

The Mighty Dragons Are Dead

The Mighty Dragons Are Dead #Chapter 161 - 0161 Apple Table Meeting - Read The Mighty Dragons Are Dead Chapter 161 - 0161 Apple Table Meeting

Chapter 161: Apple Table Meeting

He took the finished crystal lamp with him.

Once back in the castle, Liszt ordered his servants to install the crystal lamp in his study. The lamp, made of white crystal, emitted a soft white light, reminiscent of natural light, although not as intense as sunlight. Just one crystal lamp was as bright as ten candles.

“It’s about as bright as a 50-watt incandescent lamp, which is still not strong enough. It would be better to install two more.”

Three crystal lamps in a room is the most suitable level of brightness—any more is glaring, any less too dim. These crystal lamps could remain lit for several years on end. They could also be designed to be switched on and off at any time, but that would require high-level craftsmanship, which is not cost-effective.

The value of crystal is indeed high, but the price is not unacceptably so.

With hundreds of crystal lamps illuminating Tulip Castle from morning till night, it is a beacon of light that never falls into darkness. Many nobles like to use crystal for their tableware. After being enfeoffed, Liszt also received a set of exquisite crystal tableware. Although its magic power had been exhausted, it still highlighted his class when entertaining honored guests.

“I need to also install a crystal lamp in the bedroom, then put on a lampshade. That way, I won’t need to turn off the lamp—just closing the lampshade will be like turning off the light.” He was accustomed to sleeping in the dark; he couldn’t sleep with the light on.

He directed the servants to adjust the position of the crystal lamp.

Making a quick calculation in his head, he estimated that at Granney’s pace, it would take another three to five days to make ten crystal lamps. Ten lamps could at most sustain five rooms, but he had no intention of adding more; taking out so much crystal at once would be a bit ostentatious. Better to keep a low profile.

After all, three lamps for the study, two for the living room, two for the dining room, two for the bedroom, and one for the bathroom should be sufficient for his use.

“Master, Mr. Marcus has arrived and is waiting for you in the living room,” Carter approached to inform him.

“Did Teacher Marcus mention what it is about?”

“He has come to report on the knight training of the serf children.”

Liszt pondered for a moment, then said, “Have someone notify Karl Ironhammer and Rom Barrel to come here. Also, summon my twelve Retainer Knights; I want to hold a meeting.”

He went downstairs.

And met with Marcus.

“My lord, Marcus offers his greetings to you.”

“Good day,” Liszt, while letting Thomas adjust his necktie, replied, “Teacher Marcus, let’s talk under the apple tree. I have also invited others to join us in a meeting to discuss knight training.”

The apple tree was a wild fruit tree not far from the front of the castle.

There were stone benches and a wooden table beneath the tree where Liszt often read books or contemplated. Regrettably, during this season, the apples had already ripened and fallen. Thus, he momentarily could not emulate Newton, getting hit by a falling apple and then contemplating and formulating the epoch-making law of universal gravitation.

Next year, once apples grew on the tree again, he would definitely ponder astronomy, physics, magic and Dou Qi under it.

“Apples are wonderful, three apples can change the world.” Liszt sat down and smiled, gesturing towards the apple tree.

Marcus was puzzled, “Apples are indeed tasty, but how can they change the world?”

“Do you know how humanity came to be?”

“We are the rulers of nature, born alongside this continent, my lord.”

Alright, watching Marcus answer seriously, Liszt suddenly found it boring; this Earth Knight was not one to exhibit humor. So, he cut to the chase, “There is a legend that the first two people ate an apple and created the humans of today.”

Marcus asked, “Then why is it that three apples changed the world?”

Temptation in the Garden of Eden, gravity, the iPhone... Liszt regretted starting this topic and had to blather, “Later, someone ate an apple and cultivated Dou Qi, someone else ate an apple and created magic. Of course, these are just legends I’ve read in knight novels; those authors have quite the imagination.”

“Those magicians? They can’t change the world; the world belongs to the knights!”

A moment of blathering followed.

Karl and Rom had already arrived, and the Retainer Knights had formed a circle under the apple tree.

Looking at Marcus, Karl, and Rom sitting upright and the Retainer Knights standing straight, Liszt suddenly thought of King Arthur and his round table meetings. This fictional ancient British king liked to have meetings with his knights around a round table, and Europeans wrote many stories about King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table.

The Japanese also produced many works about King Arthur.

“If one day in the future I were crowned king, would this table under the apple tree come to be known by posterity as the Apple Table, the Apple Table Conference? Would Marcus, Karl, Rom, and this group of elders be called the Apple Table Knights? Or perhaps just the Apple Knights?”

His thoughts were fleeting.

He spoke earnestly, “Teacher Marcus, has the sorting of the serf children finished?”

“Yes, my lord, out of three hundred and fifty-four children, twenty-six were excluded due to deformities or an inability to train, leaving three hundred and twenty-eight—169 boys and 159 girls. Following your instruction, I have separated the girls into one group and divided the boys into passing and failing groups.”

“The girls’ group will be trained by Rom,” Liszt decided on the spot, “The purpose of the training is to keep them physically fit, making it easier to assign them jobs in the future. If there are any exceptionally talented individuals who can develop Dou Qi, we’ll make special arrangements.”

Rom immediately stood up to take the order, “As you wish, I will rigorously train this group of girls!”

Training women to develop Dou Qi was not the mainstream; at least most landowners choosing knights would opt for boys. However, it wasn't fixed; there were also quite a few landlords who trained female knights... Liszt's sister, Li Vera, trained a group of girls to form a women's knight squad, although she also trained many more boys.

Liszt's training of girls wasn't about forming a knight squad.

It was because he wished for women to also increase their strength to undertake hard labor in the future, or rather, to take on farming entirely, freeing up the male labor force. Men could work in workshops, or do more physically demanding jobs like building roads, bridges, and ships.

An even more crucial point was that with a stronger female constitution, the difficulties of childbirth would lessen and the baby survival rate would greatly improve.

Besides, there was another reason—if a few outstanding female knights emerged, they could be taken on as Retainer Knights, and if they were fair and beautiful, they could be adjusted to serve as personal guards, which would be delightful.

“The failing group will be trained by Karl.”

Liszt put aside his private thoughts and continued, “The training of the failing group, like the girls' group, is about building physical strength, preferably to cultivate Dou Qi. In the future, among this group, those with Dou Qi can join the Patrol Team or the Bug Guard Team, while those without it can build roads and bridges.”

Karl stood to accept the command, “As you wish!”

“Lastly, I'll entrust the passing group to Teacher Marcus for training; they are the candidates for the future Land's Guard Knights. Philip, Zavier, you Retainer Knights will take turns assisting Teacher Marcus to train the passing group... I think the passing group should be further divided into smaller groups by age to train separately.”

Marcus nodded, “We can divide them into one group for those under six years old, mainly focusing on etiquette and basics; one group for those between six and eight years old, mainly cultivating Dou Qi and loyalty; and one group for those over eight, primarily training courage and mounted charges.”

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Chapter 162: Falconer Elkerson

As the meeting progressed, the number of participants gradually increased, with Goltai, Isaiah, Blair, as well as Old Geronte and Kostor joining in.

The content ranged from training serf children to future planning for Fresh Flower Town, all of which were included.

By the time the sun was at its zenith at noon, the Apple Table Meeting concluded successfully.

The meeting resolved to establish the Knight Academy of Fresh Flower Town, because the territory was only a small town, so the academy kept a low profile. The academy was merely an informal appellation rather than a permanent institution. Everyone involved in training knights would also serve as an instructor and receive a salary of two copper coins per day.

The first batch of eight instructors was as follows.

Etiquette Instructor – Goltai Mast, responsible for training serf children in loyalty to their landlord.

Knight Squad Instructor – Marcus Wheel, responsible for training the potential candidates of the Knight Squad, i.e., the serf children who passed.

Patrol Team Instructor – Karl Ironhammer, responsible for training the potential candidates of the Patrol Team, i.e., the serf children who did not pass.

Bug Guard Team Instructor – Rom Barrel, responsible for training the potential candidates of the Bug Guard Team, i.e., the girls' group of serf children.

Administrative Instructor – Isaiah Moss, responsible for teaching serf children administrative skills.

Serpent Script Instructor – Blair Steel-Nail, responsible for teaching serf children how to read and write Serpent Script.

Wind Language Instructor – Grantaire Short Bench, responsible for teaching serf children how to read and write Wind Language.

Marine Affairs Instructor – Kostor Hoofprint, responsible for teaching serf children nautical knowledge.

The meeting also readjusted the duties and salary regulations of Fresh Flower Town's provisional officials. Among them, consultants received twenty copper coins per day, affairs officers received ten copper coins per day, and assistant affairs officers received five copper coins per day.

The list is as follows.

Consultant and Diplomatic of Fresh Flower Town – Goltai Mast, overseeing all affairs of Fresh Flower Town, including diplomatic affairs.

Administrative Officer and Legal Officer – Isaiah Moss, responsible for the administrative affairs and legal matters of Fresh Flower Town.

Assistant to the Administrative Officer – Auden Insole.

Finance Officer – Blair Steel-Nail, responsible for the financial affairs of Fresh Flower Town.

Assistant to the Finance Officer – Gray Scythe.

