

The Mighty Dragons Are Dead #Chapter 121 - 0121: Dragonbone Stabilizer and Bloodline Fruit - Read The Mighty Dragons Are Dead Chapter 121 - 0121: Dragonbone Stabilizer and Bloodline Fruit

Chapter 121: Dragonbone Stabilizer and Bloodline Fruit

The shipwreck incident was resolved satisfactorily.

The Smoke Mission was consequently completed.

“Mission completed, the reward is a piece of a broken skeleton.”

Undoubtedly, the item awarded for this mission was the large bone found within the dragonbone, carved with magic runes. Naturally, the bone was part of Liszt’s collection, and its purpose was not yet clear—it could basically be determined that this bone was a piece of magic equipment.

Placed within the dragonbone of ships, it likely related to sailing equipment.

Thereafter, Captain Kostor, the most knowledgeable about sailing in Fresh Flower Town, clarified Liszt’s confusion about the bone, “Lord Landlord, this bone is indeed a piece of magic equipment. It’s called a ‘Dragonbone Stabilizer,’ and it can make the ship’s dragonbone more stable, thus making the ship sturdier. But its most significant function is the deterrence of sea monsters.”

“Dragonbone Stabilizer? Deterrence of sea monsters?”

Captain Kostor spoke fervently, “Most Dragonbone Stabilizers are made of the skeletal remains of high-level dragonkin magical beasts because they contain the bloodline of dragons. When stimulated by magic power, it can produce a faint Dragon Might, thereby scaring away sea monsters... Lord Landlord, this Dragonbone Stabilizer was custom-made for the Fresh Flower Vessel!”

The skeletal remains of a high-level dragonkin magical beast.

In terms of hierarchical distribution, high-level dragonkin magical beasts are even rarer entities than Greater Elves. On the islands of the Duchy of Sapphire, such high-level dragonkin magical beasts are seldom found. In fact, even advanced magical beasts are scarce within the nation, and only a single intermediate magical beast, the Purple Sand Crocodile, is currently present on Coral Island.

This bone was extremely precious and had been carved with runes by a magician.

Liszt immediately infused his own Dou Qi into the Dragonbone Stabilizer, and the magic runes on it gradually lit up. Moments later, it had become a glowing bone staff.

A faint, heart-throbbing pressure began to emanate from the staff.

Liszt had experienced this pressure before when facing the Formless Dragon; the Dragon Might made it hard for his Dou Qi to circulate. However, the Dragon Might from the staff was much weaker and did not affect his Dou Qi circulation—this was Dragon Might amplified by magic runes, and after all, dragonkin magical beasts are not true dragons, with a diluted bloodline.

“It’s somewhat of a letdown, such Dragon Might is somewhat weak in its influence.”

“Not at all weak, Lord Landlord. I’m covered in goosebumps, and I feel as if I’m suffocating. Those sea monsters, regardless of size, would definitely flee as far as they could upon sensing the Dragon Might.”

That made sense.

The majesty of a dragon wasn’t just something humans understood; as the natural enemies of magical beasts and sea monsters, sensing the presence of a natural predator, they would invariably flee. This Dragonbone Stabilizer was a treasure.

Liszt handed the Dragonbone Stabilizer to the Retainer Knight to hold and told Captain Kostor, “I’ll keep it for now, and if the Fresh Flower Vessel ever sets sail, I’ll decide then whether to install it on the ship.”

Captain Kostor was somewhat disappointed but still bowed respectfully, as he dared not question the decision of the landlord.

“By the way, Captain Kostor, since the sunken ship had a Dragonbone Stabilizer, why doesn’t the Fresh Flower Vessel have one?” Liszt suddenly thought of a question.

“The technology to craft Dragonbone Stabilizers has been lost with the fall of the Cohen Marquis Family. I once saw a sea vessel passed down from the Cohen Marquis Family and that was when I learned what Dragonbone Stabilizers were. It was a unique magic equipment manufacturing technology mastered by the magicians of the Cohen Marquis Family.”

The key to the Dragonbone Stabilizer’s technology was probably in the magic runes carved on its surface.

The Cohen Marquis were the founding marquises of the Duchy of Sapphire, among the first followers of the Sapphire Duke a hundred years ago.

However, the Cohen Marquis Family later seemed to have become embroiled in a court coup and afterward... they were no more.

This matter was not recorded officially, and over the span of more than a hundred years, there weren't many left who cared for the Cohen Marquis. There were too many nobles lost to history; it is the living who are worth socializing with, whereas the dead are forgotten.

The magicians who mastered the technology.

They must have also become a speck of dust in history along with the Cohen Marquis.

"What a pity, the Dragonbone Stabilizer has a huge impact on sailing... If we want to sail toward the Devil's Sea, the Dragonbone Stabilizer could definitely play a significant auxiliary role. If we could find a dragon's skeleton to make the stabilizer, I'm afraid even the fiercest sea monster would turn tail and flee."

It is said that the Devil's Sea has great storms and huge sea monsters, with no ships able to sail upon it.

However, Liszt was very curious about the Devil's Sea, or rather, about what lay beyond the sea, "Sooner or later, I'll hire a magician to research the Dragonbone Stabilizer Technique for me."

To launch the great age of sea exploration!

There are still many secrets left to unravel.

Why would a specter be hiding inside a Dragonbone Stabilizer, how did the specter kill that woman, why would the specter enter a metal bottle, and whether it could continue to survive in the Gemstone Space. What state of existence it holds, who it was while alive, what it looked like, and why it boasts a magnificent 36D.

All are questions.

However, Liszt did not continue to ponder at the moment.

A new mission was waiting for him.

"Mission: After the torrential rain, Thorn Ridge is more replete with magic power than ever before. A solitary magic potion plant is nurturing a fruit that can change the bloodline of a magical beast; perhaps a new intermediate magical beast is about to be born, and a crisis is looming over Fresh Flower Town. Please solve the crisis. Reward: A Bloodline Fruit."

The Bloodline Fruit is not a species of plant.

It is a rather special existence among magic potions, an anomaly produced by an ordinary plant, but it cannot reproduce, even with the help of a corresponding elf.

When the fruit gathers enough magic power and matures, it's the moment the plant dies.

The fruit is called the Bloodline Fruit, a highly condensed embodiment of magic power, capable of stimulating the bloodline evolution of wild beasts and magical beasts—It's said that wild beasts can gather magic power and become magical beasts after eating the Bloodline Fruit; low-level magical beasts that consume it in large amounts can evolve into higher-level beasts.

The Bloodline Fruit cannot be cultivated and is extremely precious.

Moreover, it's something one may encounter by chance but cannot seek out. After maturation and falling to the ground, the magic power begins to fade, and in about a few minutes, it will devolve into an ordinary fruit.

Many nobles are searching for the Bloodline Fruit, to raise domesticated livestock-type magical beasts—The Fire Rabbit is a small magical beast that has been artificially bred using the Bloodline Fruit, specially raised for consumption.

Of course.

The magic power of the Bloodline Fruit is astonishing, and after consuming it, there have been quite a few wild beasts and magical beasts that died from being “over-nourished.”

Seeing this mission, Liszt was anything but calm, “I must obtain the Bloodline Fruit; otherwise, if an intermediate magical beast evolves in Thorn Ridge, Fresh Flower Town will suffer. I don't want to live under the shadow of an intermediate magical beast at all times!”

An intermediate magical beast can contend with a human Sky Knight and, with thick skin and flesh, are generally not something a Sky Knight can deal with.

The purple sand crocodile in the shallow waters to the south of Coral Island has been discovered for many years and is still living well.

It's not that the Earl doesn't want to hunt it but that the risk is too great. If the Earl gets killed by the purple sand crocodile in retaliation, the loss would be more than the gain. It's better to leave the shallow water area for the Purple Sand Croccoli to reproduce and thrive, and there's no need to take risks as long as they do not overstep the boundary.

An Earl's family with extensive estates can afford to set aside an area to raise magical beasts.

But Liszt cannot afford this; once an intermediate magical beast evolves in Thorn Ridge, there will be no peace for Fresh Flower Town.

“Teacher Marcus, the Knight Squad has been training for several months, it’s time to start eradicating the magical beasts of Thorn Ridge and eliminate all threats!”

Chapter 122: Taking Douson to Attack Thorn Ridge

“As you wish!”

Marcus saluted solemnly, his eyes bright and spirited, “Knights need the baptism of blood and fire to complete their essential transformation. The time has come for the members of the Knight Squad to face their trial!”

Knights are born to fight!

This was Marcus’s belief.

Now, he had convinced himself to lie low in Fresh Flower Town, waiting for the great battle to arise, to seize noble glory. But that didn’t mean his ardor had cooled. Conquering Thorn Ridge was a fixed plan, and he had always been looking forward to it.

Liszt, too, had not been idle.

After bulking up his purse, he began stockpiling weapons. Now, he had accumulated a whole fifteen sets of knight’s full body armor and weapons.

One set of knight’s equipment included a warhorse, a Knight’s Spear, a Knight’s Sword, a round knight’s shield, a full suit of armor, as well as horse armor, in addition to weapons like war hammers and flails. It wasn’t about fine craftsmanship but about meeting the standards for the battlefield. To have one full set of equipment neatly arranged would cost as much as five Gold Coins.

The war hammer and flail, as siege defense weapons, could be omitted from the purchase.

However, extra Knight Spears must be prepared. In battle, it’s very easy for a Knight to break his spear during a charge, and typically each Knight needs to be equipped with three Knight Spears.

A Knight is indeed a great spender of gold.

The cost of food to train the body, the expense of the equipment, and the upkeep of both the equipment and the warhorse all require money.

A Baron with a small town as his fief could only maintain a Knight Squad by diverting all his resources. The once-impooverished Fresh Flower Town simply couldn't afford a Knight Squad. But now, with the daily profits from the seafood business, Liszt could finally cultivate his own Knight Squad.

