

The Mighty Dragons Are Dead

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Chapter 71: The Festive Atmosphere of the Sea Festival

Before dawn had broken, Butler Carter's voice was already echoing up and down the castle.

"Tom, brace yourself!"

"Thomas, prepare Lord Liszt's festive attire without a single mistake, Flack Abbieye!"

"Mrs. Morson, there's dust on the second-floor window. Have the maids clean it immediately. We can't give our soon-to-arrive guests the impression of laziness."

"Good heavens, why does the kitchen have the oysters out in the sun? Take them away quickly... No, no, no, Eileen, absolutely not today!"

"I need to see the water in the castle's tank spilling over, but Jessie, you won't be carrying water, let John and Parker do that. You need to hurry and inspect all the cordyceps. Even on festival days, we can't neglect what's most important!"

"Don't bring the entire thing out to sun. You should break it up—small chunks of ice will sun more easily." Carter took out a handkerchief, wiped the sweat from his forehead. It was indeed a busy day, and he still had a pile of precious crystal tableware to polish, but he had to sort out the trivial matters first.

He watched the newly arrived manservant Jim, struggling to move the water tank used for making ice the day before out into the sun.

He couldn't help but tell him to use his head.

Jim was tall and quite clever, but only green in experience. Upon hearing Carter's words, he immediately started apologizing, "I'm sorry, Mr. Carter, I didn't think of that. I'll break up the ice blocks right now and put them in a few buckets and basins."

"Don't spill it, inside there is... saltpeter, the Lord specifically mentioned it's very valuable."

"Rest assured, Mr. Carter."

After making his rounds around the castle, Carter went up to the second floor, just in time to see Thomas carrying Flack Abbieye into Liszt's bedroom.

He followed and knocked on the door to enter.

"My Lord, you've awoken quite early today."

Liszt was donning his detested clothes and the particularly uncomfortable ruff "Ruff" with Thomas's assistance.

His mood was a bit sour for a moment, "With all the commotion in the castle, I found it a bit difficult to sleep."

Carter suddenly bowed, looking somewhat uneasy, "I apologize, it was a lapse in my work, disturbing Your Lordship."

Liszt was just a bit groggy from waking up, but seeing Carter apologize, his little irritation quickly dissipated. It wouldn't do to have this old man, faithful to him, bear the brunt of this small occurrence, "It has nothing to do with you, Mr. Carter, don't blame yourself. It's the seafest today, I had to rise early."

Carter breathed a sigh of relief.

Thomas cast a sidelong glance, somewhat disappointed—he had quite looked forward to seeing the Lord chastise the butler.

After dressing, Liszt had a quick breakfast, then mounted his Fire Dragon Horse, ready to take a tour of the hamlet—today was the festival, and even if only the nobles celebrated, it was still important to share joy with the common folk, to savor their support and compliments.

By this time, he had already spotted Goltai, also in festive attire.

And Marcus, Blair, and Isaiah, dressed rather formally. These three were not yet nobles with titles.

“Baron, Goltai offers you festive greetings.”

“My Lord, Marcus offers you festive greetings.”

“Baron, Isaiah offers you festive greetings.”

“Baron, Blair offers festival greetings to you.”

The four of them greeted Liszt in turn, meticulously performing the nobility etiquette.

Liszt responded with noble courtesy as well, “Happy holidays.”

Then came his four retainer knights, and twelve squire knights, who each stepped forward to salute and offer their holiday greetings. Finally, the castle servants, laying aside their work, led by Carter, also offered their festival greetings.

As he walked through the town with Goltai and the retainer knights,

phrases like “Lord Landlord, XXX offers you festival greetings” continuously came from both sides of the road, with freemen kneeling on one knee, and serfs kneeling on both knees.

The authority of the nobility was continuously consolidated within such rituals, sinking deeply into people’s hearts.

Once the commoners had grown accustomed to kneeling, the foundation of rule would be unbreakable.

“My lord, good news.” While patrolling Tomato Hamlet, Liszt encountered Jessie Asanobu, who had been promoted from assistant manservant to manservant, now earning a wage of two copper coins a day.

