suddenly appeared. That man was named Fussen Charlotte. He became a Great Mage at 18, a High Mage at 25, and he was one step away from advancing to the Archmage realm at 33..."

"And then?"

"Then, the Charlotte Family rose with this genius and felt that they could rival the Merlin Family. They kept provoking us, and even publicly declared that Fussen Charlotte would reach the Heaven realm before fifty and would wipe the Merlin Family and the Watson Family at that time..."

"That's certainly some ambition.."

"It was, the Charlotte Family's ambitions were great, but those were just words. At the time, Fussen Charlotte was truly a genius among geniuses, progressing at a rapid pace on the path of magic. But the Merlin Family and the Watson Family had their own geniuses too."

"What was the outcome?"

"The outcome..." Ofran smiled at Lin Yun. "He ended up being killed by a Merlin during a hunt and fell before becoming an Archmage. The High Mage who killed him was Santon Merlin, one of the three Heaven Rank Mages of the Merlin Family in the past five hundred years. But Santon had only been a child of a side branch when he killed Fussen Charlotte. His Merlin blood was very thin, and it was only

after he killed Fussen Charlotte that he was allowed to enter the Ancestral Land. Three years later, he became an Archmage, and twenty years later, he reached the Heaven realm and became a genuine Heaven Rank powerhouse. If you are interested, you can read his story in the secret tome of the family. The account of Santon's life is very detailed and it is a very interesting story..."

"Okay, I understand." Lin Yun nodded before asking, "Who is the most outstanding genius of the Watson Family at the moment?"

"It's Stan Watson, he is 38 years old and an 8th Rank High Mage. He is similar to Fussen Charlotte," Ofran subconsciously answered, before doubtfully asking, "Why are you asking?"

"Nothing, I was just asking. Anyway, Sir Ofran, it's time we take our leave..." Lin Yun didn't wait for Ofran's answer and immediately left with William.

"Eh?" Ofran didn't manage to react, standing there in a daze as the two of them hurried away. He only recovered a minute later and exclaimed, "Hey! I wasn't done talking!"

Unfortunately for him, they were already gone, so they could no longer hear him.

"As temperamental as Judd," Ofran mumbled to himself before sinking into contemplation.

'What is that Mafa planning? Why didn't he seem worried as he left with William? Could it be...

'No way!'

As his thoughts reached that point, Ofran suddenly felt scared.

'No way, no way... Did he ask me who the most outstanding member of the Watson Family was so that he could do something like Santon? Getting rid of an opposing Family's most outstanding genius?'

Ofran felt a little numb...

'This... This can't be real?'

'That story was only to show that it was difficult to enter the Ancestral Land. Santon had to get rid of the most outstanding member of the Charlotte Family to it, so since you also want to gain access, then you just need to make a similarly large contribution...'

Ofran was only giving a suggestion.

'With the wealth of the Gilded Rose, as long as you gave a small share to the Merlin Family, or if you shared the techniques and resources you had available, then the contribution would be sufficient.'

Ofran hadn't planned on making him kill Stan Watson...

Stan Watson was an 8th Rank High Mage that was apparently close to reaching the 9th Rank. He would be a peak High Mage then. Whether it was his mana storage or his power, they would be at an astounding level.

Moreover, as he'd said, Stan Watson was the most outstanding member of the Watson Family, so he was heavily guarded. Having a few High Mages guarding him at all times was quite normal, and there

might even be an Archmage. This was no joke. Let alone Mafa and William, even Ofran, as an Archmage, wouldn't dare to attack Stan Watson.

He was the jewel of the Watson Family.

The few Heaven Mages of the Watson Family might even be paying attention to Stan's growth discreetly. Let alone killing such an important person, just attacking him would be enough to invite terrible trouble.

'Shit...' Ofran inwardly cursed. 'What should I do?'

"Link, come here." Since this was a big matter, Ofran couldn't think of another way.

Following Ofran's shout, a black silhouette appeared in the originally empty studio. "What is your command, Master?"

This black silhouette's face was hidden by a hood and seemed to be half-merged with the shadows, making his appearance difficult to make out. From his voice, one could guess that this was a middle-aged man, perhaps in his forties.

"Link, I have to trouble you with something, did you see the two kids who just left? Please watch over them for me. If you find out... If you find out that they plan on killing Stan Watson, then please find a way to stop them."

"Understood." The black silhouette named Link nodded before blending into the shadows. If not for his words, no one would notice his existence.

Ofran sighed in relief after Link disappeared.

'With Link watching over them, there shouldn't be any problem.'

In the Merlin Family, Ofran was the only one who knew that Link had been working for the Family for five hundred years.

The first master that Link followed was Santon Merlin, the one who killed Fussen Charlotte. After Santon Merlin, Link never left the Merlin Family and followed Santon's will, obeying the Merlin Patriarch's orders.

And Link's existence became a secret only known by the leader of the Merlin Family.

## **Chapter 274: Seize**

Link had always been an unconventional existence in the Merlin Family. He would almost never appear and instead just remain hidden in the shadows. If Ofran didn't summon him, he might not be seen for a year or two. Even Ofran, the Patriarch himself, didn't know much about Link. Ofran only knew that Link was very powerful, but just how powerful... He didn't know. If he had to describe his strength, he would use the word "unfathomable".

That was right, Link felt unfathomable to Ofran.

For as long as Ofran could remember, Link had never gone all-out against someone. He would always act discreetly and smoothly, to the point that Ofran didn't even know what realm he had reached.

Ofran only knew that Link had lived for at least five hundred years.

Link was already in the Merlin Family during the era of Santon, always hiding behind Santon like a shadow, rarely making a move. But every time he did, it was at a crucial moment.

After Santon disappeared, Link remained in the Merlin Family and acted even less than before, only listening to the words of the Patriarch.

Only when the Patriarch's position was being handed over would the previous Patriarch tell this secret to the future Patriarch.

Ofran finally relaxed after sending out Link.

...

At this time, in the courtyard of a huge manor, a young mage in his thirties was sitting down with a smile on his face. A middle-aged man in his forties wearing a black robe with a red pattern on the cuffs was standing beside him. This was the symbol of a High Mage. But at this moment, the Great Mage was sitting while the High Mage was standing. That High Mage was even slightly bowing with a fawning expression on his face.

Even a blind person could see that the younger mage had far higher status than the middle-aged High Mage.

"Anthony, I sent you to check on my younger cousin, how is it?"

"Young Master Aube, this..." The High Mage named Anthony froze and the smile on his face became awkward. "I investigated a bit... I heard you say that this Mafa Merlin had been studying under Seth, so I used some channels and made some inquiries on Seth's side, but..."

"But what?"

"According to Seth, this Mafa Merlin doesn't stand out and might remain a Magic Apprentice all his life..."

"Magic Apprentice?" Aube was a strong contender to be the successor of the Merlin Family. Among the numerous geniuses of Okland, Aube Merlin was ranked at the forefront.

