

The Mighty Dragons Are Dead #Chapter 111 - 0111: Gemstones, Crystals, and Magic Jade - Read The Mighty Dragons Are Dead Chapter 111 - 0111: Gemstones, Crystals, and Magic Jade

Chapter 111: Gemstones, Crystals, and Magic Jade

The last two chests were not filled with books.

To Liszt's surprise, one chest contained a variety of jades, the other various crystals, "Jades and crystals, the value of these two chests, will definitely not be lower than that of the mithril ores!"

He picked up a milky white jade.

The regret of the vanished books was somewhat diminished.

Jades and crystals can be considered types of gemstones. However, their origins are entirely different. Jade comes from the earth and, like saltpeter and sulfur, is a naturally formed mineral. Crystals, on the other hand, originate from dragons. They are associated mineral stones produced alongside a dragon's gemstones.

Dragons can produce gemstones, and gemstones possess extraordinary magic power.

But gem mines are rare, and more common are the associated crystal mines surrounding the gemstones—the topaz is accompanied by yellow crystals, the ruby by red crystals.

Crystals also contain magic power, but compared to gemstones, the magic power in crystals is relatively sparse.

Nobles like to carve drinking cups out of crystal, and in Liszt's castle, there is a set of such crystal goblets used for entertaining distinguished guests. Crystals are also commonly used to make magic lighting fixtures which can brighten both day and night until the contained magic power is completely consumed. All reputable castles have crystal lamps.

Crystals are also an ideal accessory for noblewomen, who can add quite a bit of grace to their demeanor with a crystal necklace.

Jades originating from the earth, also known as magic jades, are stones that also have magic power. However, the magic power they contain has already highly integrated with the stone itself, making it difficult to utilize for creating magic items.

But jade is the best food for elves.

During the transplanting period for cordyceps, the elves relied on nibbling on jade to sustain life; when contracting elf bugs, jade is also used as bait; and using jade to make containers for elves to live in increases the probability of their evolution.

Therefore, the value of jade is not cheaper than that of crystal.

Opening the Gemstone Space.

He put a chest full of jade and a chest full of crystals into it, shook the bell to summon the butler, "Mr. Carter, I have stored the treasures in the chests, most of which are severely damaged and ancient, with only some slight residues left. Have someone move and dispose of them."

He had carefully examined the chests that contained books, and not a single legible word remained as the books were completely rotted.

This is a disadvantage of parchment paper, which cannot be preserved for too long. Liszt believes that the lack of historical records in the different world is definitely related to parchment paper. During its production process, the paper undergoes an "acidification" process to allow for smooth writing.

But acid-prone substances are likely to undergo chemical reactions, making them difficult to preserve for a long time.

That is how he understood it.

"Despite the regrets, overall, this sunken ship treasure has made me a fortune, which is great!" Liszt thought to himself.

His mood gradually became more comfortable.

So for that evening's dinner, he had the kitchen host a barbecue party.

Goltai, Marcus, and others all attended. They knew that Liszt had made a hefty gain that day, but wisely refrained from asking about the specifics of the treasure.

For three consecutive days.

Liszt was monitoring the situation with the dragon hollyhocks.

The transplanted wild dragon hollyhocks had already adapted to the new soil environment and began to show signs of life. Their green leaves were vibrant, those that were flowering continued to bloom, and those bearing fruit continued to fruit. Only the dragon hollyhock nurturing an elf bug remained in a deathly state, with its magic power intermittent, feeling as if it could die at any moment.

Yet, it did not die; it just remained there, stiff and still.

On the Smoke Mission, there had been no change, meaning that the mission had not been completed.

“The magic power of the Black Pearl should be sufficient, I can see traces of magic power emanating beneath the soil... I can’t exert any more strength. Little Dragon Hollyhock insects, whether you can survive or not, it’s up to your own will to live.”

This Smoke Mission could only involve waiting—waiting for the Dragon Hollyhock to die, marking the mission’s failure, or for the Dragon Hollyhock to revive, signaling the mission’s completion.

Liszt stood up.

Looking towards the direction of the Castle, a yellowish-gray horse was galloping toward the Castle.

“It’s Marcus returning,” he mounted his Li Dragon Horse and rode back to the Castle, where he happened upon Marcus standing at the gateway. “Teacher Marcus, was your trip successful?”

“All went well, my Lord. Tomorrow, crystal craftsman Brad will arrive with the Fresh Flower Caravan’s transport team to serve you in Fresh Flower Town for a month.”

“Well done, Teacher Marcus.”

Liszt nodded. After obtaining a large quantity of crystals, the idea of crafting a telescope began to take shape in his mind—glass was the most suitable material for telescopes, but glass-making was rather complicated. Liszt did not yet have the capability to produce glass, so he had to use crystal to make the lenses.

Transparent white crystal, when polished to a smooth finish, made crafting of a telescope rather simple.

In Coral City, there were craftsmen who specialized in making crystal ornaments, and while these craftsmen might not be able to create crystal lamps, grinding concave and convex lenses would certainly not be beyond their expertise.

“For the telescope’s lenses, should they be concave or convex?” Liszt had forgotten some of the physics knowledge. He just remembered that a monocular telescope consisted of two lenses, and the distance one could see changed as they were extended or shortened. Hiring a crystal craftsman for a month should enable him to produce a quality telescope.

Crystal craftsman Brad.

Arrived as scheduled the next day.

He was a middle-aged man with a bald head and two large mustaches, his voice booming: “Respectful Baron of Fresh Flower Town, Brad greets you.”

“Brad, do you know why I hired you?”

“Mr. Marcus mentioned that you wish for me to create several crystal artifacts for you.”

“Right, I need you to make a batch of mirrors.” Liszt handed him several pieces of white crystal, which were deposits that often accompanied sapphires. As for which Dragon produced the sapphires, Liszt did not have this knowledge—information about Dragons was plentiful but often vague.

Those nations possessing Dragons tended always to shroud them in mystery.

“Is this white crystal? I can feel the magic power it contains.” Brad was a freelance craftsman and also an Apprentice Knight; he possessed Dou Qi—a craftsman who worked with gemstones and crystals had to possess Dou Qi.

Liszt unfolded a sheet of thick paper: “I need you to craft these pieces of white crystal into mirrors of this design, with an extremely smooth surface. Moreover, their thickness must be consistent throughout, without any variations, and the shape must remain circular. The mirrors come in two sizes, but their thickness can vary.”

The paper displayed diagrams of convex and concave lenses.

Uncertain of what focal length of convex or concave lens would be suitable for assembling into a telescope, Liszt simply decided to have the crystal craftsman produce several of them, and he would experiment with different combinations later on.

“As you wish, my Lord.”

“Then make yourself at home in Fresh Flower Town. If you can finish grinding the batch of mirrors ahead of schedule, you are free to leave earlier. The salary will still be the Gold Coin previously agreed upon.”

Crystal craftsmen belonged to the higher end of the artisan spectrum, and they generally earned a good income. Earning twenty or thirty Silver Coins per month was quite normal. If Liszt wanted to employ them, he had to offer a more substantial reward.

In the days that followed, Brad meticulously began grinding the concave and convex lenses.

Chapter 112: Respect for the Maid

The telescope was still being ground.

The Dragon Hollyhock was still half-dead.

The Fragrant Coconut Tree Elf Bug was still incubating.

The Thorn Cordyceps Shrubbery's Rapid Growth Poison Thorns were sprouting new shoots every day.

Homes in various settlements were still being built sporadically, and houses were also under construction in the four districts of the town, with roadwork never ceasing. On the Douson Avenue of the castle, construction persisted daily.

Shooting arrows, practicing spears.

Merging horse and man, charging into battle.

Liszt's life was fulfilling every day. Mrs. Abbie's culinary skills evolved rapidly, not only could she make pineapple buns, but she also learned to cook a few new dishes—the Thorn Caravan traveled to and from North Valley City daily, procuring supplies needed for the castle. With gold coins, anything was attainable.

“Quietly nurturing... It's been almost half a year since I came to this world. I haven't done anything earth-shattering or made any radical developments. However, under my guidance, Fresh Flower Town has still entered a path of rapid development. Although the territory may still be barren, at the very least, it has taken on a new face.”

Once he had only Goltai and Marcus as aides by his side.

Now Goltai served as the Administrative Officer, Marcus as the interim Knight Captain, Isaiah as the Finance Officer, Blair as the Legal Officer, and Karl Ironhammer as the Defense Officer; Old Geronte led the Fresh Flower Caravan as its captain, with Abagon

as his deputy, and Sherlock captained the Thorn Caravan; Kostor was the captain of the Fresh Flower Vessel.

A team had begun to take shape.

