

The Mighty Dragons Are Dead

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Chapter 151: The Thorn Bug's Fat Pupa Stage

The discovery of Rapid Growth Iron Thorns was as significant to Fresh Flower Town as a catalyst to a chemical reaction, or an athlete taking a stimulant.

Although they would still have to wait for the Thorn Bug chain mission to be fully completed before they could start planting on a large scale,

it didn't hinder him from bringing the trunks of the Rapid Growth Iron Thorns back, and during the dinner, he gathered the officials of the town to study and discuss its uses.

"If it can grow to two meters high, it can be used to build houses, it's much harder than the fir wood we use, and I bet that houses built with it would be safe and sound in a storm."

"Blair, you're not considering everything, wood has to not only be firm but also waterproof, termite-resistant, and rot-resistant."

"I don't think I'm missing anything, look how compact its wood is, it's nearly the same as the rockwood cut by the Lumberjack Team, and rockwood never gets bugs," Blair countered, speaking of rockwood, which is a tree known as rock tree that likes to grow in rock crevices.

Rockwood is precious, a two-hundred-year-old rock tree can fetch a price of fifty silver coins.

They only found fewer than ten rock trees when they cleared Thorn Ridge, of which only three were two hundred years old; the rest were younger.

Another type of wood of the same nature as rockwood is stonewood, which is also extremely rare.

Goltai came up with an idea, "Let's sink it in water, if it sinks, it means it's almost like rockwood, if it doesn't, then it's not as good."

"Right, let's try it."

So the servant brought over a basin of water.

After some effort, they took a section of the trunk and threw it into the basin, and the trunk sank straight to the bottom.

Seeing this, Blair said proudly, "Look, everyone, I never tell a lie, Rapid Growth Iron Thorns are as excellent as rockwood!"

The usually quiet Marcus also spoke up, "Its texture is sturdy and the trunk is straight, it's suitable for making Knight Spear shafts, and also for arrow shafts, it should be more suitable than birch wood."

Ordinary Knight Spears' shafts and arrows' shafts are all made of birch wood.

Coral Island's Birch City specializes in planting birch trees and producing birch wood for weaponry. The Tulip Family even has a Little Minor Elf of the birch tree.

"If it is really better than birch wood, we can supply Tulip Castle with it, I am sure the Earl would like better spear shafts and arrow shafts."

"Especially since it can grow rapidly, this advantage is incredible. A rock tree only grows to the thickness of a palm in two hundred years, and this one is just a young sprout and it's already as thick as a wrist."

"I seem to see a bush of gold coins."

"Haha, it's a tree that bears gold coins."

"Who would have thought the most useless thorns would turn out to be the most useful wood."

The banquet was filled with laughter and good spirits, all expressing anticipation for the morrow of the Rapid Growth Iron Thorns.

After Liszt and others had finished their discussion,

they raised their glasses, full of high spirits, "We can't be sure it's a money tree yet, but you can keep an eye on it and study it, to unearth its full value completely. If it really is a money tree, we'll have to plant it on a large scale, it would be best to plant Rapid Growth Iron Thorns everywhere on Thorn Ridge where the land can't be cultivated."

Everyone raised their glasses and responded loudly, "As you wish, my lord."

After dinner,

Liszt, slightly inebriated, walked around the castle's estate and played with Douson for a while before planning to return to the study to read. He was preparing to learn a new foreign language—Wind Language, the language of the Eagle Kingdom.

Old Geronte, a well-traveled man who knows both Serpent Script and Wind Language, is the only one in Fresh Flower Town for now; therefore, he temporarily handed the management of the Fresh Flower Caravan to Abagon. He himself returned to Fresh Flower Town to serve as a translator, coordinating the officials in managing the new 476 serfs, and also undertaking to teach Wind Language.

Mastering a foreign language is indeed somewhat useful.

However, Old Geronte was too busy with tasks to teach individually, so he contributed a notebook from his early years of learning Wind Language to Liszt.

In this notebook, there were records of rather everyday Wind Language and how to pronounce them using Serpent Script.

Learning is tedious, and although interesting at first glance, after two days, his patience wore thin. While passing by the Worm Room, he simply went in to tease his Elf Bugs.

All nine Elf Bugs were kept in one large box.

It was like raising silkworms, except these “worms” were colorful and competed in beauty. He reached in and touched each one; Elf Bugs had smooth exteriors which felt nice to the touch. Some were lethargic, not moving at all, while others were energetic, roaming about, including the Thorn Bug.

The gray-white Thorn Bug was not exactly eye-catching, originally the least conspicuous among the group of Elf Bugs.

But now, he always felt that this Thorn Bug stood out from the rest.

“This is...” The effect of alcohol made his brain react a bit slow. After pausing, he suddenly jerked awake, “It’s gotten fat, the Thorn Bug has gotten fat! It’s obviously larger than the other Elf Bugs! This is a signal of evolution!”

Tulip Castle bred over a hundred Elf Bugs.

He often played with Elf Bugs as a child, even witnessing firsthand two of them break through into Little Minor Elves. The biggest change in Elf Bugs before their breakthrough was “getting fat,” a phenomenon usually referred to as the Fat Pupa Stage. Little Minor Elves, unlike butterflies, do not undergo metamorphosis by cocooning; they simply get fat directly.

During the process of getting fat, Elf Bugs slowly decay and age.

If unlucky, they simply die of old age and turn to dust.

If lucky, one day, the Little Minor Elf will break through its exterior and emerge, spreading its wings to fly.

“It’s the Fat Pupa Stage!”

Liszt was now fully sober, his entire body overtaken by tense emotions that mingled with a hesitant excitement. The Fat Pupa Stage was indeed a signal of evolution but also a signal of death. Elf Bugs wouldn’t last long at this stage; at most, one to two months. Failure meant death; there was no third option.

“Only one or two months left. This little time might not even be enough to complete the Thorn Bug’s chain tasks. I must help it!”

The plump Thorn Bug scuttled around the box non-stop.

From time to time, it would lift its head and gaze at Liszt with eyes like black sesame seeds, expressing affection. At the same time, Liszt could feel a restlessness in its emotions—perhaps a longing and impulsion for evolution. Counting them up, it had already affected four types of mutated thorns.

No detailed documentation explained the impact of Elf Bugs on plants, but Liszt was convinced it definitely had to do with the Elf Bugs’ moods.

The thorns had been extremely violent lately, continuously mutating.

“How am I to help it?”

“Provide it with nutrition, fertilize the Cordyceps every day?”

“Expand the area of the thorn bushes?”

“These seem like common methods. They may be effective for evolution but not determinative... The chance of evolving mostly comes down to luck.” Adequate nutrition, to a large extent, is capable of breeding Elf Bugs, but it cannot ensure their breakthrough.

After much thought, it seemed that only the Smoke Mission might truly help the Thorn Bug.

“I must complete the Thorn Bug’s chain tasks as soon as possible, starting with the ‘Bottleneck of Dou Qi’ task at hand. Starting tomorrow, I will personally supervise the construction of the workshop!”

His mind was made up.

Liszt let go of his tension and smiled as he watched his Elf Bugs, especially the Thorn Bug.

The decisive moment that would determine fate had arrived: “Little guy, you need to work hard.”

As if sensing Liszt’s encouragement, the Thorn Bug propped up half its body, locking eyes with Liszt with its sesame-seed eyes, full of emotion.

It was brimming with confidence!

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Chapter 152: The Conscience Represented by Mung Bean Soup

“My lord, why are you in such a hurry to have the four workshops built?”

“I want to see results sooner.”

On the empty lot of the workshop area, Liszt led Douson while inspecting the construction of the workshops.

Consultant Goltai, who was in charge of the construction, was somewhat baffled. Just this morning, Liszt issued a new order demanding that the four workshops be completely built within five days. Because of this, he had to gather even more serfs to participate in the construction.

The whole construction site was bustling with activity.

It was now autumn, and the temperature was gradually becoming less hot than in the summer, but they were still sweating profusely while working.

“Tell the workers building the workshops that if they finish within five days, their salary will be doubled, and if they finish within four days, their salary will be tripled,” Liszt said, unconcerned by a few more copper coins. He cared only about whether he could complete the task ahead of schedule.

“Oh lord, the serfs will go mad,” exclaimed Goltai, before spreading his hands, “But it’s impossible to build the workshops in four days. Workshops aren’t wooden huts; they need skilled people to construct them.”

Liszt indifferently said, “Then make them more crudely, as long as they can produce, that’s enough. I don’t expect the workshops to bring me much income, as long as they can assure the supply to the castle, that would be considered good.”

One must not overestimate the skills of the serfs.

But neither should one underestimate their pursuit of money.

When they are driven, they can work night and day to cobble together the four workshops—the quality might not be guaranteed, but Liszt was not pursuing quality at the moment, only speed.