Hearing High Mage Anthony's report, Aube showed some amazement before quickly shaking his head, "This is impossible. If he truly had the strength of a Magic Apprentice, then no matter how wealthy he was, his wealth would immediately be seized. A Magic Apprentice is an ant, even in Thousand Sails City. If he wants to keep his wealth, he would need the power to defend himself..."

"Yes, Young Master Aube, I also feel that it is impossible for him to be just a Magic Apprentice..."

Anthony fawned over Aube before continuing, "Moreover, a few of Seth's students belong to the side branches of the Merlin Family and are already Mages. They joined the Family's Mercenary Group. I went to look for them early this morning and from what they remembered, that Mafa Merlin always seemed

cowardly when he studied under Seth. He was even bullied, yet he didn't dare to say anything. He would also keep to himself most of the time, this doesn't seem to..."

Anthony glanced awkwardly at Aube after saying this.

"Haha, you are trying to say that it doesn't match the current Mafa?"

"Yes, Young Master Aube. According to your description, Mafa watched what happened between William and Jason without saying a word. He wasn't scared by Jason and didn't try to dissuade William... This doesn't seem to match his former behavior..."

"Anthony, you are overthinking it. People change..." Aube smiled confidently, giving the feeling of having everything within the palm of his hand. "Thinking about it, it's been almost a year since Mafa left Seth's tower. During that year, Locke Merlin died in a shipwreck and the Flashing Gold chamber of commerce suddenly collapsed. Even if Locke left him some capital to make a comeback, making the Gilded Rose operate at this level isn't something that could be done in a day or two. How could Mafa Merlin not mature during this year? Not being pulled around by emotions is the most basic quality for a merchant..."

Aube paused for a moment before adding, "Naturally, his character can't change completely. Just as you said, Mafa didn't say anything after being humiliated by Jason and needed William to help him. I never thought that our younger cousin William would be this bold. The one standing behind Jason is someone that can give headaches to the Patriarch, Elder Logan, yet William dared to raise a hand against Jason."

"Maybe he gave up so he doesn't care anymore..."

"This is also possible. William will never have the opportunity to sit on the Patriarch's seat. No matter how troublesome Elder Logan can be, it wouldn't be that bad for him. But Ross, Leon, and I can't afford to offend Elder Logan..."

"Young Master Aube..." Anthony seemed to have thought of something. "This is an opportunity, if you can deal with this for Elder Logan, wouldn't you have one more ally in the Elder Council?"

"Haha..." Aube sneered when he heard this. "That old fox has been in the Elder Council for a few decades, how could he be moved by such a trivial thing? He would only support those that are strong enough, favors would be useless. It's a pity that Ross doesn't understand something so simple. I heard that he just sent someone to deal with Mafa..."

"Then we..."

"We don't need to do anything. Just watch, let Ross take the initiative. In fact, I'm more interested in William. He does seem a lot stronger now, maybe he'll enter the High Mage realm soon and compete for the Patriarch seat with us, giving us one more contender..."

"Wasn't William a 5th Rank Great Mage when he left Okland? How could..."

"Haha, maybe it's due to some stroke of luck or some fortuitous encounter? It's not that hard to believe. At that time, Ross was only a child from a side branch and his bloodline wasn't very pure, but after having a fortuitous encounter, he suddenly joined the competition for the position of Successor..."

"Understood, Young Master Aube, I'll pay more attention to William Merlin."

While the two were talking, the door to William's courtyard was kicked open.

Indeed, it wasn't pushed, it was kicked.

A loud sound could be heard echoing outside.

The Draconic Beastman had been waiting for Lin Yun and William for a while and was quite impatient, pacing back and forth the whole time. When that sound echoed, his two ears stood up straight. He grabbed the Gold Essence Two-handed Hammer and stood still, confusion apparent on his dark red face...

Before Xiuban could recover, a group of people entered the courtyard.

There were about ten of them and they all seemed overbearing. They wore dark red leather armor that had a crest in the shape of a bloody longsword, displaying their status as the warriors of the Merlin Family's subordinate Dragon Slayer Mercenary Group.

The one in the lead was actually a mage. He was in his twenties, and from the silver line on his cuff, he ought to be a Great Mage.

After this Great Mage entered, he saw the Draconic Beastman holding his Gold Essence Hammer and froze. He then looked ecstatic as he said, "Good, William Merlin dares to shelter a Dark Flame Beastman in his home!"

In the past few years, the Dark Flame Beastmen continuously attacked the Gaugass' fortifications and forced their way into Andlusa three times. The king, in his anger, announced a bounty seven times, increasing the price of the head of a Dark Flame Beastman every time. Nowadays, an ordinary Dark Flame Beastman's head could be taken to mages for a huge sum of gold. In the bigger cities of the Andlusa Kingdom, no one dared to shelter Dark Flame Beastmen, because if found, they would have to eat prison food for a few years.

As for Xiuban, he was actually a Highland Beastman, the Beastmen known as the thieves and swindlers of the Beastman race. They never had any bounties placed on them in the Andlusa Kingdom.

The problem was that Xiuban's skin had already turned from green to dark red due to the fusion with the blood of the Three-Headed Golden Dragon. But this was also one of the characteristics of Dark Flame Beastmen...

Thus, that young Great Mage who was obviously looking for trouble seemed pleased when he saw Xiuban.

"What are you looking at? Start moving! Seize that damn Dark Flame Beastman!"

## **Chapter 275: Pale**

Following the order of the Great Mage, the dozen warriors rushed over to surround him. They were the elites of the Dragon Slayer Mercenary Group and were all Great Swordsmen at the very least. The momentum of ten Great Swordsmen bursting with Aura was very frightening...

How could the cowardly Xiuban withstand this? He didn't even think about it and just swung his hammer.

A loud sound roared out as the Gold Essence Two-handed Hammer smashed the ground, making the earth shake. The warriors didn't have time to react and weren't able to withstand the shockwave.

At this moment, the warriors felt as if they had been charged by a beast. They didn't even have time to shout before they were sent flying.

The Gold Essence Hammer in Xiuban's hands had been tailor-made by Lin Yun.

Xiuban's strength had already reached an extreme level after fusing with that drop of blood. Every one of his moves contained boundless power, and he would even be able to burst with power close to that of a Dragon if he went all-out. This power wasn't something ordinary weapons could support.

Even Lin Yun had to spend quite a bit of time to craft this weapon for Xiuban.

It looked similar to the two-handed hammer sometimes used by ordinary fighters, but it had been made out of Gold Essence, one of the heaviest materials. A hammer made of Gold Essence would weigh over a hundred kilograms. Moreover, Lin Yun had used a lot of alchemy techniques that transcended this era.

The most shocking one was the Boundless Layering Technique.

In theory, the Boundless Layering Technique could keep layering magic materials endlessly. The Shelter Tower protecting Heiss City used this Boundless Layering Technique.

Of course, layering them endlessly wasn't actually possible...

The greatest alchemists had been gathered for the construction of the Shelter Tower, but in the end, they only managed to layer a few hundred times. Even so, it still allowed an ordinary tower to delay Noscent's destruction for over ten thousand years.

As for Lin Yun...

He could only layer ten times at best.