Defense Officer – Karl Ironhammer, responsible for Patrol Team affairs.

Worm Affairs Officer – Rom Barrel, responsible for Bug Guard Team affairs.

Marine Affairs Officer – Kostor Hoofprint, responsible for nautical affairs.

It was anticipated that separate Legal Officers, in charge of legal penalties, and Diplomats, in charge of external affairs, would be appointed, but there were no suitable officials for the positions at that time.

Whether it was Old Geronte or Captain Kostor, they were acting in official capacities whilst still being serfs. They needed to accumulate enough merit for Liszt to release them from serfdom and convert them into formal officials. Therefore, their remuneration was granted according to serf standards, much lower than that of formal officials.

Even so, both were so excited that they prostrated themselves on the ground, kissing the tips of Liszt's leather shoes.

For them, this was an opportunity given by Liszt to rewrite their destiny and a window bestowed upon them towards nobility—as long as the future landlord continuously achieved glory, they as following officials would naturally receive rewards. Even if they could not, their descendants would have a higher starting point to strive for noble glory.

“The glory of knighthood watches over Fresh Flower Town, over Lord Landlord, and over each and every one of us.” Goltai was very excited at the luncheon.

The more prosperous Fresh Flower Town became, the more it highlighted his importance as a consultant and his power.

He was not worried about facing challengers that would shake his status since only nobles could serve as consultants, and in Fresh Flower Town, there was no other noble besides Liszt.

At least for a few years, this pattern was unlikely to change.

The excited Goltai, almost getting drunk on beer, flattered effusively, "Under the leadership of Baron Liszt, the prosperity of Fresh Flower Town is just around the corner. Let us raise a toast to the Baron!"

"A toast to the Lord!"

As for Gao Ertai's bootlicking,

Liszt was naturally immune and remained unaffected.

Fresh Flower Town had already passed the difficult initial stage and was now in a phase of high-speed development. With the help of the Smoke Mission, his vision was beyond the likes of Gao Ertai.

After the noon banquet,

the officials returned to their posts.

Liszt asked Captain Kostor to stay behind, "Captain Kostor, how is the sailor training progressing?"

"It's about to be completed. I have already started trial sailing. Just waiting for a big storm at sea to test the sailors' adaptability, and then we'll be ready to set sail for Black Horse Island!" Kostor replied excitedly.

"I need not repeat the importance of Black Horse Island, make sure to keep the training confidential."

"Lord Landlord, rest assured, I haven't spoken a word about Black Horse Island in front of the sailors."

"Well done, keep up the good work."

"Yes, Lord Landlord!"

The sun was setting in the west.

Time flew by, and an afternoon passed just like that.

Liszt had just returned from inspecting the Thorn Cordyceps Shrubbery,

when he happened to meet his servant Tom, who was looking for him: “Sir, the Fresh Flower Caravan transport team has brought back a magician named Mr. Elkeson Truth. He’s waiting for you at the castle.”

“I know.”

This magician was a falconer invited by Mr. Granney Truth.

When Liszt arrived at the entrance to the castle, he just so happened to see the other party wearing the distinctive black magic cloak, completely enveloping his body—truth be told, Liszt had always been curious why magicians liked to wear black cloaks. He had worn a black cloak too, but he also had red, gray, and blue ones.

“Baron Liszt, Mr. Elkeson True pays his respects to you,” Elkerson, showing more courtesy than Granney, bowed slightly.

Liszt returned the courtesy: “Mr. Elkeson, welcome to Fresh Flower Town.”

“The town is beautiful, quiet and peaceful. I am delighted to be here to work. By the way, where is Mr. Granney Truth? I received his invitation letter.”

“He is making crystal lamps.”

Once inside the castle, the servants brought tea, and Liszt went straight to the point, “I heard you are a falconer, and I especially asked Mr. Granney to invite you to help me train a magical beast, the Wind Falcon. It’s time for its trial flight, but it still doesn’t know how to release the Magic Wind Blade.”

Elkeson replied calmly, “First of all, I must clarify that I have never trained falcon-type magical beasts, only ordinary falcons. It’s hard to guarantee whether I can train the Wind Falcon.”

“Just do what you can to train it. If it really doesn’t work out, it’s not a problem. Mr. Granney happens to want to use the materials of the magical beast to make a piece of magic equipment for me,” Liszt laughed, “If the training is successful, I will provide you with two gold coins as payment. Even if it fails, there will still be a gold coin as payment.”

“You are very generous,” Elkeson was satisfied with the offer, “I will do my utmost.”

Compared to magicians like Granney who are stubborn, rigid-minded and fail to grasp the situation, Elkeson was an excellent conversationalist. Ample knowledge, an interesting demeanor, a tone tinged with respect, and a strong, iron-like cadence made Liszt feel favorable towards him.

The refined iron cadence popular in high society was certainly more pleasing to the ear than the clumsy local speech of Coral Island.

It's not that one fears unfamiliar goods, but rather fears comparing goods and finding them wanting.

As they talked, Liszt began to regret—he should have directly invited Elkeson earlier, instead of spending a fist-sized Black Pearl to invite Granney.

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Chapter 163: The Cruel Eagle Torture Training

“Such a beautiful creature... The eagle is a majestic flier, and the falcon is the same; even eagles and falcons raised from birth yearn for freedom, rather than being a loyal dog.”

Mr. Elkeson admired the Wind Falcon perched on the windowsill, clucking his tongue in amazement.

Outside the castle, Douson, tethered by a chain, suddenly sneezed for some reason.

“Do you mean to say that eagles and falcons can't be commanded?” Liszt furrowed his brow, his idea was to train the Wind Falcon to be as loyal and obedient as Douson.

“They can become close to the person who feeds them, but there's no way to force them to recognize a master except by subjugation. Taming an eagle or falcon essentially involves applying constant external force to force it to change its natural habits as a bird of prey.”

“How do you change it, and how do you train it?”

“Endurance!”

“Endurance?”

“Yes, enduring is the most important step in subduing the proud nature of eagles and falcons. By preventing them from sleeping and keeping them hungry, you can completely shatter their spirit and change their habits. Only then will they hunt prey in the designed manner and not flee after being set free.”

Mr. Elkeson, with many years of falconry experience, expounded on this in front of Liszt.

He explained all details including the tools used for training, the steps involved, as well as different approaches for various eagles and falcons. Later, he planned to take forty days to summarize the training methods for the Wind Falcon, aiming to break its spirit

completely and turn it into a puppet on strings for the falconer, thereby achieving total subjugation.

After hearing this, Liszt felt an inexplicable discomfort.

Especially concerning the methods used for taming.

Enduring—to prevent the eagle or falcon from sleeping and thus break its spirit;
Starving—by wrapping twine around meat, causing the eagle or falcon to eat and then clean its stomach, followed by the removal of the twine to maintain a state of hunger;
Restrain—placing a hood over the bird's eyes so it wouldn't dare escape even when untethered; Hobble—tying strings to its legs so it couldn't extend its legs to hunt.

The entire training process was nothing but an endless torture for the bird of prey.

He couldn't help but ask, "Mr. Elkeson, is an eagle or falcon trained this way still an eagle or falcon?"

The ever-talkative Mr. Elkeson paused abruptly, then laughed and said, "Baron Liszt, an eagle or falcon is just a wild beast. When humans tame wild beasts, they either eat them, ride them, or use them for farming, treating them all as tools. Falconry is merely a more complex way of using a tool."

"Isn't there a relatively more humane method?"

Liszt did not consider himself to be of the tender-hearted sort, as he had treated the Earth Matron quite cruelly. But Juan Fu was different from the Earth Matron, Juan Fu had been cared for bit by bit by him and was not just any magical beast.

Besides, it was also a reward from the Smoke Mission, with a not-so-common cachet.

"I'm sorry, my lord," said Mr. Elkeson calmly, "I understand your thoughts. Indeed, the means of falconry can be cruel, but compared to the rewards, what is a little cruelty? The Wind Falcon is merely a magical beast. If you do not tame it, it will eventually rebel and escape, only causing you trouble."

Thinking about it, after a moment,

Liszt tucked away that shred of kindness in his heart and replied, "Fine, from tomorrow on, Juan Fu will be in your hands for training."

"I will need your cooperation as well, ideally five hours a day, to train with me. Only by doing so can it truly submit to you."

Juan Fu was still chirping away on the windowsill.

Completely unaware that its fate was about to plummet.

Liszt took a deep breath, suddenly changing his mind, “Mr. Elkeson, how about we wait another two days? Help me make the crystal lamps first. Mr. Grandini alone will have a hard time finishing the crystal lamps quickly.”

He half wanted Juan Fu to enjoy two more days, and half wanted to accelerate the progress on the Thorn Bug chain mission.

“If you truly need it, I’d be happy to serve you.”

In the evening.

Mr. Elkeson met with Mr. Grandini.

He greeted him warmly, “Grandini, I’m delighted to see you again. It’s been half a year since our last meeting. I’ve wanted to visit Moss Town several times, but kept being delayed by other matters.”

Mr. Grandini, however, was cold-faced, “If Baron Liszt didn’t need a falconer, I wouldn’t have bothered writing to you.”