"My lord, I heard you want to exterminate the beasts of Thorn Ridge. Karl Ironhammer is willing to lead the Patrol Team and join the clearing sequence!" Karl, the town's Defense Officer, rushed to the castle upon hearing the news.

Soon after, Rom Barrel, the Worm Affairs Officer, also hurried to the castle: "The Bug Guard Team is mostly comprised of serfs; their fighting power is almost nil. But Rom is willing to serve as your Retainer, my lord, and fight for you in Thorn Ridge!"

The combat abilities of Karl and Rom were similarly weak.

Liszt was very satisfied with this sentiment, "Your loyalty and courage are comforting to me. However, the affairs of Fresh Flower Town need your attention. You don't have to join me in clearing out the beasts of Thorn Ridge. Just ensure the defense affairs of Fresh Flower Town are handled well. In case any beasts flee into our town, I will need you to stand and fight."

"As you wish!"

"We swear to defend Fresh Flower Town to the death!"

Then Goltai, Blair, and Isaiah, one after another, came forward to pledge their loyalty and requested to join the battlefield. Liszt encouraged them as well, but letting this group of unskilled fighters onto the battlefield would be more of a hindrance than a help.

The mission was urgent, and Liszt had prepared early. As soon as the sky cleared and the roads were still muddy, he planned to set off.

With Thomas's assistance, he donned a black Magical Beast Leather Armor, equipped with his Gemstone Weapon Bloodsword, and stepped out of the castle. His boots tread upon the alfalfa of the paddock that still had some puddles, and with a whistle, the Li Dragon Horse grazing in the distance galloped over.

Philip and Zavier, the two Retainer Knights, walked up one after the other, carrying Liszt's gear.

They didn't bring the Knight's Spear, only two Knight's Swords, and a round Knight's Shield, because the upcoming battle would be in the woods, and the long Spear would not be suitable for charging.

Of course, there were also bows and arrows. Liszt's archery skills were second only to Marcus's.

"Sir, here is your Smoked Grass Fire Stone Package," Thomas handed over several small packets wrapped in thick paper, which contained dried smoked grass and flint.

In an emergency, just rubbing the flint at the top of the packet would ignite the paper, releasing the stench of the smoked grass.

It was believed this could save a life at a critical moment.

Eliminating the possible crisis at Thorn Ridge was certainly important, but preserving one's life was even more so. However, the Smoked Grass Fire Stone Package was just a decoy; in his Gemstone Space, he had large bundles of smoked grass ready to be thrown at any moment, potentially burning to hold off the beasts' killing intent.

He slung his bow and arrows, mounted the horse.

Suddenly, Liszt saw Douson beside the doghouse, wagging its tail at him.

His eyes lit up, Douson had become adept at releasing Rock Spikes and, strong and well-built, its combat capability was certainly not much inferior to an Earth Knight—making it an excellent assistant.

Most importantly, it had been trained to be very obedient and was utterly loyal to him.

"Thomas, bring Douson over here."

"Are you taking Douson onto the battlefield?"

"That's right."

Thomas untied the rope, and Douson dashed over to the side of the Li Dragon Horse in an instant. The Li Dragon Horse was very familiar with Douson and showed no sign of tension. Douson did not attack the Li Dragon Horse but simply wagged its tail nonstop.

"Douson, follow me."

Liszt spurred his horse forward, and Douson hurriedly followed, extremely obedient.

Everything was ready.

When he reached the intersection of the main road and the horse track, Marcus was already waiting with the Knight Squad, ready to set out. Goltai and others stood there as well, seeing off the Knight Squad as they departed for battle.

Douson was in no way daunted by the scene, mixing in with the group, calm and collected, closely following the Li Dragon Horse.

“My Lord, Douson has really distinguished itself,” Marcus remarked appreciatively.

“That’s why I’ve brought it to Thorn Ridge. In Thorn Ridge, it has a natural advantage and may be able to provide unexpected assistance.”

“Indeed, for the sake of the fief, the castle, and for you, my Lord, it too should make its contribution,” said Marcus, placing his right hand over his chest and bowing to Liszt, “I am willing to charge into battle for my Lord!”

The other Retainer Knights followed suit, saluting one by one.

“I am willing to charge into battle for my Lord!”

Liszt’s expression turned serious. His sapphire eyes under the helmet swept over his Knight Squad, full of vim and vigor: “Let us set out, to Thorn Ridge!”

The Li Dragon Horse strode forward mightily, and the rest of the horses followed suit, closely surrounding Liszt in their midst.

There was no dust.

Only the splash of water.

The Knight Squad moved along the waterlogged road, gradually drawing away amid the blessings of Goltai and others.

Old Carter, the butler, with other servants, stood at the castle gate, gazing at the retreating backs of the knights. His face showed nervousness, relief, and anticipation. He placed his hands over his chest and called out loudly, “May the knights’ glory watch over the master; the master will surely return laden with endless glory.”

“Yes, Mr. Carter, we all believe that to be true,” Mrs. Morson said gravely.

In the nearby stables.

One-Eyed Barton muttered softly with a pipe in his mouth, “The master’s Knight Squad has too mixed a collection of horses; they should keep a group of black horses to look more impressive... However, the master is truly of the Tulip Family lineage; his radiance is undeniable. May the knight’s glory shine upon him forever!”

The Knight Squad had already gone far.

Goltai, Isaiah, and Blair walked together toward the town.

“The threat of Thorn Ridge seems soon to be resolved,” Goltai said lightly.

Isaiah’s face showed some worry: “Magical Beasts aren’t so easy to deal with, Goltai. Do you really think the Baron can take care of those beasts that are so good at hiding?”

“I have a lot of faith because Liszt is much more composed than you think. Don’t see him as a mere sixteen-year-old. He is a competent Landlord and a capable Knight. I’ve seen his archery; it is already on par with Marcus. His side-sword is a Gemstone Weapon gifted by Marquis Merlin.”

Blair said cheerily, “The Lord is a Son of Glory watched over by knightly radiance. Thorn Ridge isn’t a difficulty, just a whetstone to sharpen his blade.”

He looked back at the sandy path, now void of any figures, and spoke with a slightly frivolous tone: “When the Lord returns, it will be the time for the evening party’s bonfire to be lit.”

Chapter 123: Another Fierce Earth Dog

Liszt decided that he would spend the upcoming period amongst the thorns.

He publicly declared that he was going to eradicate the magical beasts of Thorn Ridge, and indeed he prepared to do so, but his most essential goal was to snatch that Bloodline Fruit.

An exhaustive search was indispensable.

“All game that can be hunted must be completely eradicated. Thorn Forest is destined to be cleared, and there’s no need to keep the beasts!” Marcus was the commander of the Knight Squad.

He scolded the Retainer Knights loudly, “Wayne, Evan, you two idiots who can’t even muster Dou Qi, are responsible for gathering the bodies of the beasts. Pile them up and hang them on trees, do you understand? We are going to take all this food with us when we return!”

This was a ruthless strategy.

In Liszt’s plan, apart from the wild fruit trees, all other trees in Thorn Ridge would be felled. Not only would the magical beasts be killed off, but all wild beasts as well. The area would later be transformed into farmland, stones would be extracted for road construction, and timber would be used for building houses and fueling fires.

Environmental protection was nonexistent.

Liszt's hand rested on the Crimson Blood Sword hilt, and his pupils occasionally turned into spinning vortices as he used the Eye of Magic to locate the lurking positions of the magical beasts.

This was his biggest reliance for eliminating the Thorn Ridge Beasts.

Although Marcus did not know about the Eye of Magic, a mysterious Dou Qi Secret Technique that Liszt possessed, he vaguely guessed that Liszt had the ability to see through magic power—being a landlord from the Tulip Family with some secret methods was nothing out of the ordinary—thus he was equally confident.

Douson was probably the most fearless one; it was his first time visiting Thorn Ridge, and the entire dog trembled with excitement, darting back and forth, thoroughly enjoying itself.

“Douson, be quiet!”

Liszt gently called out.

In the field of view of the Eye of Magic.

Douson was yellow, Marcus was cyan, and the other Retainer Knights were vague gray-white Dou Qi, their Dou Qi properties not yet displayed.

Rustling sounds.

A hare jumped out of the bush.

Marcus did not move, but a Retainer Knight who had developed Dou Qi charged forward on his horse, piercing lightly with his longsword, and thus impaled the hare.

The motion was fluid and smooth, aided by Dou Qi and the relentless practice of knightly drills, this twelve-year-old Retainer Knight was already agile, far surpassing an adult.

The longsword quivered, and the body of the hare was thrown to the back of the group.

Wayne, who had not yet developed Dou Qi, hurriedly caught the hare's body, pulled out a rope, bound the hare's feet together, and hung it behind the horse.

There were already several small animals' carcasses hanging behind the horses, with the largest being a roe deer.

In this way, the Knight Squad swept through the morning without encountering a single magical beast, but they did hunt a large number of wild animals. Once a certain number was reached, the carcasses of the animals were bundled up and hung in the trees—this prevented most wild beasts from stealing the carcasses.

The town was not short of food.

Some of this game would be cured or smoked for the castle's stores; some would be distributed to subordinates and their families as a way to win their hearts.

The leftovers that couldn't be eaten would be sold at the seafood shop, a castle business aimed at providing seafood to the populace—the prices for the game were already set by Liszt, just slightly more expensive than black bread. This allowed the residents of Fresh Flower Town to have a taste of the game from Thorn Ridge.

It was a kind of welfare gifted by the landlord.

Liszt was a good man, or so he always considered himself.

The serfs thought the same; never had there been a landlord who treated their serfs so well.