But a tenfold layering was frightening enough. Although this hammer wasn't much different from an ordinary one on the surface, it was ten times heavier and weighed over a thousand kilograms. In other words, Xiuban was brandishing a terrifyingly lethal weapon.

If it fell on someone's body...

Let alone these Great Swordsmen, even a Dragon would spew blood on the spot.

Lin Yun was very satisfied with all the transcending techniques he used on that hammer.

He even believed that after being used for a year, it would give rise to a Magic Tool Spirit, and at that time, it would inevitably rise to top of the Spiritual Magic Tools. With sufficiently good fortune, it might even become a True Spirit Magic Tool.

For this reason, Lin Yun named this hammer, calling it Carnage.

He chose this name because it would be what happened once the hammer burst out with all its power.

Just by smashing Carnage on the ground, Xiuban created a shockwave that sent the dozen Great Swordsmen flying.

“You... You dare resist!” The Great Mage was clearly frightened by Xiuban’s attack.

This was no joke...

The dozen Great Swordsmen had been focused on Xiuban, yet they didn’t have time to react before being sent flying. Just how frightening was that power?

“Eh...?”

But the Great Mage didn’t expect that the Beastman wouldn’t even pay attention to him.

Although it was the first time this Great Mage had ever seen such power, wasn’t it also Xiuban’s first time using Carnage?

The might of that thunderous swing scared Xiuban too...

Xiuban had misjudged the swing and hit the ground on accident, but it unexpectedly created such a powerful shockwave. These were Great Swordsmen, and it wasn’t as if Xiuban had never met Great Swordsmen before... Before meeting Lin Yun, a Great Swordsman was enough to make him run away in panic. Even the weakest 1st Rank Great Swordsman would leave Xiuban bitterly struggling to move just with their Aura.

As for a 2nd Rank...

Xiuban expected only death from them.

Even now...

He got many benefits from following Lin Yun, and after getting that drop of blood in the Heaven Enlightening Plane, Xiuban could only tell that he was stronger than before.

But he simply didn’t know how much stronger he was.

There were two important mages in the Gilded Rose: the young one he was no match for, and the older one he couldn’t rival. The Humans were too despicable, they had all kinds of spells that were malicious traps for the upright and straightforward Highland Beastman, and every time he fell into it, they would jeer at him.

And there was also that damn flame.

In front of that flame, Xiuban only felt cold sweat trickling down his back. If he could, Xiuban would rather not face that abnormal flame ever again.

After the fusion with the drop of blood, his strength had advanced by leaps and bounds, making him feel as if he had broken away from the control of that Human and could finally breathe freedom. But that Human subdued him before giving him to that abnormal flame. Just thinking of that experience made Xiuban feel cold.

Xiuban remembered that the Human named “Merlin” that he was now serving seemed to be a Great Mage.

‘Aren’t Great Swordsmen and Great Mages around the same level?’

That experience had made the obstinate Xiuban believe that he was roughly only at the level of a 5th Rank Great Swordsman. If he met two or three lower-ranked Great Swordsman, he might be able to do beat them, but if he met a stronger one, he would be out of luck.

But he hadn’t expected that he would meet a group of weak and unreasonable Great Swordsmen after following that Human Mage into a city.

He understood after seeing these guys...

They all approached with raging Aura, showing off their strength as Great Swordsmen. Some of them were in the upper ranks too.

But...

‘How could they be so weak...’

‘I only smashed Carnage down... Could the gap between Great Swordsmen and Great Mages be that large?’

‘Or is it... Is my weapon that amazing?’

Xiuban couldn’t help touching Carnage. There seemed to be nothing special besides its weight... Otherwise, it was no different from your everyday hammer...

‘No, I have to test it.’

“You there, get up.” Xiuban lifted Carnage once again.

“...” The Great Swordsmen on the ground all held their breaths.

‘Shit, why is this damn Beastman so abnormal... He already seriously injured us, yet he’s still telling us to stand back up... Is he not satisfied? He wants seconds?’

‘Fuck, do you think we are idiots? Only idiots would stand up after being told to like that...’

The Swordsmen didn’t need to communicate to all make the same choice.

If they didn’t stand up, they wouldn’t die!

Thus, a strange scene unfolded.

“Get up! Get up! Hurry up and get up!” Xiuban urged them.

‘Don’t get up, don’t get up and we won’t die...’

The Swordsmen desperately played dead.

“...” Xiuban had a new weapon that he really wanted to try out, he wanted to see if that strike had been a coincidence.

But he hadn't expected that the Great Swordsmen would actually play dead and refuse to stand up.

Helplessly, Xiuban could only look at the Great Mage on the side. "How about you come over?"

The Draconic Beastman's mind was very simple...

He simply didn't think of the difference between occupations, he only knew that Great Mages and Great Swordsmen had similar rank, so they should have similar power.

Since the Great Swordsmen refused to get up, he could only target that pretty boy on the side.

"Your face is so pale, you must be a very formidable Great Mage..." It couldn't be helped that he was confused. Xiuban was a Beastman, not a Human, and he only knew two Great Mages, Lin Yun and William. Both of them were a bit on the pale side, so in the Draconic Beastman's mind, any Great Mage with a pale face would be very formidable...

"..." The young Great Mage almost went crazy.

If not for his great fear of the Beastman and his weapon, the young Great Mage would have already cursed back at him, 'Shit, since when does being pale equate to being formidable?'

'Moreover...

'I'm fucking pale? That's because you are scaring me...'

### **Chapter 276: Taking Care of Something**

"What... What do you want to do!?" The young Great Mage became even paler as he looked at Xiuban's dark red face, which seemed very sinister to him. It was even more so after Xiuban laughed evilly while caressing his hammer, looking more and more perverted.

"What am I doing? Hehehehe..." Xiuban was already immersed in the pleasure of discovering such a powerful weapon. He couldn't stop giggling, and when the young Great Mage noticed his eerie smile, he almost peed his pants on the spot.

"D-Don't... Don't..." The young Great Mage took a few steps back, his eyes filled with fear as he retreated. "Don't come over..."

"Hehehehe..." Xiuban slowly walked closer to the Great Mage while holding his hammer.

This was an extremely strange scene.

And fortunately for Xiuban, William hadn't held much importance in the Merlin Family before. He was only one of the stronger members of the younger generation that couldn't participate in the succession fight, so usually, no one would visit his courtyard. Otherwise, they would catch Xiuban in the act.

Ten warriors on the ground, a Great Mage and a Beastman on the side, one retreating step by step, the other advancing step by step. The atmosphere in the courtyard was very weird.

Fortunately...

Someone was there to save the young Great Mage.

William had returned.

“What’s going on?” William’s face sank when he discovered that someone had broken the door to his courtyard.

But... He soon saw that strange scene...

One retreating while stuttering threats, one advancing while giggling, it looked quite comical. William even forgot about his door and crossed his arms over his chest as he calmly watched.

“William, you, you... You dare shelter a Dark Flame Beastman! I’ll report you to the Elder Council!” Seeing William, that young Great Mage shouted as if he was grasping at his last straw.

But the way he shouted was a bit wrong...