“It seems you have quite a prejudice against me, which is truly regrettable. Baron Liszt hopes that we can work together to finish making all the Crystal Lamps as soon as possible.”

“Work together with you? You must be joking!”

Baron Liszt, who had been letting the two magicians introduce themselves, saw that things were about to become unpleasant, so he said, “Mr. Grandini, rest assured that you will not be shorted on your compensation. I simply hope to accelerate the production of the Crystal Lamps, for the Black Pearl Magic Equipment needs to be made as soon as possible.”

“I don’t think working with him will speed up the progress. Not every magician knows how to make Magic Equipment.”

Mr. Elkeson maintained his smile, “Lord Grandini, I acknowledge your craftsmanship is excellent, but please do not belittle me. Even if my skill is not as good, we’re only making Crystal Lamps after all, and it’s very common for two people to collaborate on such a project. Besides, Baron Liszt has said that he will pay my salary separately, so it won’t take away from your business.”

Seeing that Mr. Grandini was about to speak again.

Baron Liszt said impatiently, "Enough, this matter is settled. Now, let's begin the banquet to welcome Mr. Elkeson, with hopes that he'll enjoy his upcoming days in Fresh Flower Town."

Mr. Elkeson, still smiling, bowed in thanks, "Thank you for your hospitality. I've taken a stroll around Fresh Flower Town and have already fallen in love with its beautiful landscape and people, as well as its thriving atmosphere."

Look at that.

The way he spoke made even Baron Liszt blush.

He had assumed all magicians were like Mr. Grandini, but now he knew that there were indeed magicians with the elegance of nobles.

When the banquet began, town officials joined in.

The atmosphere became even livelier, with Mr. Elkeson's wit, humor, and erudition quickly winning everyone's favor. Mr. Grandini, however, kept a cold face throughout the entire event, focusing solely on his own eating and drinking, and not fitting in with the festivities.

In the following two days.

With Mr. Elkeson's involvement, the making of the Crystal Lamps indeed sped up, and by the morning of the third day, they successfully finished making ten Crystal Lamps.

All of the Crystal Lamps had been installed in the castle.

"Mr. Grandini, next, let's quickly forge the Black Pearl Magic Equipment," said Baron Liszt, who was in fact already regretting choosing to have him make the Magic Equipment. Still, maintaining a basic level of integrity was necessary, so he did not show any significant emotional change towards Mr. Grandini.

Mr. Grandini, with his usual indifferent expression and a hint of pride in his eyes, said, "What do you plan to name it? It's certainly going to be an exquisite piece of Magic Equipment. It deserves a name that reflects its character, so as not to waste my Magic Equipment crafting skill!"

"Calming Sea Pearl, I've already thought of it."

"Calming Sea Pearl?" Mr. Grandini, after pondering for a moment, replied without courtesy, "It's a mediocre name. How about 'Eye of the Storm' instead? It has a stronger presence and fits its role better than Calming Sea Pearl."

Eye of the Storm?

Calming Sea Pearl?

Deep down, Baron Liszt had to admit that the name Mr. Grandini came up with was indeed more impressive than his own, but he was displeased with Mr. Grandini's attitude, "It will be called Calming Sea Pearl, no, Calming Sea Divine Pearl!"

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Chapter 164: The Key to the Evolution of the Thorn Bug

Having dispatched the clueless Granney,

Liszt closed the door and, in the brightly lit study, he waved his hand, summoning forth the Smoke Mission.

"Complete the task, reward: Magic Potion variable rapid growth variety of Thorn."

"Magic Potion!"

Seeing these two Serpent Script characters, Liszt's pupils dilated instantly. The long-desired mutation was now a reality, for indeed, a Magic Potion had been cultivated from the Thorns! Not cutting down the ordinary Rapid Growth Thorns in the beginning was truly a wise choice; no matter how practical the Rapid Growth Iron Thorns were, they couldn't compare to the importance of a Magic Potion.

Especially now, as he had entered the Elite Earth Knight Sequence, it was precisely the time he needed a Magic Potion.

It was like a timely rain, pouring refreshingly through his heart, utterly exhilarating.

The smoke slowly transformed in front of his eyes, forming new Serpent Script: "Mission: A chain outbreak of five varieties of mutant Thorns is the Thorn Elf Bug expressing its desire for evolution, launching a firm attack against fate. As its contracted master, you should lend a hand, please provide new varieties of Thorns for the Thorn Bug. Reward: A Little Minor Elf."

At this point,

Liszt's pupils dilated once again.

"A Thorn Bug chain mission, finally at the last link. My first Little Minor Elf will be a Thorn Minor Elf! I originally thought it the least likely to evolve successfully, but unexpectedly, it's the first to evolve... The new Thorn variety isn't available in Fresh Flower Town; it seems I need to go outside to find it."

With that thought, he did not hesitate for a moment.

He directly called over his Retainer Knights, Philip and Xavier—the two Apprentice Knights who had been the first to cultivate Dou Qi and the most likely to break through to become Earth Knights; Liszt was focusing on training them.

“Philip, Xavier, I have a task for you.”

The young faces, now tanned dark, no longer held a wooden expression but rather a resolute one: “We are at your service, my lord!”

“Philip, make a trip to Coral City. Tell Captain Abagon to mobilize all the routes of the caravan to look for Thorns, not ordinary Thorns, but unusual varieties within them.”

Philip promptly replied, “Understood!”

“Zavier, accompany the Thorn Caravan on a trip, the same mission, to find unusual Thorn varieties. Also, when leaving, stop by and call for Teacher Marcus.”

“As you wish.”

Zavier quickly brought Marcus, who had been training the serf boys, over.

“My lord, you called for me?”

“Come with me.” Liszt led Marcus straight to the Worm Room on the second floor, pointing out the increasingly plump Thorn Bug, “Teacher Marcus, you are the person I trust the most. Take a look at these Elf Bugs, do you notice anything?”

Marcus seldom saw Elf Bugs.

But that did not mean he was unfamiliar with Elf Bugs. As someone who aspired to be a Noble, he had made it a point to inquire about matters related to Elf Bugs. Therefore, when he saw the Thorn Bug, he was stunned: “My lord, this Thorn Bug... has it entered the Fat Pupa Stage?”

“The emergence of four consecutive varieties of mutant Thorns has made my Thorn Bug no ordinary bug. It has a strong desire to evolve. I can already feel its urgent craving to evolve. So, I want to help it. I need you to make a trip to Tulip Castle, as well as to the Beer Castle and Shattered Stone Castle.”

“My lord, what’s the task you’re entrusting me with?”

“Get in touch with them to inquire about Thorn Bugs. I suspect all three places have Thorn Bugs; Tulip Castle alone has two more. If they also have control over unusual varieties of Thorns, negotiate for me. I want to bring my Thorn Bug to assimilate these Thorn varieties.”

Thomas nodded in agreement, then furrowed his brows and asked, “My lord, do you think the Thorn Bug could possibly break through to become a Little Minor Elf?”

“Why not? Maybe the odds are low, but nothing is absolute. Even if there’s only the slightest possibility, I will not give up. I need a Thorn Minor Elf to care for my Rapid Growth Iron Thorns, understand?”

“Understood, I’ll set off at once.”

“I’ll write three letters for you to take with you.”

Marcus set off with the three letters.

Liszt wasn’t idle either. After greeting Douson and Elkerson, who was preparing to train Juan Fu, he set off toward the thorn shrubbery.

He was searching for a new variant of magic potion rapid growth thorn, which he called Rapid Growth Magic Thorn.

Rapid Growth Thorn, Rapid Growth Poison Thorn, Rapid Growth Spiky Thorn, Rapid Growth Iron Thorns, Rapid Growth Magic Thorn—the benefits brought by the Thorn Bug were already rich and were now on the verge of a breakthrough. The future profits that thorns could bring would be even richer.

Riding on the back of a Li Dragon Horse,

he suddenly thought of a very serious question, “Now that I have a Little Minor Elf, I can probably choose to change my surname, right?”

Some nobles would change their surname for their elves.

Usually, they would change their surname after acquiring a Greater Elf, to declare their family’s glory. But since Greater Elves were rare, many smaller nobles followed suit; upon acquiring a Little Minor Elf, they would change their surname—after all, Greater Elves lived two hundred years and Little Minor Elves lived one hundred years, both of which could prolong the glory of a family for several generations.

The Tulip Family began in the era of the earl. The Tulip Lesser Spirit evolved into the Tulip Great Elf, and the surname changed from “Tile” to “Tulip.”

The Lycra Family of Beer Castle had a Lycra Minor Elf and directly changed their surname to “Lycra.”

The Shattered Stone Family from Shattered Stone Castle also had a Little Minor Elf but did not change their surname. Perhaps they harbored ambitions to wait for a Greater Elf

before changing the surname, or perhaps they were too modest to use a Little Minor Elf as their surname.

“In any case, I can now change my surname to Thorn... Liszt Thorn... It doesn't sound as noble as Liszt Tulip, never mind, I won't change it. I'll continue to bear the surname Tulip and maintain some distance from Tulip Castle so that I can still benefit from the Earl in the future.”

He arrived at the Thorn Cordyceps Shrubbery.

Bug Guard Members came forward to salute.