The Elf Bugs grew from four, the Tulip Bug, Millet Bug, Alfalfa Bug, and Thorn Bug, to seven with the addition of Tomato Bug, Little Wheat Bug, and Peanut Bug, and two more were awaiting birth, the Fragrant Coconut Bug and the Dragon Kui Bug.

The number of horses in town, including those belonging to the newly arrived officials and their families, had grown from fifteen at the start to seven pregnant mares, the purchase of two foals, and eight nags. There were also twelve carriages allocated to the caravans. The grass at the horse farm was no longer sufficient; it had become necessary to purchase fodder from outside.

In addition.

Magic Potion, Smoked Grass, Fruit Thief Monkeys, seafood...

The only slow development was the population, from the initial 1991 people to now 2074, an increase of just 83 people. However, by the end of September, five hundred serfs would be transported here to add to the labor force.

"The greatest gains are actually all within me," Liszt leaned back in his chair, leisurely sipping a cup of milk tea without any additives.

Behind him stood a fruit tree outside the castle, a green apple tree with a low yield, small fruits, and a tart taste.

At least it could provide a bit of green shade.

He felt pleased.

Perhaps Mrs. Morson's cooking skills had improved, or maybe the quality of the pregnant cows' milk had increased, but regardless, the milk tea was becoming tastier by the day. So much so that after drinking it, he could feel the nutrients in the milk tea making his body exceptionally comfortable and invigorating his spirit.

It swept away the lethargy of the scorching summer days.

"Douson is a good guard dog, Rock Spike is very powerful in attack, and Juan Fu could probably be kept for meat. The Space Gem is the most priceless treasure, the value of the Mithril Mine, Jade, Crystal, and Black Pearl should be calculated in Dragon coins. The Crimson Blood Sword is a gemstone weapon, along with the Drift Bottle from the Child of the Sun."

His personal wealth, if really assessed and measured, was probably unparalleled in Coral Island.

“I also learned the Dou Qi Secret Technique—the Eye of Magic. Although I don’t know why the Bald Vulture Knight, Stefan, hid the Eye of Magic in a book, I should thank him. This assistive Dou Qi Secret Technique far surpasses any other powerfully destructive Dou Qi Secret Techniques.”

Douson was frolicking all over the place.

“Woof woof!”

Thomas followed behind it, pulling on the leash, sweating profusely. Given Douson’s current strength, Thomas, just an ordinary person, really couldn’t hold on to it.

Liszt shifted his gaze away from Douson.

He glanced at the small garden beside the castle.

There, a maidservant was collecting the meat jerky that had been drying in the garden. Her black-and-white maid uniform was quite pleasing to the eye.

“Is that Little Lily?” Liszt, who was somewhat distant, couldn’t make out the maid’s facial expression but could tell it was her from her figure.

Little Lily, the kitchen maid, was the tallest among the maids in the castle, standing at probably one meter seventy.

He remembered the first time he saw Little Lily, the seventeen-year-old girl was just a skinny, dry stick. Perhaps it was from eating and living well in the castle and the ensuing relaxation, but it was clear now that she had developed breasts and her buttocks were a bit perkier than before.

“The young lady has blossomed, indeed. The sight of a maid at work is truly a delight to the eyes.”

After reflecting on this, he redirected his gaze and began to circulate the Dou Qi within his body—just moments ago, there was some restlessness, as if wanting to express respect to the maid.

His body was also developing rapidly.

He had shot up in height, and he estimated that he must now be about one meter eighty-three tall. Earth Knight Marcus was a standard one meter eighty-six, and standing beside him, Liszt was now almost the same height.

The Earl was about one meter eighty-one tall, and his late mother Melissa was said to be a tall beauty.

Thus, Liszt surmised that he might still grow taller, surpassing Marcus wouldn't be a problem, and maybe he could even reach one meter ninety?

The restlessness was hard to smooth over.

Liszt simply stood up, drew the Crimson Blood Sword hanging at his waist, and began to practice the "Fire Dragon Drill".

Time flew, and it was suddenly September.

The Earl had returned from Blue Dragon Island and had summoned all his followers to gather at Tulip Castle. As the newly ennobled Baron of Fresh Flower Town, it was only natural for Liszt to attend.

The Coral Island faction was not particularly large.

In total, there were two viscounts, sixteen barons, eighty-two Honored Knights, in addition to one Hereditary Viscount (Levis) and a few life barons.

A life peerage is a non-hereditary title that allows for equivalent status and privileges without land and cannot be passed down.

Some countries have established them, while others have not.

In the Duchy of Sapphire, life peerages are generally granted to adult heirs of great families—they have come of age but their fathers are still alive, so it is not their turn to inherit. Some may even be over forty years old without having inherited, which can be somewhat awkward.

Hence, life peerages were introduced.

Of course, some magicians, skilled craftsmen with contributions, and even merchants of considerable wealth might also be granted life peerages.

"The Grand Duke has already issued the Pioneer Mandate. After autumn, we will act in coordination with Steel Ridge Kingdom to attack the coastal regions of Eagle Kingdom," Levis informed Liszt with accurate news upon encountering him, "Father has decided to accept the mandate and participate in this war."

"Are you going as well?" Liszt asked.

"Of course, I have to go. This is a test for me; I need to prove that I can carry on Father's will and be favored by the glory of knighthood," Levis said, not nervous but

excited, "The Grand Duke has arranged for Father to cooperate with Marquis Roderick, and I will act as the liaison officer, coordinating the actions between the two knight orders."

"Marquis Roderick?" Liszt recalled that Lady Penelope had mentioned that Levis was pursuing the man's daughter, "What's the name of the marquis's daughter?"

Levis's eyes shimmered with the light of spring: "Loria, Loria Gold Wheat Ear!"

Chapter 113: The Role of the Black Pearl

The surnames of the great nobility are always very elegant.

Even within marquis families, the Long Taro Family's surname "Long Taro" is a step below that of the Golden Wheat Sheaf Family's "Golden Wheat Sheaf" in terms of class.

This is also a display of heritage.

The surname of the Golden Wheat Sheaf Family, just decades ago, was still "Golden Wheat."

This is a powerful family, and the reason their surname is not "Barley" or "Little Wheat" is that their family not only has a Little Wheat Greater Elf but also a Barley Greater Elf. Before the Grand Duchy of Sapphire was established, the Golden Wheat Family had already risen by trading in grain.

Later on, following the Sapphire Family, they established a nation and became one of the earliest Marquis families in the Grand Duchy.

However, much like the Pa Pa Family, which split into Small Pa Pa and Big Pa Pa, the Golden Wheat Family also went through a division decades ago.

The branch that had the Little Wheat Greater Elf, for their military achievements, was ennobled as Earls and changed their surname to "Golden Wheat Grain." The branch that had the Barley Greater Elf inherited the title and changed their surname to "Golden Wheat Sheaf."

Every change of the surname.

Signifies the development of the family, the elevation of bloodlines, and the alteration of status.

“If one day, I also cultivate a Tulip Great Elf, and rely on military achievements to be ennobled as an Earl. Then, following noble custom, perhaps the Tulip Family might change its name to ‘Red Tulip,’ and I to ‘Black Tulip’... Liszt Black Tulip?”

Sometimes, Liszt would indulge in such idle fancies.

“Then, dear brother, may your wishes come true,” Liszt said with a smile as he wished his brother well after learning the daughter of the marquis’ name.

“I will succeed. Unlike Cousin Meioubao, Loria and I have been in correspondence for half a year already, I know she has taken notice of me. What I need to do now is to outperform the other competitors with excellent deeds. Cousin Meioubao is simply having a one-sided crush, the princess has... many guests.”

Levis said, not forgetting to tease Meioubao in the process.

This cousin, well, he is beyond reproach in character, appearance, and family background, but he happens to be smitten with a flirtatious princess.

Liszt actually had a good impression of Meioubao, so he did not join Levis in teasing: “By the way, brother, the Black Pearl I sold you last time, have you had it crafted into magic equipment?”

“It has been successful. The magician carved special magic runes on it, and then it became an item capable of silencing the wind.”

“Silencing the wind?”

“The water-attribute magic power within the Black Pearl can suppress the flow of wind, especially silencing Wind System Magic. I saw with my own eyes a Wind Blade released by a magician dissipate after coming within five meters of the Black Pearl. Though it’s a bit large, when hung on a warhorse, it can defend effectively against stealth attacks by Wind Dou Qi.”

He looked at Liszt and continued, “Especially for someone like your Marcus, a knight with Wind Dou Qi who loves to practice archery, vainly trying to use Dou Qi to control arrows for a fatal surprise attack. Now, when facing elite Wind Dou Qi Earth Knights, I don’t need to be anxious.”

“It seems the Black Pearl is quite useful; I feel like I sold it too cheaply.”

