

The Mighty Dragons Are Dead

#Chapter 41: To Get Rich, Build Roads First - Read The Mighty Dragons Are Dead Chapter 41: To Get Rich, Build Roads First

Chapter 41: To Get Rich, Build Roads First

Liszt regarded the issue with calm objectivity, freeing himself from the unrealistic fantasies about dragons and came to believe that the so-called information about the Formless Dragon was likely not a rewarding discovery.

According to his previous deductions:

First, the Smoke Mission was doing science outreach— but this made no sense at all; as a ‘golden finger’, it shouldn’t be this boring.

Second, there might be a Formless Dragon nearby that could be captured—if this were true, it would definitely be explosive news; however, Liszt had no power to capture a dragon. Those nations possessing dragons often captured them as youngsters since adult dragons were too difficult to handle. But even a young dragon would be too much for all the knights of Coral Island to overcome.

Third, a Formless Dragon had traveled thousands of miles to deliver equipment—Liszt didn’t believe his dragon fate was that good yet.

Fourth, it was possible that a Formless Dragon was about to launch an attack on Fresh Flower Town.

The fourth deduction was undoubtedly the most likely since dragons attacking human villages and towns was no longer big news, or else the profession of ‘Dragon Slayer’ wouldn’t have come into existence. In most knight’s novels, Dragon Slayers were celebrated protagonists, second only to Dragon Knights.

Essentially, in a satisfactory knight’s novel, the protagonist was bound to become a Dragon Knight or slay a dragon, and then he would undoubtedly marry a beautiful Princess.

“So, the rewards for these two missions are telling me that I have to resist a dragon and strive to become the protagonist of a knight’s novel, Dragon Slayer Liszt?”

Liszt looked into the mirror and chuckled, “Then, if the big dragon is gone, where is the princess?”

Feeling somewhat conflicted, he worried that his speculation might come true while also feeling that such an event couldn’t possibly happen. After much thought, he decided there was no need to borrow trouble. First, he would complete his mission and see what clues the final mission rewards would provide before making a decision.

If there really was an invasion by a Formless Dragon, and he couldn’t hold it off, that didn’t mean he couldn’t request help.

The moment he delivered this news to the Sapphire Family, he believed it wouldn’t be difficult to exchange for a Marquis title—the highest rank that could be conferred by the duchy.

He called over Goltai, and immediately delegated the task: “This type of Corn Grass wouldn’t appear out of nowhere, it’s definitely with the birds or wind that the seeds have been blown over. Teacher Goltai, mobilize all the idle farmers to search between the hamlets, we must locate more Corn Grass.”

Goltai didn’t quite understand the importance of the task: “Liszt, is this type of Corn Grass very important?”

“Of course, it is highly nutritious fodder, even more suitable for use in horse farms and dairy operations than alfalfa grass... Anyway, planting a variety of fodders allows livestock to grow quicker.”

“If it’s that valuable, I will arrange for people to search right away, we won’t miss a single corner.”

As they were talking, Liszt suddenly noticed a group of people marching in formation outside the castle, passing by the gate, heading towards Thorn Ridge in the south.

“Teacher Goltai, is that the new Patrol Team?”

“Yes, your Retainer Knights have been really helpful. At first, the bastards in the Patrol Team wouldn’t take orders from me as the Administrative Officer, but after a few fights, they quickly learned to curb their tempers.”

“Well done, discipline is the first priority for the Patrol Team, Teacher Goltai, we need to continue strengthening our control over them. I have several ideas that need to be realized... The Patrol Team needs to take on the security management of the town and the hamlets, with the town paying them, uniform dress codes, uniform behavioral standards.”

Liszt outlined some broad ideas, planning to build the Patrol Team into a police station, initially responsible for public security, and eventually, to also take over the management of civil registration.

This way, he could thoroughly know everything about the town, and any individuals with suspicious identities wouldn’t be able to settle in Fresh Flower Town.

“However, there are not many Gold Coins in the town, and Isaiah has complained to me more than once that without Gold Coins, he can’t do anything.”

Gold Coins, Liszt’s castle didn’t have many either; previously the butler had reported that there were roughly one hundred and fifty left.

However, the castle now is very “affluent”: just Li Si Te’s Crimson Blood Sword alone is worth a thousand or two Gold Coins, not to mention the profits from the Black Tulip Industry each year, as well as a large amount of materials obtained through assimilation.

“I will allocate fifty Gold Coins from the castle’s treasury for the development of the town, and this portion of Gold Coins will be deducted from the town’s retained tax revenue each year.”

“Fifty Gold Coins, Li Si Te, that’s a lot—I’ve looked into it, and the town’s annual tax revenue is a mere fifteen Gold Coins.”

“Fifty Gold Coins is not much, Teacher Goltai. Inform Isaiah and Blair that Fresh Flower Town is entering a busy period, and they need to be prepared.”

“As you wish!”

The development of Fresh Flower Town was something Li Si Te was indeed serious about.

He was already working on drawing a map of the town—an abstract and rudimentary terrain map that essentially depicted Fresh Flower Town as a right-angled triangle.

The two perpendicular sides were Thorn Ridge, and the hypotenuse was the East Coast.

The town was located at the center of the triangle, with the castle near the right angle, and the dairy farm and Barley Hamlet occupying the other two corners.

“To be rich, build roads first,” he said, holding a quill pen and emphasizing the dirt road from Thorn Ridge to the town. “This main road—I need to turn it into a gravel road. There’s no cement, but there is plenty of sand. The East Coast has large quantities of sea sand, which can be hauled here for road construction.”

Then there are the muddy paths between the farms, all of which can be paved with sand.

However, paving with sand alone is not the best choice, as it’s hard to drain and gets into shoes, spreading sand everywhere. Unfortunately, there aren’t many stones near Fresh Flower Town to mix with the sand, so they’d have to make do with sand roads for now—it’s still better than muddy roads that become unusable when it rains.

Road construction is a major affair, as is farming.

Elves can influence crop growth, but you can’t rely solely on elves. Before the arrival of elves, the farmers of Fresh Flower Town still had to till their land.

“Scientific farming has only taken the first step, making the villagers aware of the need to fertilize crops. But that’s not enough. We also need to create a batch of farming tools to increase the productivity of the farmers, so they can cultivate more fallow land for crops. I’ve exchanged a bunch of iron from Tulip Castle and Falcon Town and can contact the smithy.”

These two matters are urgent, but their effects won’t be seen immediately.

Yet another matter could bring immediate rewards—sea harvesting.

On the back of a Fire Dragon Horse, Li Si Te gazed at the endless sea, the unique briny scent of the seawater filling his nostrils as the waves beat against the shore, sparkling in the sunlight and filling his vision with little stars.

Thomas led Douson around, allowing it to frolic on the sandy beach.

Douson was growing rapidly, almost daily, and was now the size of a country mutt. It was not known whether it was because of the good diet, but it already showed signs of magic power flowing within. It might not need to reach adulthood before it could cast magic.

Li Si Te planned to intensify its training to prevent an overly wild nature and potential harm to people.

“My Lord, is there anything of note along the East Coast? There are no deep-water bays here, not suitable for a dock,” Marcus said as he watched the waves, still not seeing the wealth of the sea.

Li Si Te pointed to the rocks occasionally visible beneath the sea waves. “Teacher Marcus, do you see those rocks? They are covered with food. When the tide is out, we can have the farmers go and pick up these foods... Compared to the freshwater fish we usually eat, these are the real seafood.”

Chapter 42: The First Seashore Foraging in Fresh Flower Town

“The tide is starting to recede, my lord,” Thomas tugged at Douson, speaking to Liszt.

“Hand Douson over to me, and you, along with Tom and Jessie, go search for the seafood as I have instructed you,” Liszt took the leash from Douson.

Douson kept trying to dash outward, chasing the waves.

Liszt suddenly shouted, “Quiet, Douson!”

Douson did not listen.

Liszt dismounted and stretched out his hand, pressing Douson into the sands, making it unable to move, and commanded loudly, "Douson, be quiet!"

"Woof woof..." Douson let out two confused barks, struggling in futility, and eventually lay down obediently.

Then Liszt slowly let go of his hand.

Douson tried to struggle and dash outward again.

Liszt repeated the process of pressing it down and issuing commands for it to be quiet. After several attempts, Douson finally stopped moving, and at that moment, Retainer Knight Karl hurriedly brought over a piece of bacon, which Liszt rewarded to Douson, "Quiet and you'll get to eat meat, understand, Douson?"

"Woof woof." Douson frantically tore at the bacon, gobbling it up.

Before leaving home, Liszt had specifically instructed Thomas not to feed Douson, for only hunger could engrave a deep memory in animals, better forming a conditioned reflex and achieving obedience training.

"Lord, you have a great talent for taming magical beasts, and I can foresee that Douson will become a qualified domestic magical beast in the future."

"Of course, it will. If it can't achieve that, I will have it slaughtered halfway through. The smoked Fierce Earth Dog meat we had last night was quite delicious. I've hardly ever had magical beast meat like that in Long Taro Castle."

The large Fierce Earth Dog had not been sold for its meat; all had been left at the castle to cure and dry.