Lunch consisted of barbecuing game in the middle of Thorn Ridge, with the Retainer Knights bringing spices for the food. After cleaning, they sprinkled the spices, skewered the meat on sticks, and cooked it right there.

The flames quickly roasted the meat, tender inside and crisply charred outside.

The savory aroma spread, whetting appetites and successfully attracting nearby beasts, which then became targets for the Retainer Knights to practice their swordsmanship—over the course of the morning, the knights' sword skills improved rapidly, with hands-on experience helping them grow quickly, becoming neither panicked nor clumsy.

“We'll probably need three days to thoroughly search the southern part of Thorn Ridge. It's inevitable that some will slip through the net. Without food in the forest, they are likely to spill over to Fresh Flower Town,” Marcus said while eating his roasted meat, contemplating the consequences of their military operations.

Liszt did not ask the Retainer Knights for help with roasting the meat.

He roasted a deer thigh by himself, cutting slits in the meat with his dagger, sprinkling it with seasoning, and brushing on several more layers of oil. He cooked it over a high fire until the skin was golden brown, and the oil and seasonings had thoroughly penetrated the flesh.

This skill, he had tested a few times in the castle, to great success—a Noble might not enter the kitchen, but it was common to grill meat oneself in the wild since it was considered a refined pleasure.

“Before I set off, I had already instructed Teacher Goltai to tell the residents of Fresh Flower Town not to leave their homes unnecessarily in the near future and to go out in groups when they had to work. After this period passes and the Lumberjack Team cuts down all the wood in Thorn Ridge, Fresh Flower Town will be completely worry-free.”

With his dagger, he prodded the deer thigh.

It felt like the meat was roasted enough.

He blew on the golden skin and took a gentle bite as if into a crispy cookie—the skin was crunchy. The meat was tender and easy to tear apart, its aroma bursting hot on his tongue. It was so hot that Liszt felt like spitting it out but couldn’t bear to because it was too delicious.

He ate the meat while exhaling.

“Delicious!”

In his heart, he praised himself fiercely.

After nibbling half of the deer thigh, he remembered that he should be observing his surroundings for any lurking Magical Beasts. The moment he used the Eye of Magic, he immediately noticed a yellow Magic Power-formed Fierce Earth Dog to the left front of the campfire—if Douson hadn’t been snuggled at his feet, he would have thought it was Douson!

“Teacher Marcus, do you see that thick tree trunk to the left?” he mentioned to Marcus without any change of expression, putting down the deer thigh and reaching for his bow and arrows on his back.

Marcus’s brows lifted: “I see it. Is there something afoot, my lord?”

“In the bushes to the left of the trunk, there’s a Magical Beast hiding. It could be a Wind Blade Wolf or a Fierce Earth Dog,” Liszt hadn’t been able to directly identify which Magical Beast it was.

Marcus nodded.

He became serious.

He turned and made a few simple hand signals to the Retainer Knights nearby—this was a common battlefield communication method among knights, as they couldn’t

always rely on shouting—the signals meant to be on guard, that there was an enemy nearby in the direction he was pointing, and to pass the message around to each other.

Without a sound, all the Retainer Knights got the signal.

Each of them held their weapons and began to move slowly, surrounding the area of the bushes.

Douson seemed to sense the tense atmosphere, suddenly standing up with its fur slightly bristled. Liszt reassured him in a soft voice: “Don’t panic, Douson, wait for my command.”

Only then did Douson restrain its urge to charge, its dog eyes darting everywhere, sniffing the smells in the air—before, it was only busy smelling the roasted meat.

The net was set.

Liszt and Marcus exchanged glances, each raising their bow, with two arrows set to the string, aiming at the bushes.

With a loud command, “Fire!”

The two men instantly released the arrows from their bows, with four arrows shooting toward the bushes from different directions. Marcus, unaware of the exact location of the Magical Beast, had arrows that were slightly off, but Liszt’s were on target, aimed precisely at the head of the Magical Beast.

Thwack!

As expected.

Only one of Liszt’s arrows hit, striking the Magical Beast’s back—as it quickly reacted in a critical moment, twisting its body to dodge the dangerous attack.

With that move, the Magical Beast jumped out of the bushes, an arrow sticking out of its back—not too deeply.

It lunged directly at the nearest Retainer Knight.

Still daring to counterattack.

“It’s a Fierce Earth Dog!” Marcus raised his bow again, shooting first at the position where the Fierce Earth Dog was charging to save the life of a Retainer Knight.

Liszt also raised his bow to shoot, while simultaneously giving a command, “Douson, target the prey, cast Magic!”

Chapter 124: The End of the King of Thorn Ridge

Fierce Earth Dog, the King of Thorn Ridge, a powerful low-level Magical Beast.

It is very likely related by blood to Douson—Douson's mother had died, but its father was probably the very same one before them.

Despite the possibility of kinship, it did not stop Douson from launching an attack under Liszt's command.

Magic Power sprayed from its mouth, crossing the gap in space to accurately converge at the designated location, forming the Earth Attribute magic—Rock Spike.

Whoosh!

The Rock Spike burst from the ground beneath the Fierce Earth Dog's belly, nearly skewering it through. The Fierce Earth Dog quickly sidestepped, dodging the Rock Spike with agility and continuing its evasion as it also avoided the four arrows shot at it. Then, it adjusted its stance and charged at the Retainer Knight once more.

The Retainer Knight, having caught a moment to breathe, was ready to defend, propping up his round knight's shield in front of him.

But he suddenly heard Lord Landlord's bellowing command in his ear, "Zachary, roll!" His body involuntarily followed the voice's command, falling to one side and rolling twice on the muddy ground.

In their knight training sessions, Marcus had repeatedly ingrained the concept of "Lord above all" in their minds. As for the commands from Lord Landlord, there was absolute obedience. Therefore, Zachary didn't need to think with his brain; his body had developed a conditional reflex to act upon Liszt's commands.

This time, obeying the command saved his life.

Where he had been just a moment before, a thick Rock Spike shot out from the ground. Had Zachary not moved, the Rock Spike would have pierced through his body, likely impaling him in a critical area.

Cold sweat broke out in torrents.

Zachary swallowed hard and felt even more grateful towards Lord Landlord for the life-saving warning. However, there wasn't much time for gratitude, as the Fierce Earth

Dog, missing its strike, charged at him again, seemingly fixated on biting and hunting him down to the death.

“My Lord, you shoot the arrows, I’ll charge!”

Seeing that the arrows could not hit the Fierce Earth Dog, Marcus called out loudly.

Liszt had no objections to such a command—at that moment, he was fully embodying a qualified archer, understanding that dealing damage from the rear was the logical choice.

Besides, he also had to command Douson to cast spells and remind the Retainer Knights to dodge the Rock Spikes.

The task was heavy.

In the chaotic battlefield, there was an order. The Fierce Earth Dog was indeed fierce, and the Rock Spikes appeared unpredictably, but under the observation of Liszt’s Eye of Magic, every move it made was revealed. Aside from scratching an unwary Retainer Knight, the other Rock Spikes had not achieved any success.

About ten minutes of skirmishing.

The Magic Power of the Fierce Earth Dog had plummeted to a low ebb, and based on Douson’s daily spellcasting experience, Liszt understood that the Fierce Earth Dog would have difficulty casting Rock Spike again in the short term.

He abruptly drew his Crimson Blood Sword, “Charge, finish it off!”

His steed, the Li Dragon Horse, lifted its head proudly, galloping furiously, rushing towards the Fierce Earth Dog that was now surrounded and with no escape. Douson also charged with him; it did not understand the concept of kindred cruelty—Liszt’s command was its code of conduct.

Two Earth Knights.

Ten Apprentice Knights, plus two for chores.

Fourteen men against a Magical Beast whose Magic Power was exhausted; the outcome was inevitable. All knights practiced coordinated attack patterns, secure in their positions, leading to Marcus taking the brunt of the assault head-on while Liszt found an opportunity to strike.

“Heart of the Fire Dragon Drill!”

The Crimson Blood Sword, in combination with the Ultimate Mystery Technique of the “Fire Dragon Drill”, was unmatched in momentum, fully enveloping the cornered Fierce Earth Dog. Flames filled the sky, the manifestation of Liszt’s explosive Dou Qi.

Howl!

The Fierce Earth Dog let out continuous pitiful wails.

The King of Thorn Ridge, under the humans’ hunt, could only end in bitterness.

“It didn’t take much effort, and it fell.” Liszt calmly sheathed his Crimson Blood Sword, waiting for the flames to die down, to see the grim fate of the Magical Beast he had just killed by his own hand.

But just when everyone relaxed a bit.

Before the flames could dissipate, a charred silhouette suddenly burst forth, breaking through the slackened encirclement. It was the Fierce Earth Dog that was supposed to be killed by Liszt’s powerful move. It was covered in wounds, even giving off a faint scent of roasted meat, but it still had the ability to run.

“Pursue!”

How could Liszt tolerate his prey running away just as it reached his mouth?

The Knight Squad didn’t bother tidying up their barbecue setup; they all pursued. Douson was particularly eager, leading the chase after the scorched Fierce Earth Dog.

“My lord, be careful, we might encounter other Magical Beasts.” Marcus’s mood was quite gloomy, “I didn’t expect a Fierce Earth Dog to be so tricky, feigning death and escaping. It was also my negligence, without confirming the death of the Magical Beast, one must never let their guard down, they are cunning!”

“Magical Beasts are indeed cunning, but it won’t survive, its body is nearly burnt to a crisp!” Liszt’s morale was still high, unaffected.

On the battlefield, he did indeed fear death and instinctively hid behind others.

But once he set his mind to something, he would give it his all to accomplish it. If he said he would hunt down a Fierce Earth Dog, then he definitely wouldn’t allow it any chance to catch its breath.