Even if the workshops turned out to be defective, it didn't matter. The goal was just to complete the task.

Compared to the evolution of the Thorn Bugs, these were secondary concerns.

Goltai didn't understand Liszt's thinking, but he was just a consultant. All the power of the land was bestowed by Liszt, so he could only accept, "I will properly motivate these serfs. I dare not guarantee four days, but within five days, there will definitely be four workshops appearing in the workshop area."

"Complete this task, Consultant Goltai, and I will reward you with a few bottles of juniper wine, a cellar-aged vintage purchased directly from Tulip Castle."

"Oh lord, cellar-aged juniper wine, that is utterly tantalizing. I haven't had juniper wine from Tulip Castle's cellar in years! Ha-ha, I will supervise the construction of the workshops day and night for the next few days. Please rest assured, my lord!"

He straightened out the attitudes of the officials and workers.

Only then did Liszt lead Douson back the way they came.

Halfway there, he directly mounted Douson's back, using it as a mount—Douson had been rapidly growing recently, already weighing over a ton. Tigers, in front of Douson, could only be considered slightly larger cats. The explosive power contained within its body could tear tigers and leopards apart.

Even without using magic, it could stand at the top of Coral Island's food chain.

At first.

Liszt riding it made it somewhat unwilling, but after a beating, it obediently served as a mount. Carrying a person hardly affected its movements

Upon reaching Douson Avenue,

Liszt gave the command: "Douson, multiple stone spikes!"

Douson opened its mouth wide, let out a roar, and then, on the sections of the road that had been planned but not yet constructed, seven thick stone spikes burst forth with a 'pfft, pfft' sound.

“Good boy!”

Patting Douson’s large head, Liszt was very satisfied and continued with the commands: “Keep it up, Douson, multiple stone spikes!”

‘Pfft, pfft!’

Another six stone spikes broke through the ground.

“Well done, little guy. Come on, stone spikes!”

Pfft!

With just a single Rock Spike thrusting out, Douson had already grasped the difference between a Rock Spike and Multiple Stone Spikes.

A piece of jerky as a reward.

Liszt rubbed Douson’s chubby neck and continued the training, “Douson, bigger, make it bigger, Rock Spike!”

Pfft!

A Rock Spike emerged.

“Bigger, Rock Spike!”

Pfft!

Another Rock Spike appeared.

“Not good enough, Douson, no jerky reward. Bigger, only then comes the jerky, understand?” Liszt teased Douson by waving the jerky in front of it, but didn’t let it eat, making clear that its performance wasn’t up to par.

He trained it bit by bit like this.

Only when the Rock Spike became thicker did Liszt stuff the jerky into its mouth, repeating the command, “Bigger, Rock Spike,” to indicate that only a larger Rock Spike would earn a reward. Douson was smart, but since they didn’t speak the same language, he could only use conditioning to make it understand various commands.

Such training was repetitive and tedious.

But when Douson mastered a new command, Liszt felt a great sense of accomplishment because his ultimate goal was to train Douson to cast a greater variety of magic.

“Douson is definitely an Intermediate Magical Beast, but it still falls short of a Purple Sand Crocodile. As a postnatal evolved Intermediate Magical Beast, its aptitude is certainly inferior to that of innate ones. How to compensate depends on how I, as its master, train it and use techniques to offset its lack of natural talent.”

He reveled in personally training a powerful Intermediate Magical Beast.

However, the Roadwork Team following behind wasn't as thrilled. As Douson's Magic Power soared and it produced a large number of Rock Spikes, the team's workload greatly increased.

Hammers pounded continuously, smashing the Rock Spikes to pieces and spreading them out on Douson Avenue—an incredibly strenuous task, since Liszt demanded that each piece of rock shouldn't be bigger than a wine bottle cap. The serfs responsible for breaking the rock had to hammer constantly, even reducing the stones to dust.

Only in this way could the road they built be smooth.

Seeing the sweaty, dust-covered serfs of the Roadwork Team, Liszt felt somewhat sentimental—he had it far too easy compared to them.

Reincarnation was a skill, and evidently, he had done it quite well.

“Have Mrs. Abbie prepare some mung bean soup and send it to the serfs of the Roadwork Team, a bowl for each,” Liszt instructed as Butler Carter approached.

“Your mercy will astonish them.”

“As long as they work hard for me, I'm never stingy with rewards and benefits. In Fresh Flower Town, I want everyone to be able to earn their living through work, have enough to eat, stay warm, and live healthily even when winter comes,” Liszt proclaimed with high-sounding words, his vision ahead of the times.

Merely exploiting serfs is a very low-level form of exploitation.

Motivating the serfs' productivity is what truly maximizes the exploitation of laborers to gain more surplus value. He was a man who had read through Karl Marx's “Das Kapital”.

As for the conscience of a capitalist—hadn't he already given them mung bean soup? What more could they want!

So many people building one road, the wages paid on time, and only twelve hours of work a day, that was already quite kind. Any other Landlord might make the serfs learn from Xu Sanduo; not spending a copper coin, picking up rocks to build the road themselves.

Riding on Douson.

Liszt continued training, depleting all of Douson's Magic Power to create a large batch of Rock Spikes to be used as materials for the road. Only then did he leave the construction site, heading straight to where the Earth Matron was imprisoned—as a reward for Douson.

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Chapter 153: The Earth Matron Who Refused to Mate

After Liszt left.

The serfs, busy with their work, began to whisper amongst themselves.

“Lord Landlord's pet is so formidable, I don't even dare to look at it. When it roars, my whole body trembles,” one serf said in amazement as they watched the Fierce Earth Dog's retreating figure.

“Of course, the Fierce Earth Dog is the King of Thorn Ridge, only the great Lord Landlord could tame it.”

“Yes, Lord Landlord is a noble graced with the glory of a knight, with a single sword he can subdue any Magical Beast. This winter, we no longer have to fear the Magical Beasts eating people.”

“Thorn Ridge, ah, who would've thought we would chop down all the trees there.”

“It's a pity my family isn't large enough, and I don't have enough tools, otherwise I would definitely reclaim ten more acres of wasteland... The officials in town said, the more you farm, the more grain you get to keep! My son is reaching the marrying age next year, I need to prepare enough food and a house for him, otherwise, he won't be able to get a wife.”

“Hey, Old Brown, has your son found a girl willing to be with him?”

“Of course, I asked Captain Grantaire of the Fresh Flower Caravan, and he promised he'd find a girl who speaks Wind Language for my son, right, with a big butt!”

“It's the new serfs Lord Landlord recently purchased, I heard they come from the Eagle Kingdom, is that right?”

“Only the Eagle Kingdom speaks Wind Language, but here in Coral Island, Lord Landlord will have them speak Serpent Script. By the way, Old Brown, why don't you find one? Among the newly purchased serfs, there are several older women who would be a perfect match for you, to help you with housework and farming.”

Old Brown smiled bashfully, “Heh heh, I'm on the lookout.”

“Those women from the continent can't speak Serpent Script, if Old Brown marries one, the two would only be able to gesture.”

“As long as they can lie in bed, it doesn't matter if they can't talk, as long as they can perform the motions, haha.”

“Old Brown's good days are coming.”

“Praise Lord Landlord!”

“Praise Lord Landlord, life in Fresh Flower Town is getting better and better.”

The serfs had a simple way of thinking, life was better than before, all thanks to Lord Landlord, so they must praise Lord Landlord and farm more, work harder for him.

Walls, iron cage.

After losing her freedom, the life of the Earth Matron was confined to this small piece of land.

From initial resistance to gradual acceptance, now the times when Douson came to visit were her happiest and most exciting moments. Even faintly, she had started to like these peaceful days, her days filled with eating and sleeping, occasionally getting up to mate, enjoying Douson's fierce thrusts.

“Woof woof!”

The sound of Douson's bark, drawing nearer from afar.

The Earth Matron lying on the ground sleeping immediately got up and went to the edge of the cage, responding with a bark: “Woof woof!”

Moments later, the gate to the enclosure opened, and the two Fierce Earth Dogs saw each other. Liszt was still riding on Douson's back, leisurely approaching the cage, now entering Earth Matron's magic release range. However, Earth Matron did not release any magic; she almost forgot about Rock Spike.

Her conditioning was simple.

Release magic—food is taken away.

After a few days, the Earth Matron was left with the impression that each time she released her magic, she would go hungry. If she didn't release magic, food would appear.

So, it no longer released its magic.

The instincts of the beast told it that eating was far more important than magic.

However, it was only because Liszt relied on the Dou Qi Secret Technique, Eye of Magic, that he dared to approach so casually. The castle servants who fed the Earth Matron did not dare to come in.

They moved the cage, allowing Douson to enter the iron cage for a rendezvous with the Earth Matron.

What should have been a smooth mating process encountered a problem: the Earth Matron could accept Douson's affection but firmly resisted, forbidding Douson's request to mate.