William originally wanted to stop Xiuban, but when he heard that shout, he swallowed his words and instead sneered, “Report me if you can.”

“You...” The young Great Mage’s expression became unsightly.

Although William wasn’t as important as Aube or Ross, he was still a direct descendant of the Merlin Family. Sheltering a Dark Flame Beastman might send most people into prison for a few years, but the Merlin Family’s descendants would at most be reprimanded. So what if he told the Elder Council?

His own situation was a lot more troublesome.

‘That damned Dark Flame Beastman keeps approaching with its creepy smile while fondling that weapon, I’ll be seriously injured if it touches me!’

“William, if... if you do this, Ross won’t let you off!” The young Great Mage was panicking. He thought that by using his backer, he would be able to escape this situation.

Unfortunately, things didn’t go as the young Great Mage imagined.

“Haha, Ross...” The name which held boundless respect in that Great Mage’s heart was only worth a sneer in front of William.

William might have been afraid of the consequences in the past...

After all, he was one of the most talented geniuses of the Merlin Family. His strength and talent exceeded that of Aube and Leon, but because he was born in a side branch, he had only been suppressed by Aube.

Unfortunately for this young Great Mage, William was no longer the same.

Remaining in Thousand Sails City for half a year had let William reach a whole new level. William saw a 9th Rank Great Mage suppress an Archmage, so how could he care about Ross?

Moreover, William had acquired the Soul Inheritance from that damaged crest. He was completely reborn and had stepped in the High Mage realm. His future was boundless. Using Ross’ name to pressure him was a wrong move.

“William, you seem a lot bolder after half a year...”

At this time, another group entered.

The one in the lead was a seemingly thirty-year-old man that looked quite carefree. Although there was a long scar on his face, it didn't make him ugly, but instead increased his charisma. As he stood there, whether it was the fallen Great Swordsman, the retreating Great Mage, the pervert Beastman, or the reborn William, they all looked at him.

He gave the feeling of always being the center of attention.

“Ross, why did you come?” William's heart tightened. That name was a shadow that none of the younger Merlins could get rid of.

As long as they had the Merlin name, they couldn't ignore Ross' existence.

Born in the side branches, he didn't have powerful backing or outstanding talent. At 24, he was only a 5th Rank Mage. That power wasn't enough to enter the Gilded Rose's Mercenary Group. Who knew the name Ross Merlin back then?

But after he was 24, Ross Merlin rose up like a comet.

It only took him one year to reach the Great Mage realm. Five ranks in a single year, this caused a sensation in the Merlin Family.

But it wasn't over yet.

After rising those five ranks in one year, Ross kept quickly progressing and advanced even more ranks in another year, becoming a 5th Rank Great Mage. After two years, he stepped into the High Mage realm, and his Magic Conducting Rune was the Endless Spring that no one in the Merlin Family managed to form in five hundred years. Santon Merlin was the last person to form the Endless Spring in the Family, and was known for his endless reserves of mana.

After fusing Nine Endless Springs into one, Ross' mana reached a realm that a High Mage could never dream of. Just by relying on that Magic Conducting Rune that had never appeared in five hundred years, Ross sat at the number one position of the younger generation despite being a member of a side branch.

And this wasn't self-proclaimed...

Three years ago, Ross went deep into the Raging Flame Plane and single-handedly charged into a Crimson Fort occupied by over a thousand Raging Flame Beastmen. He fought for seven days and nights without rest before taking back the Crimson Fort.

After this fight, Ross' position in the Merlin Family skyrocketed, becoming one of the powerful contenders for the Successor position from his previous position as a mere side branch member.

Even his fellow contenders, Aube and Leon, were speechless about this.

Despite having been completely transformed in this half a year, William, who had been wondering if he could now stand up to Ross, couldn't help frowning when facing him.

It couldn't be helped, as Ross' battle in the Raging Flame Plane had left a deep shadow in his mind.

It was a subconscious reaction.

But his frown quickly disappeared.

William had realized that he was no longer the same, he had changed after everything he'd experienced since he left the family.

Nowadays, he was leading the Gilded Rose' Mercenary Group. He had fifty Great Mages under his command and had entered the laboratory of the final Artisan of the 3rd Dynasty. Let alone Ross, William even believed that Santon Merlin might not have had as many diverse experiences as him at this age.

Not to mention, there was still his unfathomable cousin, Mafa, standing behind him.

If there was one person who could make William feel dread, it was definitely Mafa Merlin. William knew more than anyone how terrifying his younger cousin could be.

Xiuban was a good example. With Carnage in his hand, a dozen Great Swordsmen were laying on the ground and one Great Mage almost peed his pants. Wasn't that frightening enough?

William himself was a good example. In just half a year, he advanced from 5th Rank Great Mage to 2nd Rank High Mage, and even now, he was still advancing at a frightening speed. He might even manage to become a 9th Rank High Mage before turning 40. Wasn't that miraculous enough?

But William knew that whether it was the frightening Xiuban or himself, they had both benefited from Mafa Merlin's training.

It could be Xiuban, it could be himself, but it also could have been others instead.

He and Xiuban had only been lucky enough to follow that younger cousin.

In contrast, what did Ross even count as?

He was only the number one of the Merlin Family's younger generation. He may have the Endless Spring Magic Conducting Rune, but he was still an ant in front of an Archmage.

But Mafa Merlin, while he was still a 9th Rank Great Mage, had already defeated Fran, who had reached the Archmage realm.

The gap between them was too great.

Since that was the case, how could he be nervous facing Ross?

"Haha, I heard from someone that you took our younger cousin back from Thousand Sails City and that I should come to check on him. Where is he?"

"Cousin?" William had already recovered, so he wasn't at all angered by Ross' condescending attitude. He only smiled as he replied, "Cousin Mafa went out to deal with something, he should be back soon."

**Chapter 277: Funny Joke (Unexpected Development!)**

The Aurij Mountains, north of Okland, near Shulan, the land of Ice and Fire. Towering mountains spreading for hundreds of kilometers. In the middle of the 3rd Dynasty, the Empire opened a path in Gaugass, and this became a savage, deserted land with numerous minerals and herbs, but it was also occupied by many dangerous magic beasts. For thousands of years, the Aurij Mountains remained a paradise for Mercenary Groups.

Of the over hundred Mercenary Groups of Okland, at least half of them were making a living in the Aurij Mountains. The more powerful the group, the deeper they could go and the more magic beasts and precious materials they could harvest.

The Red Dragon Mercenary Group was among the most famous of these.

It was the 3rd ranked Mercenary Group in Okland. The Red Dragon Mercenaries already had three hundred years of history and had been through four leaders, each of them being famous powerhouses that helped slowly raise the status of the Red Dragon Mercenary Group to its current position.

In the current Okland, the Red Dragon Mercenary Group fell short only of the Heaven Enlightening Mercenary Group and the Temple Knights Mercenary Group. They had an 80% success rate that they could proudly boast of. If it wasn't for their leader dying in battle two years ago, the Red Dragon Mercenary Group might have already risen to become the number two Mercenary Group of Okland.

The Okland Mercenary Guild's board had a special column with a star symbol. The star symbol indicated that the task was very difficult and very rewarding.