"It was indeed a delicacy, and eating it, one could feel the magic power nourishing the body," Marcus had also dined at the castle last night.

After training Douson for a while, Liszt handed him over to Karl and then rode his horse to the beach where the tide had receded, to check on how the servitors were doing.

At this time, Thomas, Tom, and Jessie, each wearing a pair of thick leather gloves and carrying buckets, wielded hammers and shovels, busily at work.

Thomas was responsible for flipping rocks, searching for seafood under and on top of them.

Jessie took charge of digging through the sand, looking for seafood buried beneath it.

Tom, on the other hand, picked up various stranded seafood that hadn't made it back to the sea in time.

"Teacher Marcus, do you know the correlation between the tides and the moon at night?" asked Liszt, in a good mood.

Marcus shook his head, "I do not know."

"The moon keeps moving, and it attracts the seawater, causing tides to rise or fall. Of course, the sun does the same, but it's much further away and doesn't have as strong an attraction as the moon."

"I do not understand these things you know, my lord," Marcus politely admitted.

Marcus was already being courteous.

The moon and the sun can attract seawater? If it was someone else, he would surely have spat in their face, calling it nonsense. Then he would have countered, saying you claim the moon and sun attract seawater, so why don't they pull us humans up into the sky too? In that case, everyone could fly, and we could all be Sky Knights, so stop deceiving me for lack of education.

Seeing Marcus' expression, Liszt found it uninteresting—ignorant natives.

After his reflection, he thought to himself, "Since the moon here can also cause tides, does it indicate that this world is indeed a planet? If I sail along the Sea of Azure Waves continuously, can I make a circle around the planet and come back to this place? If that's true, perhaps one day I could dispatch a fleet for a trip around the world?"

The thought was distant, and Liszt did not dwell on it further.

He rode up to where Tom was.

Tom promptly saluted, "My lord."

“Continue with your task, I’m just taking a look,” Liszt saw at a glance that Tom’s bucket contained clams, conchs, starfish, crabs, sea cucumbers, clams and seaweed, as well as creatures similar to sea centipedes and sea cockroaches.

However, sea cockroaches and sea centipedes could run away, occasionally spilling out of the bucket.

So Tom had to go and pick them up again, all thumbs.

“These two kinds of bugs that run are not seafood, they can be thrown away,” Liszt reminded him.

“Oh, okay, okay, Master,” Tom busied himself throwing away the bugs, sweating profusely as if he was nervous about the landlord being present, always trying to catch them but failing.

Not far off, Thomas, who was moving rocks, saw Tom’s clumsy actions and turned around, smirking with pride—he was the only one of the castle’s three male servants who was outstanding enough to be the proper successor to the butler.

As for Jessie, who was digging in the sand, he had spent half the day without catching a single razor clam or shrimp that the landlord had mentioned; aimlessly digging, he didn’t realize he was supposed to follow the small holes the seafood uses for breathing.

“What a couple of good-for-nothings!” he thought to himself.

Therefore, he happily wielded his hammer, tapping it under the rocks, knocking off clams, sea cucumbers, and oysters, occasionally also picking up a few small crabs.

“The oyster meat needs to be removed like this.” Thomas took his hammer and shattered an oyster shell, then scooped out the soft flesh inside.

Before leaving, Lord Landlord had mentioned that the flesh of oysters was delicious.

Thomas didn’t find those soft and unattractive things particularly tasty, but he was meticulous in carrying out the instructions of Lord Landlord.

It was hardly any effort at all.

On the exposed rocks after the tide had receded, there were oysters and sea cucumbers everywhere.

In just two hours, Thomas had filled the two buckets he brought with him, one of which was entirely filled with the oyster meat he had harvested.

Looking over at Tom, his bucket might have been full, but the landlord had told him several times not to pick certain things, yet he still did.

Even though it was the same kind of bug, he thought they were different.

That was just too silly.

As for Jessie, he might as well be ignored, having dug himself into a sweaty mess with barely more than the bottom of his bucket covered. A few plump shrimp—the landlord had called them mantis shrimp—and a few razor clams that looked like sticks, apparently called bamboo clams.

He put down his bucket full of oyster meat, stuck out his chest, and awaited Lord Landlord's inspection.

Mounted on his horse, spending most of his time under the coconut trees enjoying the cool breeze, Liszt noticed noon was approaching and the sunshine growing blistering hot, so he called an end to this foraging experiment.

He rode over and examined each bucket.

"Tom, you still need to put in more effort to distinguish between pests and seafood, not everything found by the sea is edible. If it's poisonous, it could kill someone," he said.

Ashamed, Tom lowered his head and responded, "I'm sorry, Master, I'm too dumb and couldn't make out the difference."

"It's alright, Tom, it's normal to lack experience on your first foray into foraging; don't feel so guilty about it," Liszt consoled him, then turned to Jessie's bucket, "Hmm, Jessie, your hard work is visible to me, but obviously, you've not applied the methods I taught you."

“Master, I dug hard, but as I dug, the holes would just disappear,” Jessie said in a flustered manner.

“You need to dig following the direction of the holes,” he instructed.

“I... I can stay and keep on digging here, Master, I’m sure I can fill the bucket,” Jessie offered.

“If you stay here, then there’s nobody in the castle to fetch water, Jessie. I’m not blaming you. It’s not an easy task to dig for mantis shrimp and bamboo clams,” Liszt explained.

Finally, Liszt walked over to Thomas’s bucket, one full of oyster meat, and the other also brimming with crabs, sea cucumbers, and more.

“Well done, Thomas.”

“Thank you for the compliment, Master, it’s my duty, and I give my all in service to you,” Thomas beamed.

Liszt responded with a smile befitting a noble, acknowledging Thomas’s efforts—he was well aware of Thomas’s ambitions, as Butler Carter had already informed him. As a landlord, he was not concerned, for Thomas’s ambition extended no further than becoming the castle’s butler.

If he truly had the ability, and Old Carter was no longer up to the task, what harm would there be in letting Thomas become the butler?

No servant could turn his world upside down.

Chapter 43: Seafood Feast in the Castle

Carrying a pile of seafood and returning to the castle, Liszt did not immediately have the kitchen prepare it.

These seafood items indeed resembled those from his memory, but whether they were edible or poisonous still needed to be verified. The verification process was simple: Marcus took a few of the town’s scarce hunters to set

traps on the outskirts of Thorn Ridge and captured several wolves and wildcats, among other carnivorous animals.

The wolves and wildcats locked in cages were starving.

When the seafood was thrown in, the beasts voraciously gobbled it up. Then, the cooked seafood was given to another group of animals. After waiting for a day, by the second day, aside from two animals that died after eating a certain type of sea urchin, the other creatures were still lively, showing no signs of poisoning.

“This indicates that the flavors of the sea here are quite similar to Earth’s seafood, except for the sea urchins. We’ll remove the sea urchins, and the rest of the edible seafood will be used to create specimens for the serfs who harvest the sea to reference,” he said.

After some thought, Liszt was not in a hurry to have people harvest the seafood.

He needed to make others understand that seafood was delicious, not something distasteful.

Many kinds of seafood can be eaten raw, but Liszt did not recommend eating them this way; he always felt that consuming too much seafood could lead to infection by parasites within.

Without any medical facilities, infection by parasites meant waiting for death.

So he called over Cook Abbie Spoon, “Mrs. Abbie, let me show you how to prepare seafood. See this crab? Use a brush to clean it thoroughly, then steam it directly; same with this shrimp—clean it well, then boil it in plain water.”

“Look at this clam; you can use it to make soup or stir-fry it directly. And these oyster meats are actually edible raw, but I don’t eat raw seafood, so you’ll need to boil it in water or stir-fry them. We have plenty of oyster meats here, which I call oysters. If there are any leftovers, they can be dried and used to produce oyster sauce by boiling the dried oysters,” he explained.

Oysters, scientifically known as *Ostreidae*, are a type of shellfish.

They are a delicacy.

Back in his hometown, Liszt was very fond of eating oysters because they are rich in zinc—zinc plays an important role in the development of human secondary sexual characteristics; having trace amounts of zinc in the blood makes one more vigorous...

Therefore.

Oysters would undoubtedly become an essential delicacy on the Baron's dining table.

Fortunately, Fresh Flower Town was situated by the sea and had not been overharvested by humans, so the sea was teeming with oysters, and there was no need to worry about zinc deficiency.

The sixteen-year-old Liszt, still in a period of rapid growth, needed to eat more to grow stronger.

After teaching Mrs. Abbie Spoon how to prepare the seafood, Liszt did not expect the first time he tasted seafood in this world to be memorable, or rather, he had already experienced it— at Long Taro Castle, fishermen had found rock lobsters from the sea.

As an archipelago nation, the Duchy of Sapphire had quite a few fishermen.

The serfs, driven by necessity, naturally sought food from the sea and discovered the deliciousness of seafood. However, due to inconvenient transportation and a lack of information, the ways to enjoy seafood from the different islands could not be shared. On Coral Island, the Tulip Family had not yet finished reclaiming wasteland and had no incentive to exploit the sea.