“Two hundred and eighty gold coins is not a small amount; it can only silence the wind after all. If it could silence all magic power, then it would truly be valuable.” Levis leaned in closer, “Do you have any more Black Pearls? As far as I know, a pearl oyster can produce several pearls, and Tridacnas should be the same; you must still have Black Pearls.”

Liszt responded with a question instead of an answer: “It can silence the wind, with a range of up to five meters?”

“That’s right.”

Such capability sparked a flurry of thoughts in Liszt’s mind.

What he sold to Levis was a Black Pearl the size of a sea bowl, capable of enveloping a radius of five meters, silencing all wind. If replaced with two Black Pearls the size of a basketball, how much area could they silence? And what about that one the size of a basin, how much area could it silence?

It was likely to cover a radius of dozens, if not hundreds, of meters.

Such an ability might, on the battlefield, merely avoid the sneak attacks of Wind Dou Qi.

But if applied to sailing, just think about it, if the Fresh Flower Vessel were equipped with a black pearl the size of a washbasin that silenced the wind around the entire ship, it would essentially never encounter a storm. Sailing the seas would then be like walking on flat ground—even if it couldn’t calm the surges, silencing the wind would greatly reduce the threat.

As for whether a ship could sail if the wind was silenced... aren’t there oars? If a storm was encountered, just take out the Black Pearl, and when there’s no storm, put it away again. There’s always a way to solve the problem.

In an instant, he made his decision, “Black pearls as big as washbasins or basketballs, absolutely cannot be sold. They are a must-have item for arming my own fleet in the future!”

So he replied with an indifferent tone, “Of course, I have some more. I originally planned to keep them as collectibles. Black pearls are not so easily obtained treasures.”

“Sell me another one.”

“You want another one?”

“Yes, I plan to make it into a new piece of magic equipment and then give it to Loria... What do you think, isn’t that a thoughtful and sincere gesture?”

Liszt casually said, “Women generally have no resistance to jewelry, I think it’s a good idea. How much are you willing to spend? I have one black pearl about the same size as the one I sold you, as well as a few smaller ones.”

“Two hundred and eighty Gold Coins.”

The price was the same as the previous black pearl, and Levis quoted the same price.

“To silence all winds with such a function, you can’t get it for two hundred and eighty Gold Coins,” Liszt said unhurriedly, as it was now a seller’s market.

It was time to raise the price from the ground up.

After some back-and-forth haggling.

Finally, another black pearl was sold by Liszt at the price of four hundred and thirty Gold Coins.

“Liszt, your heart is as black as those merchants.”

“Whether my heart is black or not is not important. What’s important is that you can show Loria your crimson heart, right?”

The Earl announced the Pioneer Mandate during the midday banquet.

He then began to summon his followers to join him in the military campaign—a common occurrence, as every year or two, a Pioneer Mandate would be called.

So in one afternoon, all the followers were rallied.

Among them, the Earl himself would dispatch the most elite Coral Island Knights, consisting of ten Knight Squads totaling one hundred and thirty people, along with a temporarily assembled garrison Knight Order, fifteen Knight Squads totaling one hundred and ninety-five people. His followers would send out twenty-six elite or ordinary Knight Squads, totaling three hundred and forty-two people.

All together, six hundred and sixty-seven knights were mixed into four Knight Orders.

The Earl himself would lead the elite Coral Island Knights, while Levis also acted as the liaison officer and led one of the mixed Knight Squads, Viscount Trick Lygrass led another, and Jonas Rubble Viscount led the last one.

“Rest for three days, gather all knights in Coral City in three days, and set sail to Golden Island by ship, to act together with Marquis Roderick’s Knight Order,” the Earl announced in full military attire, hand on sword, his grey-green eyes seemingly glowing, his words resonating with authority.

All the nobles participating in the war.

Each of them covered their left chest with one hand and performed the knight’s salute, “We follow you, my lord!”

Liszt stood in the corner; he was not participating in the battle—Fresh Flower Town couldn't even muster a single Knight Squad. A regular Knight Squad indeed didn't need all members to be Earth Knights, but they at least had to possess Dou Qi. Of the twelve young knights, six had not yet developed Dou Qi.

Chapter 114: The Conservation of Cordyceps

The Earl was very busy, Liszt merely took a moment to greet him and offer his blessings before leaving Tulip Castle and returning to Fresh Flower Town.

Before departing, the Earl solemnly said, "Fresh Flower Town is developing quite well, I have been paying attention. Train your Knight Squad, I hope that in next year's Pioneer Mandate, you and Levis can fight side by side."

"I am looking forward to it as well."

Liszt responded with these words.

Yet in his heart, he was noncommittal—engaging in battle was out of the question, he would never partake in battle in this lifetime. Flattery wasn't his forte, only farming, could he maintain his way of life.

However, no one could predict the future.

He would not be cooped up in Fresh Flower Town forever, remaining a countryside Baron. Riding dragons was a major life goal, while owning his own small island was a minor one. To possess an island as a fief, he would at least need to climb to the rank of Viscount, which would require some effort.

During the return journey, the Li Dragon Horse galloped.

He zoned out slightly while on horseback.

The excitement of the nobles at the Pioneer Mandate banquet had indeed infected him—the nobles might be parasites, but their thirst for glory was very pure.

To fight, to charge, to risk their lives for wealth and honor.

"Will I really not go to war? But without warfare, how else can I advance in rank? Rebel? Without the power to slay a dragon, rebelling is tantamount to suicide."

You can't treat the Sapphire Family's Sapphire Dragon as an ornament.

That is a top-level power in this world, akin to a nuclear weapon; it is best not to test it.

“Earning merit on the battlefield is the most effective way to advance... A Lord does not need to lead the charge, let the knights do the fighting and killing, it is still possible to ensure one’s safety. In the worst-case scenario, being captured and ransomed back is a bit embarrassing, but preserving one’s life is most important.”

“Perhaps I could follow the path of a typical Noble’s second son, and court a noble damsel?”

Some nobles who only had daughters, their ranks would certainly be inherited by the daughters, as the Grand Duchy recognizes Baronesses. Such noble damsels are the best marriage prospects for second sons of nobles.

Some noble damsels, pampered by their parents, would already have their own fiefdoms and become hereditary nobles, like Li Vera. They too would be prime marriage prospects for second sons of nobles.

“Unfortunately, in the Duchy of Sapphire, suitable noble damsels are after all in the minority... There are many noble damsels at the ranks of Honored Knights and Barons, but noble damsels at the rank of Viscounts, Earls are very rare. The archipelago itself isn’t very large, with only seven Marquises and a little over twenty Earls.”

Besides, there was a very realistic problem—noble damsels aspired to marry higher ranking noble heirs, not just any minor nobility.

“I am handsome, my father is an Earl, my grandfather is a Marquis, and I have been granted a Baron’s fief. Amongst the second sons, I am probably a very competitive candidate, let me think about which single Viscount damsels in the Grand Duchy are suitable for marriage...” After some thought, he couldn’t come up with a single one.

All nobles hope to have a son to inherit their rank.

Nobles with only a daughter are very rare.

The battlefield is too dangerous, and Baronesses are too scarce, Liszt then considered a third way to achieve rank—by making a significant contribution. If he could contribute the art of paper-making to the Sapphire Duke, maybe he could fish for an Earl’s, or even a Marquis’s rank.

“But ranks conferred for contributions are lifelong ranks without fiefs. This method is utterly unacceptable.”

The more he thought about it, the less feasible it seemed.

He gave a self-deprecating laugh, feeling resigned, “Rather than going through all this trouble, it would be better to hope for the Earl and Levis to... stop, I feel like such thoughts shouldn’t arise, after all, they are dear blood relatives.”

After returning to Fresh Flower Town.

Liszt fell back into the leisurely rhythm of life.

The Earl was too pressed for time with war duties and couldn’t even hold his September 14 birthday party on Coral Island, so there was no need for Liszt to worry about diplomacy and he could devote himself to developing the town.

The Dragon Hollyhock was still half-dead, but as long as it hadn’t died, it indicated that the Elf Bug had a will to survive.

Hope remained.

What brought him joy was the Fragrant Coconut Tree, as farmer Jiggs came to report that a Fragrant Coconut Fruit had cracked open. Instead of coconut milk flowing out, a plump, milky-white Elf Bug had crawled out.

He brought Jade Powder and a Jade Box.

Liszt hurried to Oyster Village and personally climbed the several dozen meters high Fragrant Coconut Tree to see the long-awaited Fragrant Coconut Tree Elf Bug—it was very plump, fatter than any Elf Bug he had on hand, and also exceptionally white, as if it were faintly glowing. It appeared as though it had just bathed in milk.

“Little guy, come on, my treat, have some Jade Powder.”

He sprinkled Jade Powder on the Fragrant Coconut Fruit to tempt the Elf Bug. A newly born Elf Bug, acting on instinct, was quickly attracted by the magic power contained in the Jade Powder.