He simply used the Eye of Magic to observe the thorns. The Thorn Cordyceps were the most conspicuous with their abundant magic power. Moments later, Liszt discovered a new trace of magic power in a corner of the shrubbery and determined the location of the Rapid Growth Magic Thorn.

The Rapid Growth Magic Thorn was not conspicuous.

On the contrary, compared to the surrounding Rapid Growth Thorns, it was even smaller. This smallness was not because it was in the seedling phase but rather because the entire plant had a dwarfed appearance. Judging by its form, it had definitely grown for more than a month, with branches fully spread out, but the height only reached the lower leg.

“The chaotic, attribute-less magic power is like that of the Black Tulip, not bad at all. With this, I have a new magic potion available to use... Most importantly, this is a rapid growth variant of the magic potion, practically a Gold Coin production line!”

He touched the Rapid Growth Magic Thorn. Its thorns were very small and rather blunt, posing virtually no harm.

Beside it was a Rapid Growth Spiky Thorn, whose thorns glinted coldly, as if ready to kill at any moment.

“I need to protect this Rapid Growth Magic Thorn. Clear out all the other varieties of thorns, from top to root, to make room for its growth.”

Having confirmed the plan for cultivating the Rapid Growth Magic Thorn,

he faced another concern: “The Rapid Growth Magic Thorn needs Thorn Bugs to increase production, as does the Rapid Growth Iron Thorns, how should I allocate them?”

One can't have both the fish and the bear's paw.

His only hope was for the Thorn Bug to break through into a Thorn Minor Elf soon and affect a larger range of thorns.

Standing up, he looked across over a hundred acres of Thorn Cordyceps Shrubbery, envisioning an endless supply of magic potions and high-quality wood.

“The Sea of Thorns is a bit exaggerated; The Land of Thorns is a bit mundane; The Forest of Thorns lacks creativity... I might as well call this shrubbery the Thorn Garden. I’ll tend to it as I would a garden!”

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Chapter 165: Flame Mushroom Magic Potion Collaboration

“Oh, my God!”

When Goltai received the notification and hurried to the Thorn Garden, he immediately opened his mouth wide and exaggeratedly described, “I can’t believe this is real, Magic Medicine Thorns? I thought Fresh Flower Town was the place where the knight’s glory shone, but now I realize that this place is more like the birthplace of the knight’s glory!”

“The birthplace of knight’s glory? I like the sound of that, Consultant Goltai, and there might be even more surprises that you can’t imagine,” Liszt said mysteriously.

With the existence of the Smoke Mission as a golden finger, everything here was to be expected.

Dragon!

Smoke Dragon!

A dragon that could found a nation, bringing such benefits, is nothing.

“Are there more surprises?”

“Of course, you will know soon,” Liszt referred to the evolution of the Thorn Bug, believing that soon, they would receive news of a new variety of thorns, and after that, the assimilation of the Thorn Bug.

What would be gained then was a miraculous Thorn Minor Elf.

He didn’t tell Goltai; Goltai couldn’t keep secrets. Regarding the evolution of the Thorn Bug, he wasn’t planning to announce it until it was successful, letting only Marcus in on it. Liszt had great trust in Marcus; his family had already settled in Fresh Flower Town.

He swiftly changed the subject.

Liszt said, “Teacher Goltai, this Thorn Garden can commence with transplantation and planning. My idea is to transplant the Rapid Growth Spiky Thorn and Rapid Growth Poison Thorn to the edge of Thorn Ridge, to enclose Fresh Flower Town and prevent invasions from magical beasts or thieves from outside.”

“That’s a significant project,” Goltai said with a troubled look, “It might not be feasible in a short period, as the autumn harvest is upon us, and I’m organizing serfs to reap this year’s crop.”

“Then let’s wait until after the autumn harvest to arrange for the Thorn Garden. But for now, around the Rapid Growth Magic Thorns, someone must immediately arrange for the removal of the ordinary thorns, allowing the Magic Medicine Thorns to grow and breed,” said Liszt.

“As you wish.”

A moment later.

Worm Affairs Officer Rom Barrel, who was inspecting the cordyceps, also hurried over.

Liszt had to give another set of instructions: “The protective measures for the Thorn Garden must be strengthened, with at least a squad of four Bug Guard Members on guard, divided into eight-hour shifts, with three squads rotating.”

“Understood!”

“Also, I will purchase several large drums to be placed in the wooden hut where the Bug Guard Members keep watch. In case of any situations, they should beat the drums as a signal,” said Liszt.

After making proper arrangements, he reluctantly left the Thorn Garden.

Back at the castle.

Mr. Elkeson True had already designed a complete set of tools for training Juan Fu, including an eagle hood, eagle tether, eagle water bottle, eagle gloves, eagle creance, falcon stand, bait, and other equipment. All these were made to precise measurements according to Juan Fu’s body shape.

It wasn’t too expensive, but neither was it cheap—altogether, it cost a gold coin.

“Baron Liszt, for the next period, we must enter the stage of training the bird through sleep deprivation. You must refrain from feeding Juan Fu. The rest, leave to me, preventing it from sleeping. Eventually, it will submit its proud head to you completely,” advised Elkeson.

“I understand,” said Liszt.

Liszt reached out and petted Juan Fu. Although Juan Fu didn't bite Liszt, it dodged his touch, as it didn't like anyone touching it.

In the following time, the training of Juan Fu began.

Having moved out of the castle and confined to a separate falcon room, Elkerson watched Juan Fu closely, recording all the detailed data about him. It must be said, this witty and humorous magician, instead of performing his duties as a magician, found it interesting to take on the role of a breeder.

“Mr. Elkerson, which systems of magic are you skilled in?”

“Earth System and Water System.”

“I have a curious question, how did you embark on the path of a magician?”

Elkerson reflected, “Baron Liszt, I come from a family of serfs. As it happened, my teacher passed by Serpent Spear City on his way to the small town where I lived, to select some plants; he needed an assistant and chose me. Afterward, he asked if I wanted to join him to explore the truth, and I agreed.”

“So, you are from Serpent Spear City.”

“My family were originally serfs from Midway Island, but when I was very young, because Viscount Clare angered Marquis Deep Throat, Clare was exiled to an uninhabited island. Thus, my family and I came to Coral Island and settled down in Serpent Spear City, but my parents have passed away, and I'm on my own now.”

The Marquis of Deep Throat Island, full name Wallace Pineapple Green, is one of the seven marquises of the Grand Duchy.

The long-forgotten Viscount of Little Papa Island, whose brother, the Viscount of Da Pa Pa Island, is a noble vassal of Marquis Deep Throat. As for Midway Island, Liszt had not heard of it before, and knew nothing about Viscount Clare.

However, in earlier years, when the Tulip Family received their fief on Coral Island, they bought a large number of serfs from various places; Elkerson was likely bought as a serf to Coral Island at that time.

They made small talk for a bit.

Suddenly, Liszt asked, “Mr. Elkerson, do you know Fire Attribute magic?”

“I am not proficient in it, but I can definitely do it.”

“In that case, I have a batch of Fire Attribute magic potions; could you make them into magic power potions for me?” Liszt decided to entrust the creation of magic power potions to Elkerson.

Elkerson’s brows raised slightly, and he chuckled, “I would not refuse a task that brings in money. On the path to seeking truth, I am always in need of gold coins; knowledge never comes for free.”

Magicians like to mess around with vials and jars, studying various types of explosions and dangerous things.

All of these materials must be purchased with gold coins. As a class existing outside the feudal system, if they want to earn gold coins, they have to work on their own — making magic potions, crafting magic equipment; those specializing in the Ice System might even make and sell ice blocks.

Of course, some magicians choose to join the feudal system.

For example, they serve as court magicians or magic advisors for nobles, enjoying the patronage of a noble.

But magicians like Elkerson and Granney, of their level, certainly cannot enjoy such patronage and must work on their own to earn money to purchase knowledge and explore the truth.

At Tulip Castle, there is a magician specializing in the cooperative production of magic potions, living a reclusive life without lacking money.

These two could only take on odd jobs, living a semi-secluded life.

“Then, I entrust the magic flame mushrooms I have to you for processing. I will build a Flame Mushroom Processing Workshop at Mushroom Hamlet and plan to have a long-term cooperation with you, how does that sound?”

He had intended to keep Granney around, but now, he felt that Elkerson was a better choice.

Elkerson seemed hesitant, “To stay in Fresh Flower Town for a long time?”

“You don’t have to stay here all the time; the production of flame mushrooms is limited. If you could take out a week every month, that would be enough to process all of the Flame Mushroom magic potions.”

“In that case, I am willing to cooperate,” Elkerson nodded, then voiced his confusion, “Baron Liszt, why don’t you cooperate with Tulip Castle?”

“Isn’t it the same if the products are made first? There is no loss due to transportation costs and perhaps that could even earn a little more.”

Liszt narrowed his eyes, choosing not to tell the truth. He had been very conspicuous lately, making quite an impression on Coral Island. Too much rigidity can lead to collapse, so moderation is key in everything. As for joining the Elite Earth Knight Sequence, it’s best kept to himself.

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Chapter 166: Juan Fu’s Miserable Bird Life

Elkerson oversaw the construction of the Flame Mushroom Processing Workshop and stewed falcon Juan Fu every day.

Granney threw himself into the making of the Calming Sea Pearl wholeheartedly.