With the Eye of Magic, he could already discern the timings of when Magical Beasts released magic, which meant he no longer faced any magic from Magical Beasts that could be fatal to him.

A Magical Beast without magic is no different from a wild beast!

Thorn Forest, there was nowhere in it Liszt couldn't go!

Moments later.

The fleeing Fierce Earth Dog finally stopped running. It stood in front of a plant, gasping for breath, with burnt wounds bleeding profusely. It turned to look at Douson, who was closing in, and the many Knights following behind, as if making a decision. Its gaze shifted to a golden, fist-sized fruit hanging on the plant's branches.

The dog leaped towards the fruit, attempting to consume the golden treasure.

However, a sharp whooshing sound came from behind. In the next instant, the Fierce Earth Dog felt its body being propelled by a force, inadvertently leaping half a meter further forward. Its mouth grazed the golden fruit, missing its bite, and upon landing, pain engulfed its body, and it could no longer hold on.

It died.

A short distance behind it, Liszt put down his bow and arrow, letting out a sigh of relief.

"What a tough creature, it really could run... Fortunately, I arrived just in time."

Through the Eye of Magic, he had already spotted the magic-infused fruit, the Bloodline Fruit. Clearly, it had not yet matured and would be a waste if consumed by the Fierce Earth Dog now.

Next to the dead body of the Fierce Earth Dog, Douson crouched down, its dog eyes fixed intensely on the golden fruit as drool flowed like a waterfall.

It too was drawn to the allure of the Bloodline Fruit.

"Douson, stop drooling!" Liszt scolded, calling Douson back from reaching towards the Bloodline Fruit.

"Woof, woof!" Douson immediately wagged its tail at Liszt, constantly glancing at the golden fruit, clearly trying to please Liszt in hopes of getting a taste of the Bloodline Fruit.

"Hold your horses, it's not ripe yet." Liszt dismounted, scanned the surroundings to ensure there were no other Magical Beasts nearby, and then turned his attention back to the Bloodline Fruit.

The plant was unidentified, likely belonging to some kind of fern.

Bearing just one golden Bloodline Fruit, it appeared rather striking.

The fruit was very beautiful, round and full, not only was the color a dazzling golden hue, but there was also a translucent quality just beneath the skin. It didn't give off any fragrance, nor did it seem to radiate magic power outward. However, in the field of vision granted by the Eye of Magic, it contained a substantial amount of magic power within.

It was almost at a solidity level.

"Is this... a Bloodline Fruit?" Marcus, who had just finished dealing with the Fierce Earth Dog's body and checking the terrain around, approached Liszt and immediately exclaimed in a low voice.

Chapter 125: The Turning Point of Douson's Destiny

Marcus understood the value of the Bloodline Fruit—nobles often were willing to spend thousands of Gold Coins for the location of a Bloodline Fruit.

If it weren't for the risk of failure associated with the Bloodline Fruit, its value might have been measured in Dragon coins.

He was both excited and relieved, "Thankfully, we started the campaign to clear out the Thorn Ridge Beasts early. Otherwise, by the time the Bloodline Fruit was ripe for the picking, this Fierce Earth Dog might have further evolved and become even harder to hunt down."

It was for this very reason that Liszt had initiated the early purge of Thorn Ridge.

He reached out and touched the Bloodline Fruit, lamenting that it wasn't edible for humans, "It seems like this Bloodline Fruit will soon mature. The Fierce Earth Dog originally wanted to gamble on this chance, but now it belongs to me."

"My lord, treasures like these, once mature, will surely attract the Magical Beasts of Thorn Ridge. These beasts have acute senses; they must be lurking nearby, waiting for the Bloodline Fruit to ripen,"

"Isn't that just perfect," Liszt had a stroke of inspiration, "We can use the Bloodline Fruit as bait, wait at ease, and set up traps around the area."

"I will lead the Knight Squad to set the traps right away!" Marcus said, exhilarated.

Before entering Thorn Ridge, the Knight Squad was well-prepared, bringing plenty of ropes, shovels, and traps. The knights had also learned a lot from hunters—the knights'

everyday work not only involved charging into the battlefield but also hunting Magical Beasts in the forest.

Marcus was an expert.

He had set numerous loops along the frequent routes of the Magical Beasts; such loops wouldn't stop the beasts but could effectively hinder their movements when triggered unexpectedly.

The success of the hunt still relied on him and Liszt's offensive capabilities.

By the time all traps were set, it was already evening. During this time, Liszt was by the side of the Bloodline Fruit the whole time, waiting for it to mature.

He was also contemplating whether to feed the Bloodline Fruit to Douson or the Li Dragon Horses.

Douson was a Low-Level Magical Beast that might evolve into an Intermediate Magical Beast after eating it. Of course, it might also fail to evolve, but dying an explosive death was unlikely.

Li Dragon Horses were Dragon Breed Beasts that might evolve into Low-Level Dragon Breed Magical Beasts after eating the fruit. Here too, there was a possibility of evolution failure, even a risk of exploding to death.

"Better to give it to Douson. Li Dragon Horses are extraordinarily rare Dragon Breed Beasts charged with the responsibility of proliferating their species. They cannot afford any loss," Liszt decided after careful consideration.

As for Juan Fu in the castle, he was outright ignored.

The sun set in the west.

The campfire was lit once again.

Liszt took the front leg of the Fierce Earth Dog from a retainer, skewered it on a stick, and prepared to roast it for his dinner. His physical strength grew day by day, and his Dou Qi climbed ever higher. At the stage of an Earth Knight, his progress was incredibly rapid, incomparable to that of a Common Earth Knight.

The reason was simple: he ate well!

While talent is key to training, the essence of it is the absorption and utilization of nutrients. If every meal was Magical Beast Meat, even a pig could become a Magic Power Pig.

Without enough to eat, even those with exceptional talent could not cultivate Dou Qi.

“Woof woof!” Douson barked at him, drooling, coveting the Magical Beast Meat in his hands.

Liszt patted Douson’s big head, “You can’t eat this. It might be your father’s meat, or if not your father’s, then perhaps your uncle’s or maybe your brother’s... anyway, it’s likely related to you.” Fratricide was already cruel enough, but cannibalism was beyond the pale ethically.

So Douson only got a roasted hare.

Then he drooled as he watched Liszt tucking into the Fierce Earth Dog’s leg while nibbling on the skinny rabbit.

“Don’t be envious, your delicacy is right here,” Liszt pointed at the Bloodline Fruit, a significant opportunity for Douson, “Look, the Magic Power is almost tangible. It’s about to mature, probably tonight. Douson, conserve your strength; I hope that after tonight, you can become an Intermediate Magical Beast.”

An Intermediate Magical Beast was a match for a Sky Knight.

Moreover, a well-trained Magical Beast was imperative on the battlefield, owning an Intermediate Magical Beast was like having a Sky Knight as a retainer, one without ambition. Poised for glory on the battlefield, the owner of a Middle-Level Magical Beast only needed to await a rise in rank.

“Can Douson evolve?” Liszt wondered internally.

He was unsure.

There were all sorts of powerful Magical Beasts in the world, but on Coral Island, the Magical Beasts were mostly Low-Level ones, with only a single Purple Sand Crocodile. The Fierce Earth Dog was known as the King of Thorn Ridge, but it was still essentially a Low-Level Magical Beast. Whether it was an opportunity to rewrite its bloodline or simply a waste of a Bloodline Fruit on a failed evolution was hard to predict.

“My lord, would you like to rest for a while?” Marcus asked, returning from his patrol.

“No need, staying up occasionally is not a big deal.”

Time passed.

The night grew deeper.

Apart from the occasional crackling of the campfire, Thorn Ridge was left with only the sound of the wind and the unnamed chirring of insects, punctuated by the occasional calls of small animals.

Douson had already sprawled at the foot of Liszt, snoring evenly.

Liszt leaned against the trunk, his spirit still fairly vigorous, watching the bloodline fruit. After a long time, his gaze suddenly sparkled with vitality, and his spirit lifted, "It's about to ripen, I can feel it. The magic power is about to dissipate from the bloodline fruit. It's reached the critical point!"

He kicked Douson, waking him up.

He also called out to Marcus, "Teacher Marcus, the bloodline fruit is ripening. Have the knights stay alert, and be careful of possible magical beasts!"

"Is it ripening?" Marcus's expression was serious as he quickly alerted the Knight Squad to get ready.

Just at that moment.

The bloodline fruit suddenly fell, spreading an overpowering fragrance swiftly.

It had ripened!

Liszt quickly picked up the bloodline fruit and stuffed it into Douson's mouth, "Eat it quickly, Douson, eat it!" The bloodline fruit only lasted for a few minutes. Wasting a moment would mean losing some of its magic power, reducing its effect significantly.

Douson understood this was something good.

His mouth opened, and he gulped down the bloodline fruit in one swallow.

Meanwhile, Liszt, who was utilizing the Eye of Magic, had already noticed several shadows of magic power rapidly approaching. "Marcus, we are under attack! Magical beasts, to the east, southwest, and northwest!"

Crack!

Crack!

The traps were the first to act, entangling two of the magical beasts.

Marcus charged forward, leading the way toward the beast to the east, a familiar one, the Fierce Earth Dog! It turned out that the Fierce Earth Dogs of Thorn Ridge weren't limited to just Douson's family. A burst of Wind Attribute Dou Qi furiously unleashed,

and the Fierce Earth Dog, whose hind legs were caught in ropes, was struck before it could react.

It immediately retaliated with Rock Spike, forcing Marcus to dodge in a frenzy, unable to kill the Fierce Earth Dog for the moment.

The magical beast from the southwest was also caught in the ropes.

Several Retainer Knights roared as they attacked.