That's why the subjects of Fresh Flower Town had never thought of harvesting seafood for the past ten to twenty years.

"Mrs. Abbie cooking seafood for the first time would probably fail even at steaming crabs properly; she could only continue to explore how to cook the most flavorful dishes and slowly improve her cooking skills."

Indeed.

At lunchtime, at the castle's dining table, Liszt ate the familiar seafood but could not find the familiar taste.

The crabs were oversteamed, the shrimps overcooked and mushy, the oysters stir-fried too tough, and the clam soup was full of sand. However, he still enjoyed it quite a lot—it was much more appealing than his usual bread with roast meat.

Marcus, Goltai, Isaiah, and Blair accompanied Liszt at the seafood feast.

“Delicious!” Marcus simply commented, and then buried himself in the shrimp and crab.

Isaiah smiled, “Tasty!”

Blair gave a thumbs up, “A rare delicacy!”

The most exaggerated was Goltai, who initially disliked the oysters for their ugly appearance and couldn’t bring himself to eat them. But once he tasted them, he couldn’t stop. He cleaned his plate in no time and then ordered two more servings.

After a sip of hoppy beer and a bite of oysters, his face full of wrinkles lit up with happiness, “I remember now, I remember now.”

“Remember what?” Liszt expertly cracked open a crab shell.

“When I was young, I visited a small island called Flying Fish Island. I had these... oysters at a local’s home. I got drunk that night and ate a pile of oysters, had a marvelous evening. After sobering up and leaving Flying Fish Island, I never found that delicious taste again, until now.”

“Then eat more, maybe another wonderful thing will happen tonight,” Liszt said with a smirk.

He already knew Goltai had found a young girl in town, only sixteen or seventeen— if she hadn’t willingly chosen to follow Goltai, Liszt would have definitely stopped this cradle-snatching behavior.

Goltai laughed, “Who knows, but I’ve already fallen in love with oysters.”

Isaiah and Blair chuckled knowingly.

They were all adults, understanding the implication of the words.

Even Marcus's eyes lit up with expectation, and he turned to start eating oysters.

Upstairs in the living room, nobles and knights were indulging in the delicious seafood, while downstairs in the kitchen, the servants were equally enjoying the pleasure that seafood brought.

"These shrimp are really good. If I hadn't tasted them myself, who would've thought something so ugly could be so delicious?" Eileen Four Fingers devoured them with relish.

Abbie disapprovingly said, "Young lady, don't eat so rudely, you're practically like a boy."

"I'm just a kitchen maid, why can't I eat like this? At home, I always ate this way. Mr. Carter never said anything about it."

Carter elegantly sliced his oysters, as the butler, he always strived to ensure all his actions, including dining, were befitting of a noble butler's demeanor.

He also expected other servants to as much as possible conform to noble etiquette.

Upon hearing this, he said, "Eileen, you've seen Miss Li Vera's personal maid, perhaps you should learn how she dines."

"I don't want to learn from her, holding a fork and knife so daintily. One might think she's some noble lady. Miss Maisie's manners have even been praised by the master, but she doesn't eat that way."

Maisie laughed, "I grew up in the village; no one taught me how to dine elegantly, but I'm learning from Mrs. Morson now. She worked at Tulip Castle, where the maids know more noble etiquette than many noble ladies."

Morson Paddy Field pinched the shrimp head and squeezed out the meat, "That's because nobles have the right to break the rules, while we servants must strictly follow them, or face harsh criticism and punishment."

Eileen suddenly clamored, "The master would never punish the servants, Tom broke a vase in the castle yesterday, and the master didn't even scold him."

“The master is kind; I will definitely not break anything next time,” Tom said with a respectful expression on his face.

As Thomas ate his scooped oysters, he snorted with disdain, “That’s not certain. Clumsy Tom, breaking a vase is just the beginning. You’ll break more things in the future, the master should just ban you from going upstairs.”

Chapter 44: Lord Landlord Wants to Establish a New Settlement

The banquet ended.

“I plan to build a new village on the East Coast to settle some serfs as fishermen for coastal fishing,” Li Si Te said.

Planters are busy during the planting season, but once the crops are planted, they become idle.

Li Si Te felt this was an unreasonable allocation of human resources. It would be better to reassign some planters to focus on developing nearshore fisheries, no, coastal fisheries.

Now without boats, even if we wanted to fish nearshore, we couldn’t do it.

“Such delicious food, we should indeed catch more. However, Li Si Te, the town’s population is too small, we don’t even have two thousand people. The agricultural production of each village can’t do without the labor of serfs.”

“I’ll figure something out about the population,” Li Si Te didn’t elaborate.

In fact, he had already discussed with Levis, using the shared profits from the Black Tulip as payment, to buy serfs from Levis—the Earl’s fleet went out to trade and could load quite a few serfs on the return journey. These serfs might come from war-torn islands or from the continent.

Goltai seemed to have understood, “Since you’ve said so, I will start planning for the new village immediately.”

“Baron, what will the new village be called?” Isaiah asked.

“Let’s call it... Oyster Village,” replied Li Si Te.

Li Si Te had high expectations for Oyster Village. He hoped that, once the village was established, it could transform a group of serfs into fishermen, continuously harvesting seafood, providing food for Fresh Flower Town, and offering a material basis for future construction—one where the residents of Fresh Flower Town could hibernate at home during winter to reduce food consumption.

With sufficient food, the cold of winter wouldn’t matter at all.

A large amount of construction could begin in winter.

In the evening, Goltai came to the castle again, “Li Si Te, Corn Grass has been found! The Patrol Team finally did something worthwhile. They discovered a bunch of grass similar to Corn Grass at the edge of Thorn Ridge, southwest of the town.”

“Take me to see it,” said Li Si Te.

Before dark, Li Si Te personally saw the large expanse of Corn Grass, mixed among other wild grasses. They appeared much shorter than the three wild corn plants in Little Wheat Village, probably due to poor nutrition.

Li Si Te took a tour and felt somewhat disappointed.

This was probably indeed the original habitat of Corn Grass, but there was no sign of Elf Bug nurturing—without the Elf Bug, the development of Corn Grass would be hard to thrive.

And it also couldn’t improve the variety gradually with the help of the Elf Bug to become more like a corn cob.

“Guard it well and be sure to collect the seeds carefully. Later, when we clear the fields in town, choose a suitable place and plant some to provide new varieties of forage for the horse farm and dairy farm,” Li Si Te instructed.

At night, after bathing, Li Si Te read in his study.

Before his eyes, the Smoke Serpent Script condensed: “Task completed, reward with new information on the Formless Dragon.”

Suddenly, the smoke twisted, and a new mission was released, “Task: Fisheries have been scheduled by the Landlord, and a group of serfs will soon be driven to the sea. It’s a Landlord’s essential skill to drive the people, but sustainable development is more important. Please update the equipment for the fishermen. Reward: A large patch of Smoked Grass.”

“A large patch of Smoked Grass, what is that, tobacco?” Li Si Te mused.

Updating the equipment for fishermen was a simple task. Even if the Smoke Mission wasn’t assigned, he would have done it anyway. One can’t expect fishermen to fish with their hands if they lack tools.

After the tide receded, the rocks became extremely sharp, able to cut a finger with just a careless slip.

The task reward was no longer the information about the Formless Dragon, which somewhat relieved Li Si Te (Liszt) and made him start to look forward to what Smoked Grass might be.

Smoking was fashionable among nobles, and the Tulip Family had planted many tobacco plants and even had a Tobacco Minor Elf.

“So, Smoked Grass probably isn’t tobacco, since there were tobacco seeds among the seeds traded from Tulip Castle. I could plant them anytime I wanted.”

Li Si Te (Liszt) decided not to dwell on it, certain that he would eventually find out what Smoked Grass was.

He waved his hand to disperse the Smoke Serpent Script and continued reading. The Earl had kept his word; upon Liszt’s return, he was gifted a cartload of books.

Now, he was reading an autobiographical novel called “The Adventure of Ranger Griffe”.

The story was told from a first-person perspective, recounting the experiences of an Earth Knight named Griffe as he journeyed through the Maple Leaf Duchy. The story was amusing, although Liszt thought many parts of it were simply the author’s wild fantasies—like having an affair with the wife of an Earl, eloping with a Marquis’s daughter, or conversing with the Duke of Maple Leaf in high spirits.

Such experiences were certainly not for someone who wasn't even an Honored Knight, let alone a fallen noble descendant.

However, the author must have been someone with a wealth of experience, as he described many customs different from those in Coral Island, along with the decadent lives of nobles and numerous hearsay stories.

Quite interesting.

Li Si Te (Liszt) enjoyed novels that provided both stories and knowledge.

“Hm?”

As he read, the story abruptly shifted to a chapter on a dragon-slaying battle, in which Griffé arrived at a town being invaded by an invisible entity. The town's landlord had fled, and the townspeople were unable to resist; at that moment, Griffé decided to save the suffering people.

After observing, he concluded that it was a Formless Dragon—though the book didn't explain how he observed and came to that conclusion.