These high-risk high-reward missions were usually monopolized by the three highest ranked mercenary groups.

This included things such as killing a level 30 magic beast, or destroying a force on par with the Viper Nest, or taking control of a small town. There were all kinds of missions...

And only the three strongest mercenary groups could accomplish these.

But this time, the Red Dragon Mercenaries had accepted a mission that wasn't marked with a star.

This mission had come from the Watson Family.

One of the two major Families of Okland, a behemoth that stood against the Merlin Family. Even the Red Dragon Mercenary Group had to lower their heads in front of the Watson Family.

This time, the one who hired the Red Dragon Mercenary Group was Stan Watson, the most outstanding genius of the Watson Family. He hired the Red Dragon Mercenaries this time to protect him as he entered the depths of the Aurij Mountains.

As for why Stan Watson was going in the depths of the Aurij Mountains, it wasn't for these hired hands to know.

The Red Dragon Mercenary Group wasn't unfamiliar with the Aurij Mountains' depths. They would usually go there to hunt of magic beasts or gather resources.

But it was the first time that they had received an escort mission. They were very careful about this and sent the strongest fifty members with a vice-leader at the head to guard Stan Watson on this journey.

They were the strongest that the Red Dragon Mercenaries had to offer and were the main force for over half of the star missions. They were all veterans.

The entourage had made their way through quite domineeringly. The met dozens of magic beast attacks that would have wiped out any normal group, but with the protection of the 50 Red Dragon Mercenaries, Stan didn't even have the opportunity to make a move of his own.

To begin with, the fifty members of the Red Dragon Mercenary Group were like mammoths charging up a mountain.

"Alright, it's here." After annihilating another group of magic beasts, the team of fifty took a break to rest and reorganize under a cliff. A young mage wearing a white robe walked out from behind, a yellow map in his hands. After carefully examining the cliff, joy spread across his face.

"Young Master Stan, please be careful, this is one of the most dangerous areas of the Aurij Mountains. You are now under our team's protection. If something unexpected happened, our Red Dragon Mercenary Group wouldn't be able to account for it."

The one speaking was a female warrior donning a silver armor. She seemed very young, in her early twenties. Her silver armor couldn't completely cover up her graceful figure and her blonde hair glittered like the setting sun. From her fair face and delicate features, she was undoubtedly a stunning woman.

But...

The members of the Red Dragon Mercenary Group knew that she wasn't merely a beauty.

She was Anna Achilles, the top ranking vice-leader of one of the three largest mercenary groups in Okland, a 24-year-old Expert Swordsman with the bloodline of the War God. Three years ago, she defeated a famous Expert Swordsman when she was a 9th Rank Great Swordsman becoming famous herself.

Now, Anna was already the 1st vice leader of the Red Dragon Mercenary Group, only having to report to the current leader, Leo.

If it wasn't for the fact that the one they were escorting had a rather special identity, Anna wouldn't have accepted such a mission.

"Okay, Commander Anna, your mission has been completed after escorting me here..." The young mage with his white robe waved his hand casually. "I don't need your help to protect me. Shall I remind you that your Red Dragon Mercenary was only hired so that I wouldn't use up mana beforehand? As for the rest, I don't need you worrying about it."

"Young Master Stan..." Anna wanted to say insist, but she ended up shaking her head and remaining silent.

"Don't say anything else. Commander Anna, you'd best remember my identity. I'm Okland's only 8th Rank High Mage at only 35 years old. Only a Sword Saint would be qualified to worry about my safety.

"You..." These words were truly hurtful, and even Anna couldn't help being angry despite being a hired mercenary.

However.

Before Anna could say anything, a voice came out of a bush.

“Stan Watson?”

“Who are you!” Before Stan even reacted, the fifty mercenaries already drew their weapons. As the commander, Anna instantly burst with Aura, covering her blond hair and heavy armor with a layer of cyan mist.

Anna had studied under the Storm Sword Saint, Talos.

Talos went through hundreds of battles throughout his life and was never defeated due to his famous Sky Aura. Although he had many disciples, only three or four of them truly mastered the Sky Aura, Anna Achilles being one of them.

Anna instantly released her Sky Aura just as the voice came out of the bush because she felt a premonition of danger from that voice.

She didn't know exactly why...

But she felt that the owner of that voice had some frightening magic power, and even if he hadn't come out of the bush, it was enough for a veteran like Anna to feel a chill run down her spine.

“Come out!” Anna's Sky Aura was raging as she remained vigilant and coldly snorted towards the bush.

“Haha...” Under Anna's cold snort, a young mage slowly walked out of the bush. He looked thin, and his face seemed a bit pale, yet charming. He walked very softly, as if afraid of killing an ant.

The young mage held a magic staff with a huge gem embedded at the tip. Anna looked at it carefully and discovered that it was actually an Elemental Amber!

This discovery made Anna's heart tighten.

Fist-sized pieces of Elemental Amber were very rare in Okland. They would usually appear only in the hands of geniuses nurtured by their entire Family, like Stan Watson, for example.

Yet, the young mage standing before them held one.

“Okay, stand there and don't move! Tell us what you are planning, or else the Red Dragon Mercenary Group will view you as an intruder!” The Elemental Amber raised Anna's level of vigilance.

“If I don't get closer, how could I tell you my goal...” The young mage kept slowly walking towards Stan Watson as if he hadn't heard her. “In fact, I hold no evil intentions...”

“Oh?” Anna tightened the grip on her sword and didn't relax after the person's answer.

“Whether you hold evil intent or not, don't hope of escaping now that you came,” Stan Watson coldly snorted before Anna even gave the order to attack.

At the same time, he quickly chanted a spell.

The might of an 8th Rank High Mage was quite extraordinary. Just as the incantation echoed, raging flames were already filling the atmosphere. It was a Flame Prison spell. The flames turned into chains, sealing the escape route of the young mage.

“I truly hold no evil intentions...” The young mage didn’t seem to notice that he was in the center of a Flame Prison and only scratched his cheek before raising his staff. “I only came to kill Stan Watson, it has nothing to do with you...”

“Haha, such a funny joke!” Stan laughed when he heard that.

As the most outstanding genius of the Watson Family, Stan had become so strong that he had never met anyone or anything that could contend against him. Let alone the youths at the same age, even the Archmages with a grudge in the Watson Family didn’t dare to openly talk about killing him.

And now, a young mage that probably wasn’t even twenty had said something like that...

### **Chapter 278: Three Seconds**

Stan Watson felt that this was a joke, but Anna didn’t think so...

If that young mage gave a feeling of danger just when he came out of the bush, then after raising his staff, Anna felt an icy chill in her bones. That chill was similar to being watched by a viper from brush or standing at the edge of a cliff. It was inexplicable, but so very vivid.

Anna had been training under Storm Sword Saint Talos from an early age. Her eyes were far keener than the average person could imagine. From when she joined the Red Dragon Mercenary Group at 18 to becoming the 1st vice leader now, she had experienced hundreds of battles. Her repeated close encounters with death gave Anna some instincts that far surpassed those of ordinary Expert Swordsmen when it came to feeling danger.