Goltai and other officials presided over the autumn harvest work of Fresh Flower Town.

The commoners of the town also joined the harvesting teams, reaping wheat, barley, rye, leveling wasteland, picking wild fruits, gathering vegetables, and collecting Tulip pod fruits. After autumn, the long Ice Snow winter will set in, and all the crops in Fresh Flower Town will cease to grow.

“Master, these are the freshly picked Dragon Kui from today,” Butler Carter brought over a plate of dark little fruits.

With the boost from the Dragon Kui Bugs, the yield of the Dragon Kui Field surged, harvesting a plate of fruits every day. These things indeed tasted good, but eating too much was not comfortable, Liszt only tasted them occasionally, and the rest were given to his subordinates.

Ever since the outbreak of the Thorn Bugs.

The Dragon Kui Bug had become the most chicken-ribbed among the Elf Bugs.

The output of Dragon Kui was low and couldn’t be sold in bulk, only serving as a taste improver.

However, taking the example of the Thorn Bug, Liszt would not underestimate the Dragon Kui Bug, who knew when it might have a big outbreak and trigger a set of chain tasks, evolving into a Dragon Kui Junior Elf.

“You should try some too.”

“Thank you, Master.”

After eating a few Dragon Kui fruits, Liszt asked, "We're approaching the end of October now, and in two more months, it will be winter. Has the warehouse started preparing for food storage?"

"I've already entrusted Captain Abagon and Captain Sherlock to be ready at any time to purchase the newly harvested wheat."

"Relying on just wheat isn't enough, sorghum, beans, salt, sugar, etc., all need to be purchased, even in winter, I don't want the dietary conditions at the Castle to decline," said Liszt, who did not want to compromise, "I will notify Consultant Goltai to build a warehouse near the Castle specifically for storing winter supplies."

Suddenly.

He thought of something, "Right, remember to remind me to hire people to build an ice cellar in Fresh Flower Town when the time comes."

"Yes, Master."

Salt peter ice-making was indeed convenient, readily available, and recyclable. Unfortunately, there was some loss in the process, and now, out of more than three hundred pounds of salt peter powder, only over two hundred and sixty pounds were left, a loss of nearly forty-fifty pounds. In another year and a half, ice-making would no longer be possible.

A new Salt peter Mine was sought in vain.

So, at the end of the day, it was essential to dig a large ice cellar to preserve the ice from winter, for use in the following year.

Warehouse, ice cellar, falcon stand, dog kennel, dog prison (Earth Matron), apple desk, stables, Tridacna shell, Liszt discovered that the Castle, which was supposed to stand alone on a hillside surrounded by green grass, was quickly becoming encircled by various illegal buildings.

"No, the warehouse and ice cellar have to be built in a faraway place; the dog kennel will be moved to the entrance of the Castle; the falcon stand can be relocated to the Castle's top platform, built into a third floor in the form of a loft. Apple desks, apple trees, and Tridacna shells can be considered as scenery, the stables need to be moved further away."

The reason for leaving open space around the Castle.

Is to set up a ring of safety zones where one cannot hide their form, to prevent assassins from sneaking in.

“Not only the illegal buildings need to be moved, but a ring of hedges should be planted, and a moat should be dug as a part of the Castle’s defense. If funds and materials permit, the Castle walls, especially the entrance, should be fortified, preferably into a bridge-style gatehouse.”

With the terrain advantage, the gate of the Castle can be built at a high position, connected to the outside by a bridge, under which people can directly walk.

This would make it difficult for attacking forces to charge in large numbers of knights at the same time, ensuring the Castle could not be taken down in a short period.

To win time for reinforcements from allies.

Speaking of which, it was unlikely that Fresh Flower Town would be attacked, after all, Liszt was the son of an Earl, and the blood of the Tulip Family was a banner on this island. But just in case of an encounter with Pirates, just in case the pirates insisted on attacking, a well-defended Castle could be a lifesaver.

“To thoroughly complete the castle, a considerable sum of money is needed. I am indeed very wealthy, with countless fixed assets... but as for liquid funds, even though the seafood business lends support, it still falls short of the mark, which is a headache,”

A castle that could bear one’s own name.

It should at least sustain an independent life within its walls, with ample food, solid defenses, and a water source. Perched atop a cliff, Tulip Castle had a spring; even if soldiers surrounded it, it could at least hold out for half a year to a year—in this regard, the castle in Fresh Flower Town was lacking.

Without a water source, water had to be drawn from the town’s well.

“Should I seize the opportunity to sell some mithril, crystals, and jade? Get a few thousand gold coins for them first!”

The high-value items he could sell externally were a box of magic power mithril, a box of dragon’s mine crystals, and a box of magic power stones jade.

And the remaining dozen or so Black Pearls.

Black Pearls were of immense value, especially the large ones the size of washbasins or basketballs, instrumental for navigation, while smaller Black Pearls could be made into personal defense ornaments. Selling them now would be very disadvantageous, as Tridacna were not commonly found.

Especially such large Tridacna.

The remaining mithril, crystals, and jade were also valuable but unsellable items he equally couldn't bear to part with.

"Forget it, let's not think about these things anymore; it's not yet time for me to lie back and enjoy,"

"I still have to strive!"

As these thoughts came to him, he felt his blood stir, unable to stay put in the castle.

He simply took his retainer knights and the ever-growing Douson on a casual stroll—visiting the Dog Prison to see the seemingly pregnant Earth Matron, allowing Douson to cozy up to it; going to the cow farm to see the pregnant three cows, feeling the little calves inside their bellies that were likely to be Dragon Breed Cows.

Heading to the Fruit Thief Monkey Training Grounds in Oyster Village, watching the obediently trained Fruit Thief Monkeys climbing trees to pick Fragrant Coconut Fruits, and also the three female monkeys with swollen bellies.

Visiting Little Wheat Village to see the 12 large, fat pigs in the pig farm; by winter, these big fat pigs would be ready for slaughter.

And the growth of every piece of Elf Cordyceps.

As such, the day came to an end.

Then, in the blink of an eye,

Three days had slipped past in a blur.

With no news of a new Thorn Bug species coming in, Liszt had been cooperating with Elkerson in training Juan Fu. Juan Fu, having not eaten or drunk for three days, had become hoarse from crying, unable to sleep, its eyes bloodshot red. Upon seeing Liszt, its cries were even more pitiful.

"Gah-jee!"

"Gah-jee!"

Its regal appearance had disappeared, leaving only a disheveled, oversized fat bird. Seeing that Liszt did not feed it any food after calling for quite some time, Juan Fu seemed to have run out of energy and plummeted from the Falcon Stand.

Liszt was just about to go help it up.

But Elkerson stepped in to stop him: “Baron Liszt, now is the perfect opportunity to break Juan Fu’s spirit. Do not interrupt; otherwise, it will take even more time to wear it down.”

“It hasn’t submitted yet in this state?”

“No, it has not bowed its head, so it does not count as being subdued.”

“Alright, you continue to tough it out with the bird,” Liszt shook his head, glanced at Juan Fu rising from the ground, and turned to leave. Walking far away, he could still faintly hear the pitiful cries of Juan Fu.

“Gah-jee...”

Chapter 167: Fly Free, Juan Fu

At the end of October, the weather turned cool.

The atmosphere in the castle became more and more oppressive, mainly because its master, Liszt, was growing increasingly irritable.

Fresh Flower Town was thriving, with more than four hundred new serfs quickly integrating and the autumn harvest yielding large amounts of food each day, stacking the storehouses full.

In such an atmosphere, he should have been happy.

However, the news relayed by the caravans left him quite restless, his tone slightly gloomy, “Abagon, the Fresh Flower Caravan covers so many small towns’ seafood businesses and has built such a vast network of information, yet you haven’t even found one different species of thorn?”

Abagon knelt on the ground, trembling with fear.

The words of an angry Elite Earth Knight, the extremely dissatisfied attitude of a Domain Overlord, put him under immense pressure.

“Lord Landlord, I’m sorry, Abagon has disappointed you. I’ve already had everyone in the caravan put out the word—anyone who can provide a new species of thorn will receive a handsome reward, but all the thorns that have been delivered are common varieties, none meeting your requirements.”

“You’ve searched the entirety of the area covered by the Fresh Flower Caravan?”

“Birch City, Elm Forest City, Serpent Spear City, Shattered Stone City, and the surrounding small towns—have all been searched. To continue searching, we would need to go to the villages beneath the towns.”

“Then go to the villages, one by one, ask, one by one, search,” Liszt’s temper was not really directed at Abagon, but regardless, he was irritable, “You can directly retain one-tenth of the Fresh Flower Caravan’s funds to use in the search for new species of thorn.”

Abagon replied cautiously, “Yes, Lord Landlord, I will search diligently!”

Grantaire had been promoted, and he had only just been given the opportunity to be promoted to captain of the Fresh Flower Caravan. He certainly didn’t want to be incompetent and then be sent back by Liszt to farm again.

“Go on, get to work.”

Liszt waved his hand, signalling Abagon to leave.

Then he sat down in his chair, rubbing his temples with his hands. Not only had the Fresh Flower Caravan come up empty-handed, but Sherlock’s Thorn Caravan had likewise turned up nothing, having just been scolded by him. He had thought that it would be a simple matter for the caravans spread across Coral Island to casually inquire and find a new species of thorn, but it turned out to be not so easy.