"What is this?" Liszt had a flash of insight, "Could it be that the Earth Matron is pregnant?"

A pregnant female would resist mating; of course, a female not in heat would do the same. However, the Earth Matron was supposed to be in heat, and it hadn't been resisting mating before.

Anyway, since the Earth Matron was resisting, it meant that it either was no longer in heat or was already pregnant and no longer suitable for forced mating — previously, Douson mated with it every day but failed to impregnate it, because the Earth Matron wasn't in heat — heat involves the ovulation of animals.

Without eggs, how could it become pregnant.

"Douson, come out," Liszt knocked on the cage.

Douson didn't want to come out and only after several urges did it reluctantly step out.

"It seems I need to go to Coral City to buy some female large wolves to bring back; otherwise, Douson's vigorous energy won't have any outlet, which is not a good thing." Continuously holding back without proper diversion is not conducive to healthy development, "I just don't know if Douson can produce offspring with the large wolves."

The thought was quite exciting.

Perhaps they could breed a batch of magical beast bloodline wolf-dogs, similar to the quality of the Fire Dragon Horse.

“Douson is an intermediate magical beast, its bloodline is stronger, the mixed-breed magical beast pups will certainly be strong, and if selectively bred and reared over time, they might become an excellent breed of hunting dogs or work dogs... If it’s really possible, then I’ll build a dog farm to cultivate an army of wolf-dogs.”

He was lost in wonderful speculation.

A servant rushed in to report, “My lord, the magician from Coral City has arrived at the castle with the Fresh Flower Caravan.”

“Go back.”

Liszt turned around, riding the Douson who looked back three steps at a time, returning to the castle.

The people from the Fresh Flower Caravan were busy unloading goods and moving them into the castle’s cellar, while another carriage parked on Douson Avenue. A tall, thin man in a black cloak stood in front of the carriage, gazing at the nearby town. Beside him was a thin little boy also clad in a cloak.

This was none other than the magician Grandini Truth and his magic apprentice.

“Mr. Grandini, welcome to Fresh Flower Town.” Despite Liszt’s dissatisfaction with the belated arrival of the magician, his face still wore the standardized noble smile.

Grandini flipped back his cloak, revealing disheveled brown hair: “The roads of Fresh Flower Town are quite good, actually paved with stones; I thought they would be muddy. Baron Liszt, constructing stone roads costs quite a few Gold Coins, even if a Noble needs to maintain appearances, why waste it on a road?”

As he spoke, his gaze was fixed on Douson.

Now Douson, wherever it went, became the focus of attention — its massive body and formidable presence had an astonishing effect.

“Tsk, tsk, such a fine Fierce Earth Dog, majestic and extraordinary, truly fitting of the title King of Thorn Ridge, it’s far superior to low-level magical beasts. Possessing it is your good fortune.”

“No, following me is its good fortune,” Liszt extended his hand to gesture, “Let’s talk inside the castle; Mr. Carter has already prepared teas and drinks.”

Grandini did not move, his eyes still intently looking at Douson: “Baron Liszt, I wonder if I might have the honor to study this Fierce Earth Dog? Perhaps I could pay to buy it from you. You should know, the value of a magical beast lies in the Magic Equipment it can produce.”

Liszt’s smile turned cold: “Heh, you’re thinking too much.”

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Chapter 154: Correct Your Work Attitude

I want to buy Douson.

I want to turn Douson into magic equipment.

Liszt felt he should release Douson’s leash, then let it teach Granney how to be a decent person, for an Intermediate Magical Beast was not something a magician could simply touch.

In the castle living room, host and guest sat down respectively.

Perhaps it was the prestige brought by the “hermit” title, or maybe because magic possessed a certain allure, but magicians held quite a high status in society, belonging to the upper-middle class, with the privilege of entering the second floor of the castle.

“Is this the famous ice cream from Tulip Castle I’ve heard so much about, invented by you?” Granney was instantly drawn to the ice cream with its varied colors as the servant brought it over.

Ice cream is a luxury food—making a small amount of ice cream requires a significant amount of ice, which ordinary people simply couldn’t afford.

Granney had only heard of it, never tasted it.

“Try it. Outside of Fresh Flower Town, only Tulip Castle, Falcon Town, Beer Castle, and Shattered Stone Castle offer this frozen delight,” Liszt said. He had sold the recipe to four people: Levis, Li Vera, Aubrey Lycra, and Brandon Brokenstone.

Other nobles wanted to buy it but were too reluctant to spend the money.

Taking a cup, Granney tasted it, “Hmm, is this ice from nature, not made by magic? Interesting. How is it made?”

“The ice cream recipe is quite valuable.”

“I don’t need the recipe for the ice cream. What I want to know is where does the ice come from? Baron Liszt, don’t tell me your castle is so small that it has an ice cellar underneath.”

Creating ice with saltpeter was not a secret worth keeping.

But the tone of Granney’s inquiry made Liszt uncomfortable, so he responded indifferently, “Mr. Granney, I invited you to Fresh Flower Town to craft equipment and teach me related knowledge about magic, not for me to teach you. I hope you can adjust your attitude.”

Granney scooped another mouthful of ice cream, oblivious, “Seeking the truth is our magicians’ nature. It is still hot weather; even Ice System Magic is hard to cast, let alone making ice by natural means. This is a significant discovery, and I hope you can teach me.”

“Teaching knowledge costs money.”

“How many gold coins?”

Judging by Granney’s demeanor, he was indeed willing to pay in gold coins for the information on the saltpeter ice-making process.

Liszt’s eyes gleamed with a new idea, “I’m not short of gold coins. If you want to know how I make ice, it’s simple: work diligently for me during this period, and after completing the work, I will naturally teach you the principles of ice-making.”

Granney frowned, “I hate working with unresolved questions.”

“Therefore, under the premise of ensuring quality, complete the work as soon as possible, and you’ll be rid of your doubts sooner,” said Liszt bluntly. He had already figured out how to deal with magicians; there was no need to be considerate, just scold them directly—here in Fresh Flower Town, magicians couldn’t stir up trouble.

“Alright, let’s talk about the work. Which black pearl do you need me to craft into magic equipment?”

“Thomas, go fetch my Black Pearl from the study, it’s in the cabinet.” Just moments ago, he had entered the study, taken out the basketball-sized Black Pearl from the Gemstone Space, and placed it in the cabinet, to mislead any observers.

Thomas quickly brought the Black Pearl over.

He placed it on the table.

This Black Pearl wasn't a regular spherical shape; it was rather lopsided and didn't look very appealing. But that was Liszt's aesthetic. To Granney, who had never seen a larger Black Pearl, it was perfect: "Incredible, incredible. A black pearl itself is incredible, but to actually have one so large!"

He caressed the Black Pearl with his hand, "Abundant water system magic power, as if placing me upon the great sea, it must have been born in the deep ocean, oh, it also has this historic heaviness to it, I feel like it has existed for hundreds of years!"

"Do you think it can be made into magic equipment for suppressing storms?"

"Of course, it's even more outstanding than I imagined, a top-quality material for making magic equipment... However, the materials I brought are probably not enough, I need to purchase more."

"You're leaving now?"

"No, no, no, there's no need to leave, I'll write a letter and have Charley go buy it, it's just that some auxiliary materials are lacking, the core materials are not in short supply."

Charley was that skinny magic apprentice.

Granney was efficient at work, immediately asking for paper and pen to start writing a letter. He addressed it to a fellow magician, asking him to help purchase materials, and then handed the letter to Charley to be taken to Coral City by the Fresh Flower Caravan when they set off. The fellow magician lived near Coral City.

"Baron Liszt, I need a separate workspace to create a piece of magic equipment, especially with such a prime material, it will take a long time."

"There are many newly built houses in town, you can pick one," said Liszt as he rose to his feet, "I'll take you to the town now to choose your room."

Granney did not bring a horse, and astonishingly, he could not ride one.

So a manservant had to take him by horse.

Upon reaching the town.

Granney's eyes never stopped scanning. He saw large plots of planned land, including drainage ditches, curbs, and green strips. Although not built yet, the areas were already parceled out. Some houses had been torn down, replaced by neat rows of new ones.

There weren't many pedestrians. At this time, most people not busy with farming were at the docks, moving rocks.

Only in the workshop area were crowds of serfs bustling about.

“There’s... no... manure?” He looked for a long time before expressing his surprise.

“Defecating in public is prohibited in Fresh Flower Town, there are toilets here, and all residents must use the facilities,” answered Goltai, who had just arrived, “Mr. Granney, long time no see, I hope you like Fresh Flower Town, the environment here is even more beautiful than that of Coral City.”

“I must admit, the streets are clean, but in terms of prosperity, this place is too remote compared to Coral City.”