She felt the chilling sensation of danger just as the Flame Prison appeared.

That feeling was so intense that Anna thought that death had already come to claim its victim.

“Protect Young Master Stan!” Although she didn’t know what the danger was, Anna still held her sword and dashed forward at the young mage stuck in the Flame Prison.

The power of an Expert Swordsman bursting with the Sky Aura was very threatening. Her speed reached the pinnacle and she looked like a meteor crashing into the Flame Prison.

Unfortunately, it was already too late.

Because the young mage had already extended his hand.

This hand didn’t seem strong or powerful, but when Anna saw it, it made her go pale.

“Fuck!”

She was still twenty meters away from the Flame Prison when she swung her sword, letting the Aura contained within burst out with an ear-piercing sound. In a flash, a cyan aura could be seen flying in the shape of a curved moon, displaying beauty as well as endless killing intent.

Anna's attack could only be described as shocking. Even Stan, who had said that only Sword Saints were qualified to worry about his safety, could draw back in surprise in front of this attack.

But it was such a pity, because it was still too late.

The cyan Sword Aura was only a meter away from the Flame Prison.

But this meter was like an uncrossable ravine. Before the deep cyan Sword Aura could breach that distance, the young mage's slender hand had already grabbed the Flame Prison and gently pushed.

The prison of raging flames tore open.

In that moment, Anna even saw the young mage calmly pat the dust off his body before casually waving his magic staff.

Following that, a strange rune appeared out of nowhere.

"Runic Shield!"

Anna was startled.

The might of that Runic Shield far surpassed what anyone could have imagined. A strange rune could be seen floating in the air. It was neither dazzling nor bright, and it didn't emit any frightening aura. It was only silently floating there just like a dried up leaf.

But it was this rune like a dried up leaf that blocked Anna's all-out Crescent Moon Slash. The deep cyan Sword Aura exploded against the strange rune...

The scene was too strange.

It was obviously an extremely fierce explosion, but there were no sounds and no traces of Aura or mana flowing out... Everything happened silently.

The strange rune floated there like a bottomless black hole, swallowing away all the power.

"This is impossible..." Anna was a bit stunned, this completely surpassed her imagination.

But this beautiful Expert Swordsman was a veteran, she was only startled for a split-second before bursting with Aura once again and slashing with her sword three times. Three Crescent Moon Slashes burst out consecutively with Sword Aura. At this time, the entire area seemed to be covered by her Sword Aura: sound, wind, rocks, soil, branches, everything was bathing in that power.

It could be said that this beautiful Expert Swordsman was bursting with all her power.

But...

The young mage wasn't affected at all. That strange rune was like an unbreakable barrier that stifled Anna's efforts. The young mage was still walking very slowly with his staff in hand, a smile on his face.

But in Anna's eyes, he looked like a ghost, a shadow of death.

Facing the three Crescent Moon Slashes, the young mage's hair wasn't even ruffled as he walked straight through the Sword Aura, leaving the three slashes in the dust.

When he brushed past her, Anna felt her hair standing up on her head.

Besides Anna and Stan Watson, there were still fifty members of the Red Dragon Mercenaries, but she was the only one that could feel the danger.

Only Anna, who knew how much she had put into those four Crescent Moon Slashes, knew how frightening that young mage was. He simply wasn't an existence an Expert Swordsman could contend with. A common High Mage couldn't use a Runic Shield to block four of her Crescent Moon Slashes.

Anna had never met such a powerful opponent.

When the enemy brushed past her, Anna felt like her heart had stopped beating. The feeling of being on the verge of death was terrifying.

He only brushed past her for a split second.

But to Anna, it felt like a year. Her back was already drenched in sweat, she had tightened her fists until they turned white, her heart was beating fiercely, and she was panting heavily. After some time, Anna finally felt that pressure disappear.

"Phew..." Anna sighed in relief when the pressure dissipated.

But she recalled this young mage's words.

"I truly hold no evil intentions, I only came to kill Stan Watson, it has nothing to do with you..."

"Fuck!" Anna cried out in alarm. She tightened her grip on her sword and rushed over like lightning.

Unfortunately, it was already too late.

Anna had chased after him as fast as she could, but she only caught up to a spark of flame. The young mage had burst into raging flames just as he passed her.

Elemental Incarnation!

The young, carefree mage had already turned into an Elemental Incarnation and taken advantage of the remaining flames from the Flame Prison to reach Stan with a Flame Flash.

"Who are you? You dare become the enemy of the Watson Family?" Stan had a grave expression. He raised his magic staff and burst out with the power of an 8th Rank High Mage, showing that he was worthy of being the most outstanding genius of the Watson Family.

He didn't panic when facing the young mage. He used a counterspell to gain some valuable time and then cast a Flame Field to restrain the fire elements and stop them from being too active. The two spells were insta-cast, and they were cast accurately and perfectly.

After this, he cast an Ice Wall.

Not many mages knew that the 2nd Tier Spell, Ice Wall, was still one of the best ways to handle Fire Elemental Incarnation, even after gaining access to spells of higher tiers. The Ice Wall itself had the effect of suppressing fire elements, while also bringing powerful physical defenses. To a Fire Elemental Incarnation, which used fire elements for both spells and physical attacks, the Ice Wall was a true nemesis.

The three spells in a row displayed the true power of Stan Watson.

He was worthy of being the genius nurtured by the Watson Family. Even though he had grown up under the protection of the Watson Family, he wasn't lacking in fighting experience. Despite facing an Elemental Incarnation at close range, he didn't panic.

This was the difference being peak forces and ordinary forces.

Compared to Stan Watson, the genius from the Monchi Family, Ryan, was far too inferior.

Stan Watson sneered after casting these three spells. The light at the tip of his magic staff flickered as the mana stored within erupted out.

This time, he cast Chain Lightning.

This spell, which had reached 6th Tier, was extremely destructive.

Stan Watson knew that as long as he could hold for three seconds, the Chain Lightning would completely rip through his enemy.

"Careful!" At this time, Stan heard the warning of the beautiful Swordsman.

But that reminder felt laughable to Stan, who was in the middle of channelling Chain Lightning. Although Anna wasn't weak, her insight was too shallow. How could she understand his marvelous setup? In the end, insight depended on one's strength. An Expert Swordsman was only a joke, only a Sword Saint was qualified to mind his safety.

But...

Stan Watson's smile suddenly disappeared.

Because he noticed a flame passing through the thick Ice Wall.

'How could it be!?'

## **Chapter 279: Snap**

Unfortunately, it was too late for Stan Watson to figure out what was happening.

The red flame passed through the thick Ice Wall, dazzling like the sun. The ice instantly melted as the red incandescence leapt out from within. Stan suddenly lost contact with the ground, and a flaming arm was tightened around his neck.

It was followed by a snapping sound.

The surroundings suddenly went quiet.

Everyone stood there in a daze.

This was a really shocking scene.

The beautiful Expert Swordswoman forgot to send a 5th Crescent Moon Slash, the elites of the Red Dragon Mercenary Group forgot to try to save their employer. They all stood there in a daze, filled with shock and fear.