It began to gobble up the Jade Powder in big bites.

Next, all Liszt needed to do was to smear his finger with Jade Powder and stretch it out to the mouth of the Elf Bug.

A bite down.

The contract was complete.

The pleasure of a heart-to-heart connection closely linked him with the Fragrant Coconut Tree Elf Bug, sharing joy and sorrow.

Having put the Fragrant Coconut Bug into the Jade Box, Liszt rewarded the farmers who had been patiently taking care of the Fragrant Coconut Bug, giving each person a silver coin, “Jiggs, you all must continue to take good care of this Cordyceps, understand?”

“Understood, Lord Landlord.”

Back at the castle, he handed the Fragrant Coconut Bug over to Carter to be placed in the Worm Room.

Carter was very happy but also expressed his concerns, “My lord, we now have eight Elf Bugs, and the castle servants may not be able to take adequate care of each Cordyceps. Do you think it is necessary to hire new servants to specifically care for the Cordyceps?”

This question reminded Liszt.

Indeed, no one in Fresh Flower Town would dare to defy him, let alone destroy his Cordyceps. But it’s always the unexpected that happens—if a commoner went mad and cut down the Cordyceps; or if an animal accidentally ate the Cordyceps—don’t expect fences to stop everything.

“Your concern is very reasonable, but I don’t plan to hire servants for watching the Cordyceps. Instead, I plan to set up a formal team to guard them,” he said.

No sooner had he thought it than he acted, immediately calling Goltai, Marcus, and Karl Ironhammer.

“My lord.”

“Teacher Goltai, Teacher Marcus, Karl, I’ve called you here because I have more and more Elf Bugs, and the Cordyceps are distributed all over the town. They need better protection.”

“Do we need to assign more Patrol Members to frequently patrol the Cordyceps, my lord?”

“Merely patrolling is not enough. I need dedicated, long-term protection. Do you have any good ideas?” Liszt had plans in mind, but he didn’t reveal them.

To hint but not divulge—this is the Controlling Path of those in high positions.

Goltai thought for a moment and said, “Currently, the protection for Cordyceps relies mainly on castle servants for care, local farmers for supervision, Patrol Team for inspection, and fences for isolation. Perhaps we can train more Patrol Members to specifically patrol the Cordyceps.”

Marcus was more straightforward, “The Knight Squad could take over patrol duties.”

Last came Karl, “My lord, I think we can arrange for Patrol Members to stand guard around the Cordyceps. Currently, we have twenty Patrol Members overseeing the town, which is not necessary; we can spare eight Patrol Members to protect the Cordyceps, ensuring they are guarded at all times.”

“Karl’s suggestion aligns more with my thoughts, but we don’t need Patrol Members for the job; that’s a waste of manpower. Select sturdy serfs from each village, arrange them to guard the Cordyceps in shifts, and have the town administration pay their salary, one copper coin a day,” he said after a pause.

Then he continued, “In addition, Teacher Marcus, arrange for members of the Knight Squad to teach the guarding serfs some basic combat skills.”

Chapter 115: Thorn Chain Quest

Rom had been very excited lately; he thought he would end up like Auden and Gray, unable to cultivate Dou Qi and ultimately abandoned by Mr. Marcus.

Being abandoned and becoming a useless person without Dou Qi was a terrifying prospect.

He, along with Karl, Auden, and Gray, all of serf origins, had been employed as Retainer Knights for Baron Liszt. However, Karl had now become an Apprentice Knight and the Defense Officer of Fresh Flower Town, leading a Patrol Team of twenty men and basking in success.

When meeting Karl, he would have to address him as Mr. Karl.

The change in status brought immense pressure to him, a suffocating urgency as if the giant hand of fate was choking his throat, trying to strangle his hopes for progress. He was terrified of achieving nothing, so he practiced diligently not only during Marcus’s lessons but also on his own, with reckless abandon.

Eventually, he successfully cultivated Dou Qi, Primary Dou Qi, and became an Apprentice Knight.

His wish fulfilled, his earnest and hard practice bore fruit—Lord Landlord appointed him as the captain of the Patrol Team, assisting Karl in maintaining the town’s security.

His status was not equal to Karl's, but Rom was already very satisfied, his talent being not as outstanding as Karl's and having taken many more days to cultivate Dou Qi.

He should rightly take a place beneath Karl.

The Patrol Team originally had a captain, who was just an ordinary person and was very resentful about his arrival. However, Rom taught him how to behave with just a few easy punches.

“Strength, with just Primary Dou Qi, I already possess the power that ordinary people cannot hope to match. How much more powerful could an Earth Knight be with Intermediate Dou Qi?”

Before obtaining Dou Qi, his understanding of knights was not very clear. He only knew that knights were strong, but how strong they were and how marvelous Dou Qi was, he had no idea. Now that he had acquired Dou Qi, he fully understood the tremendous qualitative change Dou Qi brought to knights.

“Earth Knight... I have no hope of attaining Intermediate Dou Qi in this lifetime. However, Lord Landlord has already given me a chance to change my fate, and I, Rom Barrel, will seize it! In the future, I will ensure my son starts practicing Dou Qi from a young age!”

He was not yet married, but already many girls in town had shown their affection for him.

An Apprentice Knight was still very appealing.

“My son will become an Earth Knight like Mr. Marcus! Then, he will have the hope of reaching out to join the Nobles!”

For a bright tomorrow.

Rom diligently did his job every day, never shirking his Patrol duties, and took great satisfaction in his role as the team captain.

What Rom didn't know, however, was that his hard work had all been noticed by Liszt.

Liszt did not like mundane affairs; dealing with the various day-to-day issues of the town was not his style. He did not wish to be a Han Xin skilled at leading soldiers but rather a Liu Bang competent at leading generals. Thus, he appreciated subordinates who worked diligently.

Rom was one such diligent subordinate.

“Rom, in light of your performance, I have a new mission for you.”

“Please command, my lord!”

“You and Karl have both become Apprentice Knights capable of handling responsibilities on your own, so I plan to establish the position of ‘Worm Affairs Officer’ in Fresh Flower Town, under which there will be a ‘Bug Guard Team.’ Members will be selected from the strong labor force of each post. You will serve as the Worm Affairs Officer, and your task will be to lead the Bug Guard Team in protecting the Cordyceps.”

After much thought, Liszt decided to establish the Bug Guard Team as a separate entity.

This team’s basic template was roughly equivalent to a militia organization, an augmentation to the Patrol Team. With an increasing influx of people to Fresh Flower Town, it would be impossible to maintain security with just the Patrol Team. Thus, the Bug Guard Team would become an integral part of the security forces.

Patrol Team police station.

Bug Guard Team militia barracks.

Knight Squad Army.

Such was the thought process of Li Si Te, the successor of borrowing ideas; his notions always tended to fit this mold.

Rom immediately knelt on one knee, performing the knight’s salute, “Rom wishes to follow Your Excellency’s footsteps for life!” His body trembled slightly, a sign of excitement, never having imagined that opportunities to change his fate would come one after another.

Now, he officially stepped into the ranks of the officials.

Being an official wasn’t formally a social class, but assuming such a role indicated that one had entered the ranks of the “nobility reserves.”

When he left the castle, he was still somewhat dazed, feeling as if his body was afloat, “Serving Your Excellency is a moment deeply graced by knightly honor in my life, Rom!”

Perhaps it was Li Si Te’s heartfelt care for the Elf Bugs that was sensed.

Just two days after the establishment of the Bug Guard Team, he saw the Dragon Kui Cordyceps in the Dragon Kui Field regaining a hint of vitality in their leaves, and the previous black spots had also dissipated a great deal.

“Has it pulled through?”

Li Si Te hastened to summon the long-missed Smoke Mission.

Without any surprise, the Smoke Serpent Script had changed, "Complete the task, reward one Dragon Kui Elf Bug."

"Indeed, Dragon Hollyhocks nurture Elf Bugs; this is my ninth Elf Bug, very good... although I am unsure of what use the Dragon Hollyhocks are." The berries of the Dragon Hollyhock are edible, but only as a snack; even with the boost from the Dragon Kui Bug, it's unlikely for it to yield many berries.

Better than nothing, at least it is an Elf Bug.

Smoke twisted, issuing a new task, "Task: The long overdue heavy rain is about to visit Fresh Flower Town, the homes of the residents of the territory are mostly in disrepair, unable to withstand the torrential rain, as a Lord how can you sit idly, please repair the territory's houses. Reward: Mutated Thorn."

"Another reward of Mutated Thorn?" pondered Li Si Te, "This is the third task about Thorns, it seems to be a chain of tasks! The previous Formless Dragon chain task rewarded a Space Gem, I wonder what good thing this series of tasks will reward?"

He had a vague guess? Thorn Minor Elf!

"Could it be the Thorn Minor Elf?"

