

The Mighty Dragons Are Dead

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Chapter 261: The Receiver and the Narcissist (First Update)

The carriage stopped, and a servant helped a lady in a magnificent gown alight; she wore a Bird Lady Hat, a favorite among the noblewomen, adorned with a colorful bird feather standing tall and very eye-catching.

What was once the signature hat of the Lady Sky Knight had now become the favorite of the common nobility.

However, Liszt did not recognize this noblewoman.

“Liszt, why are you hiding here, I’ve been looking for you for a long time,” the voice of Cousin Meioubao came from behind him, “What are you looking at by the Window?”

He walked straight up to Liszt and looked outside, perfectly overlooking the carriages in front of Long Taro Castle, “Hmm, you’re not trying to suss out in advance which lovely lady is worth the effort, are you? Indeed, viewed from this angle, the ‘height’ is very clear.”

The ‘height’ he referred to was the impressive silhouette when seen from the front and the profile.

“Not at all, just feeling it’s too stuffy in the hall.”

“I understand.”

“What do you understand?”

Meioubao clinked his glass of red wine against Liszt’s champagne flute, “You’re waiting for that beautiful Asina from the Salmon Family, aren’t you?”

“Not at all,” he replied half-heartedly before suddenly asking, “Is she coming this time too?”

“You said you weren’t looking forward to it, did you? Liszt, when you rejected Asina back then, why do you care about her now?”

Liszt didn't beat around the bush and said directly, "Maybe it's because it feels significant to me; I seldom attended such balls on Coral Island or had an invitation from a female noble of my own age to visit her home. At the ball on Red Crab Island, Asina was the first to recognize how outstanding I was."

"No wonder."

As if a nerve had been struck.

Meioubao suddenly stopped teasing and instead, with a touch of melancholy, said, "A man should find a woman who understands him... If she doesn't understand him, I can't imagine what the future life would be like."

Liszt ventured, "Are you talking about Princess Angela?"

"Yes, Angela Sapphire, the brightest pearl on the Grand Duke's Crown, and if all goes well, she'll be the future mistress of Red Crab Island."

Duke Andrew had two sons and two daughters; Angela was the youngest daughter.

"Have you confirmed your relationship with her?"

"Not me and her, but my grandfather and the Grand Duke have sealed our relationship." He drained the glass of wine in one gulp, throwing the glass back onto the servant's tray with a "Go away."

The servant hurriedly bowed and left.

Meioubao rested his hands on the window ledge, "Do you know why I chased after her so desperately without a single response, only to have a definite relationship now?"

Liszt watched him, waiting for the rest of the story.

"Grimmand Truth, I naively thought he truly came with the Grand Duke's blessing, but the truth was..." he suddenly turned around and patted Liszt on the shoulder, "Grandfather says your future is immeasurable, and we share the same blood; I have nothing to hide from you."

"Please tell me, cousin," Liszt had already guessed.

Sure enough, Meioubao's telltale disclosure was almost exactly as he had surmised—he had become the fall guy.

Of course, Princess Angela would certainly not come with her child in tow. Even as the Grand Duke's most beloved daughter, she could not bring a child into a marriage with

an heir to a Marquis. This was not only a violation of the morality under the knight system but also an immense disgrace to the Marquis Family.

Therefore, Princess Angela, several months pregnant, was forced to have an abortion.

“Her reputation was dreadful, I knew that much already, as long as there wasn’t too much of a scandal, let bygones be bygones. But what’s unforgivable is that the father of that aborted child... his... his... was nothing but a street performer!”

If her reputation was already tarnished, it wouldn’t matter who the father of the child was.

But as a noble, a member of the natural ruling class, Liszt could very well understand Meioubao’s feelings. Nobles could fool around with each other, but never with commoners, especially not nobles of such high birth as the daughter of a duke. A street performer was as low as a serf, so it was no wonder Meioubao was furious.

Swirling his champagne, Liszt took a careful look at Meioubao and then had another thought.

Perhaps Meioubao was not angry because the princess had dallied with a street performer, but rather because the news had leaked out—it was clear to the Long Taro Family that the princess had conceived with a street performer, which meant the affair was no secret on Blue Dragon Island.

“Perhaps in Meioubao’s eyes, Long Taro Castle has started to look green, sickeningly green.”

He suppressed the urge to gloat over the misfortune.

He pondered for a moment.

He decided to comfort Meioubao, “Life isn’t always smooth sailing. Although Princess Angela doesn’t meet the moral standards of a noble lady, she is still the mistress Long Taro Castle needs the most. Compared to the harmony of marital life, what are those pre-marital incidents, really?”

As he said this, Liszt suddenly recalled his own views on romance.

In his youth, he had hoped to save his first time for the girl he chose; as a young man, he thought it didn’t matter if it was the first time or not; in his early adult years, he felt the past wasn’t important; as he matured, he believed that what mattered was mutual love. Reaching the cusp of thirty without having found someone, he just wanted to settle with whoever came along.

The struggle between man and life is such that if you take a step back, life moves forward a step.

It was perhaps just a grumble.

Meioubao soon freed himself from the fury of having to take up the unwanted legacy, already resigning himself to the role of the scapegoat: "Let's go, let's chat in the hall. All the young nobles from Red Crab Island are here today; perhaps you'll find someone satisfactory."

Only then did he remember, "I've been so caught up in my own affairs, I forgot to tell you, don't wait for Asina; she won't be attending the ball. She fell in love with a baron at the Sea Festival dance and is likely to become a baroness by next year."

"Is that so?"

Liszt responded flatly, as if indifferent.

In fact, his heart tightened severely inside, a feeling of discomfort that he couldn't put into words. The effort he had put into repressing the *schadenfreude* he felt towards Meioubao popped like a balloon.

Meioubao being forced to take up the unwanted legacy was laughable indeed, but wasn't his own long-standing self-love just as laughable?

"I assumed too much. Among the nobility... there's no such thing as love at first sight, and what's more, it was just a fleeting encounter at a ball; perhaps she forgot about me right after it ended."

All of a sudden,

His enthusiasm waned.

The social ball that was supposed to stir some excitement, especially with the anticipation of seeing Asina, suddenly felt empty. The thought of the so-called social dance being nothing more than a union of noble interests, showing off their assets, and selecting suitable matches to continue their family lineage made his previously restless heart settle back down, and a standard noble smile returned to his face.

Chapter 262: Liszt's Piano Pieces (Second Update)

The ball, as expected, lacked the presence of Asina Salmon.

Levis and Li Vera merged into the crowd, eagerly engaging in conversation with the nobility of both genders. Meioubao still wore a smile, strenuously maintaining the dignity of Long Taro Castle's host.

He was very good at this kind of work.

Liszt was his usual self, neither taking the initiative nor refusing; if someone came over to exchange pleasantries, he would casually chat along. Although he had never thought of coming to Red Crab Island to make a name for himself, why refuse the opportunity to broaden his connections?

The pianist played a beautiful melody.

Couples twirled through the dance floor, one pair after another.

Laughter rose continuously from every corner, a clear sign of enjoyable conversations. Meioubao made a round, attended to all the noble ladies and gentlemen, and then, with a glass of wine in hand, took a seat next to Liszt.

"More tiring than having fought a charge," he gasped for breath.

"It's a good thing I'm just a baron, not obliged to speak a word with each and every man and woman here."

"They are all followers of Long Taro Castle, come from afar in hopes of exchanging words with me; I can't bear to let them down."

It was unclear whether this statement was self-mockery or self-satisfaction.

He suddenly asked, "Aren't you going to dance?"

"Those who invited me are not of interest to me."

"Then take the initiative and invite someone; such proactivity is what a gentleman noble should possess."

"I haven't decided yet whom I might like to invite."

"Your way of thinking is quite peculiar. If it were me, I would invite every beautiful lady in turn; it's not like you can only dance once. If you come across someone suitable, find a corner for a heartfelt talk, then the trip here wouldn't be in vain. Who knows, if the conversation goes well, you might even lead her home as the lady of the house."

Liszt was still reserved, "Isn't that a bit too hasty?"

Meioubao shook his head, unable to understand his own cousin, “Since you don’t feel like dancing, can you play the piano?”

“I guess... a little.” Liszt himself didn’t know how to play an instrument—not any kind of instrument. But his predecessor, as a member of the nobility, had learned the piano.

He barely remembered a few pieces.

Nobles love music, and the piano is the most popular instrument, especially at balls. Without piano music to set the mood, how could one create an enchanting atmosphere? Many down-and-out nobles relied on playing the piano to maintain their high-society lifestyle, even becoming the distinguished guests of noble women.

“Get ready, we’ll each play a piece later,” Meioubao said.

He beckoned a servant, “Go tell the pianist to come down after this piece. Liszt and I are going to play the piano.”

“Yes, young master.”

“Have you thought about what piece you’re going to play? I’m planning on ‘Elly by the Water.’ It’s my favorite piano piece with a beautiful melody and a touching story. Do you like it?”