Liszt drew his Crimson Blood Sword and glanced at this beast, a boar-shaped one. In Thorn Ridge, there's only one kind of boar-shaped magical beast, the Thunderfang Boar that once attacked Fresh Flower Town in the winter. It was a Thunder Magic Beast, its teeth capable of releasing Thunder Magic — Lightning Flash.

Boom!

Without hesitation, the Thunderfang Boar unleashed Lightning Flash, lighting up the woods with a bolt of lightning.

“Dodge! Get close! Raise shields! Plant swords! Release Dou Qi!” Liszt issued five commands in one breath. The Retainer Knights reflexively retreated, gathered together, raised their shields, and planted their longswords in the ground, releasing their Dou Qi, which clung to their round shields.

Boom!

The lightning struck the round shields like a whip, instantly sending two Retainer Knights flying.

“Ah!”

“Ah!”

Two screams of agony.

Chapter 126: The Formidable Elite Earth Knight

The screams were heart-wrenching.

But after the two Retainer Knights landed, they managed to struggle to their feet, evidently without serious harm. Their good response had neutralized the powerful magic—they had all practiced resisting routines for the Magical Beasts they might encounter at Thorn Ridge.

The Thunderfang Boar was one of them!

Falling back was to wait for the exhaustion of Lightning Flash; Thunder Magic was the most draining, its force weakened with distance, and the Thunderfang Boar would also have a rather long preparation time when releasing Lightning Flash.

Moving closer was to disperse the Lightning Flash's attack on a single target.

Raising shields was to enlarge the area affected by the lightning, protecting the body.

Planting the sword was to channel the force of the Thunder Magic directly into the ground.

Releasing Dou Qi was to use it to neutralize the remaining force of the Thunder Magic involved.

Indeed, two Retainer Knights had been sent flying, but managing to have a group of Apprentice Knights successfully neutralize a powerful magic strike was a successful strategy.

"All units, obey orders, hit-and-run attack! Tie down the Thunderfang Boar, wait for my combined strike!" Marcus finally spared a moment of attention from the Fierce Earth Dog's Rock Spike attack and hurriedly issued commands to the Retainer Knights.

He was the commander of the battlefield, tasked with overseeing the entire situation.

"My lord, there's another Magical Beast!"

"Leave this one to me!" Liszt's voice was cold. He had the Eye of Magic, which made him safer than the others, "It's just a Serpent Type Beast!"

The Crimson Blood Sword was imbued with Fire Attribute Dou Qi, flames slowly igniting.

He had already charged toward the serpent-like monster to the northwest—Thorn Ridge had no record of such a serpent-type monster, but regardless of the record, Liszt had to face it.

Douson could no longer be relied on.

After consuming the Bloodline Fruit, it had become listless on the ground, seemingly caught in deep sleep.

"Fire Dragon Stab!"

With the Eye of Magic locking on the target, Liszt did not hesitate to launch his attack. The Crimson Blood Sword turned into a bloody arrow, aimed straight at the serpent-like monster's vital spot.

That spot was clearly where the magic converged, visible to his Eye of Magic.

Strike a snake at its vital spot, it was the snake's weakest area, and a solid hit meant certain death.

The Serpent Type Beast appeared to sense the fatal threat, as its thick body, wide as a bowl, twisted, dodging the attack while opening its mouth to spew magic power.

Liszt leaped into the air, dodging the Magic Attack.

At the spot where he had jumped, a dark whirlpool formed, quickly corroding the dry grass and dead leaves on the ground to sludge.

"Dark Magic Whirlpool! It turns out to be a Shadow Snake!" he quickly identified the species of the serpent-like monster he was hunting—it was a Shadow Snake.

The Shadow Snake was a Dark Attribute Magical Beast.

It tended to live in swamps or dark, damp woodlands, capable of releasing the spell "Dark Magic Whirlpool." The Dark Attribute's magic power inherently carried a corrosive effect; once hit by the Dark Magic Whirlpool, it could instantly corrode a human's body to nothingness. This was a very malicious creature, but its body was quite frail.

If it were Marcus, he might well have been caught off-guard, legs severed by the Shadow Snake, left to be devoured by it.

But it was facing Liszt now, dodging the magic with ease, and the remaining time was a matter of how to kill it cruelly.

"Heart of the Fire Dragon Drill!"

He started with a powerful move, a rain of fire raining down on the Shadow Snake, which coiled into a ball, not even getting the chance to cast spells. A lion still uses its full strength to fight a rabbit, Liszt never believed in conserving energy in a fight, his style was either to stay back and attack or to go the front line and bombard fiercely.

Splash!

The flames ignited the scales of the Shadow Snake.

Scorched by the burn, the Shadow Snake kept rolling in agony, trying to extinguish the flames. Whether it was the heat of the flames affecting its judgment, the snake released magic wildly. A small area was hit with three Dark Magic Whirlpools in quick succession, all of them missing Liszt by a wide margin.

Facing such an irrational Shadow Snake, Liszt let out a relieved smile, raised the Crimson Blood Sword high, and aimed for the vital seven inches of the snake before bringing it down with a mighty swing.

Crack!

With one strike, the Shadow Snake was cleaved in two. The lower half writhed in madness, while the upper half could not twist and turned, its mouth still opening and closing.

No more magic could be released.

All that was left for it was death.

“Huh...” Liszt exhaled a heavy breath, momentarily at a loss. Once considered useless, he had now easily killed a Magical Beast.

While the Shadow Snake wasn't very strong, it was still a Low-Level Magical Beast with strength comparable to that of an Earth Knight.

Yet in his presence, it only had the chance to be beaten, not lasting more than ten moves before being cut in two: “It seems I've grown this strong, almost like an Elite Earth Knight.”

Indeed, with the Eye of Magic to see through illusions and the Crimson Blood Sword to enhance his power, it was clear that Liszt had become stronger.

His reflections were brief, for in the next moment, not waiting for the bifurcated Shadow Snake to stop squirming, he mounted his horse with the Crimson Blood Sword in hand, charging towards the Thunderfang Boar—some Magical Beasts required fighting on foot, and others were better dealt with on horseback. The Thunderfang Boar, massive and thick-skinned, required the power of a warhorse to hunt.

“Charge!”

Rider and steed became one, Dou Qi bursting forth, the Crimson Blood Sword slicing through the air with a piercing whine.

As he charged into the fray, the Thunderfang Boar was about to release magic, only to be sent flying by Liszt's “Inferno Slash,” blood scattering on the spot, and its magic thwarted and kept at bay.

The thick-skinned Thunderfang Boar was not seriously harmed, however, and started to charge at Liszt with grunts of defiance.

But after only two steps, it was sent flying once again, this time by Marcus who had just dispatched the Fierce Earth Dog, charging in unison with the horse despite his injured left leg, blood flowing freely from a gash caused by a Rock Spike. However, this did not hinder his mounted charge.

“Sir, let’s combine our attacks!”

“I’ll take the left, you take the right, one round of charging each. Follow my command and don’t let it cast any magic!”

“Alright!”

After a brief exchange, Liszt initiated another round of charging, knocking the Thunderfang Boar off its feet once again. Before the boar could rise, Marcus charged again, knocking the still unsteady beast back to the ground.

Two Elite Earth Knights, alternating rounds of attack.

As their teamwork grew more seasoned, the Thunderfang Boar lost its chance to stand up again. It couldn’t release its Lightning Flash, and so it could only bellow in frustration as more and more gashes were cut into its flesh, quickly soaked with its own blood, then stained black by the mire on the ground.

The Retainer Knights, exhausted by the Thunderfang Boar’s antics, lit torches one by one, surrounding the battlefield to prevent the boar from breaking through and escaping.

Watching the two Earth Knights toy with the Thunderfang Boar, their blood surged with excitement, wishing it were they who were in the fray, tormenting the beast.

After at least a dozen charges back and forth.

Marcus’s warhorse was too tired to lift its feet any longer, and the Li Dragon Horse was also heaving with heavy breaths. It was then that the Thunderfang Boar finally ceased its plaintive grunts, lying on the ground, breathing in far more than it could breathe out.

“It’s finally dead.”

Liszt breathed heavily. The Thunderfang Boar was not much of a threat to Earth Knights—it moved clumsily and unleashed its magic slowly, making it easy to dodge. But its hide was too thick, and they could only wear it down softly and slowly till its death.

Marcus’s face was pale, his left leg bleeding quite a bit, sapping his strength, but he still managed to shout first, “Everyone, don’t just stand there, clean up the battlefield, we’re preparing to leave!”

After saying this, he dismounted, ready to tend to his wound.

However, Liszt suddenly spoke in an urgent tone, "Teacher Marcus, we're in trouble. One, two, three, four... a total of seven beasts, converging on us."

Chapter 127: Douson's Big Battle Against the Wind Blade Wolf

It was the Wind Blade Wolves.

These cunning creatures didn't come to snatch the Bloodline Fruit right away but showed up after a big battle, hoping to benefit from the fisherman's fortune.

The previous three Magical Beasts had already kept the team in disarray.

Now facing seven all at once, and at night with their conditions not being ideal, it was very difficult to defeat this group of Wind Blade Wolves.

"Sir, we should retreat."

Marcus directly took out the Smoked Grass Fire Stone Package he had distributed: "Fighting at night is very disadvantageous for us, traps won't stop the pack of wolves, and my left leg is injured, preventing me from unleashing my full strength. Let's light the Smoked Grass now, I'll use 'Multi-Arrow' to cover your retreat, and we'll retreat toward the main road."

Liszt was decisive: "Okay!"

When it's time to act, do it with zeal; when it's time to run, do it just as decisively.

The flint had not yet struck.

A piercing wolf howl shattered the eardrums: "Awoo, awoo, a-w-o-o-o-o-o-o..."

Liszt turned his head and saw Douson, who had been lying on the ground unconscious, had at some point stood up, thrown back its head, and was howling at the sky.