“It depends on how you define it, brothels, gambling houses, and taverns—none exist in Fresh Flower Town, life is more peaceful. After all, Fresh Flower Town is just a small settlement,” shrugged Goltai, “Once accustomed to its tranquility, you’ll definitely fall in love with it, although admittedly, nights with nothing to do can indeed be hard to bear.”

Freya was already over four months pregnant, and they couldn’t do that, so Goltai’s nightlife was limited to his hand.

Liszt could not help but admonish, “Take good care of Freya, Consultant Goltai.” If he didn’t remind him, who knows, this guy might start flirting with some town girl again.

Goltai chuckled, “Of course.”

After walking around the small town.

Granney did not choose any of the houses here: “My work requires quiet, Baron Liszt, the noise of construction in the town is too disturbing, not suitable, please provide me with a more secluded house.” He enjoyed bustling cities, but his work required silence, hence he lived hidden away in the dilapidated Moss Town.

“In that case, Consultant Goltai, in one of the new houses in Little Wheat Village, pick out a separate house for Granney to serve as his residence and studio,” said Liszt.

“As you wish,” replied Granney.

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Chapter 155: The Incarnation of the Mundane Truth

All the materials and items were moved into the new house, and thus Mr. Grandini settled down in Fresh Flower Town.

The noon banquet was held in the castle by Liszt to entertain Grandini, where nobles and would-be noble classes gathered in numbers, yet the atmosphere of the banquet was somewhat mediocre.

The magician wasn't as unsociable as imagined.

Of course, he couldn't be described as witty and humorous either; often, it was Goltai and others entertaining themselves, with Grandini merely eating and drinking, more like a self-absorbed creature.

The materials for crafting the Black Pearl were not yet sufficient.

Therefore, after the banquet ended, starting from the afternoon, Grandini's work mainly focused on teaching—although he also had the task of crafting Crystal Lamps, he needed the cooperation of a crystal craftsman, as the magician wasn't skilled in carving crystals.

The Fresh Flower Caravan had already gone to invite the crystal craftsman Brad, who would probably arrive the day after tomorrow, if he wasn't too busy.

"Magic, just like Dou Qi, is a form of magic power,"

Grandini started without any fuss, "The world is triangular; matter is one corner, spirit another, and magic power the third. This is our magicians' understanding of the nature of the world, and the source of magic. Specifically, as it relates to ourselves, the caster is matter, the power from meditation is spirit, and the combination of matter, spirit, and magic power creates magic."

"What about knights, then?"

"As I said, magic and Dou Qi are alike—magic power, the releaser, and spiritual power create various Dou Qi manuscripts. The difference between magicians and knights is that knights regard themselves as the triangle, while magicians integrate themselves into the larger triangle of the world."

As he spoke, he asked, "Do you understand?"

Liszt nodded as if he really got it, "A triangle, huh? The most stable structure." In fact, he didn't understand at all—what large triangle, small triangle.

Then.

Grandini continued to talk about his triangle theory, like how Taoism believes the universe is divided into the five elements of metal, wood, water, fire, and earth, and Buddhism generalizes that matter is composed of earth, water, fire, and wind. Magicians believe the world is divided into spirit, matter, and magic power.

A very broad cognition, its correctness unknown, and the content extremely dull.

Grandini wasn't a good teacher either, and his speech was even more tedious. An afternoon of repeating the same triangle theory nearly put Liszt to sleep several times.

Finally, he couldn't bear it anymore and interrupted, "Mr. Grandini, I've already understood the triangle theory, you can skip it. What I want to know now is how magic is released and why magic power is divided into different properties like water, fire, earth, wind, lightning, light, ice and darkness. Also, I'd like to witness real magic."

Grandini frowned.

Being interrupted during a long lecture was very disappointing.

Luckily he still knew that Liszt was his patron, so he raised his left hand, his fingers slightly spread, and quickly rubbed together a fireball. The fireball appeared out of thin air, from a tiny flame to a fist-sized fireball. With a fierce push of his hand, the fireball shot out of the castle window and exploded in mid-air not too far away.

"Fireball Technique, the most basic of the Fire System magic."

"Do it again," said Liszt, narrowing his eyes, bringing forth the Eye of Magic Power. He wanted to observe closely—he had observed a Magical Beast releasing magic, where magic power condensed in its body and was expelled from its mouth, naturally forming magic.

Grandini nodded.

Raising his hand, he once again created a fireball.

Liszt watched very clearly this time—Grandini had only a small amount of magic power inside him, chaotic and colorless. The moment he cast the Fireball Technique, the magic power in his palm quickly turned red, becoming Fire Attribute Magic Power. Then, speckles of red magic power in the air were attracted by the magic power in his palm, coalescing into a ball and forming the fireball.

Pop!

The fireball exploded outside the castle.

In the vision of the Eye of Magic Power, that fiery attribute magic power dissipated with a roar as if it never existed.

He had a rough idea of the process of casting magic.

However, he still didn't understand why magic could gather into a fireball, as the Eye of Magic couldn't observe the force that caused the magic power to condense.

Perhaps, as Grandini had said, it was the power of the spirit.

Like him, a single thought could drive the Dou Qi within his body to circulate according to his will. Why it followed his thoughts was a mystery.

At this moment,

Grandini continued to manipulate the magic.

"Meditate, to build a bridge between your spirit and the magic power," his voice was somewhat ethereal, his gaze fixed on the palm of his hand, his whole being immersed in a certain state, "Magic power is a third existence outside of the material and spiritual realms. It has emotions. Feel them, befriend them, and they will serve you."

Gradually,

A gray-brown substance, which was magic power materialized as soil, began to appear in his palm.

The soil sphere slowly grew larger, and his voice continued to drift: "Meditation is an essential step in building the bridge. Only when your spirit is in a state of calm can you touch the existence of magic power. It is everywhere, jumping for joy. Once you find them and make friends with them, you can obtain magic, and then, understand the world!"

Finally, the soil sphere expanded to the size of a fist and then gradually solidified, turning into a rock with distinct edges and corners.

Grandini didn't stop, continuing to cast magic, compressing and solidifying the rock over and over again until it emitted a cracking sound, and only then did he stop.

With a flick, the rock completely shattered.

But unlike the fireball from before, the shattered rock didn't disappear; it remained as debris: "Flying Rock Technique, an Earth System Magic, as low-level as the Fireball Technique. However, I can't master it very well. I specialize in Water System and Fire System Magic, and I have a slight understanding of Wind and Earth Systems but am not proficient."

"Lightning, Ice, Darkness then?"

"I have not delved into these four systems of magic and cannot cast them."

“But I’ve heard that magicians can master and cast magic of every type.”

“If I can get closer to Truth and become a Grand Magician, maybe I will have enough energy to study Lightning, Ice, and Darkness Magic. But right now, I am far from the Truth, and my spirit is not broad enough to be proficient in both Water and Fire Systems is already pushing it.”

“What is an Archmage like?”

“I don’t know.”

“You don’t know?”

Grandini lifted his head, his hooked nose tilting upward: “Archmages are incarnations of Truth walking in the secular world, beings that magicians look up to. Baron Liszt, why do you think I would understand Archmages? Even you, do you understand what a Dragon Knight is?”

Faced with such a question, Liszt couldn’t argue—he had always thought that Dragon Knights were simply knights who rode on dragons.

However, the Advanced Dou Qi of a Sky Knight was just one level below Dragon Dou Qi, the legendary Dou Qi shared with dragons. As for what Dragon Dou Qi was, not even his noble relatives and friends, like Marquis Merlin, a veteran Sky Knight, knew what it was.

All the noble knights dreamed of becoming Dragon Knights.

But knights who possessed dragons were lofty beings, out of reach for the common man—even the King who had dragons, such as the Sapphire Duke, likely had no idea what being a Dragon Knight felt like. The first Sapphire Duke was a Dragon Knight, but the current Sapphire Duke was merely the dragon’s partner and caretaker.

No chance for dragon riding.

“Alright, let’s change the subject. Why did the rock condensed from magic power continue to exist?” He asked a question that had puzzled him for a long time.

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Chapter 156: Chronicles of the Dragon Lance

“You mean these residues?” Granney poured the rock fragments in his hand onto the table, “They’re just ordinary stone residues, devoid of any magic power.”

“So, why is that?”

“Why don’t the rocks formed by the agglomeration of magic power disappear?” Granney stirred the fragments on the table with his hand, “Your question is too broad, just like questioning how dragons can produce gemstones and metals, and why elves can cultivate plants, it concerns the essence of the world. I can only tell you my understanding.”

“Please do.”

“Spirit, material, magic power, they form a triangle.”

“Of course, you’ve told me many times.”

“It’s not immutable, or rather, spirit and material can have a dual influence on magic power. Spirit can influence magic power into becoming material, and material can also affect magic power to generate spirit... Casters, with their own spirit, create magic, forming material; material combined with magic power, in turn, forms...”

He paused before continuing, “Dragons, elves, that’s how I believe they came to be.”