“I don’t want to play the piano, and besides, I’ve never heard of this piece.”

“Heavens, you’ve never heard of it? It’s a masterpiece by Czerny Windmill, composed for a story he experienced personally! Eurie Ellie, the mythical Gorgon with snaky hair—when Master Czerny traveled through the Blast Furnace Fortress Kingdom, he laid eyes on Eurie Ellie by the water, and in that moment, he turned to stone!”

“Turned to stone? So, he died?”

“You truly lack any sense of artistry! It’s a rhetorical device. Czerny didn’t literally turn into stone, but the beauty of Eurie Ellie petrified him metaphorically—not that her gaze physically turned him to stone. What he saw might not have been Eurie Ellie; it’s just a metaphor.”

Meioubao spoke of the piano piece animatedly, his face alight with excitement, “Eurie Ellie is a creature of legend and does not exist. Legend has it she had three sisters, all Gorgons, all beautiful yet deadly. Master Czerny saw a woman by the water and felt her beauty was like poison, petrifying him. Do you understand now?”

“I suppose I understand,” Liszt replied carelessly.

“Then, prepare yourself, you’ll go on stage to play a piece later. Only art can make people forget their worries, trust me.” He left Liszt a very artistic silhouette as he got ready to perform on stage.

It seemed that Liszt’s ignorance had scared him.

During his performance, he intentionally used his Dou Qi to amplify the volume and started by telling the backstory of “Elly by the Water”, before he began to play.

One had to say, his piano performance skills were very superb, the melody sometimes soothing and sometimes passionate, truly immersing people in scenes like “I see Eurie Ellie,” “I have turned into stone,” “Her beauty leaves me breathless.”

The piece concluded.

The nobles, who were immersed in the music, began applauding one after another.

Meioubao elegantly stood up, bowed slightly to express his gratitude, “Next, my cousin, Liszt Tulip, will perform the following piano piece for everyone.”

...

Liszt really wanted to smash Meioubao’s head with a hammer.

He had absolutely no desire to play any piano piece. Indeed, almost all nobles would learn instruments like the piano to augment their noble demeanor. The former Liszt had often played the piano, but the current Liszt was a musical ignoramus, with a preference for pop music!

Since he had crossed over into this world, he had not touched any musical instrument again.

The piano techniques from his former life’s memories had become unfamiliar, asking him to perform would be an embarrassing spectacle. He didn’t know whether this was Meioubao’s way of seeking revenge—given that during their previous conversation by the window, he had probably exposed his schadenfreude attitude, since at that moment, he genuinely felt like laughing.

But.

At this moment, the feeling of being awkward simply did not exist.

His current mindset was somewhat detached from worldly concerns; he never intended to find love at this ball, so if he was going to embarrass himself, so be it.

Having adjusted his mindset and with a smile on his face, Liszt made his way to the stage one step at a time.

Sitting in front of the piano, he swept his hands across the keys, producing a neat sequence of notes. He looked down at the piano keys, compared them with his predecessor's memories to locate the corresponding keys for do, re, mi, fa, so, la, si, and then a melody of a song popped into his head, swiftly figuring out how to play it.

Just like Meioubao, he too planned to give a prelude monologue.

He channeled his Dou Qi to boost his own volume, "It's a very ancient legend... Long, long ago, in the forest kingdom of a distant land, there lived a brother and sister, each with a special ability. The brother's eyes could see far into the distance, and the sister's ears could hear sounds from afar; they grew up together, sharing joy and sorrow."

Liszt's voice was very magnetic.

There was no sense of abruptness when he recited the monologue; on the contrary, it was easy for people to be drawn into his story.

"In their free time, they would run to the mountain, the brother gazing into distant kingdoms and sharing the wonders he saw with his sister; the sister listening to the messages carried by the wind and singing heavenly songs to her brother... They fell in love, threw off all constraints, and reveled in their love."

"But society would never allow their love to exist. No matter how hard they tried, they still lost to the moral shackles. To prove their everlasting love for each other, the brother blinded himself, and the sister blocked her ears, unable to receive the blessings of others, what good were those abilities."

"Many years later, a foreign musician heard this poignant and moving love story, deeply touched. Overwhelmed by emotions, he composed a soul-stirring melody. I happened to hear this melody, and could not help but feel deeply moved; how can the fate of the siblings not evoke deep sighs and emotion!"

"Unfortunately, I did not retain the entire melody nor the full song. I can only share with everyone what I remember of the melody and the song."

Bang!

Bang bang!

Liszt's hands caressed the piano, firmly pressing the keys, beginning to play that piece.

With its simple, brisk melody gaining momentum, a touch of faint sorrow seemed to mingle within the brisk clarity. His singing voice, too, blended with the melody, drifting

above the dance floor in Chinese that no one could understand: “Two Tigers, Two Tigers, running fast, running fast...”

The Mighty Dragons Are Dead #Chapter 263: 0263: To Alice in the Waltz Ballroom (The third update, an additional for 1400 monthly votes) - Read The Mighty Dragons Are Dead Chapter 263: 0263: To Alice in the Waltz Ballroom (The third update, an additional for 1400 monthly votes)

Chapter 263: To Alice in the Waltz Ballroom (The third update, an additional chapter for 1400 monthly votes)

Alright.

Actually, Li Si Te did not play “Two Tigers”, nor did he sing “runs fast”; in fact, he played the piano piece he was most familiar with.

It was Beethoven’s piano bagatelle, “For Alice”.

The reason he chose to play this piece was naturally because it was very simple and widely recognizable. In his childhood, he owned a music box, which, whenever wound up, would tinkle out the tune of “For Alice”. So much so that now, when he closed his eyes, the overly familiar melody would still emerge in his ears.

As one of the greatest piano composers in the world, Beethoven’s story of becoming deaf is written in elementary school textbooks.

But few people know that Beethoven was never married.

He yearned for love; at 16, he fell for a noble lady but was separated by their vast difference in social status, nearly driving him to suicide. At 20, he fell in love with a widow, and yet again, due to the disparity in their statuses, he missed out on the relationship. His lifelong ear condition tormented him, but he still longed for love.

Approaching his forties, he fell in love with one of his female students, a young girl named Therese Malfatti.

In a moment of impulse, he composed a small piece titled “A Minor Bagatelle” for Therese. Later, someone writing a biography for Beethoven found this small piece among Therese’s belongings, but when it was published, the original title “For Therese” was mistakenly written as “For Alice”.

Henceforth, this piano bagatelle began to spread widely across the world.

Because of its simple monophonic melody, even the music box market was nearly dominated by “For Alice”—the other half taken by “Castle in the Sky” and “Canon”.

Playing for the first time,

Li Si Te's fingers were still clumsy, with many mistakes made, which wasn't very perfect. But by the time he started playing for the second time, he had already mastered each note and largely restored “For Alice”.

After playing it three times in a row,

He concluded his first piano performance.

Just like Meioubao, he stood up, bowed slightly to the noblemen and noblewomen in the dance floor who had stopped dancing to quietly enjoy “For Alice”, showing his etiquette.

When he turned around and left the piano,

A round of enthusiastic applause erupted from below, more than what Meioubao had received for playing “Yuri Ely by the River”. Most of the people there had heard Meioubao play “Yuri Ely by the River”, but none had ever heard the short but evocative piece “For Alice”.

“For Alice” was able to be passed down on Earth, its charm goes without saying, and even though Li Si Te's performance was at a beginner's level, it still moved many people.

“Fantastic!”

Unable to contain his excitement, Meioubao said, “Li Si Te, you must teach me this piece, I want to learn it!”

“No problem, I will take the time to write out the score,” Li Si Te replied without any conceit, though he greatly enjoyed the applause after the performance.

It wasn't just Meioubao circling around him; many other nobles also came up to him, inquiring about the piano piece “For Alice”.

A male noble exclaimed, “I've never heard it before, it might be short, but it's exceptionally charming.”

“I heard it by chance as well.”

A noble lady of ordinary looks, with big blinking eyes, said, “Sir Li Si Te, would you teach me how to play this piece, by the way, does it have a name?”

“‘For Alice’, I will organize the score and give it to Cousin Meioubao; he will send you a copy.”

“I love this piano piece, I felt that sweet touch, the deep understanding beyond the worldliness, and the entire song’s sorrowful love, as well as the unwavering yearning for love!” said the noble lady, with her hands clasped to her heart, as though she was immersed in the sadness of not “Two Tigers”, but “For Alice”.

Li Si Te expressed his regret, “Yes, it’s a sad story. I can only remember this lighter part of the piece; the truly sad part wasn’t able to be played.” In fact, he himself hadn’t been able to discern whether this piece had any tinge of sadness at all.

A rendition of “For Alice” suited for beginners.

It had successfully made Li Si Te, who wanted to keep a low profile, the center of attention at the ball.