Its body seemed to inflate like a balloon, muscles bulging under its fur, eyes bloodshot, and teeth becoming even more ferocious and sharp.

He quickly employed the Eye of Magic.

Liszt saw that Douson's earthy magic power was rising like flames, giving the impression of a fiery fierce beast: "Douson!"

Douson, hearing Liszt's call, turned its head, showing a moment of confusion in its eyes.

The next moment, a familiar scene flashed by, and Liszt's order echoed in its ears: "Attack the prey!" Instinctively following the direction of Liszt's finger, it charged out.

There, were two Wind Blade Wolves.

Seeing Douson coming, they hastily retreated, but by then, Douson's speed had become so fast, it caught up with the Wind Blade Wolves in just two steps, and opened its mouth to release magic.

A larger Rock Spike shot out from the ground, impaling one of the Wind Blade Wolves, its belly completely torn open, with intestines and blood spilling out.

"Woo-awoo..." the Wind Blade Wolf howled in agony.

The other six Wind Blade Wolves charged over, pouncing toward Douson, starting a battle without any prelude. The Wind Blade Wolves' Wind Blades flew chaotically, slicing through branches and trunks, and tearing furrows in the ground. Douson's Rock Spikes fired precisely with each shot leaving marks on the Wind Blade Wolves.

It was like a tiger entering a flock of sheep, unrivaled in ferocity, with the Wind Blade Wolves trying to bite Douson, only to be swatted away.

Even when bitten, it was only superficial, as its muscles, inflated like balloons, allowed it to effectively avoid the Wind Blade Wolves' sharp teeth.

Then it would turn around and bite back, and the Wind Blade Wolves couldn't stand it, yelping and jumping away.

Blood splattered, magic flew.

The battle between wolf and dog was extremely fierce.

"Has Douson evolved?" Marcus asked, his hand trembling slightly while holding the Smoked Grass Fire Stone Package, the scene was indeed spectacular, a Fierce Earth Dog taking on six Wind Blade Wolves by itself.

Liszt's breathing was slightly hurried, he had seen the look in Douson's eyes just now, as if it didn't recognize him anymore. There even seemed to be a bloodthirsty hostility lurking, the innate instincts of a wild beast, and he had no doubt that Douson might attack him at any moment.

Fortunately, at the critical moment, he didn't panic, and his mind remained clear.

He quickly gave the order to attack, redirecting Douson's attention.

As he expected.

Douson's response to his order was a conditioned reflex, subconsciously charging out, attacking the Wind Blade Wolves. What he hadn't expected was for Douson to take on six alone without falling behind in the least.

"I don't know, its magic power is very violent, maybe it's evolution, maybe it's not evolution. Either way, it needs to vent!" said Liszt, his tone calm but with an undertone of indifference, "Teacher Marcus, Douson seems to be influenced by the Bloodline Fruit, becoming wildly beastly. Be prepared to take it down."

If Douson really becomes unrecognizable and attacks him later,
he will not hesitate.

Marcus nodded heavily, drawing his bow and arrow, and while retreating to the vicinity of the intact traps, he paid close attention to the scene of the fierce battle between the dog and the wolves, "Understood!"

The Retainer Knights stood in formation, protecting Liszt in the center.

Quietly waiting.

The battle did not last long.

The wildly peerless Douson found an opportunity, impaling a Wind Blade Wolf with a Rock Spike, breaching the perimeter of the wolf pack, and then began his slaughter. He violently grabbed a Wind Blade Wolf and before it could twist its body to flee, another Rock Spike emerged, piercing through the wolf.

It was far more proficient in using magic than the Wind Blade Wolves, and the Rock Spike was already a spell suited for stealth attacks, having been trained by Liszt for a long time.

One by one.

The Wind Blade Wolves were cruelly impaled by it.

And the frenzied aura on its body gradually subsided, and when it was about to kill the last Wind Blade Wolf, it ran out of magic power and failed to release another Rock Spike.

It watched helplessly as the Wind Blade Wolf escaped disaster and fled into the distance without looking back.

For a moment, it gasped for air, forgetting to give chase.

But the next moment.

Four sharp arrows flew, pinning the severely wounded Wind Blade Wolf to the ground. It was Liszt and Marcus acting together, catching one that slipped through.

After shooting the fleeing Wind Blade Wolf, the two of them bent their bows to notch another arrow, taking aim at Douson.

They did not shoot.

Liszt gently called out to the panting Douson, "Douson, sit."

Douson paused, its bloodthirsty eyes flickering, as if it no longer understood Liszt's command or recognized who Liszt was. It just gasped for air, staring at Liszt and the others, without any movement.

Liszt maintained his archery stance.

His heart was filled with mixed emotions.

Having raised it for nearly half a year, even though it wasn't as a pet, he had grown fond of it. He didn't want to turn into strangers and then have to kill Douson by his own hand—a loss that wasn't just a Bloodline Fruit, but so much more.

Time ticked by slowly.

Liszt's mood also darkened bit by bit.

However, at that moment, Douson slowly sat down and barked at him twice with a "woof woof."

In an instant, his spirits lifted, and Liszt laughed out loud, beckoning, "Douson, come back!"

Douson immediately wagged its tail, limping over to him. Dismounting, he touched Douson's fur, and Douson cooperatively stuck out its tongue, licking Liszt's palm. Its eyes had lost their bloodthirsty crimson and returned to their usual liveliness and vibrancy.

Marcus smiled and turned to shout, "Clean up the battlefield, collect the prey, let's head back!"

The Retainer Knights were relieved from the tension of the battle, chatting and laughing as they picked up the bodies of the magical beasts, packing and hanging them on the horses. After this battle, it's likely that no magical beasts will be left on the southern side

of Thorn Ridge—Thorn Ridge had been divided into two disconnected sections by the main road, with a fence constructed, completely separating the north from the south.

“How’s the leg injury?” Liszt inquired.

While bandaging, Marcus replied, “It’s just a superficial wound, the bones are fine. Sir, has Douson evolved? Has it become an Intermediate Magical Beast?”

“I don’t know, it looks... bigger than before.”

Chapter 128: Glory Belongs to Lord Landlord

Douson had indeed grown a bit larger, mainly because his muscles had developed quite a bit, and it seemed as if they were inflated by the magic power of the Bloodline Fruits, giving a somewhat swollen appearance.

“Teacher Marcus, have you ever seen an intermediate magical beast?”

“No.”

“Me neither.”

Intermediate magical beasts were not something just anyone could encounter, just like how Coral Island only had one Sky Knight, the Earl, and only one intermediate magical beast, the Purple Sand Crocodile. These weren’t crocodiles kept in zoos that one could visit with a ticket purchase; the magic of intermediate magical beasts wasn’t limited to just one single type.

According to the records of Tulip Castle.

The Purple Sand Crocodile was a water-attribute magical beast, which had released three types of magic during a skirmish with the Knight Order.

These were “Water Arrow Barrage,” “Water Wave Shield,” and the extremely powerful “Waterfall,” capable of summoning waves over ten meters high on dry land which could even crush an Earth Knight to death.

Therefore.

Liszt couldn’t be sure whether Douson had evolved into an intermediate magical beast or not. At least from the current state of affairs, Douson hadn’t undergone much change, and even in a berserk state, it had no overwhelming advantage over the pack of Wind Blade Wolves—the dense and numerous wounds on its body were proof of that.

“Regardless, the Bloodline Fruits should bring about some changes to Douson; subtly and gradually, they will make it stronger.” Liszt reassured himself in his heart, trying not to worry too much.

The Knight Squad had been cleaning up for quite a while and still hadn’t managed to deal with the corpses of the magical beasts.

Mainly because the Thunderfang Boar was simply too large, estimated to weigh as much as a full-grown hippopotamus, close to 3 tons. No horse, no matter how strong, could carry the Thunderfang Boar. There were also two Fierce Earth Dogs, seven Wind Blade Wolves, and one Shadow Snake; today’s haul was immense.

“Let’s send some of the magical beast corpses back first, then bring the caravan’s wagons. This Thorn Forest still has many more animal carcasses to be collected,” Marcus thought aloud.

Liszt had no objections to this, as mundane matters like these he couldn’t be bothered to contemplate.

Right now, he only wanted to return to the castle, take a good bath, and then get some sleep.

On the way back, he summoned the Smoke Mission.

“Complete the mission, reward one Bloodline Fruit.”

“Mission: You have initiated an attack, determined to eradicate Thorn Ridge, to create a peaceful new environment for Fresh Flower Town. So gather your determination and slaughter all magical beasts in Thorn Ridge. Reward: Traces of the Li Dragon Horse Herd.”

The new mission gave Liszt a burst of energy.

The reward was actually the traces of the Li Dragon Horse Herd—an existence he had always suspected might not be a solitary one. Logically, there shouldn’t be horses on the island, but who could guarantee that there really was no horse herd? After all, this was a world full of magic power. Unexpectedly, the Smoke Mission provided a direct clue.

There were indeed Li Dragon Horse Herds.

This was a Dragon Breed Horse, its value goes without saying.

“I was planning to rest after clearing out the southern Thorn Ridge and finding the Bloodline Fruit. Now it seems I can’t rest. I must press on and finish the extermination work, to welcome my Li Dragon Horse Herd!”

The moon had long since set.

The stars in the sky twinkled brightly.

Under the starlight, Liszt and his Knight Squad, bearing a full harvest, returned to the castle.

Lamps were lit in the castle, and the butler, Old Carter, had been waiting all along, not knowing when the lord of the castle would return. Following Liszt's instructions before leaving, there was no need to wait if he wasn't back by nightfall. Yet he still rose from bed from time to time, going to the window to look outside.

Then, he saw the torches.