Liszt glanced at Granney, somewhat surprised by this fresh idea—dragons and elves originating from the combination of magic power with material.

Before Liszt could voice his doubts,

Granney explained on his own: “This is just speculation, Baron Liszt, not based on a foundation of Truth, so it’s best forgotten after hearing it. I will not admit that this set of ideas originated from me. Magicians pursue truth and despise lies.”

He nodded.

Liszt did not dwell on it and changed the subject: “I’ve seen the Elf Bug’s reproductive process many times, yet I know nothing of a dragon’s breeding. Do you know?”

“I don’t know about dragon breeding, I’m just a magician, I’ve never even seen a dragon,” Granney’s tone carried a hint of regret, “However, I can recommend you a book, ‘Dragonlance Chronicles: Dragons of Autumn Twilight’ by the great Archmage, Odom Truth. It has a detailed introduction to dragons.”

“Do you have the book with you?”

“No, in fact, I don’t own the book. I only browsed through it when I was young, serving as a magic apprentice under my teacher. It was part of my teacher’s collection, and in his quest for Truth and greater knowledge, he has travelled to the mainland. I haven’t seen him for many years.”

Without the book, Liszt could only ask Granney to narrate its contents to him.

Speaking a few words for money, Granney naturally wouldn't refuse and immediately recounted what he remembered.

"Young dragons before the age of one hundred are the easiest to capture. It is said that most Dragon Knights cultivate a bond during the dragon's youth, enabling dragon riding. From one hundred to eight hundred years old, adult dragons reach their peak period for producing gems and mineral deposits, with dragon blood, dung, saliva, breath, scales, and might, all capable of infecting the surroundings and forming mineral deposits."

After eight hundred years come the elderly dragons.

Most elderly dragons leave their dwellings during this time to head for the "Valley of Dragons," a mythical place.

"Some say the Valley of Dragons is in the Devil's Sea, others say it's in the Whirlpool Sea, and there are those who say it's on Mount Mulagao Ding, but no one has seen it; it's a legendary place. Dragons bury themselves in the Valley of Dragons. They do not die but rather become one with the world, to be reborn as dragons after countless years."

Dragons are categorized into three types.

Elemental Dragons, Gemstone Dragons, Metal Dragons.

Metal Dragons can infect metal ores like gold, silver, copper, iron, aluminum. 'Dragonlance History: Dragons of Autumn Twilight' records twenty-three types of Metal Dragons.

"Brass Dragons, Bronze Dragons, Purple Copper Dragons, White Copper Dragons, White Maw Iron Dragons, Malleable Cast Iron Dragons, Grey Iron Dragons, White Heart Iron Dragons, Black Heart Iron Dragons, Golden Dragons, Platinum Dragons, Silver Dragons, Mercury Dragons... These are roughly the types of Metal Dragons I remember."

Gemstone Dragons can infect gemstone mines and are broadly categorized into blue, red, yellow, and green.

Like the Sapphire Dragon, Ruby Dragon, and others such as the Azure Sapphire Dragon, Crimson Gem Dragon, Light Green Emerald Dragon, etc. The gemstones produced by the Gemstone Dragons possess extraordinary magical powers and are even more valuable than those of the Metal Dragons. However, their production is not as high as that of the Metal Dragons.

Most of the Elemental Dragons are Evil Dragons, embodiments of the elements themselves. A Fire Dragon can infect a volcano, a Water Dragon can infect a swamp, a Wind Dragon can conjure storms, an Earth Dragon can raise mountains, and so on.

“Archmage Odom Truth once battled a Wind Dragon, his blood drenched the entire plain. Now that place is called Windhowl Valley, located in the Neverfall Empire, where fierce winds blow endlessly throughout the year. Countless magicians who specialize in the Wind System aspire to visit Windhowl Valley, to feel the magic power engraved by the Wind Dragon.”

Liszt was brimming with interest, “How many years ago did this happen?”

“Based on the era in which Archmage Odom Truth lived, it should have been about four thousand years ago, at that time, the Neverfall Empire didn’t even exist.”

The Neverfall Empire has a history of only three thousand years.

“For four thousand years, the magic power of the Wind Dragon in Windhowl Valley has not dissipated?”

“Yes, that’s the power of Dragons. They possess the ability to change the world. Unfortunately, even Archmages find it difficult to peer into such mysteries.” Granney shook his head, his regret apparent.

Liszt was equally astonished.

He had read many Knight novels that described dragons, all of which seemed to be made up—portraying dragons as nearly divine creators, yet with intelligence comparable to that of a small dog.

The records left by Archmages are very credible, and the magic power of the Wind Dragon has indeed not dissipated in four thousand years.

This revelation left him dazzled and eager to rush to Windhowl Valley immediately to observe with his own Eye of Magic, to discern what was different about the Wind Dragon’s magical power.

After a moment.

His eyes flickered slightly as he casually asked, “Mr. Granney, in the Knight novels I have read, some authors have mentioned a category of dragons beyond the Elemental, Metal, and Gemstone ones, known as Sacred Dragons?”

“I have heard of Sacred Dragons too, but ‘Dragonlance History: Dragons of Autumn Twilight’ makes no mention of them; that’s just nonsense spun by novelists. I don’t like reading Knight novels; they’re all made up, they defy Truth and are lies!” Granney said with disdain when it came to Knight novels.

“Can you tell me about Sacred Dragons? I’ve only read about one kind in a book, the Formless Dragon.”

“Those authors invented five kinds of Sacred Dragons,” said Granney, his disdain didn’t prevent him from being well-informed: “The Immortal Dragon, which represents life, grants one eternal life—very fake; The Twilight Dragon, which represents time, can stop time, I don’t see the use of that; The Jade Dragon, representing dreams, can enter into dreams. I’ve seen jade, it’s a kind of gemstone, what does that have to do with dragons?”

He continued his disdainful remarks.

Liszt, however, listened very earnestly.

“The Formless Dragon, representing space, can produce Space Rings, akin to a ring that can hold many things—a concept as ridiculous as my cup holding an elephant; and lastly, the Smoke Dragon, representing destiny. According to the Knight novels I’ve read, it’s described as a wisp of smoke—I find that imaginative.”

After he finished talking about the five Sacred Dragons, Granney concluded with scorn: “No one has ever seen a Sacred Dragon with their own eyes, and no country possesses such dragons. They are just figments of the imagination by those who have never seen a dragon—dreamt up in their dreams at night... There’s nothing more to discuss, let’s continue talking about magic.”

“Of course,” responded Liszt absentmindedly.

However, inside his head, a gigantic wave had already surged.

The Smoke Dragon, representing destiny!

A wisp of smoke!

The Smoke Mission!

Chapter 157: The Fate Choice of the Smoke Dragon

Seven months ago.

Liszt awoke from the darkness, comprehended his situation, and accepted the memories of his predecessor, knowing the latter could see the smoke from a very young age.

But back then, the smoke was too faint to see clearly.

It wasn’t until he had transmigrated and merged with this body that he could truly see what the smoke was made of; it turned out to be a text-formed task.

When he first saw the content clearly, he was really startled.

If you could call it a golden finger, the smoke formed Serpent Script, not Chinese characters.

If you said it wasn't a golden finger, both the language style and the task content were familiar to Earth's style.

He could only convince himself that before a transmigrator did anything, the golden finger acted first. Then he accepted the existence of the Smoke Mission, guessing that behind the faint outline, there must be some schemer or conspiracy. However, this time, upon hearing Mr. Grandini describe the five Sacred Dragons, he found there was one representing fate—the Smoke Dragon.

It brought him a tremendous shock.

“Perhaps, this golden finger of mine, this Smoke Mission, is not some kind of conspiracy?” There was no indication that the Smoke Mission had any ulterior motive or was driving him towards some sort of layout. From beginning to end, the Smoke Mission simply issued some simple tasks.

And then rewarded him with things that already existed but were extremely easy to miss.

This manner of awarding.

Upon reflection, it had a strong flavor of destiny—whether it was a brush past or an embrace, both are different trajectories of fate.

Ordinary people cannot change the trajectory of fate, or rather, their fate's trajectory is unknown, chaotic.

But with the help of the Smoke Mission, Liszt's destiny's trajectory included an added element of choice.

Granney continued to prattle beside him, expounding endlessly on matters of magic.

Liszt was already lost in his thoughts, entering his own inner world. He lowered his head, looking at his own body: “Representing fate... a puff of smoke... Could it be that residing in my body is a Smoke Dragon? Because of the Smoke Dragon's infection, I have been granted the right to choose my fate?”

Unlike Granney's denial of the Sacred Dragons.

He believed in the definite existence of Sacred Dragons—the Formless Dragon had eaten two cows in front of him and left behind a Space Gem, an undeniable fact.

If the Formless Dragon existed, why couldn't the Smoke Dragon exist?