Stan Watson had already been famous ten years ago. He was considered the Watson Family's future, a 25-year-old High Mage that shocked all of Okland, and he had been steadily progressing over the years. He had been quickly advancing down the path of magic and had already become an 8th Rank High Mage. He might have become an Archmage within three years if given the time.

Stan Watson was like a shadow looming in the minds of all of Okland's young mages. Everyone knew that he was very prideful and arrogant, but no one could deny that he was extremely talented. Anyone that wanted to reach the peak would have no choice but to face Stan Watson.

The beautiful Expert Swordswoman included.

Anna had the bloodline of the War God, she had defeated the famous Expert Swordsman, Rosen, and was now the vice leader of the Red Dragon Mercenary Group. Her sword rarely met any worthy opponents, but she herself had to admit that she was still far from being on Stan Watson's level.

Earlier, Stan had arrogantly claimed that only a Sword Saint was qualified to worry about him. At the time, even if Anna had been angry, she didn't retort, because this was indeed a fact. He was incredibly confident, to the point of being arrogant.

But now...

The arrogant and formidable Stan Watson was dead.

Indeed, that seemingly fragile and slender arm had passed through the thick Ice Wall and snapped Stan's neck in an instant.

Now, Stan Watson was only a corpse that was casually thrown to the ground by that young mage. The Fire Elemental Incarnation had already scattered and the young mage no longer emitted berserk mana fluctuations. He gently looked around at everyone with a smile on his face. If not for the sparks at the tip of his fingers that had yet to dissipate, no one would have imagined that such a gentle and harmless-looking young man had just snapped the neck of the most outstanding genius of Okland Family.

"You... You killed Stan Watson!" Anna stood there in a daze, her hand tightly gripping her sword, but it was clear that her sword was shaking.

The beautiful Expert Swordswoman was already paralyzed. She couldn't stop thinking of the consequences of Stan Watson's death. The failure of the escort mission would be a huge blow to the Red Dragon Mercenary Group's reputation, and the Watson Family would definitely look into it.

Normally, Anna's only choice as a hired mercenary would be to kill the murderer.

But she didn't dare to try.

Anna truly didn't dare, because the power of that young mage was frightening and strange. She simply didn't have the confidence to withstand that power, let alone to kill the opponent. Even just looking at him from far away made her feel unspeakable fear.

Even Anna was in such a state, not to mention the other mercenaries.

In fact, they had yet to react. How could their perfect escort mission suddenly fail? 'Where did that young mage come from, how could he have such frightening power? Wasn't Stan the most outstanding genius of Okland's younger generation? The most talented? How... How could he be completely unable to even resist? How could he stand there as his neck was broken by someone else? This... What's happening?'

But they wouldn't get an answer from Lin Yun.

He didn't leave immediately after cancelling the Fire Elemental Incarnation. Instead, he bent down and picked up the yellow map.

He had seen Stan Watson take it out earlier, and it seemed very important. After he appeared, Stan Watson didn't have the time to hide it, and with his death, that map had involuntarily fallen to the ground.

"Oh?" After picking it up, Lin Yun took a look at the map and became interested.

On the yellow map was drawn the shape of the Aurij Mountains with a red line at the peak. Lin Yun studied it carefully and saw that the end of that line seemed to be on the other side of the Aurij Mountains, close to the Gaugass region.

'It looks like I killed the right person.' Lin Yun smiled and stopped studying the map. He slowly rolled it up before carefully putting it in his pocket.

Looking further at it would be a waste of time.

The red line led to a region that he couldn't enter right now. In the future, a world-shaking fight would happen, engulfing the entirety of Noscent. Countless powerhouses would fall there; Archmages, Sword Saints, they were only cannon fodder in that war, as even more than a dozen Heaven Mages would fall.

Thus, Stan Watson's death wasn't unfair.

Trying to step into that area with the strength of an 8th Rank High Mage...

'He was truly tired of living...' Lin Yun's mouth twitched. He no longer paid attention to the corpse on the ground and nodded at the beautiful Expert Swordsman who was still shaking. "Don't worry, I don't have any evil intentions."

He then walked down the mountain...

At this time, the fifty elite mercenaries and the 24-year-old War God didn't dare to stop Lin Yun on his way down. Let alone stopping him, no one even dared to breathe.

Lin Yun's figure gradually became indistinct in the distance.

“Hold on! Stop!” Anna seemed to regain some courage as she chased after the blurry figure.

But then, she stopped.

Even this beautiful Expert Swordswoman herself didn’t know what she was doing.

Chasing him?

Was this any different from courting death? The power displayed by the other side could overwhelm Expert Swordsmen, and she was only at the 5th Rank. Even if she spent a few years and reached 9th Rank, or even Sword Saint rank, she felt that it might be very difficult for her to win.

But...

She felt unwilling to let the other side go.

Anna didn’t know what she should do now.

The blonde Expert Swordswoman was at her wits’ end as she stood there. She didn’t dare to chase, but was unwilling to let it go. A few minutes later, when the young mage’s silhouette disappeared completely, Anna sighed and told the fifty mercenaries behind her, “Take Young Master Stan’s corpse, let’s return...”

...

At the same moment, in the Merlin Family Manor.

“That is quite a coincidence, I came to meet our younger cousin today, but he actually went out. Forget it, it’s fine if our younger cousin isn’t around, I only wanted to tell him a few things.” Ross stood there with his condescending attitude. The young mage from earlier was already hiding behind Ross, afraid of that “Dark Flame” Beastman doing something rash.

“What did you want to tell him?”

“I heard that our younger cousin’s business in Thousand Sails City is pretty good, the alchemy shop called Gilded Rose seemed to be doing quite well. It’s perfect, I just set up a mercenary group and I’m preparing an expedition on the River Branch Plane and I need a lot of equipment. Wait a bit, I’ll have someone draft a list and send it to you, then you can have our younger cousin deliver the items as soon as possible.”

“Hehe...” William suddenly understood when he heard that.

No wonder someone was looking for trouble.

It turned out that he was obeying his master.

The matter of the Gilded Rose’s wealth had already spread throughout the Merlin Family. It wasn’t just Ofra that knew, even Ross and Aube most likely got some information.

It was clear that Ross had heard that the Gilded Rose was thriving in Thousand Sails City, and thus, he sent a group of people to look for trouble, in order to extort some profits from the Gilded Rose.

It wasn’t hard to understand.

While they were busy making a mess, Ross would personally appear to clean it up and take the opportunity to ask for a batch of alchemy items. Due to owing a favor and because of Ross' power, even if Mafa was unwilling, he would feel pressured to deal with his request.

Unfortunately, Ross had yet to meet Mafa.

If he had, he would never have dared to blackmail him even if he were a hundred times more courageous...

## **Chapter 280: Fire Dragon Spell**

'He was a 9th Rank Great Mage when he crushed an Archmage. And he had already set foot in the High Mage realm, his strength reaching an unfathomable level. Trying to blackmail such an abnormal existence, are you tired of living?'

Unfortunately...

Ross didn't know about any of this.