Even though the pianist had returned to the stage and begun a high-level performance, there was still a large group of nobles gathered around Li Si Te, discussing the piano piece.

“Hey, handsome pianist, may I have a dance with you?” A tall noble lady suddenly squeezed past a few others surrounding Li Si Te and extended her hand to him.

Her appearance made it easy for Li Si Te to think of Elizabeth Olsen—yes, the Scarlet Witch from “Avengers: Age of Ultron.”

Only her hair was golden yellow, and her pupils were a deep blue.

If ten points were perfect, she could probably score an 8.5 from Li Si Te, which was a lot higher than the 8 points Asina Salmon received before.

“How could I refuse an invitation from Miss Duniko?” Li Si Te took her hand and followed her onto the dance floor.

He wrapped his arm around her waist and, to the slow piano music, took steps resembling the slow waltz.

Li Si Te could feel her pressing very close to him as if their hearts were connected, warming each other.

“I like this piece, “To Alice”.”

“So do I.”

“But when you played it, some parts weren’t smooth.”

“Yes, I don’t play the piano often, and I’ve forgotten some of the fingerings.”

“I play the piano every day. I love music, especially this piece, “To Alice”. It’s a simple melody, but it has a unique beauty. I heard the murmurs between lovers, the deep confessions and the fullness of love, and I was enraptured.”

As she spoke, she brought her mouth close to Li Si Te’s ear, and gently blew a stream of warm breath.

This action made him feel respect, and he had to hold back not to show it: “Miss Duniko really understands music. It’s a pity I can’t recreate the original “To Alice”, so you could feel the story of sorrowful love it tells.”

“No, perhaps the incomplete is the most beautiful. It’s short, it’s light, but it’s the best piano piece, with no need to add any more melody.”

Such a comment.

Li Si Te looked at Miss Duniko with new esteem.

“To Alice” was originally an independent piano piece. After hearing his made-up story, many felt regret for not hearing the complete piece, but only Duniko felt the incomplete part was already perfect.

This was a woman who truly understood music.

Perhaps this is what the upbringing of the great nobles produces.

Duniko Hyacinth, the daughter of Durant Hyacinth, one of the two Earls on Red Crab Island. According to the information provided by Cousin Meioubao, the seventeen-year-old Duniko, also known as the Thorny Rose of Red Crab Island, didn’t have a very good reputation. She was proactive and passionate, surrounded by countless admirers, yet none had truly won her heart.

He held her slim yet strong waist.

Feeling the soft yet firm sensation against his chest and the eye contact as they glanced up and down, he suddenly felt a surge of excitement, “Actually, the story was made up on the spot. This piece was always an independent piano piece. It was created by a pianist who was infatuated with a noble lady, composed in a moment of passion.”

Chapter 264: You Know I've Never Been a Part of It (First Update)

Duniko aptly threw a flirtatious glance at Liszt, "So, you've deceived everyone."

"How can it be called deception? Every piano piece has a beautiful story behind it. Does it matter which stories are true and which are fabricated?"

"It doesn't matter?"

"A story just offers a tiny touch of sentiment, but it's the melody that truly moves the heart."

"Is that so? Unless you can come up with a story better suited to 'For Alice,' I won't agree with you."

When it came to making up stories, Liszt was quite adept, but he didn't agree to Duniko's "request." Perhaps he could invent a tale, play up to the Earl's daughter, and engage with Duniko in a story beyond the story. Maybe, given his temperament and charm, it would be normal to win over Duniko.

But there was no need for that.

He didn't like deliberately seeking favor.

Maybe he was just in love with himself all along, or perhaps he was only interested in Duniko's outer beauty and lacked that impulsive drive to pursue.

"There's no romantic tale, just a piano teacher who fell in love with his student, and a little tune born out of passion," Liszt said casually.

Duniko cast another seductive glance, "Like you're filled with passion right now?"

Liszt didn't catch on immediately, "What?"

It was only when Duniko gently rubbed his thigh with hers that he suddenly realized his admiration had been too obvious.

With two lifetimes of experience combined, he lacked the shyness of youth, "You know it's hard to maintain a calm disposition in the presence of a beautiful lady, especially one as exceptionally beautiful as you." He slightly retreated his body to cool down the warmth.

Yet Duniko took a big step forward, pressing her body closer, "I accept your compliments. No one has ever expressed their admiration for me so candidly."

"Hmm," Liszt suddenly found himself at a loss for words.

Perhaps no more words were needed. They could just dance quietly, bodies close, swaying gently to the rhythm of the piano. As their gazes met and the corners of their mouths turned up slightly, maintaining a consistent smile seemed adequate.

Duniko also ceased to speak, following Liszt's steps in a gentle rhythm.

The piano piece ended.

The two did not separate immediately, continuing to embrace each other, waiting for the second piano piece. However, halfway through the piece, Duniko suddenly asked, "Would you like to step outside for some fresh air?"

"Let's go."

Liszt released the hand around her waist and took Duniko's hand, quietly leaving the bustling dance floor. The sky outside was completely dark, only the lights of Long Taro Castle remained bright.

In the corridor outside the hall, servants hurried past.

Neither of them spoke again, just held hands and headed toward a secluded corner, where they could see couples tightly embraced in the nooks of private alcoves.

In a corner where the crystal lamp's light was relatively dim.

They stopped in one such spot.

"The air is fresh outside, and you can breathe in the chill of winter," Liszt said, with one hand on the window sill and the other still holding Duniko's, "Miss Duniko, you're dressed rather lightly today, aren't you cold now?"

"I'm not cold, in fact, I feel a bit warm," Duniko said, looking at him, then suddenly suggested, "Call me Duniko."

"Duniko."

Liszt gazed at Duniko's long eyelashes and her delicately made-up face and couldn't help but lower his head. Standing about 1.7 meters tall, Duniko quietly rose on her toes, lifting her face, and gently closed her eyes.

No need for an excess of words to describe the moment.

The next second, Liszt's lips met with softness.

They remained clutched together until they nearly suffocated. A sparkling thread stretched between them, reflecting the light of the distant castle. Duniko wrapped her arms around Liszt's neck, unwilling to let go, her gaze intense.

Here is the translated text:

Liszt hurriedly said, "My room is upstairs."

"Hold on tight."

Bend down.

Hook arms.

Liszt picked up Duniko sideways from the bend of his legs, activated his Dou Qi, and with legs springing like coils, he swiftly walked through the corridor, up the stairs to the fourth floor of the castle. He bypassed the servants who greeted him in the hallway without a response, heading straight to his own room.

The door wasn't locked. At Long Taro Castle, the fourth floor was the living area of the master.

Clack!

The door shut with a foot, and all was understood without words.

...

When Liszt awakened from his sore back and stiff waist, the morning sun had already risen, a rare clear and sunny day. He sat up and saw the woman beside him still deep in sleep, her blonde hair scattered across the pillow.

There was a slightly unpleasant smell in the room.

Shaking his head, Liszt still felt a tinge of surrealism.

A rendition of "For Alice", two intimate dances, several deliberate or accidental flirtations, all led to a wild night. Recalling the fervent heat of last night, he suddenly felt bewildered; in other words, he had wholly surrendered his first time in this new life.

Perhaps he had been too loud getting out of bed.

The sleeping Duniko suddenly woke up, and seeing Liszt getting dressed, she greeted him groggily, "Hi, Liszt. What are you doing?"

"Getting up."

Liszt, having put on his pants and bare-chested, showed his perfect inverted-triangle physique as he walked to the bedside, bent down, and kissed Duniko's forehead. "Don't you want to sleep a bit longer?"

"Can't sleep anymore." Duniko stretched out her hand and drew a circle on his chest. "You could call a castle maid to help you dress."

"On the battlefield, there won't be any servants to help me dress; I prefer to do it myself. Only the complicated Flack Abaie would be dressed by servants."

"Then I'll call my maid in, and I'll get up too."

Ring the bell, summoning the maid, Duniko with the help of the maid picked out a new outfit and got dressed. Liszt also got dressed with the help of the maid into his Flack Abaie. Castle servants then brought washing utensils, attending to both of their morning grooming.

When the maids left with the wash utensils, only Liszt and Duniko remained in the room.

Duniko threw herself at him enthusiastically, wrapping her arms around Liszt's neck. "Kiss me, as if it's the last time."

"Mmm..."

After they separated,

Duniko spoke breathlessly, "I love the way you play 'To Alice'. I love your conversation and demeanor. You have a distinctive look in your eyes. In them, I saw ambition beyond the reach of others and a solitude that doesn't fit with the rest of the world."

Such keen perception.

Liszt laughed it off. "I guess you also saw a dragon since my greatest ambition is Dragon Riding."

"I look forward to the day you ride a dragon. If that day comes and I'm not yet old, you're welcome to come kiss me again... At the dance, so many men invited me, but I chose only you. My dear Baron, they will be jealous of you, just as those women were jealous of me when I took you away."