“The Formless Dragon is a mystical Giant Dragon that hides in another world; only the most courageous and upright knights can see it. I'm not courageous enough. If I want to see it, I must muster my courage! I need to find it and confront it, to discover its weakness!”

Thus, Griffé went off to meet his end before the Formless Dragon, got beaten to the point of vomiting blood, but it was also because of this that he saw the Formless Dragon.

“Ah, what a beautiful dragon it was, like a flowing crystal, colorless, its entire body transparent. I spat out a mouthful of blood, and it passed right through its body; yes, I could not touch it. I am very despondent because I may never be able to ride it.”

Li Si Te (Liszt) admired Griffé's brazenness; nearly killed by the Formless Dragon, yet still lamenting the fact that he couldn't ride a dragon.

Fortunately, Griffé was still somewhat self-aware.

“I knew it wanted to kill me. I couldn't see its eyes, I could only see a blurry mass of water, but I knew it aimed to end me, I could sense its emotions. I

had forgotten life and death, and in that last moment, all I wanted was to take a couple more puffs of a cigarette. Oh sorry, I was out of tobacco leaves, so I just grabbed a handful of grass nearby and chewed it to fight the craving.”

At this point, Li Si Te’s (Liszt’s) brows twitched.

He continued to read on.

“Later, I found out that the grass I grabbed was called Smoked Grass, similar to tobacco but with a unique flavor, akin to my socks that I’d worn for either sixteen or twenty-six days without washing. I almost threw up; yes, that moment successfully cured me of my addiction to smoking, I swore never to smoke again!”

“I’ve had a smoking addiction for seventeen years, since my father liked to roll his own tobacco leaves. He used to ask me, ‘Hey, Griffé, do you smoke...’”

The next large section was all about his remembrances of his father teaching him to smoke.

Li Si Te (Liszt) read on, frustrated: “Stop beating about the bush, I want to see how you slay the dragon!”

Chapter 45: The Friendship Harvested from Smoked Grass and Cows

Fortunately, after a recollection of more than five hundred words, Griffé finally got back to the main storyline of dragon slaying.

“I had to ensure that I truly meant it when I initially swore to quit smoking. It’s just that later on, I forgot because I was astonished by the actions of the Formless Dragon. My God, it actually snatched the Smoked Grass out of my hands, devoured it, and I think it must have mistaken the taste due to not having bathed in years.”

“Sorry, I spoke ill of the Formless Dragon. In fact, we became friends later on. Because it ate my Smoked Grass and didn’t kill me, and I, in exchange for a bundle of Smoked Grass and two cows, gained the friendship of the Formless

Dragon. Honestly, the Formless Dragon isn't that big, only slightly larger than a house."

"I've seen the Bronze Dragon of the Duke of Maple Leaf, which is a beautiful Metal Dragon nearly thirty meters in length. The Formless Dragon looked like its child, oh, but dragons don't have children."

"We had a pleasant afternoon together. In the evening, it came up to me, shook its body, and then a gemstone just fell into my hands. It flew away, but it left behind its gemstone—a gem no larger than a fingernail, which I've since worn on my finger."

"Haha, now you know where my Space Ring came from. Countless noble Sirs were willing to give up everything for this ring, but I wouldn't trade it because it's a testament to the heartfelt friendship between me and the Formless Dragon!"

With that, the Formless Dragon chapter came to an end.

Griffe quickly moved on to the next story—the battle of wits with the Headless Knight.

When Li Si Te (Liszt) quickly flipped through the novel, which was only about fifty thousand words long, no further information about the Formless Dragon appeared, not even the Space Ring, which was only mentioned that one time.

It was as if Griffe only wrote about the Formless Dragon when he remembered it, and after finishing, he forgot all about it.

"It seems that this reward is just the knowledge of the Formless Dragon recorded in 'The Adventure of Ranger Griffe'... Only the brave and upright can see the Formless Dragon, so there's probably no chance for me, being neither brave nor upright." He was very self-aware.

However, he seriously doubted the truth of this information. How could one rely on intangible and vague virtues like courage and integrity to determine whether one can see a Formless Dragon?

"This story always feels like a spin-off of 'only pure-hearted maidens can see unicorns'."

Many female protagonists in knight's novels are noble daughters who ride unicorns. Li Si Te (Liszt) had read a few, all of which staunchly claimed—only the pure, beautiful, naive, and kind virgin girls could be accepted by unicorns. As for whether unicorns, these legendary creatures, exist, Li Si Te (Liszt) was skeptical.

He was skeptical about unicorns and the same went for the Formless Dragon.

Especially the bizarre setting that only knights with courage and integrity can see the Formless Dragon.

Still, he quickly caught a piece of useful information: “Griffe used Smoked Grass to fend off the Formless Dragon’s slaughter. Later, he mentioned exchanging a bundle of grass and two cows for the Formless Dragon’s gemstone. My current Smoke Mission rewards me with Smoked Grass. It seems it’s still part of the chained missions.”

First, the reward was information about the Formless Dragon.

Then new information about the Formless Dragon was rewarded.

Now, they want to reward me with Smoked Grass that the Formless Dragon loves to eat.

All are interconnected rewards, like unlocking a large chain mission, so the target of the mission can easily be inferred—there may truly be a Formless Dragon that will invade Fresh Flower Town.

“Cows?” Li Si Te (Liszt) thought of another link, “The dairy farm seems to have two old cows that can no longer produce milk, but the castle has plenty of food, and they haven’t been used to entertain guests yet. Perhaps, these two old dairy cows are what I need to prepare for the Formless Dragon’s dinner?”

The information is still not clear enough, preparations remain insufficient.

Li Si Te (Liszt) felt that the most urgent task was to continue completing missions to gain more details about the Formless Dragon chain mission, making it easier to devise a response strategy.

Ding dong.

A knock on the door.

“Please come in.”

Butler Old Carter came in carrying an oil lamp, “My lord, it’s getting late. You should rest early.”

“I was just about to go to bed.” Liszt closed the book and put it back on the shelf, frowning slightly due to the unpleasant smell on his hands, “Mr. Carter, by the way, light another box of air freshener in the study. I really can’t stand the strange smell of these thick parchment papers.”

The carriage of books given by the Earl this time brought a large amount of fishy smell, although Liszt had already lighted air fresheners, it still couldn’t be masked.

There was no such thing as the snow-white and clean paper.

There was only yellowed, hardened parchment with a long-lasting stench.

This type of paper was made from the inner layer of animal hides, peeled off whole and specially tanned. It was expensive to produce, difficult to preserve, and inconvenient for writing. Liszt truly wanted to hurry up and produce white paper to replace this thick parchment, but he also understood now was not the right time.

For one thing, white paper wasn’t an urgent necessity.

Secondly, there were no copyright laws, and nobles could seize paper-making technology at any time.

Just as he hadn’t started researching horseshoes, saddles, or cement, similarly, he had the rough structure of a longitudinal sailboat in his mind. Once invented, it would definitely promote the development of the Age of Exploration.

The most important reason was—they had no people.

The entire town had 1,990 people, no, 1,991 people—to be precise. Recently two elderly had died in the town, and four babies were born, with one succumbing early on.

Of these 1,991 people, excluding the elderly and children without labor capabilities, only about 1,500 were capable of working, which was already quite fortunate. They needed to farm, repair roads, and now they had to build Oyster Village. Soon, a group of people would also need to be allocated to sew gloves, cast hammers and spades, and produce fishing gear for fishermen.

As for Liszt himself, he was also very busy. He must continually practice his magic.

“Fire Dragon Drill” and “Flaming Wave” had already been mastered, but required time to become proficient. After obtaining the Crimson Blood Sword, he became even more diligent in his cultivation, hoping to break free from the earth’s bonds and soar into the skies.

Carter lit the air freshener.

He blew out a candle and said, “My lord, should the castle hire a few more servants?”

“Is there a shortage of manpower?” Liszt asked in surprise. Ten servants to attend to his needs should be enough.

However, Carter spoke solemnly, “Little Wheat Bug, Peanut Bug, Tulip Bug, Alfalfa Bug—they are all good critters, but their cordyceps need a man-servant to inspect and care for them daily. These tasks were assigned to Jessie. Now that corn planting has begun, and soon Thorn Bugs will also need to be settled, Jessie is overwhelmed with work.”

After a pause, he continued, “Douson, Li Dragon Horses, Fire Dragon Horses, and the other horses all require people to care for them. The seafood in the castle, before Oyster Village is constructed, also needs to be gathered by the servants. Moreover, the kitchen with the increased variety of dishes, Mrs. Abbie has already complained about being unable to cope.”

The castle, the city, and the towns had many overlapping functions.

However, the castle leaned more towards self-sufficiency in agriculture, while the town managed the entire territory and collected taxes. Liszt was not satisfied with this system, feeling it hindered the development of productivity, with the biggest obstacle being the castle—a distorted monster controlling all elves and firmly bounding the greatest productive forces.

After all, the castle's primary function was to provide a luxurious life for nobles, not to liberate productivity.

Understanding this, yet without much desire to change it—after all, he was a noble himself!

“Since there is a lack of manpower, Mr. Carter, you'll be responsible for recruiting new servants.”