"It's just a small matter. Since our younger cousin isn't around, you can help me pass on the request," Ross said before his expression became serious. "But I truly didn't think that you would become so bold after going to Thousand Sails City. You even dare to shelter a Dark Flame Beastman and watch as he attacked my people. Don't you know the relationship between Harvey and me?"

"Cousin Ross..." As William started to respond, the young mage that was hiding behind Ross suddenly chimed in, "William is holding you in contempt! When that Dark Flame Beastman attacked me, he said that you aren't anything special!"

"Haha, It looks like you have grown a lot after half a year in Thousand Sails City, William..." Ross' gaze became even colder.

"Alright, Ross, you don't have to continue with the nonsense. You should be able to discern truth from falsehood, Ross. I'll still advise you, you should think twice before trying to walk over Cousin Mafa's head..." William didn't plan on explaining any further.

Ross' goal was extremely clear. He had sent his people to start a conflict. As long as he had the upper hand, he would force Mafa Merlin to equip and supply his mercenary group.

His method was a good one, but he had tried it on the wrong person.

"Haha, let's have a go then. I want to see how much progress you made in Thousand Sails City in half a year and whether Harvey's words are right... We'll see if you have the right to belittle me..."

With these words, Ross immediately roused his Magic Conducting Rune without letting William reply. Endless Spring revolved at maximum speed and a huge amount of mana started flooding Ross' body.

At the same time, he drew a strange rune in the air.

After completing the rune, a ball of fire rose up and flew towards William. This was a 5th Tier Spell, Fire Dragon. It consisted of flames transformed into a Dragon Breath, and although it wasn't as terrifying as

an actual Dragon Breath, it already had the characteristics of one: high temperature, high toxicity, and enough power to melt even steel just by grazing it.

But Fire Dragon was a 5th Rank Spell. Even if Ross was a High Mage, he shouldn't be able to complete it that fast. He took only one second to cast the Fire Dragon after drawing the rune.

That was almost no different from an instantaneous spell.

This was thanks to the Endless Spring.

As the most powerful Magic Conducting Rune of the Merlin Family, the power of the Endless Spring wasn't something that other Magic Conducting Runes could compare with. It could be considered one of the peak Magic Conducting Runes in the entire Andlusa Kingdom.

The mana recovery was shocking, and although High Mages with the Endless Spring didn't truly have an endless supply of mana, it was very hard for them to run out with basic consumption.

Moreover, after the nine Endless Springs fused as one, there would be a special spell slot. This spell slot could store a spell that didn't surpass the caster's rank, and if the need arose, they could use a rune to cast that spell.

Such as this Fire Dragon.

The most frightening part was that after the Fire Dragon spell went through the Endless Spring's nurturing, its might increased and couldn't be compared to an ordinary version of the spell. When that mass of fire rose up, William felt an aura of destruction. It wasn't much different from a true Dragon Breath...

"Shit..." William felt the horror of the Endless Spring.

But William didn't think that Ross would use the most powerful card in his hand. This wasn't just teaching him a lesson... If that spell hit him, even if he managed to survive, he would still be crippled.

Unfortunately, William didn't have time to think about it now.

He didn't think too much about it and let out a Runic Shield.

Usually, using a Runic Shield at such a time would be very stupid.

Ross would immediately follow with a spell after that Fire Dragon, but William had already lost valuable seconds on a Runic Shield. If another spell landed on it, it would almost certainly be shattered.

But he didn't have much time to think.

After casting the Runic Shield, a rumbling sound could be heard as the Fire Dragon clashed with it. The tyrannical flames exploded, making the shield flicker twice before it was split open by the enhanced spell.

'So powerful...' William was startled, but he took advantage of the valuable few seconds he gained from the Runic Shield to cast a Fire Elemental Incarnation. He then used Flame Flash and instantly appeared behind Ross.

“William, you are so naive...” What awaited William was a large hand.

A loud crashing sound echoed.

That was from the hand slamming the ground. William didn't even have time to react before he felt that huge power crashing into him. It felt as if a large rock had fallen onto his body. Everything spun around him as he spat a mouthful of blood.

“Runic Shield, haha, William, it looks like your harvest in Thousand Sails City was pretty good, you are already a High Mage...”

“The Endless Spring is so troublesome...” William coughed some more blood. He was extremely pale, but his eyes were bright and scary.

He had understood.

It looked as if he had lost this battle very quickly. Ross only cast one Fire Dragon and almost settled the fight.

But in reality, William found out from this that the gap between him and Ross wasn't as big as he had imagined. He hadn't lost because of the Fire Dragon, but because of the Endless Spring.

He had lost to the most powerful Magic Conducting Rune of the Merlin Family.

If he had a powerful Magic Conducting Rune of his own, the outcome of this fight would have been uncertain.

As he thought of this, William looked forward to it.

He looked forward to the next fight against Ross.

Because his younger cousin had promised to impart him a Meditation Law Set far surpassing the Crimson Heart once he stepped into the High Mage realm. That Meditation Law Set was so amazing that he would even be able to rely on it to reshape his Magic Conducting Runes if he was willing to, or so his younger cousin had said.

Reshaping his Magic Conducting Runes!

He would stand on the same starting point as Ross if he could do that. At that time, the battle wouldn't be settled by one Fire Dragon.

William now truly understood how much he had gained in Thousand Sails City. He now had some hope to defeat Ross, the existence he'd been forced to look up to, the Ross he had never hoped to catch up to.

He would have never believed it possible before going to Thousand Sails City.

He only needed time now.

Time wasn't a problem for William, as he was patient enough.

But...

William being patient didn't mean that others would be patient.

As William coughed blood, someone entered his courtyard.

"Well, Cousin, you are admitting defeat too early..." Lin Yun held his Spiritual Magic Staff as he slowly entered the messy courtyard.

"Haha..." William's heart sank as he saw Lin Yun coming into the courtyard. A hint of a smile appeared on his face as he struggled to reply, "Nothing I can do about it, a Fire Dragon Spell nurtured by the Endless Spring isn't something I can currently resist against. It's fine, he won't be my opponent if I have three months..."

"William, it's not your style to say something so bold..." Ross sneered at William before looking at the approaching Lin Yun. "I suppose you are our younger cousin from Thousand Sails City? Hmm? William, how about you make the introductions?"

That last sentence was actually an attempt to get a reaction from Lin Yun.

Unfortunately, Lin Yun didn't even look at him. He walked to William and took a bottle of Health Potion from his pocket and frowned as he asked, "How is it? Any severe injuries?"

"I'm alright..." William coughed blood again before drinking the Health Potion. After a short time, his face regained some color. Then, William pointed at Ross, "This is Ross Merlin, one of the most outstanding geniuses of the Merlin Family, and alongside Aube and Lyon, he is considered the future of the Merlin Family..."

"And compared to Stan Watson?" Lin Yun grinned.

"Haha, how could he be compared to a dead person..." William couldn't help chuckling when he heard that question.

William didn't need to ask the result of Lin Yun's trip...

He knew that since Cousin Mafa personally went to take care of this, Stan Watson was definitely dead.