“The caravans have offered a handsome reward for finding a new species of thorn, and the commoners who hear about it will surely search frantically... the lack of results for several days suggests a strong possibility that Coral Island truly has no new species of thorn... now, I can only wait for Marcus’s news.”

He had instructed the caravans and Marcus to look in two different directions.

It was all to discover more species of thorn, to enhance the chances of the Thorn Bug’s breakthrough, the more pheromones gathered, the greater the possibility of evolution.

“If Marcus also brings no good news, where should I go to search?”

With no leads on Coral Island, he could only search other islands. As a minor noble, his social circle was largely limited to Coral Island. Earls are nobles directly enfeoffed by the Grand Duke, and most of the surrounding islands are ruled by Marquises and their followers, with relationships to Coral Island that are not very cordial.

It was frowned upon for followers of different landlords to make casual contact with each other.

However, there was one island he could enter and exit freely—Red Crab Island.

Liszt was a legitimate descendant of the Long Taro Family bloodline, and his mother was the daughter of the master of Long Taro Castle, one of the seven great Marquises of the Grand Duchy on Red Crab Island, Marquis Merlin Taro. When he had visited Marquis Merlin, he had once been recruited by the sparsely populated Long Taro Family.

“If I were to ask Grandfather Merlin, no, if I just ask Cousin Meioubao for help, I should be able to complete the task.”

The vast Red Crab Island, when considered, is equivalent to a province in China, could it really not produce a few different species of thorn? Perhaps in the hedges of Long Taro Castle, there are several different species of thorn.

At that thought.

His irritation subsided slightly, “If one day I can’t make it on Coral Island, I will go to seek refuge at Long Taro Castle. I believe Grandfather would at least arrange for me a Viscount’s domain.”

However, with Red Crab Island’s extensive family and businesses, it might not be as easy as Coral Island.

No matter how close a cousin is, they can never be as close as immediate family.

Suddenly, his thoughts turned to Asina Salmon, and his mood inevitably warmed slightly, “It’s been months, I wonder if Asina has held hands with another noble... Ah, I remember the running under the sunset that afternoon, that was my fleeting youth.” He had quite a fondness for this noble young lady who had brazenly confessed her love to him.

But soon.

The pleasant memory was shattered by a piercing howl.

The sound came from the falcon room outside the castle, an expression of torment from Juan Fu.

Just as his irritation began to subside, it surged back up. He rose to his feet, walked out of the castle, and approached the falcon stand. Mr. Elkerson was sitting opposite, his eyes red with bloodshot veins.

Seeing Liszt arrive, he hurriedly said, “Baron Liszt.”

“Mr. Elkerson, has Juan Fu not yet submitted?”

“The pride in this Wind Falcon’s heart is beyond my imagination,” Mr. Elkerson explained with some embarrassment. He believed the harrowing falconry step he’d thought all but assured had come to a complete standstill.

The Wind Falcon, Juan Fu, would rather starve to death than bow his head.

Liszt suddenly noticed traces of red blood at Juan Fu’s beak. “Has it vomited blood?”

“Yes, due to prolonged starvation, its body is now in danger. If it fails several more falconry sessions... I apologize, Baron Liszt, this is something I’ve never encountered with regular hawks or falcons.”

“So, Juan Fu might starve to death?”

“There is that possibility, but also a possibility that after a few more days, it might bow its head. As you know, after all, magical beasts are just wild animals; they will succumb to the threat of death. At that time, after several training sessions, it will become your qualified pet.”

“Cawww...” the blood-vomiting Juan Fu on the falcon stand let out a pitiful and mournful cry.

But its gaze didn’t hold a shred of submission; it remained defiant. Looking into its eyes, Liszt felt as though he could see its disdain for fate.

Fate.

Perhaps it was an aftereffect from the Smoke Dragon, but he often found himself associating everything with fate lately, almost veering towards the prophetic; always contemplating cause and effect, fate and destiny.

Thankfully, the materialistic values rooted in him from childhood still stood guard.

“I think Juan Fu will not submit to anyone,” Liszt shook his head. The Wind Falcon was not a caged bird; from a young age, he could see Juan Fu’s yearning and longing for the sky, “Mr. Elkerson, let’s stop the training here. I need you to devote more effort to the development of Flame Mushroom Magic Potion.”

“What?”

Mr. Elkerson was stunned. “Baron Liszt if we give up now, all the effort put in previously will be in vain, and there will likely be no second chance for falconry as it matures.”

“Don’t worry, I’ll pay you as if you’ve completed the job,” Liszt decided to be wilful just this once, the beautiful imagery of controlling the falcon in each hand was best left to the imagination.

As he spoke, he untied the ropes binding Juan Fu on the falcon stand.

He personally brought meat and water to feed Juan Fu. As a magical beast, Juan Fu had strong recovery abilities, regaining much of its vitality in just half a day.

“Fly, Juan Fu!”

He opened the door of the falcon room and gave Juan Fu a push. Clearly unaccustomed to the situation, Juan Fu turned its head to look at Liszt, its eyes flickering with confusion.

But after a moment’s hesitation, it finally flapped its wings and hopped off the falcon stand.

Flying.

Thud.

It fell down.

However, it quickly discovered its inborn instinct for flight amidst the failure. With one final leap from the ground, flapping its wings, shedding two feathers, it successfully soared into the sky.

“Caw!”

Leaving behind a final call, without looking back, it vanished into the expanse of blue sky and white clouds.

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Chapter 168: The Evil Scientist

“Master, Juan Fu has flown away.”

“I know.”

“You must be feeling quite upset right now.”

“Of course, these damn magical beasts. Next time I catch one, I should just make soup out of it!” Liszt complained bitterly, “I fed it, gave it freedom, raised it for so long, and still couldn’t tame it. It just flew away like that. It just goes to show that magical beasts and wild beasts are really not much different.”

“Woof woof!” Douson in the doghouse lodged its protest.

After venting his frustration on Juan Fu, Liszt turned around; there was no sign of anger on his face. "Mr. Carter, has the Thorn Caravan not purchased the female mastiff yet?"

"According to Sherlock, we need to contact the Fresh Flower Caravan; North Valley City does not have a suitable female mastiff for Douson's... size," Carter said carefully, choosing his words.

"Hurry it up, otherwise Douson will go crazy sooner or later. I've noticed it's been looking at those horses in the stables with a strange gleam in its eye."

"Uh..."

To keep Douson from going mad,

Liszt could only train it vigorously: "Douson, Rock Spike!"

Pfft!

A thick rock spike pierced the earth's surface.

"Douson, Multiple Stone Spikes!"

Pfft, pfft, pfft... pfft!

A cluster of thick rock spikes pierced the earth's surface.

"Casting magic quite skillfully, Douson really is an outstanding magical beast. Baron Liszt, Douson must be at the intermediate magical beast level now," said Mr. Elkeson, who had just woken up from a nap, as he walked over from a distance, eyes sparkling while looking at Douson, "Such a magnificent creature, calling it the King of Thorn Ridge is no longer fitting."

He already knew that Douson had consumed a Bloodline Fruit.

Liszt stroked Douson's big head: "Among intermediate magical beasts, it's probably one of the weaker ones, especially since it can only cast Rock Spike. Multiple Stone Spikes barely counts as a new kind of magic, but after all, it's just a superposition of Rock Spike, the essence has not changed."

Douson turned its head and licked Liszt's hand with its tongue.

Immediately, its hand was covered in saliva.

The personal servant hurriedly took out a handkerchief and handed it to Liszt to wipe his hand.

Mr. Elkeson laughed, "It's still not quite a mature magical beast, and its comprehension of magic isn't very extraordinary. Even for us magicians, mastering a single type of magic takes a long time to refine, let alone a magical beast. As it ages, it will self-learn the power granted by its bloodline and discover how to unleash new magic."

"I hope so," said Liszt, not dwelling on it, "At least for now, Douson has no natural predators on Coral Island. In the future, I will train it to adapt to the battlefield and help me achieve glory."

"You will, like the Earl, attain numerous dazzling glories."

Liszt smiled faintly, "I think so too."

This was not boasting.

This was confidence.

A noble must have both a desire and confidence for glory; humility is only seen as timidity or a lack of ambition. Regardless of what Liszt really thought, on the surface, he must always appear ready for battle, ready to earn accolades. Only this way would his subordinates follow him.

Life is but a play, all dependent on acting.

As a soul of an experienced adult, coupled with the noble education received from childhood, his acting skills were undoubtedly masterful.

After performing for a bit, he asked, "Mr. Elkeson, how is the progress on the production of the Flame Mushroom Magic Potion?"

"The agents are being mixed and tested, and I believe we will soon enter the production phase. Flame Mushrooms are a very excellent magic potion, extracting magic power to create the potion is not difficult."

"Then proceed with production as soon as possible."

In the past few days, Liszt had firmly settled into the phase of an Elite Earth Knight. He had also tried to continue his training without the aid of Magic Potions. However, it proved that his talent was not exceptional, as he was still confined by the limitations of Dou Qi and unable to increase the total amount of Dou Qi inside his body.