“Very well, my lord.”

Chapter 46: Hiring Male and Female Servants

“Big Lily, where's Little Lily?”

“What's the matter, Old Yab? Little Lily is feeding the chickens in the yard.” Big Jasmine was a middle-aged woman, with a hunchbacked spine marked by years of hard labor.

Old Yab's wrinkled face beamed with a smile, “It's good news, Lord Landlord's castle is hiring new servants. Butler Mister Carter said they're looking to hire three male servants, one female servant, and one kitchen maid. Big Lily, Little Lily could apply for the maid position.”

“Really? Is Lord Landlord truly hiring new maids? Is this true? That's fantastic.” Big Lily sprinted into the house. “I have to go tell Little Lily.”

“Go quickly,” said Old Yab, and by the time he finished speaking, Big Jasmine had already vanished from sight. He chuckled, shaking his head, and muttered, “I've got to go spread the good news to everyone. In the castle, ah, they can drink milk every day, such a wonderful life awaits the children, they're so lucky.”

Before long, all 48 serf households of Barley Hamlet knew of the news.

“What great news, I was just complaining that Malfoy doesn't have more fields to sow, and we can only go and clear new lands. He's strong and hardworking, eats a bit too much maybe, but he's sure to do well as a male servant.”

“That’s not a sure thing, Parker is more industrious and also polite. I think he could definitely get hired.”

“Is the news for real, that Lord Landlord would hire servants from the countryside?”

“It’s what Old Yab said, and he’s been helping make tools for Lord Landlord at the smithy these past few days. Could his words be false?”

“Old Yab certainly has craftsmanship skills, but can he still lift a hammer?”

“He doesn’t need to do it himself, there will be apprentices arranged by Lord Landlord to do the hammering. Remember lame-footed Peter? He became an apprentice in the smithy, and Lord Landlord pays him a copper coin every day as wages!”

“Isn’t the smithy owned by the Old Drunkard?”

“The Old Drunkard sold the smithy to Lord Landlord long ago, ho ho, for three Naldas!”

“Three Naldas, my goodness, Lord Landlord is so generous!”

Good news always flies swiftly from ear to ear, like birds with wings.

In the yard where she was feeding chickens, Little Lily’s face flushed with excitement, “Mama, can I... can I really apply to be a maid?”

“It’s news from Old Yab, he wouldn’t lie to us. Little Lily, you must prepare well. Just getting into the castle means you’ll have a good life ahead,” said Big Lily joyously.

“But... would Lord Landlord choose me?”

“Have confidence in yourself, Little Lily. You are Barley Hamlet’s most outstanding girl, hardworking and capable; you’re Mama’s pride. Of course, you could also consider the role of the kitchen maid, Lord Landlord is hiring for that position too, and no one can wash vegetables as clean as you.”

“Hmm, I know what to do now, Mama,” Little Lily said, determination shining in her eyes.

For the promise of a better future, she had to display exceptional qualities to be hired as a castle maid. Without a father, her Mama struggled to raise her and her two brothers in extreme poverty. Now grown up, she had to start taking on responsibility for her family. The seventeen-year-old girl clenched her fists in silent resolve.

In the smithy, Liszt watched as several older blacksmiths and their apprentices busily crafted iron blocks.

Using iron blocks obtained through trade with Black Tulips, Liszt had used them for making agricultural tools, starting with equipment for fishermen.

Shovels, hammers, awls—with these three pieces of equipment, fishermen could harvest seafood.

The seafood resources on the East Coast of Fresh Flower Town, untouched and unpolluted, included abundant shellfish and crabs, which could be easily caught without the need for advanced techniques.

“Teacher Goltai, has the selection for the fishermen already started?” Liszt received the handkerchief passed by Marcus and wiped the sweat from his forehead.

He had become accustomed to the services of a personal manservant, and, as long as there was no physical contact, he enjoyed having someone to pour tea and water for him.

Goltai had no choice but to take out his own handkerchief to wipe his sweat, “Your requirements have been conveyed, Clerks are doing the publicity in each hamlet. We’re only taking the elderly, women, and some not yet grown-up children as fishermen.”

“That’s right, it’s like that, seaweed harvesting doesn’t require much strength, just patience. It’s a reasonable allocation of human resources to have the less efficient farming households go seaweed harvesting. However, you must do the publicity well; poisonous seafood must not be touched, and raw seafood must not be eaten.”

The medical and health methods in this world are extremely undeveloped.

Nobles cultivate Dou Qi and rarely fall ill, so there’s no motivation to study medicine. Liszt also doesn’t know medicine; all he could do was to focus on

prevention for his subjects—promoting hygiene, drinking boiled water, and eating cooked food.

“They are lucky to have met you, Liszt; you have a unique charm,” Goltai flattered him.

A regular young Noble, puffed up with a few compliments, would probably become conceited. Liszt, with the soul of an adult and well-established principles, couldn’t possibly get dizzy from a few flattering words; he simply ordered, “Don’t stop the forging of iron, but don’t let the few blacksmiths get too tired either. Adjust their wages from five copper coins to six copper coins, and apprentices to two copper coins.”

Apprentices doing odd jobs, one copper coin a day.

Master smiths wielding the hammers, five copper coins a day.

These were the wages Liszt had offered previously, which were quite generous. Now a financially strong Baron, he no longer cared about exploiting the common folk for those few copper coins.

Bear in mind that his Crimson Blood Sword at his waist was worth a thousand or two Gold Coins.

That’s tens of thousands of silver coins, or over ten million copper coins.

Besides, the entirety of Fresh Flower Town was his. There was no difference between the subjects having money and him having money—he could adjust the tax rates anytime he wanted, however he wanted to collect them.

“Six copper coins a day, hmm, lucky blacksmiths,” Goltai muttered to himself.

Then he walked into the smithy’s forging room and shouted, “Blacksmiths, Lord Landlord has just decided to raise your wages from five copper coins a day to six copper coins a day, and apprentices can now get two copper coins a day. Work hard, the generosity of Lord Landlord is beyond your imagination!”

“Wow!”

“Six copper coins a day?”

“Long live Lord Landlord!”

“Praise Lord Landlord, Old Jack will forge iron for Lord Landlord all his life!”

“Apprentices can also get two copper coins a day; oh my, my parents will be overjoyed.”

Laughter and chatter filled the smithy, complaints about the heat evaporated, and everyone worked hard to repay the generous Lord Landlord Liszt.

Hearing the cheers inside, Liszt shook his head.

He may have a kind heart, not wishing to exploit the serf class, but isn't he also using slight benefits to drive the productivity of the serfs? Rather than exploitation, he preferred creation, rational allocation of production resources, and boosting working efficiency. That's how to make perfect use of the less than two thousand people in the town.

“Master, are you going back now?”

“I'll go to the Tailor Shop to check on the gloves, towels, and masks being sewn for the fishermen; I hope they are all qualified products.” Liszt mounted the Fire Dragon Horse and lightly flicked his whip.

Chapter 47: The Revolution in Clothing

“Lily·Bathing Basin, Wendy·Big Toe, Jim·Bull Dung, Parker·Red Nose, John·Doorknob, after the selection, you five will have the opportunity to work in the castle.”

After three consecutive days of trial training, Butler Carter finally announced the three men and two women who met his standards for selecting servants, to be the new male and female servants of the castle.

The remaining seven or eight trial participants asked unwillingly, “Mr. Carter, please give me another chance, I will do better!”

“I'm sorry, but once a decision is made, it cannot be changed. However, you don't need to worry. For these three days of trial training, each of you will receive a compensation of three copper coins, based on the standard of a kitchen maid. Moreover, your excellence is already remembered by me, and

should the castle need to recruit servants again, I will definitely consider you first.”

The ownership of the Castle Servants, strictly speaking, lies in the hands of Liszt.

But they are not compelled to work without payment; they receive a wage, which servants can save to spend on food, drink, and clothing, or send back to their families.

The wages of the castle are one copper coin a day for a kitchen maid or male servant assistant; two copper coins a day for a maid or male servant; three copper coins a day for the first male servant or Cook; and four copper coins a day for a male or female Butler.

Aside from the solitary Carter and Morson, the other servants in the castle choose to send their wages back home to support their families.

Furthermore, servants can apply to buy their freedom if they become too tired of working—that is, to return to a free status. Of course, the decision to accept or reject the buyout rests with the Noble.

The young men and women who were not selected left the castle disappointed; losing the chance to work in the beautiful castle was a major blow to them.

The five who were selected were beside themselves with excitement.

“Oh my God, I’ve been chosen!”

“I... I’m staying in the castle?”

“Mother, I made it!”

Carter watched the five newcomers with a smile, remembering his own youth when he came from a struggling Serf family and was selected by a castle, then under the Viscount Family, to become a Servant.

He started as a lowly male servant assistant and gradually became an excellent servant. As the Tulip Family experienced leapfrog growth, he was sent by the Earl to manage the family’s other estates and castles in different towns.

Until Liszt came of age, he followed and became a Butler.

The years had left deep marks on his face, and he could hardly recall the jubilation he felt when he first became a servant. For decades, he had worked in the castle, his relatives having passed away many years ago. There were regrets, but also happiness.