"The master is back," Carter felt an inexplicable relief, then quickly dressed and knocked on Mrs. Morson's door, "Mrs. Morson, the master is back, wake the maids and prepare the bathwater for the master. Have the kitchen rush to prepare a late-night meal, the squad has already reached Douson Avenue."

"Alright, Mr. Carter, I'll get up right now," Mrs. Morson responded.

Carter quickly roused the servants one by one, and then continuously lit lamps, awakening the entire castle from darkness—his lordship loved light; he always said not to worry about wasting candles, now that they had money!

Lights in the castle rapidly brightened.

The returning master on horseback felt exceptionally at ease.

Liszt couldn't help but think of a song—"Stars light up, illuminating my doorstep, guiding lost children to find their way home."

It didn't seem quite fitting, so he thought of another short poem—"The steady cadence of my horse's hooves is a beautiful mistake; I am not a home-comer, but a passerby..."

Alright.

Neither was very fitting.

Unable to find the right words to describe his feelings at the moment, he was simply excited. When he reached the castle gate, the servants were already lined up, waiting to greet him.

"Knightly honor favors us! Lord, seeing you return safely brings me peace of mind," Carter said.

“No need for concern, Mr. Carter; it was just a hunt in the forest, and there were no dangers,” Liszt replied with a light smile. “Tom, take my retainer knights and drive out the merchant’s wagon. Later we’ll head back to Thorn Ridge to haul all the game we’ve hunted... You’ll be busy tonight.”

“As you wish, Lord, I’ll take care of it now,” Tom responded.

Carter, seeing the knight squad return with the carcasses of the game, understood that it would be a sleepless night: “Serving his lordship is our honor.”

“Has Mrs. Abbie prepared the late-night snack?”

“The kitchen has started working; I’ve had Mrs. Abbie prepare portions for the entire knight squad.”

“Good, when we return, we must drink heartily and celebrate today’s bountiful harvest,” Liszt said without dismounting his horse. “Thomas, lead Douson over there; it’s injured and needs to be bandaged.”

“Your wish is my command, Lord,” Thomas replied.

Gazing at the game that had been unloaded, Liszt went on, “Mr. Carter, inform Teacher Goltai that he can come and divide this batch of game. Reserve a portion for the castle, distribute another portion to the families of officials and retainer knights, with the rest to be supplied to the seafood shop at the price of seafood.”

The game being discussed was just beasts.

As for magical beasts, they definitely couldn’t be handled the same way—Liszt wasn’t that generous yet. Except when hosting banquets, when he would allow his subordinates to enjoy a little extra, the meat of magical beasts was exclusively for him.

After two trips, all of today’s spoils had finally been brought back.

Piled in front of the castle like a small hill.

The great hall on the first floor was bustling with activity.

It was a rare moment, transcending the noble hierarchy, where the landlord and retainers sat together at the same table.

Tonight’s late-night snack was comparable to a holiday feast—Liszt had the kitchen prepare an entire Shadow Snake into steaks, and each official and retainer received a large piece of steak.

Meat from a magical beast, rich in magic power, was a great tonic that they normally couldn't afford. Seizing this opportunity, everyone devoured their share, wishing they could even lick the plates clean.

Outside in the castle, Douson also received a large piece of steak.

"Knightly honor watches over Fresh Flower Town, it watches over Lord Landlord, with courage and wisdom going hand in hand! I propose, let us raise a glass together, to Liszt, who is favored by knightly honor, glory be to Lord Landlord!" Teacher Goltai, holding a glass filled with juniper wine, took charge of the banquet's atmosphere.

Fostering interaction and enhancing the mood were among his specialties.

The others lifted their glasses and shouted in unison, "Glory be to Lord Landlord!"

Sitting at the head of the table, Liszt's face was not the formulaic noble smile, but one of excited joy, savoring the atmosphere. He lifted his glass and declared loudly, "The glory is mine, and I am with all of you!"

Chapter 129: Rapid Growth Spiky Thorn

Though they aimed to conquer all of Thorn Ridge in one fell swoop, they still rested for two days, mainly because the members of the Knight Squad had some minor injuries, including Marcus, whose leg had sustained a graze.

Having Dou Qi, they recovered from minor injuries very quickly.

Two days were enough to relieve the fatigue in their bodies and let the wounds scab over.

Liszt, unharmed, woke from a night's sleep feeling reinvigorated and adjusted to optimal condition. He was in high spirits, racing his horse across the training field and rigorously practicing "Fire Dragon Drill," "Flaming Wave," and "Multi-Arrow." This combat experience had granted him ample experience.

He felt that the Dou Qi within him had surged significantly. Originally a tender noble, a newbie among the Earth Knights, he now solidified his foundation and took a great stride toward becoming an Elite Earth Knight.

Compared to Marcus, he was almost on par—the experience was still lacking, and so was the amount of Dou Qi, but with the Eye of Magic and the Crimson Blood Sword, the outcome of a real fight was uncertain.

"I think in a one-on-one duel with Marcus, it should be an even split!" he estimated.

Turning to look at Douson who, with glossy fur, was frantically running around the training field seemingly bursting with endless energy, he started to strategize: "With Douson's help, Marcus is definitely no match for me. In fact, I believe that Douson alone could be an even match for Marcus."

It wasn't yet clear whether the Bloodline Fruit had caused any evolutionary changes in Douson.

Regarding this knowledge, there was still too little.

But there was no question that the amount of Douson's magic had increased tremendously; it used to be able to cast Rock Spike only about ten to twenty times a day, but now could cast it from morning till dusk. While it might not reach fifty times, thirty-five times was absolutely within reach.

Because of this, the progress on Douson Avenue's road construction had greatly accelerated.

"Douson, cast the magic!"

Whoosh!

A Rock Spike rose from the ground, one and a half times larger than the ones Douson used to cast. The amount of rock produced in a day was equivalent to three to four days' yield in the past, making it resemble a mini "Rock Young Dragon"—according to a knight's novel called "Mercenary World," dragons in their youth looked somewhat like dogs.

Overall, Douson, having gotten a taste of blood, had more than doubled in strength, but it was still far from reaching the power of an Intermediate Magical Beast. Its recovery ability, however, had increased dramatically, and the wounds on its body were about to heal completely.

"Looking at Douson's current performance, it wasn't a waste of the Bloodline Fruit after all, at least, it's much better than if the evolution had failed."

About this clean-up,

he was satisfied.

The Shadow Snake's hide was excellent lining material for leather armor. There were some signs of fire damage, but overall, it was relatively intact and could at least sell for ten Gold Coins.

As for the two Fierce Earth Dogs, one was entirely charred and could only be kept for Liszt to eat; the other had its fur largely slashed by Marcus, so it couldn't fetch a high

price. The internal organs could be sold to magicians, but mostly they were kept for personal consumption since the castle wasn't in urgent need of the money.

The two large tusks of the Thunderfang Boar were excellent forging materials, especially suitable for creating Magic Equipment, with one tusk worth at least five Gold Coins. The hide was also great for making leather armor and could sell for around ten Gold Coins. The meat and bones could either be kept for consumption or sold.

Selling them for seven or eight Gold Coins wouldn't be difficult.

With a massive physique and tough hide, the Thunderfang Boar was valuable all over.

The other prizes were the seven Wind Blade Wolves—since they were hunted by Douson, the wounds were small and the fur was mostly intact, making it feasible to sell each for over ten Gold Coins without issue.

If estimated, this batch of magical beasts could bring Li Si Te at least a hundred and thirty gold coins.

“The Southern Thorn Ridge has probably been cleared out, but there are likely still many magical beasts in the Northern Thorn Ridge. We can harvest another hundred or more gold coins. Clearing out Thorn Ridge not only yields magical beast meat and materials to exchange for gold coins but also sharpens the Knight Squad and reduces the threat to the town. It's a profitable deal.”

The math was sound, but the magical beasts were a one-time bounty; once killed, they were gone.

The Thorn Forest of Thorn Ridge would also disappear—he had already ordered Goltai to reorganize the Lumberjack Team to make Thorn Ridge a thing of the past.

In addition, Blair was preparing to form a tree-planting team to plant two types of thorns, Rapid Growth Poison Thorn and Rapid Growth Spiky Thorn, around the periphery of Thorn Ridge.

The rapid-growth thorn species grew incredibly fast. With enough moisture and fertilizer, they could grow more than ten centimeters overnight.

The Rapid Growth Poison Thorn, after cultivation, already covered several acres. Its roots could be dug up at any time for transplantation elsewhere. The “Rapid Growth Spiky Thorn” had been discovered not long ago as a reward from the Smoke Mission—a spiny, fast-growing, mutant thorn variety whose branches were covered in dense clusters of large and small spikes, quite terrifying.

These two types of thorns, used as hedging, posed little threat to humans, as a few shovelfuls could clear a path. But wild beasts and magical beasts would surely despair.

“Actually, now that the tall trees of the Thorn Forest have been chopped down, and magical beasts can no longer inhabit it, we don’t need thorns for defense. However, to let others know that Thorn Ridge is Fresh Flower Town’s territory, I’ll still plant a circle of thorns.”

During the fief distribution, the Earl declared Fresh Flower Town to be Li Si Te’s territory.

But the official boundaries of Fresh Flower Town were not clearly defined, and likewise, Thorn Ridge had previously been an independent hazardous area unclaimed by any other town.

After Li Si Te took over Thorn Ridge, it became de facto territory of Fresh Flower Town, an exploitation of loopholes that was perfectly legitimate.

“The area of Thorn Ridge, added together, is at least the size of Fresh Flower Town. This means my territory will double in size and at least half of that land can be cultivated into farmland!” Concerning his somewhat bandit-like actions, Li Si Te felt not a hint of shame, but rather quite pleased with himself.

If he did this after Levis inherited the earldom, he might face a backlash—nobles value their land highly, and not even brothers are allowed to take advantage of it.