Usually, Elite Earth Knights who cannot afford the Magic Potions turn to honing their Dou Qi circulation skills instead.

By continuously tempering these skills, one can also improve their strength, and meticulously refining their understanding of Dou Qi manuscripts can lead to more than a minor increase in power.

A single Elite Earth Knight is capable of dueling seven or eight Common Earth Knights without a problem.

As a wealthy upstart, Liszt wasn't in a hurry to refine his Dou Qi circulation skills. He had already mastered two Dou Qi Secret Techniques, "Flaming Wave" and "Fire Dragon Drill," and had partial mastery over "Multi-Arrow." Moreover, another Dou Qi Secret Technique, "The Eye of Magic," had reached a high level of accomplishment.

Coupled with the Li Dragon Horse and the Crimson Blood Sword, his personal strength far surpassed Marcus's and was undoubtedly a top figure among Elite Earth Knights.

If one were to include Douson, perhaps he could even give the Earl a run for his money.

"It should... be possible... I guess." He had never seen a Sky Knight fight with all their might, nor had he witnessed their formidable charge on the battlefield, so he could only make an estimate.

After all, it was said that the stronger Low-Level magical beasts could even spar with Sky Knights.

Douson, now an Intermediate Magical Beast, could give the Earl a hard time with just its fierce Rock Spike magic. With Liszt shouting support from the sidelines—no, commanding the battle—it should be possible to hold their own.

The development of the territory was on the right track.

There was no need for Liszt to do anything in particular.

So most of the time, he found things to do for himself. At sixteen, his youthful body was bursting with energy, which he could either use to endure tedious training or find something else to occupy himself.

He decided to inspect the progress of the Calming Sea Pearl's creation.

In the new house in Little Wheat Village, Granney led the Magic Apprentices, living almost without showing his face, even eating meals in the studio.

On this point, Liszt had to admit that Granney was more dedicated than Elkeson: "Both are magicians, but the two seem to be complete opposites. One is arrogant and paranoid, the other is witty and humorous. Elkeson is better at socializing, while Granney is focused on work. Another thing, Granney seems to have a deeper well of knowledge?"

If another young indigenous landlord had to choose, they probably would find Elkeson's wit and humor far superior to Granney's dullness, but Liszt appreciated Elkeson's mannerisms while understanding the need to analyze rationally—aside from detailed falconry techniques, Elkeson's other areas of expertise seemed quite superficial.

Especially in terms of professional knowledge, far from as solid as Granney's.

"Baron, the teacher is busy. He asked that you not disturb him," the magic apprentice Charley said cautiously, afraid that his teacher's temper might irritate Liszt.

Gathering his thoughts, Liszt replied, "I'm just here for a visit. I won't disturb your teacher. Take me inside."

"Well... okay, but please speak softly. The teacher needs quiet for his work, and he hates being interrupted. I've been scolded by him many times for that."

They entered the inner workshop of the room.

The light from the Crystal Lamps illuminated the workbench—Granney had his own Crystal Lamp fixtures, designed like a desk lamp, a very clever idea.

The desk was cluttered with a large number of materials and tools.

Next to it were many stoves with pots and basins of various sizes boiling on them, containing liquids of different colors. The strange mix of odors was uncomfortable to smell.

Granney was hunched over the table, carving runes into a basketball-sized Black Pearl with a fine engraving knife. His brown hair was a mess, stained with who knows what, speckled with multiple colors. His magic cloak was dyed like a camouflage uniform, giving him an oddly villainous mad scientist vibe.

Completely absorbed.

Too busy to pay attention to Liszt.

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Chapter 169: Fresh Flower Town Specialty Fresh Flower Soap

Liszt watched silently for a moment.

Without saying a word, he left Granney's workshop—he simply couldn't understand what Granney was doing.

“Take good care of your master, especially be careful with those bottles and jars boiling on the stove, and make sure they don’t explode. Personal safety is far more important than work,” he specifically cautioned Charley before leaving.

He really feared that Granney would suddenly cause an explosion.

In magicians’ research accidents, nine out of ten times involved explosions—the forms of explosion included, but were not limited to various out-of-control violent magic.

Why are there so few magicians in this world?

One reason is that the inheritance of magic is secretive and doesn’t involve taking on many apprentices. Another reason is dying from various magical experiments and explorations. No matter how much a knight struggles with Dou Qi, at most they harm or disable themselves, but a magical explosion could kill both the master and the apprentice.

It’s no pity if a magician is killed by an explosion.

But if his Calming Sea Pearl is destroyed, that’s a severe loss.

This Calming Sea Pearl was to be equipped on the Fresh Flower Vessel, which was about to undertake its first long-distance voyage to explore Black Horse Island.

He also had another Calming Sea Pearl the size of a basketball and one the size of a washbasin; these two were reserved for future new ships.

Especially the one the size of a washbasin.

In the future, when he went to sea, this massive black pearl would be his standard equipment.

A normal small-sized black pearl could dispel the wind within a five-meter radius; the Calming Sea Pearl, according to Granney’s estimation, could disperse the wind within a hundred and fifty-meter radius.

But even if the wind is dispersed, the sea waves will continue to churn, and the ship will still be in danger, albeit to a much lesser extent.

The black pearl the size of a washbasin, if made into a Calming Sea Pearl, might be able to disperse the wind within a three hundred-meter radius. Thus, even if the waves are enormous, without the wind’s boost, the force would be greatly reduced, and the threat to ships would significantly diminish.

Leaving Granney’s workshop.

Liszt rode his horse to the town's workshop area to inspect the three newly built workshops.

Inside the Soap Making Workshop.

Soap Maker Bunier was producing soap while training several apprentices—the apprentice system was something Liszt had enforced, prohibiting serfs from hoarding their skills and rewarding those from the castle who produced a competent apprentice. With the introduction of this system, craftsmen and workers became much more serious about training apprentices.

He had previously bought the old blacksmith's smithy in town.

He gave the old blacksmith several Gold Coins, an amount he could never have earned in his lifetime, hoping that he would train a group of competent blacksmith apprentices. Still, after several thousand pounds of iron had been cast, not a single apprentice had learned the blacksmith's skills.

This infuriated Liszt.

The blacksmith was a freeman, essentially only needing to pay taxes, not subject to the landlord's personal constraints. But still, Liszt found an opportunity to give him a thorough punishment. The delightful taste of being whipped left a deep impression, and now the old blacksmith earnestly trained his apprentices, as if he was desperate to impart all his knowledge.

So.

There had to be carrots, but there also had to be sticks.

A carrot and a stick were required to implement the will of the landlord effectively.

"The production of Fresh Flower Soap is stable, while the output of regular soap is limited by the supply of pig pancreas and the waste from experimenting with formulas," Bunier reported to Liszt, who was visiting his progress.

"Hmm, continue your research. The current soap is nearly as comfortable to use as Fresh Flower Soap."

Soap was made from the pods of the Soap Pod Tree, mixed with flowers, and its cleansing effect was average, but it was very expensive to produce, especially on Coral Island where the Soap Pod Tree was scarce. Only the nobles could afford soap.

Soap (also known as lye soap) was made by mixing wood ash with pig pancreases, though other animal pancreases might also work. Its production cost was relatively low, and it cleaned very effectively.

However, as it stood, the quality of the soap that Bunier was developing still needed improvement.

Therefore, the current soap workshops were operating at a loss, with production capacity only able to supply the castle and a portion of officials and their families.

At this moment, Bunier suddenly said, "Lord Landlord, while I was researching the soap formula, I had an idea. What if I mixed scented soap with lye soap? Could it create a better soap? So I tried it, and found that the kneaded soap took shape quickly, and the usage was very smooth, but I don't know if this is the soap you wanted."

Mixing scented soap with lye soap?

Liszt felt the idea was brilliant, "Is that so? Show me the kneaded mixed soap and fetch a basin of water."

"Yes, Lord Landlord." Bunier quickly dispatched an apprentice, who brought out a plate of light pink mixed soap. The soap was pressed into flat oval shapes, three pieces in total, which looked rather rough.

Another apprentice came over with a basin of water.

Liszt dipped his hand in the water, then lathered up with the mixed soap and rubbed it, immediately creating lots of suds. The soap in his hand was very slippery, and it seemed to clean quite effectively. Especially after washing, his hands felt very clean and there was a faint fragrance.

Although this was not the soap he had seen before, the effect was already close to the Safeguard he remembered.

"What is the production cost of it, and what is the ratio of scented soap to lye soap?" Liszt asked.

"About one piece of scented soap can be mixed with three pieces of lye soap to make four pieces of mixed soap. However, I think it might save more to directly grind the pods of the Soap Pod Tree into powder; about one piece of mixed soap could be produced at the cost of forty copper coins."

"The cost of scented soap is one silver coin, right?"

"It's even more than one silver coin. The bought soap powder is too expensive."

The cheapest scented soap costs two silver coins each, which is two hundred copper coins, with the soap powder costing one silver coin, giving a total cost of at least one hundred and ten copper coins. If the cost of the mixed soap could be compressed to

forty copper coins, it could be sold at the price of two silver coins, undermining the existing scented soap market.

Even without using soap powder.

Directly buying scented soap and making it into mixed soap, increasing the cost to one silver coin, would still yield a profit.