So intimately.

Liszt was unsure whether his feelings toward Duniko were of admiration or just a moment of passion. He gently pulled away the hand that was around his neck: "I guess there must be many broken hearts in Long Taro Castle, but yeah, I've never been involved, so I wouldn't know."

After speaking, he opened the room's door: "Let's go, let's go downstairs for breakfast. I'm leaving here today."

Chapter 265: There Are So Many Castles in the World (Second Update)

"Good morning, dear Duniko," Cousin Meioubao was up early and greeted the two who came down for breakfast with a smile.

"Good morning, Brother Meioubao," Duniko always addressed Meioubao as brother, showing the closeness between their families.

Meioubao then, behind Duniko's back, gave a thumbs-up and mouthed "well done" before saying, "Liszt, I'm glad to see that you've grown up."

Such an obvious and brash jest nearly made Liszt want to roll his eyes.

But what was done was done, and since Duniko had been quite open about it, there was no need for him to be squeamish. He merely changed the subject, "Have Levis and Li Vera gotten up yet?"

Li Vera had gotten up early.

Levis was a bit late; the night before, he had, unsurprisingly, been holding hands with a certain noble maiden, talking about life and aspirations deep into the night.

After breakfast, the carriage from Long Taro Castle was ready.

Marquis Merlin, leaning on his cane, came to the castle's entrance to personally see his grandchildren off. Not just the three Liszt siblings were leaving today, but Aunt Melinda's family was also returning home.

"Grandfather, you must take good care of yourself. I'll come to visit you again in a little while," Liszt said with some reluctance.

But Marquis Merlin wasn't particularly touched, "Don't act like a woman. If you're going to leave, then just leave."

The relatives said their goodbyes.

Liszt saw Duniko, standing with Meioubao and smiling at him, and without waiting for Liszt to say anything, Duniko walked over and hugged him.

It was nothing too over the top.

A simple hug among nobles that represented their friendship, as for what kind of friendship, it was in the eye of the beholder.

"I thought you would play "For Alice" for me before you left," she said.

"It's a bit of a rush; if you'd like to hear it, I'll play it for you the next time I come to Red Crab Island."

"Will you practice it so that you're proficient?"

"If I have the time."

"I don't think I'll ever forget last night's events for a long time, Liszt, dear."

"We will always have the memories of Long Taro Castle," Liszt replied with a smile, indeed a period worth reminiscing about for a long time.

If at this moment, Duniko had given a tender and heartfelt plea for him to stay, he might have been ready to stay regardless of everything. Not caring about Duniko's past, just wishing to stay by her side from now on. He had learned the libertine ways of nobility, yet deep down, he carried the traditions of a Chinese man.

Alas, after only a brief exchange of sweet nothings, Duniko waved him off with an insouciant gesture.

Without any dithering or dragging.

Unwilling to appear more affected than a woman, Liszt nodded calmly and boarded the carriage. The coachman raised his whip and with a loud "hup," the procession began to move slowly.

Li Vera pulled her head back into the carriage.

Looking at Liszt, who seemed a bit dazed, she chuckled, "Why don't you take one last look at your thorny rose? My dear brother, you were quite the show-stealer last night, your 'For Alice' enchanted so many noble maidens that they wanted to spend the night in your room, even Duniko was swept off her feet."

"It's just basic tactics," he replied.

After a moment of thought, Liszt leaned out to take one last look at Long Taro Castle, now gradually receding in the distance. There were many people at the door; there were many nobles leaving today. He could no longer find the figure of Duniko Hyacinth, so with a touch of disappointment, he sat back inside the carriage.

He rested his hands behind his head, leaning against the cushion behind him.

He didn't know what he was pondering, but he couldn't help mutter, "There are so many castles in the world, and inside those castles so many barons. Yet she managed to make her way to my side."

Losing the beautiful fantasies he had about Asina Salmon, he'd acquired wonderful new experiences brought on by Duniko Hyacinth.

Liszt felt a strong fondness for Red Crab Island.

Of course, the bigger change was in his mindset.

It was as if he had been reborn.

After a night of frenzied baptism, he had truly come of age, both in soul and body, from the inside out.

...

Sapphire Calendar, Year 152, January 6th, at the port of Sea Crab City, clear skies.

Boarding a sea vessel at the port, this time, the Long Taro Family had employed a swift sailing ship and four ordinary double-masted sailing ships as escorts to take the three siblings back to Coral Island.

The Ghost Ship incident made Long Taro Castle take no chances.

Count Sharke had already led the fleet from Red Crab Island to patrol the vast waters between Red Crab Island and Coral Island, clearing out pirates and searching for Ghost Ships.

Standing on deck.

The caress of the chilly sea breeze freed Liszt from his pleasant reminiscences; his attention temporarily shifted to another matter.

"Where will the Sea Serpent be waiting for me?"

Definitely in the sea, since it is a Sea Serpent, after all. Perhaps he would hear the Sea Serpent's song during the voyage and then be able to find it.

However, he still had no clue how to obtain the Sea Serpent.

In the legends, kind Sea Serpents would use their songs to save people but never show themselves, hiding from humans. On the other hand, evil Sea Serpents would use their songs to bewitch people and then kill them. In short, except for Knight's Novels, no human had ever encountered a Siren.

However, even on the ship where he'd wake from sleep from time to time, as the fleet neared the waters around Coral Island, he still hadn't heard any sea songs, nor had any strange occurrences taken place.

Not until he landed on the dock of Coral City.

There were no signs of the Siren.

"It seems that the Siren might be waiting in the waters near Fresh Flower Town, no, maybe around the waters of Black Horse Island, waiting for me to claim it. I just don't know how to claim it, whether it would require some kind of contract like with a Little Minor Elf."

He rested for a night at Tulip Castle.

Equipped with a batch of specialties from Long Taro Castle and a batch from Tulip Castle, Liszt couldn't wait to leave the next morning, returning to Fresh Flower Town which he had been away from for over a week.

Snow blanketed everything in white.

The roads were muddy.

In terms of latitude, Coral Island should be much higher than Red Crab Island, so the climate is a bit colder. But to this day, Liszt hadn't figured out whether this world was spherical or if it had a North or South Pole. As for the exact latitude and longitude of Coral Island, it was even more of a mystery.

And there was one thing that puzzled him.

He had observed the position of the Sun and found that the Sun's elevation was nearly the same in both summer and winter, not very off. This suggested that the location of Coral Island didn't have much of a changing angle with the Sun. Or perhaps, the planet's rotation and orbit didn't have a tilt.

"It's a shame there's no astronomer to solve these mysteries for me, to understand what kind of environment lies under my feet."

He remembered the ancient legends of the Moon Empire, where a profession known as 'Astrologer' existed, and it's said the reckoning of years, months, and days was passed down from the Astrologers of the Moon Empire. Sadly, with the fall of the Moon Empire, many technologies, discoveries, and inventions from that era had been lost.

They had become but snippets of fantasy in Knight's Novels.

“My lord, we’ve arrived at Thorn Ridge,” Thomas’s voice interrupted Liszt’s daydreaming.

Indeed, ahead the serfs could be faintly seen laboring in Thorn Ridge. In this winter of dancing snowflakes, only the serfs of Fresh Flower Town, well-fed and strong, had the energy to go out and work.

All at once.

A feeling of ‘returning home’ emerged from within him.

A golden nest, a silver nest, none as good as one’s own dog nest; in Fresh Flower Town, he was the supreme Landlord!

“Woof woof!” Douson must have felt the same.

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Chapter 266: Personally Involved and High Above (Third Update, Additional Chapter for 1600 Monthly Votes)

“It is ready to give birth, Lord Landlord,” Old Difo carefully dodged the cage, pointing at the area beneath the Earth Matron’s tail, he said.

Liszt, of course, knew that the Earth Matron was about to give birth; his task and its rewards were about to arrive.

Looking at the very crudely made nest in the Dog Prison, then at the snowflakes fluttering outside, and feeling the ice-cold weather, he couldn’t help but say to the servant, “Thomas, go and fetch two quilts.”

“Yes, my lord.”

The Earth Matron lay on the wooden boards, staring blankly at the servants cleaning around, indeed no longer the lively creature it once was, having become lazy and dopey.

Any wild beast caged for long would probably end up this way.

Douson walked around it, occasionally sticking out its tongue to lick its fur, not knowing if it was the low temperatures of winter affecting it or if it had truly completed its bloodline transformation. Douson no longer had frequent needs to vent; it returned to a state of calm it was supposed to have. It had abstained for so many days and had not thought of heading to the dog park to have some fun.

“Will it give birth to Douson’s offspring?” Paris, who had become much plumper, stood outside the cage, curiously asking.

“Of course, there isn’t a third Fierce Earth Dog here.”

In the vast Fresh Flower Town, finding another Fierce Earth Dog to cuckold Douson would be impossible.