Not being certain, Li Si Te still forcefully suppressed the notion, harboring no hope to avoid disappointment, and should it truly be awarded, it would be an immense surprise.

For now, just strive to complete the task at hand.

"Repairing houses, it seems it's time for another all-hands-on-deck battle."

He immediately convened all the officials of the town, arranging the housing repair work of the territory, "This summer there has scarcely been any rainfall, which is unusual. I speculate that there might be strong storms coming in the next few days. Most houses in Fresh Flower Town are old wooden huts, which are very unsafe."

"The new houses are already under construction, as for those serfs, just let them fix their wooden huts themselves." Goltai couldn't help but look down on serfs.

Blair appeared to be brown-nosing, "The most in need of repair is the castle, where Your Excellency resides, should be even safer and more beautiful."

"The castle's repair work can wait until after the autumn harvest when the labor force is idle. Now, each of you assign the tasks, and make sure every damaged wooden hut is

properly reinforced. All civilians, regardless of whether they are serfs or freemen, must accept the work arrangement.”

After a pause, Liszt said, “All civilians will receive no compensation and must work for free to repair their own huts. However, the materials for repairing the huts will be provided by the Castle, as a benefit I bestow upon the residents.”

“You are truly generous. I will arrange this immediately and ensure that all the wooden huts are repaired within a week.”

Chapter 116: Dismantling One’s Own Wooden Hut

Clip-clop, clip-clop.

Horse hooves crunched over the gravel path, the Li Dragon Horse arching its neck, its black mane fluttering in the wind.

This main road had been under construction for over two months, with an average of 180 civilian workers maintaining it daily, each paid a copper coin a day. Meaning, this road cost 180 copper coins every day, amounting to over ten thousand copper coins, roughly 1 Gold Coin in two months.

Sometimes, the cost of manpower is astonishingly cheap.

Rocks brought in from various places were smashed into pieces the size of fingernails, neatly spread over the ground, mixed with the sands from the East Coast, giving the whole road a clean and tidy appearance.

Without cement, stepping on gravel and sand, one would invariably get them unknowingly into their shoes.

“It’s a pity that Thorn Ridge is just a hillock with plenty of small stones; they are too small to even cut into slabs. Otherwise, building the main road with stone slabs would be more beautiful,” thought Liszt with some regret. The town was truly barren, with its surrounding resources extremely scarce.

He had now sold Black Pearls twice, his purse bulging with over five hundred Gold Coins.

But he couldn’t immediately convert it into resources—livestock couldn’t be bought in large numbers due to the lack of pasture; too few hands for more construction; roads

couldn't be repaired often due to a shortage of stone; and not enough tools to cultivate barren fields.

Just like today, the whole town was busy refurbishing wooden houses.

Thus, there were no workers for the road.

Under the supervision of the Patrol Team and Clerks, the commoners began inspecting their own wooden houses for soundness. Those with cracked beams were to report for replacement, those with holes in the roof were to report for patching, those with loose windows were to report to have them secured, and those with decaying corners were to report for repair—the commoners were very enthusiastic.

Because Lord Landlord provided the repair materials.

This made the commoners feel like they had gotten a great deal, and not reporting it would be a huge loss!

“Perhaps, I should start making bricks. If stone is insufficient, bricks will suffice,” Liszt mused as he witnessed the fervent renovation battle of wooden houses.

Stonemasons and carpenters are the construction workers of the Different World—commoners live in wooden houses, nobles in stone castles.

In Fresh Flower Town, only Liszt's castle was constructed with rock masonry and glued with glutinous rice. The value of glutinous rice was very precious; the Elf born from glutinous rice was called “Wall Elf.” Its value lay not in its edibility but its strong adhesive quality.

Without cement, walls were bound either with mud or glutinous rice.

Fortunately, the Tulip Family had a Glutinous Rice Minor Elf, so the castles built by the Earl were extravagantly bonded with glutinous rice.

Such castles, much stronger than those bonded with mud, could also be built very tall.

Take Liszt's castle, for instance.

Removing its pointed rooftop, it could continue to be extended several floors higher.

“The turning process of brick making has almost no technical content. Once suitable clay is found, qualified bricks can be made... However, you need to build a brick kiln for firing bricks and that requires coal, or at least charcoal. Without experimentation, it's hard to produce qualified bricks.”

Liszt, who enjoyed reading and pondering in his free time, knew quite a lot.

He understood the production of ice from saltpetre, clay brick firing, handmade papermaking, black gunpowder formulas, primitive concrete, distilling spirits, pancreas formulas, telescopes, glass firing, and even grenade-making once black gunpowder was successfully mixed. Additionally, things like waterwheels, plows, windmills—he could explain the basic principles after a bit of tinkering.

But to turn knowledge into physical objects is no simple feat.

The biggest constraints were materials and manpower.

Ice making with saltpetre required saltpetre; had he not found a Miniature Saltpeter Mine, ice making would remain an idle boast; the same went for glass firing, which needed quartz sand and soda ash. Quartz sand likely required finding a quartz vein, which he remembered as somewhat translucent rock.

But what exactly is soda ash, is it soda?

He remembered that a bit of alkali was needed when making porridge, and there might be a small amount of alkali in wood ash, but where could he obtain the pure soda for glass firing?

Black gunpowder, besides saltpeter, also requires sulfur.

Cement needs limestone.

“Strictly speaking, I seem to still not know what sulfur and limestone look like, right?” Liszt suddenly realized a very serious problem.

He only knew saltpeter could produce ice, quartz could burn glass, limestone could make cement, and sulfur could make explosives.

But what do limestone and sulfur look like?

He only knew before that saltpeter was white, mentioned in many books, found in toilets and corners, and it was only after the Smoke Mission hinted about a Miniature Saltpeter Mine that he was able to find saltpeter.

If he were to look for a saltpeter mine himself, he feared he might go grey-haired without finding any.

“Limestone sounds like a common type of rock, maybe related to marble or granite? As for sulfur, should I try looking around a volcano crater? They say that volcano craters smell of sulfur.”

At this moment, Liszt felt that.

The real him was far more ignorant than he imagined: “This is somewhat embarrassing... but I’m definitely sure where to find the soil for making bricks!”

Theoretically, brick-making requires clay, the kind that can be fired into red bricks.

But if one doesn’t aim for very high quality, most soils can be used to make bricks, with any slightly sticky soil being quite decent material.

There’s plenty of such soil in Fresh Flower Town.

“Once the mission is completed, I’ll gather a bunch of serfs to make bricks for me. I want them to build houses for me.” He intended to build greenhouses for Flame Mushrooms, toilet facilities, pens for pigs, horses, cattle, sheep, and factory buildings. Then, perhaps, a soccer field, a basketball court, and recruit a team of professional players to come over for matches.

“Still, I’ll need to take time to find quartz, limestone, and soda ash. The uses of cement and glass are very extensive.”

Then he suddenly thought, “Actually, I am a noble. Enjoying life should be what I’m supposed to do. Why am I always thinking about inventing things and conducting research?”

He was once a liberal arts student.

Not a science student.

He studied Information Management at college.

“Life is so beautiful, I don’t want to become a magician.”

As he rode his horse, lost in his thoughts.

On a nearby street, a loud crash was heard as a wooden house unexpectedly collapsed.

Liszt raised his hand to block the sunlight, looking in that direction, a crowd buzzing with excitement. He then commanded the Retainer Knights, “What happened there? Go and ask.”

The Retainer Knight quickly brought over a Patrol Member who was supervising the scene.

The Patrol Member knelt on the ground and answered Liszt’s question, “Lord Landlord, it was the loud-voiced Hunte who tore down his own wooden house.”

“He tore down his own wooden house?”

“Yes, we saw Hunte with a stick, striking his own house forcefully, breaking several supporting pillars, and then the house collapsed, burying Hunte inside. However, he wasn’t crushed to death but merely broke an arm.”

“Why did he tear down his own wooden house?”

“Uh, Hunte heard that Lord Landlord’s castle would provide materials for house repairs, so he wanted to replace his wooden house...”

Chapter 117: The Torrential Rain at the End of Summer Approaches

Insolent peasant!

Upon hearing the report from the patrol member, the thought flashed across Liszt’s mind—it was as if someone had bumped right into the landlord’s head—seeking to take advantage of the landlord himself.

However, he didn’t immediately take the patrol member’s word for it.

“Sean, go and question Hunte—whether it was he himself who dismantled his wooden hut,” he ordered.

“Yes, my lord!”

Retainer Knight Sean returned quickly, and along with him came Goltai. The answer was affirmative: Hunte, upon hearing that the materials for the repairs of wooden huts would be paid for by the castle, immediately boasted that he would replace every single piece of wood of his own hut. Then, in tragically misplaced enthusiasm, his hut collapsed.