“Bunier, you’ve done well. The mixed soap is better than I imagined. You can continue researching the lye soap slowly, but the workshop will start making mixed soap immediately... It needs a catchy name. Do you have any suggestions?” Liszt was confident in the mixed soap—the feel of it while washing and its cleaning effect were both better than that of scented soap.

Even someone as picky as he was thought it was good, and other nobles would surely be impressed. Nobles were always willing to spend money on items that improved their quality of life.

“Lord Landlord, it’s under your guidance that I was able to develop the mixed soap. It should be you who names it,” Bunier said respectfully.

People get more artistic in their speech as they age.

Liszt was very pleased with Bunier’s response: “Then let’s call it Fresh Flower Soap. I will make it a specialty of Fresh Flower Town. Bunier, and your apprentices, you must keep the formula for Fresh Flower Soap a strict secret.”

“Rest assured, Lord Landlord!”

“Do your work well. I have rewards for any invention that brings in profit. Although the lye soap hasn’t been perfected, the Fresh Flower Soap is passable. Bunier, your reward is ten silver coins, and twenty copper coins for each of your apprentices.”

“Thank you, Lord Landlord!”

Bunier and his apprentices expressed their thanks, brimming with happiness.

Liszt was also very pleased. Although he couldn’t say the Fresh Flower Soap would bring in profits comparable to the seafood business, he was confident of crushing the current scented soap market, and perhaps even exporting it to distant islands.

The most important thing was that the transition of Fresh Flower Town from agriculture to manufacturing was beginning to show results.

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Chapter 170: The Leader is in Need of a Secretary

The Soap Making Workshop is soon to bring in good profits.

The peanut processing workshop is also about to yield decent profits. Among the newly purchased serfs, several chefs were assigned to study tasty peanut recipes. They have already developed peanut butter, peanut brittle, salt and pepper peanuts, and deep-fried peanuts, which are sold in small batches by the Thorn Caravan.

The response has been very good, and many nobles who have tasted these delicious peanuts have expressed their desire to purchase in large quantities next time.

The peanut yield of Fresh Flower Town is insufficient, as are the workers. The head of the peanut processing workshop, Chef Lucas, has entrusted the Thorn Caravan to purchase shelled peanuts from North Valley City.

“Well done,” Liszt gave only verbal praise before leaving. The entire peanut processing workshop was his idea; these people were mere executors, devoid of creativity.

He preferred to use gold coins, silver coins, and copper coins to encourage creativity and discovery, to establish models, rather than to encourage hard work—because the serfs were supposed to work hard in the first place.

The last stop was the Brewing Workshop.

Frank Dregs could brew fruit wine, Bording could brew rice wine, Huntera could brew beer, and now all were busy brewing, striving to produce as soon as possible to earn income for the workshop. Unfortunately, there was no one in the workshop who knew how to brew spirits or make grape wine.

Ordinary grape wine is no different from fruit wine.

But craft grape wine requires high levels of expertise and careful selection of grapes. The technology for dry, semi-dry, sweet and semi-sweet varieties of grape wine is all different.

Only the Tulip Castle on Coral Island possessed the technique for sweet grape wine brewing; their Crescent Moon Wine was sweet and sharp, famous throughout the Grand Duchy.

The Raz Manor cellar red wine that Liszt had tasted at Long Taro Castle was an exquisite example of dry grape wine.

These techniques were closely guarded secrets held exclusively by the big nobles.

It was the same with spirits.

As distillates, the production process for spirits is even more complex, monopolized by the big nobles. Spirits like juniper wine were not always available for purchase.

Therefore, the Fresh Flower Town's Brewing Workshop could only brew some simple fermented wines.

After inspecting the workshop, Liszt began to ponder, "If I remember correctly, distilled spirits are made only by adding the step of distillation to fermented wines... It seems to involve using the difference in vaporization temperature between alcohol and water to purify the alcohol, and repeated distillation yields high-proof spirits."

Because he did not enjoy drinking, his research in this field was limited.

He had read about distillation in many novels before; it seemed straightforward, so he had some vague recollection of it.

"Perhaps, I could get the Brewing Workshop to research distillation techniques. It's possible they could produce spirits and add another specialty to Fresh Flower Town," he thought.

Rice wine is a type of alcohol fermented from grains.

Spirits are also essentially brewed from grains.

Liszt wondered if distilling rice wine could result in spirits.

So he called over three brewers, "I have a task for you. Remember, this task is highly confidential, and if anyone should leak it, their entire family will be whipped to death!"

The three brewers' buttocks tensed, and they all responded, "We swear to keep the secret of the task!"

"Good. I have obtained a formula, which claims that spirits are derived by distilling rice wine. By heating rice wine, turning it into steam, then directing that steam elsewhere to cool it into water, the water in the rice wine is removed, and what remains is the spirit... Try to figure it out several times and strive to brew Fresh Flower Town's spirits as soon as possible!"

The three brewers were somewhat confused by the explanation.

However, they promptly responded, "Please rest assured, Lord Landlord, we will brew spirits as soon as possible."

The task was assigned.

Liszt felt another special product from Fresh Flower Town beckoning him, and he even thought of a name for it at this moment: “Let’s call it Fresh Flower Brew. Yes, it should come in different classes. The low-alcohol Fresh Flower Brew could be known as a five-year vintage, while the higher-alcohol ones could be referred to as ten-year, even twenty-year vintages, or we could have a hundred-year cellar aged variety, or why not five hundred years...”

Suddenly, he remembered that the Duchy of Sapphire had only a history of a little over one hundred and fifty years since its establishment, and before that, the island was probably only inhabited by monkeys.

“Forget the five-hundred-year vintage. Why not just make a vintage as old as the country itself? Just say that in the year the nation was founded, a brewer came to Coral Island and personally made a barrel of wine... There’s only one barrel, but we can produce a barrel every year, just like the ’82 Lafite that’s been drunk for so many years and never seems to run out.”

Thinking of wine sales, many classic examples immediately sprang to his mind.

But he also saw the risks: “In such a lucrative industry as liquor, it’s hard to ensure security without strong backing. We must cooperate with Tulip Castle.”

Business would be easy with the Tulip Castle’s banner flying overhead. As an Earl granted his title by the Grand Duke, Li Weiliam Tulip was most certainly one of the high-ranking figures in the Duchy of Sapphire.

Moreover, he also served as the Grand Duke’s horseman, having close contact with him every year.

Liszt didn’t mind having to share profits with Tulip Castle to fly its flag—it was indeed becoming clearer to him the more he integrated into this world, the importance of noble connections.

Levis, Li Vera, and even Lidun—all of them, no matter how much they might scheme against each other, were family. In times of crisis, they could provide help.

The Viscount of Little Papa Island was wiped out, and the separated Viscount of Da Pa Pa Island was still actively inquiring, urging the Grand Duke to find the murderer.

Liszt certainly hoped that the Tulip Family could grow strong, becoming a formidable tree that shielded against wind and rain.

The Li Dragon Horse moved so smoothly that there was hardly any feeling of motion.

Astride his horse, Liszt could think things through very well. His mind raced from one idea about profit sharing to another: “Speaking of monkeys, perhaps I could hype up

some ‘Monkey Liquor’? It doesn’t matter if Monkey Liquor actually exists, what matters is the gimmick.”

Nobles love extravagance.

Extravagance not only encompasses wearing gold and silver or owning gemstones and prestigious horses but also includes art and the pursuit of rare novelties. Monkey Liquor would certainly be considered a rare novelty.

“However, there are few nobles with deep roots—most are simply nouveau riche, not rich beyond three or four generations, including the Tulip Family, which has only risen to prominence in recent generations. They might not necessarily fancy something like Monkey Liquor; they are probably more interested in gemstones and Gold Coins.”

In any case, he could start by generating some buzz when selling the fruit wine.

Afterward, Liszt inspected a few other shops and workshops.

For the moment, Fresh Flower Town’s commercial district comprised only a bakery, a grocery store, and a barber. The workshop district had just a Smithy, Tanners’ Shop, Locksmith Store, Tailor Shop, Cooperage, the newly built Brewing Workshop, Soap Making Workshop, and Peanut Processing Workshop.

Many completed wooden houses stood vacant.

If not for the numerous Serfs paving roads, constructing buildings, and planting grass, Fresh Flower Town would look like a ghost village.

The addition of four hundred and seventy-six Serfs, distributed to the various settlements to farm the land, didn’t make much of an impact. The hundred or so skilled laborers who had been eagerly anticipated were mostly workers unable to independently support a shop or workshop; they could only go to work in the fields temporarily, wasting their artisanal skills.

“For the time being, the commercial district can only serve as a marketplace to accommodate the occasional caravans that pass by,” he said, looking at the empty houses with a sense of contemplation. “We need to focus on developing the workshop district first. After establishing it as a center for production and processing, we could then drive the growth of the commercial district.”

He gestured towards the commercial district.

He very much wanted to discuss how to build this or that here, but when he turned around, he saw that only Servant Thomas and a few Retainer Knights followed behind him.

They were all men of simple tastes.

His ambitions to elaborate grand plans were promptly stifled.

“A leader’s inspection usually entails local officials and people gathering around, or at the very least a couple of secretaries should follow me with little notebooks, ready to jot down whatever I say...”

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