Now his greatest wish was to accompany Liszt until the day the sun no longer rose, then to choose eternal rest.

“Young gentlemen, ladies, please be quiet,” he said, gesturing with his hand for the new recruits to tone down their excitement, “I am about to announce your positions.”

Lily and the others quickly calmed down.

“Lily·Bathing Basin, Mrs. Abbie is very pleased with you. Your job will be as a kitchen maid, hmm, Eileen Lady will show you the ropes for a while so you can quickly assist Mrs. Abbie.”

Little Lily immediately nodded rapidly like a pecking chicken, “I will become familiar with the kitchen duties as quickly as possible.”

“That’s good to hear, but also don’t put too much pressure on yourself. Mrs. Abbie... is outspoken, but once you get used to her, you’ll find she is a good person.” Carter was somewhat concerned for the young girl, wondering if she could withstand the blower-like booming voice of Abbie·Spoon.

He continued with the announcements, “Wendy·Big Toe, Mrs. Morson will show you what you need to know as a maid.”

“Yes, Mr. Carter.”

“Then, Jim·Bull Dung, Parker·Red Nose, John·Doorknob,” Carter looked at the three young lads with vegetable stains on their faces.

“Mr. Carter,” all three puffed out their chests, trying their best to appear more elegant.

Carter was pleased with the attitude of the three, preferring obedient lads like these over troublemakers like Thomas: “In the time to come, I will get you

quickly acquainted with the work of a manservant. Soon, you'll be busy not just within the castle, but outside it as well."

He looked up at each of the new servants: "You are not only representing yourselves but also the image of the castle. Well-dressed, civilized in conduct, you must familiarize yourselves with noble etiquette quickly, and say a complete goodbye to the laziness that came with being a serf. Understand, gentlemen, ladies?"

"Understood, Mr. Carter!"

"Now, each of you has half a day off to go home and share this good news. From tomorrow, you will live in the castle."

"Mr. Carter, congratulations, you will soon become a head butler," Mrs. Morson said to Carter after the new servants had eagerly gone home to report the good news.

"Mm, it feels good," Carter replied with a rare playful smile, "I must live a bit longer to prevent Thomas from taking over. I don't want to see him enjoying this feeling."

"I think Thomas would rather stay by the master's side, he is indeed smarter than Tom and Jessie."

With a hint of incoherence, Carter said, "The master has inherited the courage of the Tulip Family and the shrewdness of the Long Taro Family; sometimes, it might be better to be a bit dumber than smarter in front of the master."

Saying this, he suddenly cocked his head to listen, then said, "Hoofbeats, the master is back. I must go to welcome him."

"Go ahead, Butler Carter, both dumb and smart."

Carter tilted his head.

He had already formed a tacit understanding with Morson, and two such understanding butlers were what kept the castle in perfect order.

Stepping to the door, riding atop a Fire Dragon Horse, the tall, handsome Liszt came galloping back, the golden sunlight casting a glow on his slightly curly flaxen hair as if it was a flowing mass of gold.

“The master is like a born noble, he has all the attributes of a noble,” Carter thought to himself.

The body bent slightly, “Welcome home, master.”

“Mr. Carter, have the new servants been chosen?” Liszt handed the reins to Thomas and undid the cravat around his neck, tired of the stuffy noble attire, especially in the summertime.

The noble clothing of the Grand Duchy was inspired by continental styles.

Female nobles typically wore long gowns with a crinoline underneath; they would also pad their buttocks, making the whole gown stand up like a pyramid.

Li Vera never wore such attire; she preferred male noble clothing.

A full set of male noble clothing, called “Flack·Abaie,” included a tailcoat-like outer coat “Flack,” a vest “Gile” to be worn underneath, and tight knee breeches “Best”. Of course, it also included long boots and stockings.

Furthermore, male nobles had to wear accessories around their necks that symbolized noble authority.

For everyday household wear, a cravat sufficed; for going out on business, they needed to wear a tie-like “Cravat,” which Liszt referred to as a scarf; during grand ceremonies, they wore “Ruff,” a large disc encircling their neck, which Liszt called a pleated collar.

Undoing the cravat, he immediately felt the hot air from inside his clothing escaping through his neck, prompting Liszt to complain: “I need to start a revolution against clothing!”

Chapter 48 Chapter 0048: Monkeys That Steal Coconuts

Ties, shirts, vests, undershirts, boxer shorts, suits, dress pants, gentleman’s hats, leather shoes—Liszt had a whole series of clothes he wanted to produce.

But he couldn't be so innovative, after all, he was just a Baron from the countryside. If one day he became the ruler of a country, then he could freely reform and set trends.

For now, he had to endure the cumbersome outfits to maintain the so-called noble dignity.

"My lord, I have given the servants half a day off, starting tomorrow, they will devote themselves to working for the castle."

"Hmm, arrange it as you see fit."

"Yes."

Sweating profusely, Liszt wasn't too interested in small talk, "Mr. Carter, have someone prepare my bathwater, this kind of weather isn't too kind to people."

"As you wish," Carter hurried to instruct the maids to prepare the bathwater.

Nowadays, the small castle always had bathwater ready because the servants all knew their lord was an exceptionally clean noble. It was normal for him to bathe once a day, usual to bathe twice, and he even bathed three times in a single day on occasion. It would only be abnormal for him not to bathe for a day.

After taking a bath, he changed into home clothes, loose robes.

This type of robe was a kind of pajama—the nobles here knew that it was uncomfortable to always wear tight formal wear, so they modified pajamas to serve as home wear.

Liszt still found it cumbersome and uncomfortable to wear.

During summer, he most liked to wear short-sleeve shirts and T-shirts, so he rolled up the sleeves of his robe to expose his forearms. Although this wasn't in line with noble etiquette, within the confines of the small castle, who would dare to question his minor transgression? The countryside did have its advantages.

"My lord, it's a pity we don't have ice; otherwise, I could make you a glass of ice sugar water to relieve the heat."

“Even at Tulip Castle, there isn’t much ice to squander in the summer. I can bear this difficulty, but, unfortunately, I’ll miss being able to drink chilled beer again.” He wasn’t fond of drinking, and his present consumption at banquets was due to his predecessor’s love for alcohol combined with the need for social interaction.

But he exclusively enjoyed drinking chilled beer during the hot summer, which was refreshingly cold to the core.

As the height of summer was fast approaching, each day was hotter than the last. He remembered that at Coral Island, during the hottest days, eggs could cook on the ground, likely reaching forty degrees.

Every year, a good number of serfs would die from the heat.

“I’ve heard that saltpeter can be used to make ice, but it’s hard to come by. It seems Coral Island doesn’t have a saltpeter mine, and even if it did, I wouldn’t recognize one... I remember reading that the earthen wall corners of rural houses, stables, and toilet corners are rich in saltpeter, but Fresh Flower Town is all wooden houses, and there are no toilets...”

The technology to make ice with saltpeter was basically impossible for Liszt to replicate.

He could only do like other nobles: store ice in an icehouse during winter and use it during summer, “Mr. Carter, don’t forget to remind me to build an icehouse this winter.”

“Of course, my lord.”

Dinner.

As usual, he invited Goltai, Marcus, Isaiah, and Blair—only these four people from Fresh Flower Town had the privilege to dine at the same table as Liszt.

“Liszt, the planning for Oyster Village is complete. Tomorrow, the first group of fishermen from Oyster Village, clad in the new gear you’ve prepared for them, will head to the East Coast to officially fish. They are all old men, women, and children, foolish and impulsive. These past two days, they’ve already started collecting shells at the seaside.”

Once the news spread that the lord personally served seafood at the banquet, the commoners began to imitate him, ready to catch seafood for themselves.

They always followed the actions of their lord.

Liszt spoke gravely, “Teacher Goltai, you must ensure proper safety guidance. I do not want any civilian to be in danger from eating seafood. As officials of the town, you must take this matter seriously. The population is the most important productive force in Fresh Flower Town.”

Perhaps in his heart, he still found it somewhat incredulous.

However, having understood Liszt’s attitude, Goltai and the others nodded without hesitation, indicating they understood.

“So, tomorrow, if you have time, accompany me to Oyster Village to see the effect of the fishermen’s first experience of gathering at sea. At the same time, you should actively promote every kind of seafood that can be caught, as well as those that cannot be harvested. Moreover, you must teach them how to preserve seafood.”

“Baron, we have already organized clerks to repeatedly emphasize this point. Moreover, the seafood in the castle has been sampled by every clerk, and they are very enthusiastic about it.”

“Good.”

On the next day, considering the timing of the low tide, Liszt, accompanied by the Retainer Knights, arrived at Oyster Village. There were no houses in Oyster Village just yet; only a barren area not far from the beach had been leveled, which would later be used for building wooden houses.

At that time, around two hundred elderly, weak, women, and children were turning over every rock and shoveling through the sand on the flat beaches of the East Coast, carrying baskets or buckets.

Many of them did not have gloves, shovels, hammers, or other tools; they were working entirely with their hands—the productivity of the tailor shop and smithy in town couldn’t keep up.