“Teacher Goltai, what do you think should be done?” Liszt asked without anger on his face, only inquiring calmly.

“The vile commoner should be beaten to death alive!” Goltai responded loudly, “My lord, the freeman commoner Hunte harbors malicious greed, he even dares to covet what is sacred and inviolable to the castle. He should be punished severely. In my opinion, we should demote him to a serf and administer a hundred lashes!”

There were quite a few civilians watching nearby.

Hearing Goltai's words, they couldn't help but shrink their necks. Being demoted to a serf wasn't terrifying, but a hundred lashes could kill a person. Some of the civilians had also tampered with their own wooden huts, trying to gain some advantage. Upon hearing this, their legs nearly buckled with fear.

The sudden longing for greed faded in their hearts, as they stealthily stepped towards their homes, intending to stuff back the tampered wood...

To be honest, a hundred lashes seemed a bit harsh.

The crime did not warrant death.

Still, Hunte's actions had displeased Liszt considerably—he worked hard to lead Fresh Flower Town towards prosperity, yet some people did not appreciate it and even sought to take advantage.

This kind of attitude could not be encouraged; it had to be nipped in the bud.

“Considering that his arm was broken by the incident, let's keep a record of the lashes for now. Once he has recovered, we shall conduct the fifty lashes in two separate sessions,” he decided.

He glanced at the anxious civilians around him and told Goltai, “Make sure the publicity is done well, I don't want to discover a second person who commits a similar act.”

“As you wish, my lord!”

A cruel smile appeared on Goltai's face, “I will make these foolish commoners understand what is more important: a few pieces of wood, or their very lives.”

After such a commotion, Liszt had no interest in continuing the inspection of the wooden hut maintenance.

He turned his horse around and headed back to the castle.

The Dragon Kui Cordyceps in the Dragon Kui Field were gradually recovering, and the magic power could now flow steadily through the cordyceps. Black spots and withered leaves were slowly regaining their green vitality.

After inspecting the Dragon Kui, Liszt rode around the riding range for a while.

Finally, he returned to rest under the green apple tree.

Carter, carrying a set of keys and just out from locking the cellar, approached. His pace was slow, displaying the serene confidence of the elderly. His clothes were always

impeccable: a bit worn but ironed to smooth perfection, not a thread loose nor excessively wrinkled.

“My lord, you do not seem to be in the best of spirits,” he observed.

“It seems my mood is written all over my face.”

“Is there anything I can help you with?” Carter asked with a gentle smile, instantly imparting a sense of warmth.

Liszt motioned for Thomas to bring Carter a stool, then said, “Mr. Carter, do you think I am a competent landlord?”

“I have never doubted that for a moment. You have the bravery of the Tulip Family, and the nobility of compassion, fairness, humility, and honor. You are always blessed with the glory of knighthood.”

“Has there been any change in Fresh Flower Town in the past six months?”

“The change is significant. I remember when I first came to Fresh Flower Town, the expressions on the faces of the townspeople were numb. Now, it’s as if they’ve been reborn. I’ve seen many smiling faces here, more than in any other place. Everyone is grateful for your kindness, my lord.”

“Not everyone.” Li Si Te picked up an ice-cold fruit juice and took a sip. The cooling sensation spread from his throat to his belly and then throughout his body. “Today, I met a commoner who wanted the castle to repair his new house for free. He demolished his old wooden house without the slightest consideration for the kindness I had bestowed upon him.”

“You’re not worth getting angry over such a commoner. The lowly commoners are different from the honorable nobles; they are always full of vices.”

“Alright, I’ll accept your reasoning.” Li Si Te put aside the slight displeasure in his heart, “In fact, Teacher Goltai’s whip has already soothed my anger.”

Perhaps he hadn’t even noticed it himself.

He was increasingly adopting the standpoint of the nobility in considering matters.

As a transmigrator, Li Si Te still couldn’t defy the heavens and change the grand era. Little by little, he became part of it, betraying the ideas of communism and falling on the side of the exploitative class.

He was not far from becoming a qualified native.

But to this, he had his own rebuttal, “My dream is to ride dragons, not to change the world!”

The great battle of repairing wooden houses lasted for a full five days.

It couldn't continue any longer because on this day, the north wind howled, and dark clouds shrouded the sky. The alfalfa grass on the horse farm swayed with the wind, unable to stand upright even for a moment.

The castle servants were busy installing wooden boards over the windows to keep out the wind and rain.

If he had the money, Li Si Te could have used crystals to carve glass panels to install on the windows, just like in Tulip Castle. But he wasn't that extravagant. The box of crystals was reserved for making magic items in the future. For now, the castle windows relied on removable wooden boards for protection.

In addition, each window had a curtain woven from straw, which could normally shield from sunlight and mosquitoes.

But not now, as the strong winds outside would tear the curtains to shreds.

Once the boards were installed, the already dim light in the castle grew even dimmer. Carter quickly had the servants light candles in the study, living room, and other rooms to restore brightness inside. Now that Li Si Te had a fairly sufficient amount of money, a few extra candles could be lit—they lit five or six in the study alone.

“Mr. Carter, don't worry about wasting them. I need my room to be bright enough. Reading in dim light is very harmful to the eyes,”

Li Si Te held a novel, idly flipping through it.

He had already read all 182 books in the castle's library at least twice. Generally, a book had tens of thousands of words at most, and only a few thousand words at the least.

He greatly admired the authors of these knight novels for being able to weave complex and complete stories in just a few thousand words. And they had to include dragons, princesses, knight orders, kings, wars, feasts... otherwise, no noble would buy their books.

Nobles wouldn't buy books, and these down-on-their-luck nobles, who made up stories, would starve to death—make no mistake, those who chose writing were mostly destitute nobles.

Commoners couldn't write at all.

“My lord, looking at the weather now, there will be a heavy downpour today.”

“A downpour would be good. The ponds in Fresh Flower Town are nearly dried up and desperately need replenishing with rainwater.”

“Just hope it doesn’t damage the crops and affect this season’s tax revenue,” Carter said, lifting a wooden board to peek at the gloomy sky outside, expressing his concerns.

“Don’t worry. The castle is not short on food, nor is the town. The East Coast is Fresh Flower Town’s dining hall,” Li Si Te said nonchalantly.

He leaned back in his chair, his gaze not focused on the knight’s novel in front of him.

Instead, he was looking at a wisp of smoke that twisted into a line of Serpent Script: “Mission completed, reward: Mutated Fast-Growing Thorn Species.”

Chapter 118: Dirty Things in the Sunken Ship

The storm approached with fury, and as Fresh Flower Town was swayed by strong winds and sand filled the sky, there was a moment when suddenly the entire world fell silent.

Then, large raindrops pattered against the spires of the castle, as if a bucket of water had been overturned, splashing everywhere upon hitting the ground.

From the doghouse, came the loud barking of Douson.

Downstairs, in one of the rooms, Juan Fu was also making a “cluck, cluck” noise.

Outside and inside the castle, there were two different worlds.

If one listened closely, Liszt could hear the servants in the kitchen downstairs chatting together—with the storm hitting, there was nothing to do but to chat.

Mr. Carter’s footsteps meandered upstairs and downstairs; he was always on the move, checking every aspect of the castle. He ran into Mrs. Morson, who was inspecting the maid’s cleaning, and they seemed to exchange a few words, evaluating the performance of the male and female servants.

The two butlers were conscientious and diligent.

Yet the fifteen servants did not always get along so pleasantly.

Thomas's attitude towards the male servants was particularly nasty, but as he was Liszt's personal manservant and held a high position, no one dared to say much.

Not only did he often pick on the male servants and occasionally speak ill of them, but sometimes he was not so respectful to Carter either.

Carter could not understand why Liszt would tolerate someone as unpleasant as Thomas—Thomas ruined the familial harmony among the castle servants.

But it can only be said,

Carter and Liszt had different statuses and thus looked at things from different perspectives.

Carter tried to fill the castle with harmony and love.

But Liszt did not wish for that—if the servants united, it would make him, the master, uncomfortable. Just imagine, if a servant made a mistake and all the servants, being too friendly, helped to cover it up, they could easily fool Liszt.

Without Thomas, the shit-stirring stick, the servants would become increasingly indulgent.

With Thomas keeping an eye out and picking faults, the servants would work with trembling fear.

Superiors always have to plant a few confidants within the lower ranks; it's just common sense, something even schoolteachers know when they cultivate students adept at snitching.

Liszt chose not to eavesdrop on how the servants were chatting.

His expression turned slightly stern.

His thoughts wandered: "Do phantoms really exist in this world?"

In his younger years, the bedtime stories passed down by word of mouth mentioned specters. It was said that these were souls that had left their earthly shells after death, without consciousness, aimlessly wandering.

Almost no one had truly seen a phantom.