The Immortal Dragon, Twilight Dragon, Jade Dragon, they definitely all existed; they might be transcendental beyond belief, but dragons and elves were already incredible creatures. No matter how inconceivable, what of it? This was a world completely different from Earth, a remarkable world filled with magic.

His thoughts continued to soar.

He tried to find traces of the existence of the Smoke Dragon.

“If it were to be said that the Smoke Dragon resides in my body, it’s not impossible, since I often see the Smoke Mission. But the smoke could only form Serpent Script, it never formed the shape of a dragon, nor has it ever communicated with me... It’s very likely I haven’t actually obtained it, but rather am just influenced by it?”

“Ordinary animals can be infected by dragons to become dragon seed animals. Although there have never been any dragon seed humans, it’s possible that my predecessor, as a child, was accidentally infected by the Smoke Dragon and became a Smoke Seed person.”

Thinking this way.

He didn’t know whether to feel fortunate or regretful.

Fortunate because others rarely encounter dragons, while he had come into contact with two, each leaving behind precious gifts—the Smoke of fate control and the unique Gemstone Space. Regretful because the close encounters with the two dragons didn’t make him a Dragon Knight, nor did it earn him the friendship of the dragons.

“Baron Liszt.”

“Baron Liszt!”

Granney’s calling voice brought Liszt back from his reverie: “What?”

“I was introducing magic, were you even listening attentively!” Mr. Grandini was quite displeased, “Learning magic requires maintaining focus, and on the path to pursuing truth, despite the loneliness and dullness, only the joy of acquiring knowledge can fill your soul from emptiness to fulfillment!”

“Sorry, I just wanted to understand a bit about magic, not to learn it,” Liszt suppressed his cluttered thoughts and squeezed out a formulaic smile, “Without a nap, I’m a bit sluggish, how about we end today’s lesson here and continue tomorrow. Thomas, please show Mr. Grandini around, let him have a look at Fresh Flower Town.”

“Certainly, my lord,” Thomas extended his hand with perfect gentlemanly grace, “This way, please, Mr. Grandini.”

Grandini glanced at Liszt and showed a look of disdain: "Truth is becoming more and more distant from you."

Having said that, he strode out of the castle.

After Grandini left.

Liszt stayed alone in the study, looking out the window, lost in thought amid Juan Fu's "caw," "caw" calls.

Smoke Dragon.

Smoke Mission.

Destiny.

Many thoughts flickered back and forth.

The smoke in front of him twisted and changed forms, but the text remained constant: "Mission: The commercial district of Fresh Flower Town is gradually prospering, but the workshop district has been unoccupied for a long time, still lacking sufficient workshops to support it, and craftsmen should not waste their talents on chopping wood and tilling the fields. Please build three new workshops to increase the town's prosperity. Reward: A breakthrough in Dou Qi."

No matter how hard he tried to focus his attention, attempting to communicate with the "Smoke Dragon" behind the smoke, the content of the Serpent Script remained unchanged.

He could not communicate with the Smoke Dragon that may or may not exist within him.

He also could not change the Smoke Mission; the so-called choice of destiny was merely an additional option. It was like a scenic area building a road; you can choose to build a straight path from the front gate to the back gate. The Smoke Mission, on the other hand, would hint at where there are attractions, allowing you to take a detour to include them.

But if you want to build a toilet or a parking lot, sorry, there's no function for that.

"So now, there are four possibilities for the things happening to me."

First, as a child, he had close contact with a Smoke Dragon, was influenced by it, and became a person of the Smoke Dragon seed, possessing some ability to choose his destiny.

Second, the Smoke Dragon is snoozing somewhere in his body, and the scattered wisps of smoke form the Smoke Mission, allowing Liszt to steal a part of destiny.

Third, the Smoke Dragon might just be a young dragon, weak in power, hiding away and biding its time to grow.

Fourth, he might be overthinking, and the Smoke Mission has nothing to do with the Smoke Dragon—it's just a transmigrator's golden finger privilege.

The first, second, third, and fourth possibilities are all viable, but there is too little information to determine which one is more likely. He tried hard to recall the memories of his childhood, trying to find a node—a moment of close contact with the Smoke Dragon.

There was a high probability that he had come into contact with the Smoke Dragon.

“Since having memories, the places my predecessor visited were not many. Red Crab Island was one, where he only moved around the vicinity of Long Taro Castle, the rest was on Coral Island. He visited every city on Coral Island, every year going on vacation with the Earl, staying a few days in the castles' guesthouses in various cities.”

There were no waves, just an ordinary noble second son's life, always plain and insipid.

Half an hour later, he gave up on recalling.

He also gave up on contemplation: “Well, what comes will come, if I am fated with the Smoke Dragon, someday we shall meet face to face. Do what I must, and let destiny decide the rest... If it truly represents destiny's Smoke Dragon, I believe it is meant to be!”

He stretched himself.

The thoughts about the Smoke Dragon, he buried deep within his heart.

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Chapter 158: Release of Meditation Model Rune

For the following two or three days, Liszt's schedule was packed.

In the morning, he would cultivate his Dou Qi, train Douson, and supervise the workshop; in the afternoon, he focused on studying magic, particularly the spells mastered by the magician Granney. This magician was proficient in Fire and Water System Magic, had a slight understanding of Wind and Earth System Magic, and knew nothing of the magic of lightning, ice, darkness, and the like.

“The difficulty of cultivating magic is far greater than that of cultivating Dou Qi.”

“The steps of casting magic are meditation, model, runes, and release.”

“Meditation is to summon spiritual power to connect with magic power; the model is to mobilize the connected magic power and form a bridge between the internal and external magic power; runes are used to repair the model and strengthen the channels for magic power’s ingress and egress; release – when the bridge is complete and the channels are secure, with spiritual power as the guide, magic can be cast.”

“Each spell has a fixed model and runes, and it takes time to master them. For example, I can instantly cast the Fireball Technique and Water Arrow Spell because I have cast them thousands of times, imprinting the details of the magic in my body and brain, and can naturally release them.”

“But for the Earth System’s Flying Rock Technique and the Wind System’s Wind Blade Spell, I must spend time constantly adjusting the model and supplementing the runes to cast them smoothly.”

“There are many spells I have mastered that require secrecy; I can only show you the Fireball Technique, Water Arrow Spell, Flying Rock Technique, and Wind Blade Spell.”

“Every magician is also a Casting Master of Magic Equipment; actually, the principle is very simple. Making magic equipment is just carving a casting model. The core material can be seen as a rough casting model, while supplementary materials are the runes that fill in the model... Additionally, materials from Magical Beasts are a good source of runes.”

“That Fierce Earth Dog of yours is quite extraordinary, I bet that if you slaughtered it and added it to a Black Pearl, I could even create a piece of Magic Equipment that rivals a Little Elf Weapon!”

Granney said this with a gleam in his eyes.

Little Elf Weapons, more precious than gemstone weapons.

As the name implies, Little Elf Weapons are forged with the blood of Little Minor Elves – their blood, imbued in the weapon, can endow it with miraculous magic power. Although all the kingdoms have enacted laws to prohibit the slaughter of Minor Elves, the use of Minor Elves in forging weapons is a persistent issue.

After all, some Minor Elves are of little use in agricultural production.

“Don’t bring up Little Elf Weapons anymore,” Liszt commented with deep loathing, finding Elves to be beautiful beings that shouldn’t be treated this way. “Furthermore,

don't even think about Douson. Otherwise, I wouldn't mind letting Douson have some 'intimate contact' with you."

Granney sneered at Liszt, his eyes filled with contempt.

He probably thought Liszt was a hypocrite, as many Nobles spoke against elf slaughter but secretly used the 'useless' Minor Elves to forge Elf Weapons – not just Little Elf Soldiers, but also Greater Elf Warriors and even Dragon Elf Weapons.

He licked his lips: "So, you're saying you're willing to let me study that Fierce Earth Dog, Douson?"

"Granney, I advise you not to think like that. Douson is very dangerous."

"Magical Beasts are all dangerous."

"It's especially dangerous," Liszt warned lightly, and after work was done, if the other party was still not dissuaded, he would not mind letting Douson loose for a while. "Let's talk about that Black Pearl. I want you to design a control device during the manufacturing process, allowing it to be switched on and off freely."

If the Black Pearl was always suppressing the storm, clearly, relying on paddles alone wouldn't be enough for long-distance voyaging.

When there are no severe storms, the effects of the Black Pearl would be sealed. Then, when a storm came, it would be unsealed.

Granney thought for a moment: "No problem, that's easy. I already have a complete idea on how to make an exquisite piece of Magic Equipment, and in fact, I can hardly wait. Add another Douson to it, and the Black Pearl will be even more outstanding!" He circled back to the topic.

Liszt picked up the cold drink on the table, ignoring him.