But currently, the Earl was his father. A son capitalizing on loopholes and going to great lengths to secure Thorn Ridge, taking a little advantage was hardly a matter for censure.

All things considered, his father was unlikely to squabble with his son over what was originally “useless” land.

Taking a sip of fresh coconut milk, Li Si Te counted the days on his fingers.

“Today is September 14th. The Earl’s birthday is on September 19th. He has already led the Coral Island Knights to charge into battle on the mainland, so there won’t be a birthday party... By the end of this month, the Tulip Fleet should be back, and the five hundred serfs I purchased will arrive...”

He planned to spend a week to completely turn over Thorn Ridge, exterminating all the magical beasts.

The trees would all be cut down within a month, and once the serfs arrived, he would swiftly cultivate the land into farmland, managing to plant a crop of winter wheat before winter set in.

“Five hundred serfs are not enough. After selling the magical beast materials, I’ll pull out some gold coins from the seafood business, amass six hundred gold coins, and buy an additional two thousand five hundred serfs!”

Previously.

Five hundred serfs, including a hundred craftsmen, cost one hundred and twenty gold coins.

By that ratio, six hundred gold coins could buy exactly two thousand ordinary serfs and five hundred craftsmen.

“I wonder if I can get a discount on serfs with this Pioneer Mandate. Once Frank, Levis’s confidant, returns, I need to have a good talk with him... Wars always bring countless refugees. Maybe I could even buy some knights who can’t pay their ransoms and directly establish my own real Knight Squad.”

Chapter 130: A Strange Scream

Two days flew by, and the Knight Squad set forth once again, heading towards Thorn Ridge up in the north. The successful annihilation of the Southern Thorn Ridge sent the team’s morale soaring, and a hint of ferocity now tinged the tender faces of the Retainer Knights.

However, the main force of the extermination team was neither the Retainer Knights nor Marcus or Li Si Te (Liszt).

It was Douson.

It had become belligerent and full of vigor, almost tireless. From a tiny squirrel to the Low-Level Magical Beast, the Ice Tree Frog, none were spared from its ravages.

Especially toward the Ice Tree Frog, a Low-Level Magical Beast with an affinity for ice, which perched on tree branches and cast the magic “Ice Blade” at Douson in a wild bombardment. But Douson even taught itself to climb trees. Despite the Ice Tree Frog’s frantic leaping, it was still pounced on by Douson, killed in just a few bites without even using Rock Spike.

The King of Thorn Ridge’s imposing manner was already taking shape.

“Douson, even if not an Intermediate Magical Beast, is not far from it. Sir, its combat power is growing stronger, and I feel that it is still growing and getting stronger.”

Marcus watched as Douson carried the Ice Tree Frog in its mouth, wagging its tail excitedly, and cheerfully placed its trophy next to the Li Dragon Horse. He couldn't help but express his sincere admiration.

Keeping a fighting Magical Beast that was also loyal and brave proved immensely practical.

Liszt, delighted, tossed out a fried meat strip as a reward for Douson—Douson was quite picky with its mouth, not eating raw food; it preferred fried delicacies the most.

“At first, I thought the Bloodline Fruit had failed, unable to change its bloodline, and it was still a Fierce Earth Dog. But now, we can't jump to conclusions so easily. Teacher Marcus, have you noticed that after two days in Thorn Ridge, Douson's size has grown even bigger?”

“Indeed, it has grown quite a bit. Now Douson is as big as an adult tiger.”

An adult Fierce Earth Dog could at most match the size of a leopard, but now Douson had reached the size of a tiger and was still growing.

Liszt waved his hand, and Douson bounded out again, continuing its hunting endeavors.

“No matter what, Douson is only half a year old, not yet mature, but it's already this strong. Once it matures, I am afraid there won't be any opponents below the rank of Intermediate Magical Beast.” The growth rate of Magical Beasts was generally fast, but Douson's was clearly faster. Back in the Castle, Liszt had never skimped on providing well for it, serving up plenty of fish and meat.

Compared to ordinary Magical Beasts that survived on raw food in the forest, Douson had always consumed cooked meals, making nutrient utilization much higher. In less than three months, it could cast magic, and within half a year, it could struggle against adult Magical Beasts. After consuming the Bloodline Fruit, its body and magical powers exploded, easily subduing Low-Level Magical Beasts.

Once Douson matured, among the Magical Beasts of Coral Island—except for the Purple Sand Crocodile—there would likely be none that could rival Douson.

While they were speaking, Douson encountered another Magical Beast. It was a massive Thunderfang Boar, with four smaller Thunderfang Boars trailing behind it.

It was very possible that it was family to the one encountered in Southern Thorn Ridge.

Confronted with Douson, the big boar was quite ferocious, but Douson was far craftier than imagined, skillfully circling around and biting the little boars to death.

It did not confront the big boar head-on.

Only when the big boar's magic, Lightning Flash, was cast so much that its magic power was depleted did Douson begin to throw Rock Spike, teasing the big boar. Finally, seizing the opportunity, it knocked down the Thunderfang Boar, finished it off with a Rock Spike through the boar's neck, and sent the whole boar family packing.

Marcus held his bow and arrows without much chance to use them: "The timing of magic release was just right. Douson's wisdom is high, and Sir, your training has been very effective."

Liszt was equally idle: "It really is smart. Magical Beasts rely on instinct, but it relies on its brain." He was increasingly pleased with Douson.

With Douson around, the extermination tasks were as easy as leisure activities.

Marcus didn't let the Retainer Knights sit idle. When they encountered a lone Wind Blade Wolf, he summoned Douson back and then allowed Liszt to arrange for the Retainer Knights to surround and attack the Wind Blade Wolf: "This is an old and weakening Wind Blade Wolf; it has started to shed, likely having been expelled from its pack. I'll leave this one to you."

Ultimately, with three Retainer Knights injured, ten Retainer Knights worked together to corner and kill the Wind Blade Wolf.

The prey was hung up on the tree.

The team continued to delve deeper.

As the sea was soon in sight, it meant that the northern part of Thorn Ridge was about to be cleared, with not much to show for it. Just five Thunderfang Boars—one big and four small—a single Ice Tree Frog, and a single Wind Blade Wolf, barely six magical beasts in total. Plenty of wild beasts had been hunted, but Liszt had no interest in those.

Having grown accustomed to the meat of magical beasts, he considered the meat of wild beasts to be of inferior quality.

"It's a pity, the Thorn Forest is about to disappear, leaving Fresh Flower Town with no environment for magical beasts to dwell in. If we want to eat magical beast meat in the future, we'll have to go out and buy it."

The clearing of Thorn Ridge would supply enough magical beast meat for about half a year's consumption.

After that would be over, he'd need to spend quite a sum to buy magical beast meat for consumption.

Marcus saw the brighter side, “Once Thorn Ridge is turned into farmlands, the castle’s tax revenue will increase substantially, and the landlord will naturally be able to buy magical beast meat with gold coins. Moreover, by that time, the sale of Black Tulip and Flame Mushroom magic potions will also bring in a considerable income. Fresh Flower Town will become more and more prosperous.”

“Still, we need to open up more sources of income. In the future, we’ll need to do more than just feed ourselves; we’ll also have to train a Knight Squad.” The success in hunting magical beasts made Liszt’s ambition grow, “I hope that by the next Pioneer Mandate, my knights can bring me true glory. A landlord needs more land!”

Marcus’s eyes shone brightly, “I am at your service, my lord!”

“Woof woof!”

Douson suddenly barked, interrupting the landlord and knight’s pleasant anticipation.

Liszt took advantage of the situation to utilize his Eye of Magic, scanning the surroundings. Then, he spotted signs of magic power; a magical beast was lurking not far away.

“I didn’t expect to find a magical beast so close to the sea. Douson, attack.”

On command, Douson dashed out like an arrow, charging straight at the magical beast. Clearly, he had sensed the presence of the magical beast even before Liszt had.

Liszt and the others followed at a leisurely pace.

They could hear Douson’s intermittent barking and another dog’s yelping.

“It seems there’s still a Fierce Earth Dog,” Marcus deduced from the sound that the magical beast was a Fierce Earth Dog.

“That’s normal. For Fierce Earth Dogs to reproduce on Thorn Ridge, there can’t be just two or three of them. In fact, I think it’s possible there are more that slipped through the net—Thorn Ridge must have more than one Shadow Snake, more than one Ice Tree Frog, and there might even be Wind Falcons nearby.”

After a pause, Liszt added, “Of course, I can’t be certain. Eighteen years ago, when Fresh Flower Town wasn’t yet built, this place was all forest, cleared once by the Coral Island Knights. Shadow Snakes and Ice Tree Frogs might be from that time... after all, magical beasts can live for quite a few years.”

Magical beasts live longer than ordinary wild animals.

Theoretically, they could still be alive today. Fierce Earth Dogs, Wind Blade Wolves, and Thunderfang Boars had all found mates to continue their species; Shadow Snakes and Ice Tree Frogs were likely to become extinct, but their bloodlines might persist, as they could breed with wild animals.

There's not necessarily reproductive isolation between magical beasts and the wild animals of their kind.

Magical beasts forcing themselves on wild animals and producing magical beast offspring is a common occurrence—Liszt's mount, the Fire Dragon Horse, is the offspring of a Blazing Steed and an ordinary horse.

The proliferation of species always ebbs and flows.

Sometimes they evolve, sometimes they regress; magical beasts won't always stay magical beasts.

Suddenly.

Liszt felt something was amiss; he couldn't hear Douson's barking anymore, only the painful howls of the other Fierce Earth Dog. But there was something strange about the howls—while they were certainly piteous, the breath behind them remained strong and sustained, not like the cries that would be expected from a creature being hunted by Douson.