Paris rolled her eyes, “No, Baron, what I mean is can it give birth to an Intermediate Magical Beast like Douson?”

“Maybe it will, maybe it won’t, but I hope that both Douson’s and the Earth Matron’s offspring will become Intermediate Magical Beasts. That way, I’ll have a large group of Intermediate Magical Beasts and can form a Fierce Earth Dog Knight Order,” Liszt’s heart burned with fervor, “They will become the cornerstone of my achievements, bringing me countless honours!”

“Alas.”

Paris sighed, “Why does every Noble Landlord think about war?”

“Because the world is not yet at peace.” He directed the servants to spread the quilts in the cage and then shooed the Earth Matron onto them before turning his head and responding, “Someone needs to step forward to turn the tide and create a world without hunger, harm, or oppression.”

“Will you step forward?”

“The goal is too grand, so grand that even I, a transmigrator, am intimidated.” As a transmigrator, who doesn’t dream of changing the world? Yet the reality was that he could only change tiny Fresh Flower Town, “So why not start with small goals around us, achieving one goal after another.”

“So what is Baron’s first small goal?” Paris asked curiously.

“Dragon riding.” Liszt drew a pleasant arc with his mouth, looking up at the gloomy sky. Suddenly he recalled the morning at Long Taro Castle when Duniko promised him, and his mocking tone became serious, “I want to ride a dragon while I am still young.”

Paris initially thought he was joking, but as he spoke so earnestly, she suddenly felt that the tall and handsome rural Landlord before her might truly harbour such ambition.

She found it laughable.

She had seen the Light Dragon, the Evil Dragon that granted her the status of Black Dragon Childe, that unbelievable figure filled with despair-inducing horror.

A mortal could not possibly tame a dragon.

Yet she also harboured anticipation, hoping that one day Liszt really could ride a dragon and become a Dragon Knight, whose very name would send many women into uncontrollable ecstasy!

Perhaps having seen the dragon's incredibility, the idea of a Dragon Knight became even more unfathomable and unimaginable in her heart.

"Don't just stand there looking silly, let's go." After boasting, Liszt had already walked out of the iron cage. The Earth Matron should complete giving birth within these two days.

Paris snapped back to reality, "Oh, okay."

Looking somewhat silly.

This left Liszt speechless; indeed, a comfortable life could erode one's fighting spirit. The thieving female mercenary who once shouted about slaughtering nobles and dared to cross the sea to save her sister had now turned into a good-eating, fat, and somewhat slow-witted female sidekick, and he seriously doubted how much her combat ability had dropped.

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"Wah!"

"Wah!"

Sensing Liszt's return, Thorn Minor Elf Jela, who lived in the castle, flew straight out of the Worm Room and landed accurately on Liszt's head as he just entered the castle gate.

She missed Liszt terribly.

Feeling the little elf's emotions, Liszt found it very warm and let Jela sit on his head while she held onto his hair with both hands.

"Sir, would you like to take a bath first or meet with the town officials?" Butler Carter came over and asked.

"Let's meet the officials first, deal with the accumulated affairs, and then go for a bath."

"Very well, sir."

Previously, when Liszt returned to Fresh Flower Town, he went directly to the Dog Prison without even entering the castle to visit the Earth Matron and her brood of Fierce Earth Dog pups.

The notified town officials hurried over.

After the niceties, they began reporting their work—it was clear that even without Liszt's personal oversight, the development of Fresh Flower Town was still progressing.

Every day, more wasteland was being reclaimed, not just at Thorn Ridge but also the wastelands of various encampments, all undergoing development. Bone utensils produced daily at the Bone Craftsman Shop were distributed to serfs, arousing their eagerness for this year's farming and making them wish they could take on more wasteland.

Stones were being quarried every day. Large stones, after simple processing, were piled up for future major construction projects, like Liszt's new castle on Black Horse Island. Small stones were crushed into gravel for road building and paving.

The Knight's Square had already been completed, giving the children a warm place for training; two bathhouses had become signature landmarks of Fresh Flower Town, even nobles from North Valley City had visited several times just to bathe in the hot spring-like pools; an icehouse had begun storing ice blocks, already filling one ice chamber.

In short, Fresh Flower Town was peaceful for both humans and animals.

Liszt was heartened by this, as the land entered the right track and his team of officials gradually took shape, but he also felt a sense of loss. It turned out that not every affair fell apart without him. From the start of the victory celebration to the year-end festivities on Red Crab Island, Fresh Flower Town didn't become chaotic in the roughly half a month without him.

"Should I feel relieved that I don't have to manage everything personally, or should I feel impressed that supervision from a higher vantage point is sufficient?"

Either way, it was a good thing. The Lord could enjoy while his subordinates ran errands—the way everyday life should be. Of course, there were still many things he needed to care about, especially not to neglect the Smoke Mission, which was the biggest boost to his dragon riding.

“Consultant Goltai, has the formulation of the Ice Snow Flame Mushroom potion been successful?”

“We are approaching success. Several serf households have managed to grow Ice Snow Flame Mushrooms in their greenhouses, but the yield is unstable and the growth effect is poor.”

“Let them keep at it.”

“Yes, my lord.”

“The cultivation of Common Flame Mushrooms must not be delayed either. By the way, has Mr. Elkeson been here?”

“He came once, heard you went to Long Taro Castle for the year-end celebration, had a bath in the public bath, and then left.”

“Contact him and ask him to come over as soon as possible,” Liszt said. His supply of Flame Mushroom Magic Potions was running low and he needed Mr. Elkeson to prepare a new batch. Also, the harvested Rapid Growth Magic Thorns stored in the castle warehouse could be used to make more magic potions when combined.

Since town construction no longer required his hands-on involvement, he could devote all his spare time to training.

With the aid of Smoke Missions, Dragon Breed Cows, a multitude of magic potions, Sword Saint’s Notes, the experience of Earl, and a scientific mind, he hoped he could advance to Sky Knight sooner rather than later, and perhaps even break the record set by Marquis Merlin at the age of twenty-two.

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Chapter 267: Welcoming the Birth of the Earth Matron’s Offspring (Fourth Update, Bonus for 1800 Monthly Tickets)
By the seaside.

Liszt rode his Li Dragon Horse from the dock named Fresh Flower Port, along the coastline, all the way to the southernmost beach, but he heard no siren songs.

Even though he had rewarded the Sea Serpents, he just couldn’t find them, which frustrated him.

He planned to circle around Black Horse Island after the Fresh Flower Vessel returned from the island, hoping to find a Siren as soon as possible and not let the reward slip away.

However, before he caught sight of the Fresh Flower Vessel.

A piece of good news worth celebrating had already arrived—the Earth Matron had begun giving birth. He immediately rode his horse to Dog Prison, bringing Douson along on the way. By the time he reached Dog Prison, the Earth Matron had already delivered two puppies, who were lying fluffily on the blanket, their fur pitch black.

The Earth Matron rarely showed the ferociousness of a Magical Beast, baring her teeth and snarling at Liszt and the others as they approached.

Even Douson, attempting to get close, was scared away by her bared teeth and roaring.

“Lord Landlord, animals like cats and dogs become very aggressive when giving birth, not allowing anyone to approach. You should be careful as it might bite,” Old Difo explained.

Liszt understood this principle; it was the mother beast’s instinct to protect her young.

So he just stood outside the range of the Earth Matron’s vigilance, watching her give birth. Those tiny black puppies, not yet opening their eyes, were his future great fortune. Without the need for human assistance, the Earth Matron knew what to do, eating the placenta after each puppy was born, then licking each puppy’s fur dry.

Intermittently, the Earth Matron birthed a total of eight black puppies before the birthing was complete.

Seeing the eight little puppies begin to scramble for the Earth Matron’s milk, Liszt thought he needed to find a way to take away these eight little puppies, then feed them with Dragon Breed Cow’s milk—clearly, the Earth Matron’s milk was not nutritious enough, and such milk was incapable of raising Intermediate Magical Beasts.

“Douson, stay outside and don’t move.”

He stopped Douson from rushing in and then took out the prepared jerky and fresh milk. He approached the cage tentatively, and the Earth Matron, still ill-tempered after giving birth, growled and bared her teeth when she saw Liszt get close.

However, after Liszt casually tossed a piece of tasty jerky over to her,

she immediately grasped the jerky and wolfed it down.

Taking advantage of this opportunity, Liszt moved a few steps closer.

Whenever the Earth Matron growled again, he threw another piece of jerky, repeating this process several times until he was successfully inside the iron cage and standing beside the Earth Matron.

To say whether he was nervous would definitely be an understatement.

Although the Earth Matron had forgotten her Rock Spike Magic, she was after all a Magical Beast, and if she became violent and attacked, Liszt wasn't sure whether he would get hurt. He felt confident in his ability to protect himself, but if he got bitten, it was no laughing matter—there hadn't been any mention of rabies, but what if there was?