Granney waited momentarily, then seeing the awkward silence, added, "I saw a walled area near the Castle, there is a Fierce Earth Dog inside. Using it should suffice."

"Impossible."

"Then, what about this Magical Beast that's chirping away, the Wind Falcon, right? It could be worth a try."

Juan Fu?

Liszt was about to refuse when he suddenly paused.

Juan Fu was a mystery when it came to training; he had even thought of using hunger as a means to train it. But after all, it was a bird, and if let loose, it would immediately fly away. The falconer was nowhere to be found, and if Juan Fu stayed in the Castle, it would only be good for display, and perhaps for meat before it learned the Wind Blade Spell.

“Do you know any falconers?”

“You want to tame it?”

“This wind falcon was picked up from an egg, it recognizes people, but lacks training. It can’t even cast magic.”

“It’s best to slaughter it, its materials as a wind system magical beast make for better rune-assisting agents in supporting the Black Pearl, suppressing storms.”

“I want to know if you recognize a falconer.”

Granney was silent for a moment before slowly nodding: “I do know one, but I still suggest that you slaughter it to use as auxiliary material for the Black Pearl.”

Under Liszt’s persistent questioning, he finally revealed the name of the falconer—Elkerson True, another magician residing in Coral City.

Knowing the existence of the falconer,

Liszt was eager to invite him over, so he forced the reluctant Granney to write an invitation letter, since the two magicians knew each other.

“Juan Fu’s fate has taken a turn.”

He was in high spirits.

What remained was to see when Elkerson True would arrive.

When the letter was sent out,

the crystal craftsman Brad happened to come to Fresh Flower Town to work with Granney on carving crystal lamps.

It was also that very night, the fourth night of the workshop’s construction, that Goltai rode his horse at a gallop to the castle to report to Liszt: “Sir, the workshop has been completely finished!”

“Very good, finished in four days, exceeding expectations! Consultant Goltai, as I said, triple the wages of the serfs who worked on it.”

“As you wish. Do you need to inspect the workshop personally?”

“No need.”

Liszt didn't have time to inspect it; he had already started calling for the Smoke Mission.

“Complete the task, reward: the bottleneck of Dou Qi.”

“Task: No matter how many candles are lit, the flickering flames can hurt the eyes. Since you are already accustomed to staying up late, take care of yourself and find a new stable light source. Please install ten crystal lamps in the castle. Reward: Mutated Thorn.”

Task complete, a new task appeared—the anticipated chain mission.

“Another mutated thorn, it seems I was very prescient not to cut down the Rapid Growth Thorn Bug,” Liszt's mouth curved into a smile.

Every time he completed a Thorn Bug chain mission, it increased the chances of the Thorn Bug's evolution into a little elf.

“Ten crystal lamps, a task purely of benefits. I need to urge Granney and Brad later to hurry up and finish making the crystal lamps.”

Suddenly,

his attention shifted, focusing on himself: “The bottleneck of Dou Qi, when will it come? I don't seem to have reached the bottleneck; the Dou Qi inside me is still slowly growing.”

After feeling it for a moment,

he called for Butler Carter: “Mr. Carter, for tonight's late-night snack, ask Mrs. Abbie to fry up an extra batch of magical beast meat steaks, I'm feeling a bit hungry.”

Have a big meal, get a good night's sleep, and quietly await the arrival of the bottleneck.

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Chapter 159: Elite Earth Knight Liszt

I don't know if it was because I ate too much Magical Beast Meat at once.

I felt stuffed.

Tossing and turning at night, I just couldn't fall asleep. In the separate room at the corner of the second floor, the occasional "gagging" sound from Juan Fu added to my irritability.

Normally, I couldn't say that I fell asleep as soon as my head hit the pillow, but usually, I would fall asleep after turning over once. Tonight, however, I was unusually excited.

"It's only been a little over half a year, but I'm about to reach a Dou Qi bottleneck. It somehow feels too fast."

I was pondering.

Pondering why I could shorten the cultivation time.

In terms of the total amount of Dou Qi in my body, I am now definitely no less than Marcus. I eat well and have a noble lineage; there's no reason I should be worse than Marcus, who comes from commoner stock—Dou Qi cultivation is related to nutrition, but noble families, with their continuously optimized genetics, are indeed stronger than commoners in many aspects.

As a child, Liszt was very much favored by the Earl because of his appearance, at least until the age of ten. Even with a stepmother, he never lacked for anything in his upbringing.

After turning ten, the Earl grew gradually disappointed with him, and my treatment might have suffered a bit, but I was never mistreated.

Therefore, I laid a very solid physical foundation from a young age. I just lacked a bit of insight and, before adulthood, didn't manage to break through Primary Dou Qi. But when I had my transmigration, body and soul merged, and I achieved breakthrough in one fell swoop, becoming an Earth Knight. Just over half a year more, and I was set to advance to an Elite Earth Knight.

"Putting it that way, it seems quite natural. Good foundation, high aptitude, good nutrition—faster cultivation speed is normal." But I always had the feeling that my cultivation progress was too fast.

There must be something I was overlooking.

Suddenly, a thought crossed my mind, "Could it be because of the Smoke Dragon's influence that I'm affected?"

But I quickly dismissed that idea, "That shouldn't be the case. My predecessor had the Smoke Mission since he was young, and his cultivation wasn't notably fast. He didn't even manage to become an Earth Knight."

“So, what other factors could be promoting it?”

“Magical Beast Meat?” I’ve been eating a lot of Magical Beast Meat, especially lately. Every meal seems to involve it. If I weren’t young with a fast metabolism, I would probably be so over-nourished that I’d have nosebleeds. “Levis’s diet is certainly no worse than mine, and he only joined the elite ranks at the age of twenty, two years ago.”

“Li Vera’s diet is also good, always scrounging meals and drinks in the Castle, and yet she still hasn’t become an elite.”

“On the other hand, Lidun, that little guy, is only twelve this year, and Lady Marie has been boasting everywhere that her son is about to break through as an Earth Knight... If that’s true, his talent is stronger than Levis’s and might just fall a bit short of mine. No wonder half of Tulip Castle’s resources are slanted towards him.”

My train of thought became a little erratic, with all kinds of things about Tulip Castle floating through my mind.

When I had first transmigrated, I wish I would never have to deal with Tulip Castle again to avoid awkward encounters. As time went on, and I became more integrated into the identity of Liszt, the position of Tulip Castle in my heart subtly changed—I began to care about the matters of Tulip Castle, seeing myself as a member of the Tulip Family.

Or perhaps.

Deep down, I harbored the ambition of taking charge of Tulip Castle.

Growing and developing my own farm was joyful, but it couldn’t compare to inheriting family property.

“Perhaps Lidun is the one the Earl pins his hopes on the most now. For his sake, he doesn’t hesitate to divide the resources intended for Levis’s cultivation, giving half to Lidun. Otherwise, no matter how influential Lady Marie’s pillow talk might be, it wouldn’t sway him. This Earl, forged on battlefields, is not the type to be easily cowed.”

The foundation of the Tulip Family’s earldom was built by Li Weiliam with spear and sword.

“He is in his prime, his Dou Qi as a Sky Knight at its peak, and he certainly harbors ambitions of advancing even further. He never misses the Grand Duke’s Pioneer Mandate every year.” Liszt recalled his interactions with Li Weiliam. The latter’s vast Dou Qi gave a sharp and unmatched impression.

The Earl’s Dou Qi is of the Water Attribute, and generally, Water-Attribute Dou Qi gives off a gentle and accommodating feeling, but his was sharp.

There's no doubt that personality plays a part.

Liszt, with his Fire Attribute Dou Qi, should be impetuous and fervent, but he comes off as mild and soothing as a spring breeze—this is the influence of his personality—he doesn't even want to go to the battlefield, only preferring to shrink back in Fresh Flower Town, farming, farming, farming, and still farming.

How fierce can he get?

He didn't like Marcus and Lidun, this mother and son pair, and neither did he, so he quickly stopped thinking about them. He thought of his sister, Li Vera, the somewhat chuunibyounineteen-year-old spinster whose talent wasn't weak, and who had made a breakthrough to become an Earth Knight before adulthood. Yet, several years had passed, and she still hadn't become elite.

This is related to the physical constitution of women, as the cultivation of female knights is generally weaker than that of male knights.

It is said that the world has yet to see a Female Dragon Knight.

“Li Vera and Lidun don't have comparative characteristics... Based on Levis's situation, my advancement to the elite sequence this time will certainly startle everyone. He prides himself on being a genius, an elite at twenty, but what is that before me—a sixteen-year-old elite? In the Duchy of Sapphire, that's hardly common!”

He didn't think the bottleneck in Dou Qi was artificially elevated by the Smoke Mission—the rewards were merely a catalyst, and touching the bottleneck of Dou Qi was achieved through his own accumulation.

“Aside from being a genius, there must be other influencing factors.”

Lying in bed, he turned from side to side.