“Jessie, what’s the good news?”

“I just checked the cordyceps in Tomato Hamlet and found that the Tomato Elf Bug has already been nurtured.”

“Is that so, this indeed is good news.” Liszt was delighted; the seventh elf bug had come to the castle. He directly led the patrol team to John Bian Dan’s tomato fields.

The cordyceps in the middle was notably tall, bearing red tomatoes.

On one of its small yellow flowers, a plump, all-red elf bug basked leisurely in the sun. John Bian Dan watched nervously beside the elf bug, his duty to protect it for the landlord from any harm, and to prevent it from being contracted by anyone else.

Only the landlord was qualified to contract an elf bug.

And only those who possessed Dou Qi or magic could establish a contract.

“Lord Landlord, John Bian Dan offers you festival greetings.”

“Happy holidays, John.”

Liszt briefly greeted him and then approached the bug, sprinkling a bit of Jade Powder to attract it. He then rubbed a little Jade Powder on his fingertip and reached out to the little one. The Dou Qi at his fingertip circulated, the charm of magic power and Jade Powder working together, and the bug bit down without hesitation.

A fleeting sensation of a heart-to-heart connection passed, and the Tomato Elf Bug had established a contract with Liszt.

Goltai looked on enviously at the elf bug, chuckling joyfully, “Today really is a day of celebration, as if the elf bug chose to nurture today to offer you, Liszt, its festival greetings.” If only his own domain had an elf bug, perhaps he would not have ended in bankruptcy.

“It is a clever elf bug, I can feel it,” Liszt smiled and turned to John Bian Dan, “John, the tomato field where the cordyceps stands will still be cultivated by you. Remember not to harm the cordyceps; it’s the most important existence in Tomato Hamlet.”

“Rest assured, Lord Landlord, John is willing to give his life to protect it!”

He spoke with great excitement; the tomato fields near the cordyceps were high-yielding and high-quality, meaning he could keep enough tomatoes after

paying his taxes. For him, a prosperous life had taken off ever since Liszt rewarded him with a Nalda.

“It will get better and better.”

“I want to grow tomatoes for the Lord Landlord all my life!”

As he watched the patrol team depart, his gaze focused on the noble and inviolable silhouette, his heart surged with emotion: “May the glory of the knight forever favor the Lord Landlord.”

Chapter 72: The Earl Visits Fresh Flower Town

The Earl’s caravan appeared at Thorn Ridge around ten in the morning.

Learning from the last time when the caravan had reached close to the Castle before being noticed, the Patrol Team had been wandering on the road of Thorn Ridge early on.

By now, a large number of trees had been felled on both sides of the road.

The logs had not been removed yet; they were spread out on the ground, looking like a layer of flooring, undoubtedly providing great visibility for humans and reducing the risk of Magical Beast attacks. However, the job was not yet finished. The woodcutting was still underway, and Liszt was planning to set up two barricades to block the paths of the Magical Beasts.

Although wooden barricades have zero restraining effect on Magical Beasts, the beasts, still having the minds of wild animals, would most likely turn back upon encountering them rather than destroy them.

With the notification from the Patrol Team,

Liszt, along with Goltai and others, went to meet this enormous troop—consisting of only five horse-drawn carriages but accompanied by a whole Knight Squad.

Pristinely dressed, with weapons shining bright, this Knight Squad had originally followed the Earl in continental warfare.

Many Knights, due to their military merits, were ennobled and left for their territories to enjoy the beautiful life of a landed gentry, then another batch of novices from the Knight Academy filled their places,

Maintaining the integrity of the Knight Order.

The Earl didn't travel by carriage; he rode upon his beloved Panther Horse and didn't wear festive attire but was clad in armor—I suspect he purposely wore military attire to avoid the Flack Abaieye, especially the disc-like Ruff, which could smother someone with prickly heat, particularly during the summer.

In the heat of summer, the Ruff isn't so friendly to people.

No one likes wearing a scarf in the summer.