“Lord Landlord!”

Seeing Liszt, the fishermen greeted him with bows.

Liszt nodded slightly in response, riding the Fire Dragon Horse, patrolling around. Gathering from the sea was hard work, exposed to blistering wind and burning sun, but the workload was not very large. Thus, the fishermen, who often had a reputation for being somewhat idle, were buzzing with enthusiasm, busy and happy regardless of their experience.

After watching for a while, Liszt felt unbearably hot and promptly took shelter under the coconut trees.

Looking up at the tall coconut trees, he felt something was amiss. Then, it dawned on him: “There are no coconuts!”

He turned and asked a clerk standing by: “Do these trees not bear fruit?”

“They do bear fruit, Lord Landlord. These are Fragrant Coconut Trees. Their fruit is called Fragrant Coconut Fruit. But when the fruit is very small, it gets picked by the monkeys from Thorn Ridge.”

“Monkeys?”

“Yes, a type of greyish-yellow monkey. We call them Fruit Thief Monkeys. They are quite ferocious and sometimes even descend in groups to ravage the crops in the fields.”

“Fruit Thief Monkeys...” Liszt nodded but did not speak.

He suddenly remembered a news story he had read. It seemed that in some Southeast Asian countries, there was a tradition of training monkeys to pick coconuts. Coconut trees are very tall, and it’s difficult for humans to climb, but monkeys can easily scale them to pluck the coconuts—if the town could train a group of Fruit Thief Monkeys, maybe they could develop the coconut industry.

Of course, he was still not sure whether these Fragrant Coconut Trees were real coconut trees—Fresh Flower Town in winter was buried under snow for more than two months; real coconut trees would have frozen to death by now.

“How does the Fragrant Coconut Fruit taste?”

“Once I picked up a Fragrant Coconut Fruit dropped by the Fruit Thief Monkeys, it had a lot of milk-like juice inside, tasting sweet and sour—quite delicious.”

Liszt’s cravings were ignited.

The East Coast had many Fragrant Coconut Trees; if they could be protected, many Fragrant Coconut Fruits could be harvested. They could completely be treated as a kind of beverage, perhaps even developing into a local specialty.

He cast his gaze toward the distant Thorn Ridge. “Sooner or later, Thorn Ridge must be taken. All threats to Fresh Flower Town must be eradicated!”

The Fruit Thief Monkeys could be used to train in fruit picking.

Chapter 49: The Forgotten Dou Qi Secret Technique

Magical beasts can be trained, so naturally a few monkeys can be trained as well. For knights possessing Dou Qi, there is no difference between a wild beast and a small cat or dog.

However, currently in Fresh Flower Town, there are only five people with Dou Qi—Liszt, Marcus, Goltai, Isaiah, and Blair.

Each has their responsibilities, and it’s impossible for them to become beast trainers.

“It seems, it’s time to select a few physically strong young men from the townspeople and teach them Dou Qi to become my Retainer Knights.”

As for the Retainer Knights, as long as he could afford them, Liszt could even form a Knight Order.

However, due to the financial and material constraints of the castle, at most he could maintain a dozen or so Retainer Knights, forming a Knight Squad. This had been his plan all along. The greatest use for this Knight Squad would be to eradicate the magical beasts in Thorn Ridge and incorporate it into Fresh Flower Town, making it part of his domain.

“Once the food supply from Oyster Village stabilizes and the castle’s tax revenue becomes steady, I will immediately begin training the Retainer Knights.”

The four Retainer Knights, including Karl Ironhammer, do not know Dou Qi, and their potential has been wasted, not worth cultivating. The new Retainer Knights should be cultivated from young men, teaching them to practice Dou Qi and become true knights.

He was enjoying the cool breeze while pondering over the grand plans for development.

Beside him, Goltai couldn’t stop using his handkerchief to wipe his sweat; every day, he had to wear the neat three-piece attire of a noble, and he was hot to death: “Liszt, the fisherman’s inspection of the sea is complete, and everything is progressing smoothly. Shouldn’t we head back now?”

Liszt was also very hot.

This weather really wasn’t suitable for going out. Upon hearing this, he nodded, “Indeed, let’s return.” He wasn’t a delicate person, but why subject himself to discomfort when he could enjoy comfort. As a landlord, in control of all the life-and-death authority in the territory, there was no need to show off some “people-loving” or “dedicated” qualities.

Bloodline and Dou Qi were the foundation of a noble.

On the way back, Liszt took the opportunity to inspect the road construction in each village. There was plenty of sand from the sea, but transporting it was difficult; the common people could only use buckets and basins to carry the sand, which was inefficient.

But no matter what, the road was taking shape.

It was while passing Fresh Flower Farm that a sudden stench wafted over from a distance, penetrating Liszt’s nostrils, almost making him vomit with nausea.

The Fire Dragon Horse beneath him also kept sneezing, looking like it couldn’t bear it.

“Ah, it’s too stinky, what is this smell!”

“Who created this strange smell?”

A few Retainer Knights, just like him, were covering their noses, wishing they could vomit on the spot.

“Is someone cleaning out a toilet?” Liszt remembered his childhood experiences of cleaning out toilets in the countryside, that fragrance wafting everywhere; the current smell was even stronger, but he quickly realized, “Fresh Flower Town doesn’t have toilets, nor has it built septic tanks, the picked-up manure shouldn’t smell like this.”

So, pinching his nose, he said to a Retainer Knight, “Karl, you four go and investigate where this smell is coming from.”

A moment later, Karl returned, pinching a blade of grass, “My lord, the source has been found.”

He lifted the grass in his hand, “It’s this grass. A few kids on the farm were messing around and broke a lot of it on a wasteland, unaware that this grass could emit such a disgusting stench.”

As he spoke, a stronger stench entered Liszt’s nostrils, coming from the grass in Karl’s hand.

Liszt endured the foul smell, but his eyes shone: “This grass covers a large area?”

“Yes.”

“Good, very good! Karl, immediately go inform Goltai to protect this patch of grass. Do not allow anyone to approach, and especially don’t damage it!”

Confused but the Retainer Knights still followed the order.

Liszt gave his command, feeling in high spirits.

His personal servant Thomas couldn’t help asking, “My lord, why do you feel happy about such a smelly grass?”

“You don’t understand, this grass has great uses.”

He returned to the castle, and while taking a cool bath, he checked the Smoke Serpent Script, wanting to see if the task had been updated—he had thought

that the task wouldn't be considered complete until all the fishermen had been outfitted with new gear, but now, the task reward of "a large patch of Smoked Grass" was obviously in hand, indicating that the task had been completed.

Indeed, after the smoke came out, the Serpent Script updated, "Task completed, reward: a large patch of Smoked Grass."

A moment later, the Smoke Serpent Script changed to: "Task: The newly cultivated millet fields have been sown with seeds; the Millet Bug is eager to breathe the fresh air, it's a brave little fellow, please place Cordyceps for the Millet Bug. Reward: The forgotten Dou Qi Secret Technique."

"The forgotten Dou Qi Secret Technique? Not a Dou Qi Manuscript, but a Secret Technique, which suggests that the reward is just a powerful move?" Liszt speculated.

A manuscript contains methods for refining and using Dou Qi, as well as various Dou Qi moves.

A Dou Qi Secret Technique, in comparison, refers to a relatively powerful move, somewhat similar to the Ultimate Mystery Technique in a Dou Qi Manuscript, which can be understood as a powerful move.

However, due to obscure and clandestine traditions, coupled with the great difficulty in learning, it is very hard for a minor noble to pass down secret techniques from generation to generation.

The Tulip Family has no tradition of passing down secret techniques, and the Red Crab Island Marquis Family, which has not been around for long, also doesn't have any.

Only the old Marquis Families may possess one or two secret techniques.

But it's undeniable that the value of a secret technique is immense—the Ultimate Mystery Technique is the strongest move in each Dou Qi Manuscript, but its power is naturally limited by whether it's an intermediate or advanced manuscript; for a Secret Technique, however, the stronger the Dou Qi, the more powerful it becomes.

Liszt was quite pleased with this, "Not bad, not bad at all, although I do not like fighting, having a secret technique by my side will greatly enhance my combat ability and reduce the likelihood of encountering danger."

“Just don’t know what the Dou Qi Secret Technique will be, but I’ll know soon enough.”

So far, none of the tasks in the Smoke Mission have been overly difficult, basically being the daily work Liszt would have to do anyway—just the same this time: the millet fields were cultivated in order to settle the Millet Bugs, and whether or not there was a task, Liszt would have taken care of it.

After that, he pondered another question, “Could this task still be part of the chain of tasks from the Formless Dragon series?”

Three days later, the fishermen of Oyster Village were able to go to the open sea to catch seafood steadily, and each time they would harvest a large quantity of seafood.

A portion of the seafood quickly made it to the commoners’ tables, replacing the fishermen’s need for bread and allowing the town’s grain food supply to be conserved as much as possible.

But much of the seafood had nowhere to be stored.

“Liszt, we must think of a solution, the East Coast has too much seafood, and the fishermen’s catch is already more than can be eaten, it could spoil at any time,” Goltai found Liszt and started to fret.