He rummaged through all of the memories of his former self, and on Coral Island, he had never heard of anyone encountering a phantom. Among the hundred-plus knight's novels he had recently read, a few mentioned phantoms, but mostly they were rare side characters with low frequency, just like vampires, werewolves, and mine zombies.

Before, he would laugh it off when reading; it didn't seem important.

Now, the reason he was thinking about phantoms again was due to the Smoke Mission which reminded him of them.

“Mission: An old, run-down sunken ship, weathered by the seaside winds and sun, but passing fishermen often feel a chill down their spine, as if something in the ship is watching them, keeping them from approaching. Please find out the reason. Reward: A piece of broken bone.”

The sunken ship hiding five treasure chests was not something Liszt had people chop up for firewood.

He felt that the sunken ship could barely be considered a tourist attraction, so he left it at Oyster Village to add to its historical depth. He even planned to one day have it well-maintained when he found the time.

But this sunken ship, it turned out, still held secrets.

“What could be inside a sunken ship? When the patrol team searched for the treasure before, they turned the whole ship inside out. Besides some fabrics, grain residues, and five chests, there wasn't anything else... Or is there something that's hard to see?”

He could easily let his mind wander—ghosts, dirty things, sunken ships, ghost ships, and eventually to the specters of legend.

Crack! Boom!

A flash of light streaked past outside the castle, followed by a thunderous boom of lightning.

The wind picked up again, accompanied by the sound of the pouring rain, isolating the castle from everything outside.

Walking to the window, he lowered a plank of the shutter and watched the rain curtains that seemed to connect the sky and earth. Liszt felt a sense of desolation as if he was isolated from the world. Loneliness welled up inside him as he abruptly realized he had been in this world for half a year, transitioning from a world of technological civilization to one of magic and Dou Qi.

It was neither good nor bad.

Back in his hometown, the standard of living had been higher, but he was just a miserable, overworked drone.

Here, the living standard was relatively poor, but he was an all-powerful noble with Dou Qi to strengthen his body, making him immune to hundreds of ailments.

“Comparatively speaking, I prefer my life now, and I like the sight of maids bustling in front of me...” The corners of his mouth lifted slightly in a smile; he was not overly concerned.

Soon his thoughts returned to the Smoke Mission.

“If there really is a specter in the sunken ship, then it needs to be eradicated soon to prevent endangering the lives of the fishermen... The mission reward is a segment of broken bone, but what does that have to do with the specter?”

He really wanted to go to the sunken ship right now, find out the reason and complete the mission.

But the rain outside was too heavy, making it hard to travel.

He could only stay in the castle, bored and waiting.

However, the wait

lasted for three days.

The relentless rain of varying intensity flooded the entire town. Fortunately, they had carried out maintenance on all the wooden houses beforehand, and the patrol team braving the rain had not found any collapsed houses. The cordyceps were also safe, even the most fragile Dragon Kui Cordyceps, which remained intact due to proper protection.

Nevertheless, the three days of heavy rain still claimed two lives.

An elderly serf who went out to pick vegetables slipped and never got up again. Another was a mother of three who braved the rain to collect seashells on the beach; she fell ill after returning and died.

“Collecting seashells on the beach?”

Upon hearing Teacher Goltai’s report, Liszt was struck with a thought: “Could it be related to the sunken ship?”

He immediately asked, “Teacher Goltai, has the body of the deceased woman been examined for anything unusual?”

“Examining the body, I’m sorry, sir, I did not examine the body. I thought it was just a serf who died of illness, which is quite common.”

Perhaps Liszt was being too sensitive.

But he still decided to personally inspect the dead woman's body: "Teacher Goltai, we must remain alert. Lately, some fishermen have reported that there is something seriously wrong with that sunken ship, like there's some kind of dirty thing there. I suspect that this woman's death might have something to do with the sunken ship."

"The sunken ship?" Goltai was puzzled.

He hadn't heard such news, but since Liszt mentioned it, he couldn't ignore it—he believed that Liszt had many informants in Fresh Flower Town, and nothing could escape Liszt's attention.

"Then, my lord, shall I arrange for it now? Do you want to go check the body together?"

"Let's go together."

Chapter 119: The Cold Magic Power in the Dragon Bone

A grand procession rode on horseback, splashing through puddles of water.

Retainer Knights and personal servants crowded around Li Si Te, with officials like Goltai and Marcus closely following behind. Compared to the meager entourage of a few kittens at the beginning, now their presence commanded the air of being "attended from front to back."

Actually, there was no need for so many people to follow within the town.

But Li Si Te still preferred it this way—he really enjoyed the noble style. His entourage was still not as grand as that of the Earls or even his brother Levis, who were always followed by a Knight Squad, so he needed to work on growing his team.

It would be best if he could bring along Douson and Juan Fu as well.

Leading with one hand and lifting with the other.

"My lord, the roads of Fresh Flower Town are better than those of Coral City," Isaiah praised sincerely; "In Coral City, every rainy day feels like a city of manure, with feces floating in the streets making one nauseous. Here, there isn't any feces, not even mud."

The main roads were gravel, mostly free from mud.

The paths between the hamlets were made of beach sand, there would be some mud, but not much.

Goltai's timely, cheerful laughter complimented him, "Without the lord's wisdom, there would be no such wonderful environment in Fresh Flower Town. Before, I couldn't appreciate the benefits of road construction, but now they are gradually unveiled before my eyes. I hope that in the future, every road will be built with gravel."

Li Si Te smiled.

He didn't show any signs of pride—this was nothing; wait until he introduced concrete, then there would be something truly astonishing.

The sky hadn't cleared completely yet and there was still a light drizzle. He wore a large black cloak over his armor and rode a pure black Li Dragon Horse. At first glance, he appeared rather foreboding. If not for his handsome face and a few strands of light golden hair on his forehead adding liveliness,

he could probably pass as a Ringwraith from *The Lord of the Rings*.

A while later, the party arrived at Barley Hamlet where the woman who died of illness was a serf of the village.

Her body was still in her home. According to the funeral customs of the Duchy of Sapphire, after death, the body was to be buried directly into the ground. But due to the heavy rain these past few days, they couldn't bury her.

The diseased woman's three children, two of whom were already adults, led by their stolid father, knelt on the ground to welcome Li Si Te's arrival.

The purpose of his visit was explained by a retainer on his behalf.

Li Si Te only needed to approach the body and inspect it. Marcus and Goltai had examined the body first, but neither could see any problems with it.

Then Li Si Te personally conducted an inspection.

Facing the dead was a first for him, and he was slightly nervous inside, but he controlled himself well and didn't reveal any emotions. Observing with the naked eye, he saw nothing unusual about the body, but when he used his Eye of Magic,

a flash of black magic power passed over the body.

Upon closer examination, the black magic power disappeared again. Li Si Te chose to trust his eyes. He observed quietly and after about a minute, another flash of black magic power flickered within the body and then vanished.

"My lord, did you observe anything?" asked Marcus.

“There’s something wrong with the body. I felt signs of magic power on it, she didn’t die from normal disease, but from some kind of filth.”

Goltai exclaimed in surprise, “Is there really such filth? What could it be, if it was from the sunken ship, could it be phantoms? There are legends of ghost ships on the sea. The sunken ship we found, it wouldn’t be a ghost ship, would it?”

“Whether it is or not, we will find out after checking... Right, about this body, what do you think should be done with it?”

“To be safe, it should be burnt.”

Here, there was no concept of “the dead are the most important”, nor any Tomb Sweeping Day for ancestor worship. After death, people were usually buried simply, especially the commoners.

Once dead, wrapped in a straw mat, buried in a deep pit, there were no further concerns.

Even some commoners were unwilling to dig a single pit, opting instead to throw the bodies of their loved ones into the mountains or water, which was entirely possible. So when Goltai proposed to cremate the bodies, the dull husband of the deceased woman had no objections. On the contrary, there was a vague sense of excitement.

Because Liszt had given the man a compensation of ten silver coins through Goltai.

The debris from the shipwreck had killed the woman, and ultimately, the blame lay with Liszt himself, for it was he who forbade others from dealing with the shipwreck’s remains.

Though he was a landlord, he would face no punishment.

The ten silver coins were also a comfort to his own conscience.

A moment later.

A fire.

The body burned to ashes in the flames.

Watching the remnants after the burning, Liszt breathed a sigh of relief upon not discovering any traces of dark magic power. It proved that even contamination could be cleansed with fire.

After dealing with the body.

The group hurriedly rushed to Oyster Village, arriving near the sunken ship.

Before Liszt could get close, Marcus called out to stop him, "My lord, the sunken ship is dangerous. You should stay away, and leave the inspection to us."

Goltai also spoke with righteous indignation, "Indeed, my lord, you shouldn't put yourself in danger. Mr. Marcus is an Elite Earth Knight, he can surely handle the sunken ship." As he spoke, he stood beside Liszt with no intention of approaching the shipwreck.