“Father, Sir Liszt extends his festive greetings to you.” Noble etiquette still needed to be observed.

“Happy holiday,” Li Weiliam responded, then looking towards the nearby Castle with a touch of emotion, “More than ten years, and this little Castle has not changed much... No need for formalities, let's go directly to the Castle, the weather outside is too hot, your grandmother needs to cool off sooner.”

“Yes.” Liszt led the way at once.

A moment later, the caravan stopped at the Castle's gate; all the servants, under the direction of Carter, stood ready on both sides to welcome the distinguished guests.

Goltai approached with exaggerated fanfare, “My Lord Earl, seeing you fills Goltai with such excitement! You seem even more splendid than a few months ago, despite my weakened Dou Qi, I can still feel the immense pressure emanating from you, the pressure of a Sky Knight!”

Li Weiliam enjoyed such flattery and laughed, “Goltai, your complexion looks even healthier. How is life in Fresh Flower Town?”

Only then did Goltai shake out his clothes and bow deeply, “Goltai presents his festive greetings to you, my lord. Life in Fresh Flower Town is vibrant and thriving; I enjoy working here.”

While conversing, the voice of Lady Penelope could be heard from behind, “The dust was so heavy on the way, I need water to clean up. Going on a long journey feels like enduring a nightmare, wishing for it to end but having to press on regardless.”

“Grandmother, Sir Liszt offers his festive greetings to you.”

“Happy holiday,” Lady Penelope, assisted by her personal maid, entered the Castle and glanced around, “It’s hard for you, living in the countryside, enduring such a straitened lifestyle... The only thing I might envy is the smell of this little house, the scent of the rural soil.”

Then, she added, “It’s more comfortable to me than the smell of Tulip Castle.”

“If you find it comfortable, why not stay a few more days?”

“I couldn’t possibly, my servants at home don’t know how to care for my Flowers. I’d go mad if I didn’t see them for even one day.”

Following Lady Penelope was a middle-aged woman, dressed in glittering finery, her tall Bird Lady Hat adorned with various feathers—this kind of hat, originally called the Bird Lady Hat, symbolizes “the sky” and can only be worn by the wife of a Sky Knight.

It later became a trend that during festivals, all noblewomen would wear various extravagant and bizarre hats.

In addition to her conspicuous hat, the woman also exuded a fox-like charm—especially her eyes. Liszt, inheriting the memories of his predecessor, had the deepest impression of those eyes.

Back then, Liszt

always felt that those eyes were constantly observing in secret without showing any signs. Yet, when she smiled, they carried the sweet flavor of the girl-next-door.

The present-day Liszt, upon seeing those eyes again, could easily conclude that they were fox eyes.

Slightly narrow, with upturned corners, they would curve into crescents when she smiled.

“Madam, Liszt presents his festival greetings to you,” he said with a faint smile on his face, demonstrating the impeccable etiquette of a noble as a matter of routine, even if his heart loathed it, his expression was still nothing but warm and cordial.

“Happy festival, Liszt. You’ve grown taller,” the middle-aged woman replied with a smile. She was the current Countess, Lady Marie Lova.

In her hand, she was holding a very young boy.

The boy was clearly disdainful of the castle environment, showing only a forced semblance of respect while performing his courtesies: “Brother Liszt, Lidun offers his festival greetings to you.”

“Happy festival.”

Liszt responded indifferently and continued speaking to Lady Marie, “Madam, please take Lidun inside the castle to rest. I will go and greet my brother, sister, and Sir Layden and the others.”

Levis and Li Vera had been to Fresh Flower Town more than once.

So after exchanging festive greetings with each other, they entered the castle. Liszt then went on to greet the nobles who followed in the procession—these were lesser nobles serving at Tulip Castle, mostly Honored Knights and also a Baron, who was the Knight Captain of Tulip Castle, Miki.

The leader of the Coral Island Knights was personally held by Li Weiliam. As the captain, Miki was responsible for the regular training of the Knight Order and the security of Tulip Castle, effectively acting as the actual leader.