Without a rabies vaccine, he didn't know whether Dou Qi could eradicate the rabies virus.

Therefore, caution was necessary.

Using the jerky to calm the Earth Matron's snarls, Liszt then took out the milk, poured it into a jar, and offered it to the Earth Matron. The Earth Matron sniffed at the milk, appearing somewhat puzzled and uncertain, but still stuck out her tongue to taste it. Immediately after, she began lapping vigorously with her tongue.

Even when Liszt reached out to touch a little puppy, she didn't seem to care anymore.

Consequently, Liszt placed the squealing little puppy beside another jar of milk, pressing its little head to make it drink.

But the little puppy wouldn't lick.

Fortunately, he was prepared and had already had someone use the leaves of Fragrant Coconut Trees to roll into a tube with a hole running through the middle. Gently positioning the tube at the mouth of the little puppy, he encouraged it to suck on the tube.

Instinctively, the little puppy sucked once, and then it started to frantically drink the milk.

"Not bad, one down." Liszt was filled with a sense of accomplishment. He could foresee that once the little puppies developed a taste for Dragon Breed Cow's milk, they would definitely not go back to the Earth Matron's milk.

Perhaps the Earth Matron would produce more milk, but for now, the milk of the Earth Matron was clearly not abundant enough. As long as the little pups didn't drink and didn't stimulate the mammary glands to secrete, she probably wouldn't produce more milk.

That was that.

While he comforted the Earth Matron with dried meat and cow's milk, he taught the little pups one by one how to suckle milk through a tube.

Perhaps because she had been domesticated for too long, the well-fed Earth Matron calmed down considerably and didn't pay much attention to her puppies. Even when Liszt picked up the puppies and pretended to take them out of the cage, she merely lifted her head to look and then showed no further reaction.

"Lord Landlord... The Earth Matron might not have learned how to be a mother dog yet. Its maternal instincts don't seem very strong," Old Difo, who had raised dogs for many years, said. He had seen many dogs who didn't care for their puppies at all. Although the Earth Matron wasn't neglectful, she also wasn't overprotective.

"Then we'll take all the little pups away."

After deciding, Liszt carefully transferred each little pup one by one to a servant, who cautiously placed them in a dog cradle wrapped in blankets.

The Earth Matron watched the whole process without any reaction.

All eight little pups were successfully taken away.

Liszt breathed a sigh of relief, but suddenly felt too cruel, so he had a servant bring in a new blanket to replace the one stained with filthy blood. He left plenty of food for her to eat and drink and put Douson in with her so the two could bond.

However, the Earth Matron, having just given birth, temporarily showed no interest in Douson.

So Liszt had to lead Douson away, "Alright, Douson, stop being silly. The Earth Matron is not in the mood for mating with you right now. I'll bring you back another day."

...

The eight little pups successfully settled on the second floor of the castle, cared for by Liszt himself.

Based on his experience with Douson, these little pups would need at least half a month before they could open their eyes. The growth of magical beast pups was somewhat different from that of ordinary puppies.

"Wow, look how cute they are. My lord, when they grow up, they'll become strong Intermediate Magical Beasts like Douson, protecting Fresh Flower Town and winning glory for you!"

Goltai praised with delight.

The successful birth of the Earth Matron's puppies brought cheers from everyone in the domain. With the impressive Douson right before them, the future boasted nine excellent Dousons. The future of Fresh Flower Town was certainly something to ponder.

"The grace of a knight's glory!"

"The lord is truly the Son of Glory!"

"I can hardly wait to see the day when the Fierce Earth Dogs grow up."

"Train them well, and they will become the most outstanding force on the battlefield. Everyone who hears the name Fierce Earth Dog will fear your reputation."

The last sentence was spoken by Rom in excitement.

A typical bit of flattery.

Yet it struck a chord with Liszt, "Rom is right. If one day the Fierce Earth Dogs distinguish themselves on the battlefield, I'll be renowned for them... but how will others refer to me? The Earth Dog Sword Saint? The Fierce Earth Landlord? Or 'the man who rides dogs'?"

This name sounded utterly pathetic and was a severe blow to his personal dignity.

So he told his subordinates seriously, "From the day that Douson became an Intermediate Magical Beast, it was no longer an ordinary Fierce Earth Dog. Now that it has offspring, I believe they will become the same Intermediate Magical Beasts, so it's time to give them a new name!"

His subordinates immediately cheered, "Please bestow a new name upon them, my lord!"

Liszt glanced at the snowflakes dancing outside the window, his mood soaring, "They arrived on a day when the sky was draped in heavy snow, so let's call them... Blizzard Hounds, no, Blizzard Beasts!"

Chapter 268: Desperately Searching for the Siren (Fifth Update, Additional Chapter for 2000 Monthly Votes)

The Blizzard Beast in front of him was still very small, and Liszt did not have time to take care of it all day. He simply transformed the entertainment room into an air-conditioned space, and handed over the heavy responsibility of caring for the eight unopened-eyed Blizzard Beasts to the female butler Mrs. Morson and the most attentive maid Maisie.

Despite their small size, the Blizzard Beasts ate quite a lot.

The leftover milk Liszt had today was just enough for their consumption, but as they grew larger, he estimated that he would have to use the stock of powdered milk to feed them.

Busy all day, the little Blizzard Beasts ate and then slept, showing no signs of early demise.

It seemed that they would all grow up strong and healthy.

The next day, he got up early again for his knight training and fiercely drilled Paris, who was getting fatter with every meal, in actual combat. With surging Dou Qi, he only stopped the morning lesson when Paris was about to unwillingly transform—Liszt had been irritated with Paris's laziness and gluttony, hiring her for a gold coin a month and not for her to come and eat egg rolls.

He seriously said, "Compared to our first combat session, your strength has declined significantly, your reactions, speed, and technique have all noticeably regressed."

Paris, panting heavily from the intense combat, which took a great toll on her stamina, said, "Although I don't want to admit it, it's your strength that's been continuously improving, Baron."

"Why do you think so?"

"Because the flames on your sword are more intense each time, and your total amount of Dou Qi is constantly breaking through." Although Paris had gained weight, her cognitive judgment had not declined.

Her strength had indeed regressed slightly—a truth she had to admit due to her increased weight and decreased agility—but it was Liszt's improvement that was the main reason for the one-sided battle. Without transforming into the Black Dragon Child and with Light and Shadow Tug unable to take effect, she was no match for Liszt.

Putting away the Crimson Blood Sword, Liszt glanced at Paris's heaving chest.

Liszt nodded slightly, "Dou Qi cultivation is such that if you're not advancing, you're regressing. I am indeed making progress, but that's no excuse for you to let your own strength slide... In a few days, I fear that even if I don't restrain your Light and Shadow Tug and use a regular longsword, you will no longer be my match."

Paris felt a bit unwilling to accept this, but in the end, she nodded, "I understand. I will exercise diligently and strive to improve my strength further, so I won't fall behind you."

Seeing the mercenary maid come to a realization.

Liszt patted her shoulder reassuringly, "One's greatest reliance is always oneself, and don't forget, you should be setting an example for your younger sister." In his eyes, Paris was still immature, despite having gone through many hardships, after all, she was only a twenty-year-old.

"Hmm." Paris twisted her body as if trying to dodge Liszt's gesture but restrained herself.

"I'm going out. You don't need to follow me; consider this your vacation for the next few days," said Liszt before turning and departing as he needed to continue patrolling the coast to find his Siren.

Watching Liszt riding away with the Retainer Knights, their figures diminishing into the distance, Paris was momentarily dazed.

She unconsciously touched her patted shoulder and murmured to herself, "It seems the Baron prefers slimmer women... I really should eat less."

...

Fresh Flower Port.

The Fresh Flower Vessel had not returned, and Liszt had not found the Siren's singing; it was likely that the Siren was not within the waters of Fresh Flower Town.

"I should save money to buy another sailing ship to search the Sea Black Horse Island."

He raised his hand, pondering in his heart, "Based on the current ship market prices, an ordinary double-masted sailing ship like the Fresh Flower Vessel would cost at least five hundred gold coins. A slightly better double-masted sailing ship would cost over a thousand, and an even better triple-masted sailing ship would cost at least two to three thousand gold coins. And if I wanted a fast sailing ship of the sort used by the Court, it would be at least five or six thousand gold coins."

Considering fixed assets, Liszt could afford a good sail ship; his various fixed assets combined would amount to tens of thousands of gold coins.

“

Speaking of which, the value of a single Space Gem is immeasurable.

However, much of wealth is ill-gotten and liquidity is extremely scarce; the money used to buy serfs still comes from the mithril he exchanged. Mithril is of great strategic value and is unobtainable by purchase. Using one means having one less, and it is very uneconomical to exchange mithril for Gold Coins.

“I’ll just have to save up Gold Coins slowly. I have Fresh Flower Soap, and Fresh Flower Brew will be available soon. Making money isn’t far off.”