It seemed the shipwreck had been washed by heavy rain, as much of the seaweed and other attachments on its surface had been washed away, revealing the mottled wooden planks and the corroded metal brackets. This was not a large ship; it was much smaller than the Fresh Flower Vessel and severely damaged, with the ship's cabin almost entirely visible from the outside.

Marcus led the members of the Knight Squad to surround the shipwreck, ready to enter the cabin for inspection.

Suddenly, Liszt said, "Teacher Marcus, there's no need to go to such trouble. This sunken ship definitely has issues. Just smash it, dismantle it, and inspect each plank to prevent any accidents."

He did not intend to keep the contaminated shipwreck as a sightseeing spot anymore.

Thus, violent dismantling was the safest and quickest method.

Naturally, Marcus wouldn't refuse and immediately led his men to split open the shipwreck; the planks and iron frames were dismantled piece by piece and piled up on the beach.

During this process, Liszt intermittently employed the Eye of Magic.

Just as two Retainer Knights were carrying a broken dragon bone, Liszt suddenly saw a flicker of dark magic power at the break of the dragon bone.

Magic power usually has color.

For instance, fire attribute magic power is mostly red, and water attribute magic power is mostly blue, which becomes especially clear when it manifests as Dou Qi. However, this is not absolute, as some magic powers represent multiple mixed attributes and can have a variety of bizarre colors. Some that do not exhibit any specific attribute can also display various colors.

Even Archmages who have delved deep into the study of magic cannot unravel the essential mystery of magic power.

What black magic power represents.

Liszt did not understand.

But he knew that he had likely found the reason for the problems with the sunken ship, “Teacher Marcus, examine this dragon bone carefully. I can feel traces of magic power.”

With Liszt’s warning, Marcus quickly picked up the dragon bone, touched it with both hands, and observed and felt it closely. Moments later, Marcus’s eyes shone with light; he felt the magic power too: “My lord, there is indeed a problem. I feel a cold magic power!”

Liszt spoke with a deep tone, “Smash this dragon bone open. I want to see what’s hiding inside it!”

Chapter 120: A Very Plump Specter

The ship’s keel is a main load-bearing component at the bottom center of the ship, extending from bow to stern.

Once they discovered the broken keel had issues, it was easy to identify the unusual aspect of the keel—Marcus found that the keel was not one solid piece, but had traces of being pieced together.

Following the seams, they disassembled the keel and split it neatly into two halves.

Inside the separated keel, embedded like in a casting mold, was a bone about a meter long, with one end fractured and the other end being the joint part.

It was covered in dense carvings of magic runes.

“What bone is this?”

“There are magic runes on it, it must be the work of a magician!”

“This is a piece of magic equipment.”

“The bone is huge, could it be from a magical beast? Do intermediate magical beasts have bones this big, or could it be from an advanced magical beast?”

Looking at the bone, Goltai and the others chattered away in confusion.

Liszt's pupils, deep like whirlpools, could see through his Eye of Magic that dense magic power was circulating within the bone.

The magic power seemed to want to burst out, but it was firmly sealed by the magic runes on the bone, unable to break through. Only at a few slightly dimmed rune sites was a bit of magic power leaking out.

Just then.

Marcus reached to pry the bone out of the dragon bone.

But as soon as his hand touched the bone, the magic runes suddenly lit up one by one, then with a swish, the lit runes quickly extinguished.

A dark light burst forth from the bone, heading straight for Marcus's face.

Marcus reacted quickly, tossing aside the dragon bone and rolling on the ground. His posture might not have been graceful, but he moved swiftly; as he rolled, he drew his sword and unleashed his Dou Qi in a counterattack against the dark light.

Boom!

The dark light was successfully blocked.

In midair, it suddenly dissipated, forming a faintly glowing humanoid figure with only an upper body, its lower half fluttering like ragged cloth. Its facial features were unclear, but it could be seen as the shape of a woman—with breasts, very full.

It had two hands hanging by its sides, with long, slender palms that even had dimly glowing nails, at least ten centimeters long.

"Protect the lord!" Marcus roared loudly.

The Retainer Knights, facing such a bizarre scene for the first time, were somewhat panicked, but still quickly formed a circle around Liszt, each drawing their spears, tense as they watched the hovering humanoid form.

Goltai stepped back two paces and swallowed, his voice trembling, "What... what is this?"

"A specter!"

Liszt had been eagerly anticipating specters, and now that he saw a real one, he felt not the slightest bit nervous; indeed, there was even a hint of excitement in him.

He found this world growing more interesting by the moment.

It was not just magic and Dou Qi, and not just dragons and elves, but also various mystical existences—specters had now been verified as real, so might the vampires, werewolves, unicorns, and sirens depicted in knight's novels also exist?

What about giants and dwarves, who had also appeared in knight's novels? Did they exist?

And even those called elves, but are humanoid beings with intelligence like humans—do they exist?

“A specter?” Goltai shrieked. “Is it really a specter? Specters exist? Incredible, Marcus, you must be able to kill the specter, right!”

Marcus stood tensely opposite the specter.

It wasn't exactly a standoff, since the Specter, after its failed attack on Marcus and revealing itself, just floated in mid-air like this, stupidly motionless.

If not for the slight fluctuation in its body and the faint glow it emitted, it really looked like a slide in a projector.

“I can't guarantee I can kill it, I've never seen a Specter before, it has no body, just a bunch of light,” Marcus said cautiously, his hands clutching the Knight's Sword.

Liszt, protected by the crowd, was still casting the Eye of Magic.

He discovered that the magic power in that bone seemed unrelated to the Specter; there wasn't much magic power in the Specter's body. Because whether it was the Eye of Magic or the naked eye, what they saw of the Specter was a dim shadowy figure composed of a half-body shape.

He quickly recalled all the information about Specters he knew.

Specters didn't seem to be any vicious ghost or monster; in the Knight's Novels with recorded encounters, the protagonist would deal with them easily, with no detailed battle descriptions. Even in bedtime stories, Specters were just treated as a curious phenomenon, not as a harmful entity.

Just as Marcus was growing impatient and about to attack the Specter—

a spark of inspiration came from nowhere.

Liszt suddenly thought that if a Specter could parasitize inside a Dragon Bone, it was somewhat similar to the Djinn in Aladdin's Lamp. He then brushed against his chest inside the cloak, having already taken out an unknown metal Drift Bottle from the Space Ring. He tossed it to Marcus.

“Teacher Marcus, try to see if you can trap the Specter inside,” he said.

It was just a whimsical idea, somewhat fantastically inspired.

But astonishingly, when the bottle came into Marcus’s hands, the Specter abruptly charged at Marcus, and before Marcus could swing his sword to intercept it, the Specter had swiftly entered the Metal Bottle.

“Uh...”

Liszt was somewhat stunned.

He never imagined that he would actually capture the Specter, it was simply inconceivable.

But when Marcus walked over cautiously, holding the bottle, Liszt quickly masked his surprise with a look of serene tranquility and handed the bottle cap to Marcus.

Marcus quickly sealed the bottle cap on.

Several threads of magic power flashed, the Metal Bottle and cap becoming one, leaving no visible seam.

“Lord, your Magic Bottle,” Marcus said respectfully, handing it over. He was finding it more and more difficult to fathom the Landlord he followed, as if everything was in the latter’s control.

The Specter from the sunken ship was captured without any complications.

Liszt took back the bottle and tucked it under his cloak, avoiding others’ gazes, and directly sent the bottle into the Gemstone Space—he certainly didn’t wish to be in close contact with the Specter. It was better to send it to the static confines of the Gemstone Space and wait until he had verified the information about Specters before conducting further research.

“But speaking of which, that Specter, it’s at least 36D,” he mused.

The Metal Bottle could only be opened by the bloodline of the Sun Descendant.

The only source of blood for now was from Old Tanner at the Tanners’ Shop. Old Phil the Tanner and the servant Jessie had not yet formed a contract as father and son, but their interactions remained close, as good as if they were father and son.

Since Old Phil was getting on in years, Liszt only collected a small amount of his blood in a Jade Bottle, without asking for more. He also brought plenty of food for Old Phil as compensation.

“Jessie, take good care of Old Tanner. I’ve taken a bit of his blood—it’s just for research, and I have no intention of harming him. The other servants can take over more of his work at the Castle; I’ll have Mr. Carter make the arrangements. Most importantly, you must take good care of Old Tanner,” he instructed.

“Yes, master,” Jessie nodded.

Next to them, Old Tanner said, “I am honored to be able to contribute to Lord Landlord.”

Liszt smiled slightly, “It’s good you think so.”

In the future, he would come regularly to collect blood until he had enough to open the Metal Bottle an unlimited number of times.