After the formalities were over,

the castle became even more lively.

Because there were too many people, there was a large gathering of nobles upstairs and even more knights downstairs; fifteen servants were simply not enough. Fortunately, the Earl himself had also brought many servants along with plenty of food and drinks—proving that they understood the countryside had little to offer.

Consider it a picnic here.

Carter, acting as the butler, naturally took command of all the servants, even in the presence of Silva, the deputy butler of Tulip Castle.

“Carter, if there isn’t enough food in the castle, don’t bother, the Earl has brought enough food from Tulip Castle to last several days,” said Silva, younger than Carter, perfectly attired in a tailcoat, standing among the servants, he was every inch a noble of high status.

Carter used to be just a butler at a manor castle.

When interacting with Silva, the deputy butler, he had to follow the other’s command.

But now,

he represented Liszt.

So he couldn’t help but puff out his chest, making himself look more spirited: “Thank you for the Earl’s consideration, but even without the food from Tulip Castle, the town can still offer a variety of delicious cuisine. We have prepared a feast, Mr. Silva. I’ll take it from here.”

Chapter 73: A Successful Banquet

“Black Tulip, truly beautiful.”

Li Weiliam caressed the sole Black Tulip with a gentle expression. The rise of the family had relied on the Tulip, and naturally, he had a special affection for it.

Lady Penelope also gently touched the purple-black bloom, “Having a new variety of Magic Potion, and it being a Tulip at that, is a sign of the family’s continued prosperity. I originally thought Liszt was not a lucky one, but now it seems he is the luckiest one in the Tulip Family.”

“We should promote the Black Tulip vigorously, for the sake of the family,” Lady Marie said, seemingly offhand.

Following behind Lady Marie, Lidun said with a trace of naivety, “It’s really pretty, Father, can I have a Black Tulip too? I want to plant it on my bedroom windowsill so I can see it every day.”

“There will be a chance, Lidun,” Levis cut off Lidun’s words directly, looking at the harvested capsule and then questioning Liszt, “Have you already harvested a batch of seeds?”

“A total of thirty-five mature capsules, each with roughly thirty seeds. I think, entrusted to Xiangxiang for cultivation, we should be able to plant on a large scale within half a year.”

“Of course, Xiangxiang’s speed in cultivating Tulips is top-notch among Greater Elves.”

“I’ll hand over the seeds to you later.”

“Good.”

The two of them chatted briefly and settled the matter of planting the Black Tulip without leaving room for others to interject—the brothers were united in their views, willing to include Li Vera but certainly not Lidun. Not raised by the same mother, they naturally didn’t have the same priorities.

The Earl glanced at Lady Marie and Lidun.

Then looked at Liszt, who now stood much taller than himself, and ultimately said nothing.

Lady Penelope whispered quietly in Li Vera’s ear, “The two boys already have their own opinions. Just look at Li Weiliam’s face, it’s truly delightful.”

Although she whispered quietly,

everyone was gathered close, and there was no semblance of privacy.

Li Weiliam could only pretend not to hear, saying to Liszt, “Fresh Flower Farm has fallen into disrepair. After I discovered the Tulips here, I planted a sea of Tulips and hope you can restore the scenery of that time.”

“Reviving Fresh Flower Farm has always been part of my plans.”

“I can see that, you really understand how to be a competent Landlord. Fresh Flower Town exudes a thriving atmosphere, I hope it continues.”

After seeing the Black Tulip, as the day grew too hot, the group returned to the Castle. In the horse field outside the Castle, Li Weiliam saw the Li Dragon Horse. As a Sky Knight, his eye for horses was quite astute; just one glance was enough to see that the Li Dragon Horse was more magnificent than his own Panther Horse.

“What bloodline is it?”

“I don’t know,” Liszt did not reveal the Dragon bloodline, for once mentioned, the Earl would certainly snatch away the Li Dragon Horse—a Dragon Breed Horse was of immense importance to Nobles.