Liszt was rather speechless at this, “If it can’t all be eaten, then find a way to dry the seafood and preserve it... Now is not a good season for making dried goods, summer and autumn would be more suitable... If it’s not the season for dried goods, then stop fishing. The seafood isn’t going to disappear in the sea.”

Without cold storage or sufficient quantities of salt for curing, drying is the best way to preserve food.

Now the weather is too hot, making dried goods prone to spoilage, so it would be better to catch less seafood, only catching as much as can be eaten, which would also prevent overfishing of the sea.

Having made his point, Liszt spoke with a slightly stern tone, expressing his dissatisfaction, “Teacher Goltai, I am the landlord, and you are the official. I need you to manage Fresh Flower Town for me, not to come to the landlord at the first sign of trouble, understand?”

Goltai gave a sheepish smile, “Of course I understand, Liszt, believe me, I won’t make this kind of mistake so easily again.”

Chapter 50: The Invasion Reward of a Dragon

The wooden houses in Oyster Village had not yet been built, but the fishermen’s fishing work was progressing smoothly.

The construction of roads in the hamlets and towns wasn’t fast, but it went on every day.

The low-yielding, low-nutrient two-leaf clover at the dairy farm had been completely eradicated and replaced with high-yielding, nutritious alfalfa. The ten dairy cows really liked the new grass, and their milk production had significantly increased.

Outside the castle, in the horse paddocks, the alfalfa was also thriving, though there had been no mares impregnated yet, as the Li Dragon Horses hadn’t entered their mating season.

The peanuts in Peanut Hamlet were growing well, and the peanuts near the Millet Cordyceps were almost ready to harvest, with the prospect of yielding two crops a year.

The black tulips at Fresh Flower Farm had begun to bear fruit, in the form of small, dry capsules, although they hadn’t yet split open. Once they did, there would be many flaky seeds that could be propagated in large numbers. Influenced by the Tulip Bug’s cordyceps, this black tulip had produced over thirty fruits.

It was estimated that a single harvest could propagate several mu of land. The Greater Elf Xiangxiang at Tulip Castle would then continue the breeding process, and within half a year, large-scale planting would be achievable.

If it were the normal cultivation method, it would take several years to scale up, which showed the capabilities of the elves.

However, while elves were a strong helping force, they also represented a limitation, confining humans from visually cultivating plants and researching fertilizers, still using the primitive slash-and-burn agriculture to this day.

Liszt was changing the agricultural methods of Fresh Flower Town—every hamlet had begun to popularize the use of manure, wood ash, and pond mud as compost.

Little Wheat Village was still planting wheat. With the assistance of the Little Wheat Bug, it was feasible that the wheat yield could increase by twenty to thirty percent. Meanwhile, the three corn grasses were being tended by a dedicated person. However, more corn grass was planted in Barley Hamlet, cultivated by the serfs of Barley Hamlet and collecting pasture seeds.

Barley Hamlet used to grow barley and oats primarily, but the recent millet fields were cultivated on the newly reclaimed land of Barley Hamlet. Due to the cultivation of corn grass, there was a severe shortage of serfs.

Mushroom Hamlet and Tomato Hamlet remained at the same scale without significant changes.

The biggest changes were in town; no more filthy manure, and no one dared to litter in the streets—an edict strictly enforced by Liszt. With a patrol team checking daily, anyone caught littering would face harsh whipping—a punishment preserved selectively by Liszt among the various tortures nobles inflicted on commoners.

Initially, Liszt thought to adopt the police system of public security detention, but then realized that mere detention without physical punishment would be like a holiday for the serfs.

No work to do, and still receiving food and drink every day.

Thus, corporal punishment was inevitable.

“I have allocated fifty mu of wasteland for planting millet, which is the limit the Millet Bug can influence. Right now, Barley Hamlet can’t meet the planting needs, and it’s difficult to transfer serfs from other hamlets—Oyster Village has already taken some, so for now there are only ten mu of millet fields,” Goltai explained to Liszt.

Today, they were here to settle the Millet Bug. The millet had already sprouted, a green layer stretching over the ten mu of newly reclaimed land that had been fertilized with farm manure.

“Ten mu it is for now. After the harvest of oats and barley, we’ll switch to planting millet. Without an Elf Bug, growing barley and oats isn’t cost-effective,” Liszt nodded and said.

He then began to settle the Millet Cordyceps.

The Millet Bug’s cordyceps were golden millet, so its color was a bright, beautiful yellow that dazzled the eyes.

“Little guy, come on, breathe some fresh air,” he coaxed.

The Millet Bug was indeed a brave little thing, crawling out of the jade box and with an open mouth, it spat out the cordyceps, planting them in the center of the field, which had been fenced off. It quickly grew with the wind, turning into a plant of golden millet laden with grains.

With this, another task was completed.

Six Elf Bugs had been settled, with five Elf Bugs already in place, leaving only the last Thorn Bug.

Liszt, feeling elated, rode his horse and began to concentrate. The Smoke Serpent Script twisted rapidly before his eyes: “Complete the task: Reward Dou Qi Secret Technique ‘Eye of Magic Power’.”

The content then changed, posting a new mission: “Mission: All companions have been properly settled, except for the Thorn Bug, which lacks a new home. As the Landlord, you cannot waste the productivity of any Elf Bug. Please settle the cordyceps for the Thorn Bug. Reward: Invasion of the Formless Dragon.”

Accompanied by a review of the new mission’s content, the prideful mood that had just filled him quickly shattered.

Had it not been for the presence of retainers and servants around, he would have jumped up and cursed, “A Smoke Mission, are you kidding me? Can the invasion of a Formless Dragon even be considered a reward?”

According to the information obtained earlier, a Formless Dragon might leave behind a priceless Space Ring.

But, one must still be alive to obtain it!

A single dragon could easily destroy a town. Liszt had no desire to test whether he could send a Formless Dragon away with two old dairy cows and a bundle of Smoked Grass. As he saw it, one should enjoy the treatment one's capabilities allow. If he were the lord of Coral Island, he would even try luring the Formless Dragon at the cost of losing a city.

Unfortunately, he only had Fresh Flower Town.

If the dragon merely rolled over, he estimated the town would be gone, and he would become penniless, let alone lead a luxurious noble life.

In an instant, he even decided to give up on the Thorn Bugs, never complete the mission, and not trigger the invasion of the Formless Dragon as a reward.

However, after calming down, he couldn't reconcile with giving up.

The Smoke Mission seemed only to be pushing at an open door, bringing something that should have already been in his path. Without this gentle push, who knew how difficult it would be for him to develop further — and he had already become dependent on the expedient benefits brought by the Smoke Mission, receiving a reward for each completed mission; it felt too wonderful.

All the way to the castle, his mind was made up.

“Do it, it's just a Formless Dragon!”

“The Smoked Grass has been prepared, and the dairy cows are ready. If worse comes to worst and Fresh Flower Town is destroyed, I'll just go to Tulip Castle and shamelessly beg for another inheritance.”

“The Earl can't possibly watch his own son starve to death!”

For the Space Ring, and even more for the Smoke Mission, Liszt was going all in.

Once he had made up his mind, the next step was to make full preparations.

For this.

He spent a whole night in the castle's study, burning the midnight oil to design a plan. He didn't let anyone participate; keeping the secret of the Formless Dragon to himself was better, as more people could mean more confusion. And if he did manage to obtain the Space Ring, there was also the risk of it being leaked and stolen.

The Space Ring deserved to be called a Divine Artifact.

"Prepare for defeat before expecting victory, survival is of utmost importance." This was the core thought in Liszt's plan-making; no matter what, he must ensure his own safety above all.

He looked at the sketch he drew of Fresh Flower Town, thought for a long time, and circled the dairy farm, "Here, will be the battlefield for the invasion of the Formless Dragon. Leave the dairy cows as bait, and bring all the Smoked Grass here, piling it up at the dairy farm to attract the Formless Dragon's attention."

"As for the fight, it's impossible to fight. No one can defeat a dragon, let alone think about slaying a Formless Dragon."

"It's said that dragons have Dragon Breath, a special magic substance that is sprayed out of their mouths, stuff like flames, acid, or poison. Half of a dragon's combat power relies on its Dragon Breath. Therefore, the ground is very dangerous, and we must dig underground tunnels so we can escape instantly from in front of the Formless Dragon."

"It's not likely that a dragon will dig up the earth just to catch a few bug-like humans."

"Then, I probably won't be able to see the Formless Dragon, and I suppose no one in Fresh Flower Town will be able to see it either. To ensure I know the Formless Dragon's exact location, I should spread a layer of flour over the dairy farm. If it walks, it will leave footprints... But then again, do dragons need to walk? Don't they fly?"

Liszt scratched his head, trying to figure out how to spot the Formless Dragon. But no matter how he thought about it, he had no idea how to see an invisible dragon.

In irritation, he punched the table.

Crack.

The impact of his fist caused the candle to fall, the wax oil immediately flowing down the table and onto a corner where a knight's novel lay. Flames engulfed the Knight's Novel in an instant.