He pondered deeply into the night.

Then a spark of inspiration struck him: “Could it be the milk? Three cups of milk in the morning, noon, and evening, and another cup for supper, four cups of milk a day, plus various dairy products—such abundant nutrition!”

He had previously thought it was the delightful climate of Fresh Flower Town that made the milk from the cows so delicious, but clearly, that was wishful thinking. Even if the climate were agreeable, the milk wouldn't undergo an ongoing improvement in taste—after all, these were not cows in their first lactation.

The dairy farm had been raising cows for over a decade—if the quality of milk were high, it should have been discovered long ago.

Granney's mention of the Smoke Dragon earlier that day had given him much to think about.

"The Formless Dragon caused havoc at the dairy farm—could its Dragon Might have somehow affected the cows?" The more he thought about it, the more plausible it seemed, "The continuous improvement in the taste of the milk indicates something—that the lineage of these cows is changing, and they are quite possibly already Dragon Breed Cows!"

Milk Flower, Milk Yellow, and Milk Black were all pregnant, and the improvement in the taste of their milk indicated an enhancement in their bloodlines.

Perhaps as regular cows, they have limited aptitude and can't transform into Dragon Breed Cows, but it's very likely that their unborn calves will inherit the blood of the dragon and become true Dragon Breed Cows.

He simply sat up.

His heart was tumultuous.

Dragon Breed Cows sounded incredibly rare and of immense value.

"Starting tomorrow, I must focus on the dairy farm and provide the cows with rich pastures, especially the three pregnant ones—they must be well taken care of, to ensure the smooth delivery of their calves!"

There was no chance of sleep now.

He forced himself to calm down and began to cultivate Dou Qi.

Dou Qi was continuously generated in the cells of his limbs and torso, converging in his meridians. Maintaining this cultivation, he trained all the way until the next morning.

When the Sun rose and the first ray of sunlight streamed in,

Liszt suddenly opened his eyes, and at that moment, he felt the "fullness" within his body and the surging Dou Qi in his meridians.

He was both mentally exhausted and exhilarated: "I've touched the bottleneck of Dou Qi, and now, I have indeed become an Elite Earth Knight."

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Chapter 160: Preparing to Become a Medicine Jar

The sun rose in the east.

Chained Doussan paced back and forth, tugging at its chain, waiting for Liszt to take it for a walk.

At the castle's dining table, Liszt perused Grandini Truth's collection of books while enjoying breakfast. The meal was as lavish as ever, but he was particularly savoring the milk.

Whether it was psychological or if he could truly taste a difference, what was once simply delicious milk now revealed an extraordinary quality.

It's no surprise it's from Dragon Breed Cows!

"Mr. Carter, have someone inform Consultant Goltai that I'd like him to come to the castle after nine o'clock."

"Yes, my lord."

"Also, tell Mrs. Morson that from now on, every morning, I want two cups of milk and two cups of milk tea in the evening."

"As you wish."

Having emptied his cup of milk in one gulp, Carter took the cup to find Mrs. Morson to brew another. Liszt closed the "Sixteen Minor Skills of Enhancing Fireball" he was reading and leaned back in his chair, planning his next moves.

He planned to join the elite ranks.

Just by consuming meat and milk, it was unlikely that his Dou Qi would improve significantly.

At this point, magic potions were needed to expand the body's cellular capacity for generating Dou Qi, steadily increasing his total amount of Dou Qi. When he reached the threshold of his body's capacity to store Dou Qi, an abrupt increase could trigger a qualitative change, allowing for a breakthrough.

"Starting today, I'm going to become a potion guzzler."

Liszt did not know how Sky Knights became Dragon Knights, but he was clear about how Earth Knights became Sky Knights. His father was a Sky Knight and had shared his breakthrough experience with his sons and daughters without reservation.

It boils down to consuming potions!

"The Black Tulips from the first three years all have to be handed over to Levis to take care of, which is a tricky matter. However, the Flame Mushroom—I can keep it for my

own use. Flame Mushrooms possess the fire attribute magic power, making them excellent ingredients for magic potions that enhance Fire Attribute Dou Qi,” he thought of Grandini, “Grandini is proficient in fire system magic; I could ask him to make the magic potions.”

Magic potions here refer to both plant magic potions.

And the refined magic potions.

Most plant magic potions have chaotic attributes and can aid in enhancing various attributes of Dou Qi. A few plants, like the Flame Mushroom, have clear attributes that can be used to create targeted magic potions, and their enhancement effects are much better than those of the chaotic magic potions.

One is general-purpose, the other specializes; their value is not easy to compare.

But to Liszt, the Flame Mushroom-derived magic potion was the most suitable potion for him.

Magicians certainly knew how to make magic potions—magic equipment and magic potions were the two crafts that allowed magicians to enter the upper echelons of society.

Otherwise, magicians alone, not subjected to the power constraints of the nobles, would have long been suppressed by the knights

In this world, whether in numbers or in strength, knights hold an absolute advantage. Archmages are said to stand at the pinnacle of power just like Dragon Knights and can go head-to-head with a dragon, but they stand no chance against a Dragon Knight. The synergy between a dragon and its knight isn't simply additive; it's a qualitative leap.

Therefore, knights are mainstream, while magicians are fringe.

Liszt's thoughts drifted, but he quickly refocused and continued his musings: “Although Grandini has a stubborn personality and is a bit slow, he's still within the range of normal intelligence. Perhaps, I could persuade him to settle in Fresh Flower Town... He likes Coral City, probably because of the brothels there. I could find him a wife.”

Magicians are typically single, giving up worldly constraints in their pursuit of truth.

But magicians are also human, and solving problems on their own doesn't hold the same appeal as discussing them with others.

“No matter what, I need to make money. Only with money can I buy more magic potions.” He felt a tinge of regret for giving the entire Black Tulip share for the first three

years to Levis. At that time, he thought it would be at least three years before he'd reach the bottleneck of his Dou Qi.

Otherwise, the self-production and self-sale of magic potions would save me a sum of money.

There are too many expenses. Once we run out of magical beast meat, if we want to maintain the training speed, we'll have to buy more from outside, which is a huge expenditure.

Whether it's the cost of magic potions or magical beast meat, it's difficult for a typical small-town landlord to sustain.

Even with the seafood business, Liszt cannot guarantee that he can keep up. There's no way to tighten the belt any further; the only solution left is to think of ways to increase revenue.

Workshops must be built in large numbers, aiming to turn Fresh Flower Town into a center for agricultural product processing.

Black Horse Island also needs to be conquered as soon as possible. The trading business of Li Dragon Horses will definitely bring in a large amount of gold coins.

At the same time, the construction of the knight squad must be accelerated. A territory without the protection of knights is not in a healthy state.

"Luckily, I have dragon breed milk cows to provide me with rich nutrition and alleviate the food pressure." A few cups of dragon breed cow milk a day are at least equivalent to the nutritional intake of magical beast meat.

Of course.

The premise is that they really are dragon breed cows.

After walking the dog.

Goltai had already come to the castle.

Without a doubt, he had received another task from Liszt to improve the milk cow farm—a task highlighting Liszt's occasional unorthodox approach, something Goltai had grown accustomed to.

"As you wish, the cows on the dairy farm will definitely enjoy the same treatment as your Li Dragons!"

Having sent Goltai on his way,

Liszt rode his horse with his retainers straight to Little Wheat Village to inspect the work progress of Granney and Brad and urge them to complete their tasks as soon as possible.

Twelve retainer knights, roaring as they followed behind him, formidable as dragons.

After the lumberjack team had leveled Thorn Ridge, the tasks of Marcus and the retainer knights ended, with the retainer knights returning to Liszt's side to guard the landlord. As for Marcus, he had been tasked with training the children brought by the serfs.

Currently in Fresh Flower Town, among the local and purchased serfs, there are three hundred fifty-four children aged three to ten.

Marcus needed to sort them into groups based on gender, age, physique, intelligence, and so on. Liszt would then arrange for suitable instructors to train these kids—to ensure future loyalty to him, they must become Earth Knights, and training must start from childhood.

“Lord Landlord!”

The patrol members guarding outside Granney and Brad's house immediately saluted upon seeing Liszt.

Magic apprentice Charley opened the door and instinctively shrank back, “Baron, do you, do you wish to come in?” The once ill-mannered Charley now held a heightened reverence for Liszt—simply because Liszt had scared him with Douson, making him wet his pants.

Since then, Charley didn't dare show any disrespect in Liszt's presence.

“Is your teacher working?”

“Yes, the teacher is currently crafting the second crystal lamp.”

Once inside the house, Liszt quickly spotted the busy Granney and Brad. Brad was already carving the fifth crystal while Granney had just finished a lamp.

He urged, “Speed up the progress, Mr. Granney, Brad, I'm fed up with the flickering candlelight and urgently need the crystal lamps.”

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