Snowflakes continued to fall.

The sandy beaches along the coast had turned white.

The sea had not frozen over, though, and the Sea Waves kept crashing onto the shore and retreating, while the Li Dragon Horse stepped through the snow gathered at the edge of the beach, pacing slowly. Liszt’s gaze lingered over the sea surface, searching for possible Siren habitats, but the sea was clear, not even a plank of wood in sight.

There were some seagulls, though, swooping in flocks over the sea, preying on fish.

“Maybe I could start by buying some small paddle boats and train the fishermen from Oyster Village to go to sea for fishing. The seafood trade has already declined. The business of sea fish, shrimp, and crab could be sustainable; dry some fish... There are very few landlords who go out to sea for fishing now.”

Fishing for freshwater fish is not uncommon; serfs dare not go to sea, but they are definitely familiar with ponds and rivers.

Some migratory fish in the sea are also frequently caught. The Seven-gill Eel, a noble’s favorite, and Salmon, a specialty of the Salmon Family, are both migratory species. Usually, people consider these fish as food bestowed by the ocean, under the care of a knight’s glory.

There are vicious Sea Monsters in the ocean, yet sea fish take the initiative to come ashore—if this is not a gift bestowed by the ocean and the care of glory, then what is it?

Walking along, he came to the beach near the Fragrant Coconut Tree Cordyceps, where a sunken ship equipped with Dragonbone Stabilizer Technique was once salvaged, and five large chests of Sunken Ship Treasure were discovered. Looking back on it, the sunken ship must have been from the Magic Goat Family.

Those shattered Magic Books must have been purchased by a magician of the Magic Goat Family; even the 36D Ghost in the Dragonbone Stabilizer was likely crammed in there by a magician.

“It might well have been Curtis Truth’s doing; she’s always been researching soul extraction techniques, and 36D is probably a human soul she extracted.”

Curtis Truth and her Ghost Ship have dissipated, leaving behind only the Magic Book, the Goat Head Flag, Figurehead, and Sapphire Ring, whose principles are unclear, without much else worth studying.

Nevertheless, Liszt still planned to keep the 36D Ghost. Perhaps one day, he might want to study Lich Technique as well.

There are too many unknown secrets in this world.

If he could live for five hundred years, he would definitely wish, riding his own dragon, to attempt to understand this world – a world far more magnificent and fantastical than Earth.

...

In the evening, Liszt finally awaited the return of Fresh Flower Vessel.

Marcus returned with the Fresh Flower Vessel. Currently, about six hundred serfs had migrated to Black Horse Island, all of whom were constructing the port town.

Since there was no source of food, the Fresh Flower Vessel had to make repeated trips back and forth for transportation.

“I never thought the Baron would go through such a perilous voyage. To think that there really are Ghost Ships in the world, and that it’s the Ghost Ship of the long-destroyed Marquis Cohen,” Marcus exclaimed upon seeing the Knight Squad returning with three fewer Retainers, deeply moved, but it was only for a moment.

After seeing the eight Little Blizzard Beast cubs, he became uncontrollably excited: “Under the care of a knight’s glory, the future of Fresh Flower Town can be entrusted to them!”

“Teacher Marcus, the upkeep of a Blizzard Beast like Douson is probably not much less than an entire Knight Squad. Fresh Flower Town is currently under financial strain, we need to develop vigorously,” Liszt said.

“Yes, Baron, Fresh Flower Town alone definitely cannot afford to raise nine Blizzard Beasts, but we have Black Horse Island. There will be no yield from Black Horse Island this year, but once a new batch of serfs arrives and the farmlands are cultivated, the proceeds from Black Horse Island will be sufficient to support your pursuit of glory!” Marcus replied.

Chapter 269: Sorrow Mixed with Longing and Resentment (First Update)

Liszt, after loading the Fresh Flower Vessel with cargo, set sail for Black Horse Island.

So far, the Fresh Flower Vessel had made more than ten trips between Coral Island and Black Horse Island without encountering a single storm, so the Calming Sea Pearl had never been used.

However, having the Calming Sea Pearl on board gave the crew plenty of confidence, and Liszt felt at ease.

“When I get back, I’ll ask Elkerson if he can make a Calming Sea Pearl... Never mind, I’ll just go to Granney. Granney has a lot of experience, and although his temper is a bit annoying, for the sake of the Calming Sea Pearl’s quality, it would be best to have him make it.” Liszt stood at the bow of the ship, scanning his surroundings.

He hoped to encounter his own Siren during the voyage.

Unfortunately, by the time the Fresh Flower Vessel reached the dock named Black Horse Port, there was still no sign of the Siren.

“What on earth is going on, has my Siren been swallowed up by the Smoke Mission?” He was no longer able to remain calm; casting aside those inexplicable fantasies about love and color, the intrinsic value of the Siren was absolutely immense.

With a Siren, a ship would definitely never lose its way at sea again.

After unloading the cargo, night had fallen, and it was too late to survey the waters around Black Horse Island; Liszt went straight to find King of Black Blood Treasure Horses Lightning. Lightning, seeing him, affectionately lowered its head and rubbed against his arm, not forgetting the master who had once conquered it, carrying Liszt as they sped through the snowflakes.

Black Horse Island was also covered with ice and snow, and in the grassland between the four hills, only the parts near the valleys seemed to have geothermal heat, with no snow accumulation, revealing the pastures that were still growing.

The Black Blood Treasured Horses were quietly grazing there.

Perhaps because they had seen so many people, they were no longer afraid of humans and acted as if they didn’t see them.

The burial ground between Needle Grass Hill and Ice Grass Hill was also covered with snow, but the pits and uneven ground where volcanic glass and Dragon Bone fragments had been excavated were faintly visible, as well as those five tall Fire Dragon Bones. These bones had not completely decayed and surely still held significant value.

Alas, Liszt could neither take them away nor preserve them, and could only let them be battered by the wind and rain.

“When the day comes that Black Horse Island can be fully revealed, I must invite a Magician to help me study these five Fire Dragon Bones... But first, I need to recruit a Magician follower; any secrets about the Fire Dragon Bones should be kept as

confidential as possible.” One must always be cautious with any secrets relating to Dragons.

Never underestimate the people here and their great desire for Dragons.

Even he, a transmigrator, could not resist the allure of Dragons.

Marcus had already created a rough map of Black Horse Island’s topography, not being a professional cartographer, so the map was very simple, showing only the basic terrain. Ice Grass Hill, Needle Grass Hill, Sheep Grass Hill, and Alfalfa Hill formed a broken ring mountain range of a volcanic crater; inside were the grasslands and the Burial Ground, and outside were lands of rocks and weeds.

The dock and harbour town were located to the direct south of Black Horse Island.

Around the periphery of Black Horse Island, there were a few islets. In the southwestern waters, three small islands of several hundred acres each were scattered, which Liszt named respectively as Mangrove Island, Rocky Island, and Sandy Beach Island.

Because Mangrove Island was densely covered with mangrove forests; Rocky Island was full of weathered Basalt Columns; Sandy Beach Island was quite flat, all sand, with just a few scattered Fragrant Coconut Trees.

Beyond the three major small islands were scattered reefs, most of which were exposed during low tide and submerged during high tide.

“The Siren I’m looking for is probably between the shores of Black Horse Island and these islets.” Liszt looked at the rough map, contemplating.

So the next day, just as dawn began to break,

he led Captain Kostor and others to start sailing around Black Horse Island.

“Your Excellency, apart from Black Horse Port, in the northwest corner of Black Horse Island, there’s a body of water suitable for a dock. The water’s depth may not compare to Black Horse Port, but its breadth is very suitable for anchoring ships,” Captain Kostor said, directing the Fresh Flower Vessel while doubling as a guide.

Liszt nodded, “We will consider developing a new dock in the future, but for now, Black Horse Port is sufficient.”

Walking intermittently and visiting the islands along the way, it took a whole day to finally circle around Black Horse Island and check all the coastlines and surrounding reefs.

No Siren!

Resting at night in a newly constructed house in the port town, Liszt tossed and turned, unable to sleep, feeling frustrated and irritable, "Did I look in the wrong direction? Why is there no Siren? Where has my Siren gone!"

He didn't sleep well all night.

But he didn't get discouraged and continued to lead the Fresh Flower Vessel in search of the Siren in the waters around Black Horse Island. This time he searched in farther waters, starting with the three small islands distributed in a triangular pattern.

Because it was difficult to dock, they all took a wooden canoe to paddle ashore.

The Mangrove Island was densely wooded, with the kind of mangrove that could grow in seawater. Mangroves are a general term, much like how a thicket is not only thorns but also other small shrubs. The mangrove forest also contains many other types of plants, not just mangrove species.

The variety of tree species in the mangrove forest is numerous, and just the mangrove plants themselves have many varieties.

However, Liszt didn't recognize any of them, and even the well-traveled Captain Kostor only knew a few, and those were more colloquial names, such as mangrove bark, autumn eggplant, sea lotus, and chicken claws, among others.

The mangrove forest, with its well-developed root system, seemed to grow in seawater, completely hiding the interior of the island.

Unable to land, Liszt then used the Eye of Magic, paddling the wooden canoe around. He didn't detect any signs of magic power, there were neither Sirens nor Magic Potions and Elf Bugs in this stretch of mangrove forest.

Rocky Island was even more clear at a glance, there was nothing.

Lastly was Sandy Beach Island, where the entire island was covered in white sand. Stepping on the white sand after landing from the wooden canoe, he only felt that the view of the blue sea and the white sand, coupled with a few tall Fragrant Coconut Trees, was so beautiful, it seemed like a paradise on earth.

However, Liszt had no mood to appreciate the scenery. He made a round and left with a cold expression.

"My lord, do you wish to continue the search?" asked Captain Kostor, looking at Liszt's expression with caution. Never before had the landlord, although always dignified and imposing yet very mild-mannered, shown such a chilling face.

"Search!"

Liszt pressed down his irritation and said gloomily, "If we don't find it, we won't go back. We will continue searching at night!" Perhaps they couldn't find the Siren during the day because it liked to hide during the day and come out at night.

Indeed.

They found nothing during the day. The Fresh Flower Vessel went to the dock to replenish some lights and other supplies and continued to search at sea. The weather cleared that night, and a bright moon rose from the sea, driving away the darkness and casting broken beams of light dancing with the waves.

Liszt stood at the bow of the ship, not feeling the slightest bit sleepy.

As he passed by islands and reefs, he used the Eye of Magic to observe the magical traces around the islands and reefs, attempting to find the existence of the Siren. The first half of the night passed in a flash, and the moon of the late night was about to set.

As he was about to give up, agitated by the fruitless search, Liszt's ears twitched.

A barely audible song reached his ears. When he perked up and listened carefully, he could no longer hear it, as if it was a mere illusion. But he didn't believe it was only that, because the faint song was filled with longing and grief, with sadness and lament; just hearing it once stirred sadness in his heart.

This was no ordinary illusion.

He took a deep breath, struggling not to shout out loud for fear of startling the singer, "It's my Siren!"

Chapter 270: Shivering in the Shell (Second Update)
A moment later.

The Fresh Flower Vessel came to a quiet halt, and that faint singing voice finally reached Liszt's ears once again. He couldn't understand the language of the singing, the word pronunciation was very strange, but it sounded noble, looking down upon all living beings.

Only now, the singing voice was easily filled with sadness and pain.

"It's a female voice, the Siren is a female, if it has a gender," he listened silently, not rushing to search for her, fearing he might accidentally scare the Siren away.

At the same time, he carefully distinguished and sought the direction from which the singing voice came.

Eventually, he determined the direction of the singing voice to be to the front left, where there seemed to be several reefs connected together. He used his Eye of Magic to look, but because the distance was too far, he saw nothing.

“Captain Kostor, set sail in this direction toward that reef,” Liszt said.

“Yes, my lord!”

The Fresh Flower Vessel resumed its voyage, cutting through the sea’s sparkle under the light of the setting moon. It was unclear whether the sound of the vessel was too loud, drowning out the singing, or if the Siren had discovered the Fresh Flower Vessel and stopped singing. Liszt could no longer hear that sorrowful and moving singing voice, and as for the sailors, they heard nothing at all.

The sails billowed with the wind, and the oars moved in unison.

The Fresh Flower Vessel rapidly approached the reef.

Liszt’s Eye of Magic constantly worked, sweeping back and forth over the reef, still seeing no signs of magic. However, he guessed that the Siren was here, for this was the only area with reefs—if the Siren didn’t need the reefs to live and could drift anywhere in the ocean, then he would just have to accept it.

Finding a Siren that could move anywhere in the vast sea would be a challenge of hellish difficulty.

“Lower the boat, I want to personally search this area of the reef,” said Liszt after some thought, decisively embarking on the boat to start searching in the shallows within the reef.

The boat navigated between the shallow reefs.

Liszt’s Eye of Magic kept observing, and finally, when surveying near the middle of a rock, he saw a faint trace of magic in the shallow waters by the rock.

That speck of pure white light was so alluring in the night.

“Over here, quickly, row this way!”

The sailors rowed furiously, and the boat, like a swift arrow, shot toward the rock. The closer they got, the clearer the pure white magic radiance became in the vision of the Eye of Magic. He could now see the exact location of the light, nestled among the broken stones in the rocky waters.

Waves kept crashing against the surrounding rocks.

The boat's progress became difficult.

But with Liszt's guidance, they managed to inch closer to the source of the magic radiance.

At last, they were just fifty meters away.

The Eye of Magic could clearly see that it was a humanoid creature curled up into a ball. Strangely, there seemed to be a faint halo around the humanoid creature, the shape of which looked like a seashell. It was very faint and hard to see clearly, especially when the waves crashed and the halo flickered in and out of sight.

"Lord Landlord, we can't move any further, the boat is grounded on the rocks below," a sailor said.

"Get into the water directly."

Assured by Liszt that there were no sea monsters around, he jumped off the boat, as the water here was already very shallow. Below the surface were various pebbles and stones, making it hard to stand firmly, plus the moonlight couldn't illuminate the bottom, making the going very difficult.

Fortunately, Liszt was prepared; he took out a Crystal Lamp akin to a desk lamp, which could barely illuminate a small part of the water surface, as well as the stones on the seafloor.

Stepping on the stones, avoiding pitfalls, he let the seawater wash over his legs and waist.

He led a few sailors, groping their way forward bit by bit. When they were less than ten meters away, he could clearly see what the magic radiance was.

In the vision of the Eye of Magic, there was an enormous shell, inside which lay a shaking, magic creature curled up into a ball. A clear female silhouette was visible, yet there were other, fainter magical outlines around her. On the creature, there were also wings and fins.

Fin-like ears jutted out from behind her ears and fin-like wings extended from her back; her legs merged with the faint magic radiance around her ankles, making her feet indistinguishable.

The entire shell emitted a faint magic radiance.

He ceased using the Eye of Magic.

The white shell, stark in the light of the crystal lamps, lay stranded between two broken stones.

“My Siren!” Liszt’s heart raced with excitement, his mental fatigue disappeared in an instant, and his previous irritation quickly dissipated as he whispered to himself, “Don’t be afraid, I am actually a good person.”

At last.

He approached the shell.

It was a very standard scallop-shaped shell, with a diameter of about three meters. The surface showed radiating wave-like patterns, a perfect symmetrical structure without any other color—pure white.

“What a beautiful large shell!” Captain Kostor, following behind Liszt, exclaimed in awe.

The sailors also marveled, “My God, it’s so big!”

“So beautiful!”

“To think there’s such a large shell here, it’s even bigger than the tridacna shell at the entrance of Lord Landlord’s castle.”

Liszt’s brows raised in annoyance, not wishing these people to disturb him, he ordered, “Captain Kostor, take your men back and bring a large net. Later, we’ll pull the shell onto the ship.” He was definitely taking the Siren with him; since the Siren lived inside the shell, it was necessary to take the shell along as well.

“Yes, my lord,” Kostor quickly scolded the sailors and returned to the Fresh Flower Vessel to retrieve a net.

Once everyone had left.

Liszt rapped on the shell, “Hey, can you hear me speaking?”

His Eye of Magic observed the trembling Siren inside the shell, who wrapped her arms around her legs, curling up even tighter, clearly hearing Liszt’s voice.

Liszt paused for a moment.

Making his voice sound gentler, he continued, “You should be able to hear me talking. I am just a human passing by, a Noble Landlord, and these reefs are part of my territory. I heard your song; it was sad and painful. Is there anything I could do to help you?”

He wasn't sure if the Siren could speak Serpent Script, but he had to try communicating first.

After all, she was a spirit of the sea and should be treated with gentleness.

If it had been a Sea Monster, he wouldn't have hesitated to pry open the shell and kill it. But with the Siren, who had a feminine silhouette and an apparently graceful figure, he couldn't be so rough.

"Don't be scared, I really just want to help you. My name is Liszt Tulip, Lord of Fresh Flower Town. I am a landlord who believes in peace. I think whether they are humans, elves, or Sirens, we're all part of nature and should live in harmony, not harm each other."

He proceeded to talk non-stop about his peace ideologies.

This seemed to work, as the shivering Siren finally relaxed a bit. She turned her head as if to respond to Liszt.

However, at that moment, Kostor and the others came back, shouting, "Lord Landlord, we've brought the net!"

Startled by the commotion, the Siren curled up tightly once again.

Liszt's face darkened as he turned to Captain Kostor and the others, barely containing his anger, he said in as low a voice as possible, "Shut up, stand still, no, move back—go back a hundred meters!"