“Perhaps it carries the bloodline of an Intermediate Magical Beast. If you can breed a herd of equally magnificent horses, I’ll buy a batch from you to replace the Knight Order’s mounts.”

“That could take a long time.”

Li Weiliam looked at Liszt with a meaningful glance, “Don’t be in a rush, time is on your side.”

Inside the Castle.

The servants had already prepared the banquet, and after a brief wash, it was time to enter the formal banquet stage. The footmen carried dish after dish on plates, placing them in front of each noble guest. Carter employed all his skills to direct the team of servants in an orderly fashion.

The Earl’s brought food did not cause any stir—it was what they ate regularly.

However, as seafood was served, what should have been a bland banquet hit a peak of excitement, with many appetizing dishes that they had never tasted before.

“What is this?” Lady Penelope, guided by a maid, dug a clam out of its shell, took a bite, and found it fresh, smooth, and delectable, a taste distinctly different from land dishes that blossomed on the taste buds, “Hmm, very delicious, so soft I almost don’t need to use teeth.”

“Clams, a type of seafood abundant by the sea, are very tasty in flesh. They are not only very delicious but also can prevent the onset of some diseases.”

Li Vera, following the maid’s method, peeled a shrimp: “And what is this?”

As the host, Liszt continued to explain, “Mantis shrimp, or perhaps it’s more interesting to call them peacock shrimps, their flavor is fresh, sweet, tender, and smooth, delicate and soft, not at all inferior to the rock shrimps from Long Taro Castle. It’s a pity we are now in summer, if it were spring, the breeding season for peacock shrimps, the taste would be even more delicate and delicious.”

“So, they are all from the sea... seafood?”

“Yes, Fresh Flower Town doesn’t have any special products, so to improve our recipes, we must look to the Sea of Azure Waves on the East Coast. Fortunately, there are countless delicious seafood waiting to be developed.”

Seafood is an important food source.

Not many nobles have noticed this yet, but perhaps after today’s banquet, Coral Island might experience a seafood development craze—or perhaps not, as the ocean is far less important in the eyes of the nobles than the land.

Sometimes, what restricts development is not vision.

But inertia.

Liszt discovered this among the incessant praises for the seafood. While the Earl and others highly appreciated the seafood, they preferred to buy it from Fresh Flower Town rather than catch it themselves. Perhaps, in their view, it wasn’t proper to waste serfs who should be farming on becoming fishermen.

“Naturally, I can supply seafood for Tulip Castle. In fact, as you have seen, I am opening the route through Thorn Ridge, and once it is through, I will organize a caravan from Fresh Flower Town to go back and forth to Coral City. We will regularly sell the goods produced in Fresh Flower Town.”

The Earl took a sip of red wine and nodded, “Once the restriction of Thorn Ridge is lifted, Fresh Flower Town might also develop into a prosperous town... Like your sister, train a group of knights, for the glory of nobility is always fought for on horseback.”

After the seafood.

Another delicious dish was served, dried meat of the Wind Falcon. It was also the last main course, using magical beast meat as the finale of the main dishes, a fitting climax.

Watching the guests enjoy their meal with no complaints made Carter, the butler, stand proudly beside the banquet. Everyone used to think Fresh Flower Town was a poor and shabby town, where the landlord was forced to live on poor food in a simple life. But this banquet demonstrated Fresh Flower Town's affluence.

An affluent noble is a dignified noble.

And his diligent direction of the servants' efforts perfectly reflected the aristocratic demeanor of the castle, convincing anyone who might have seen Liszt as a "country baron."

Here in Fresh Flower Town, was a place blessed with the glory of knights.

"Master, may we serve the dessert now? Mrs. Abbie has already prepared a sufficient amount of ice cream."

"Then bring it forth."

Chapter 74: The Popularity of Ice Cream

"Ice cream, what is that dessert?"

True to her nature as a girl, as soon as the word ice cream came from Carter's mouth, Li Vera immediately took note and asked, "Is it a dessert made of ice?"

Carter gestured to a servant to bring the ice cream from the kitchen, then explained to everyone, "Ice cream is a very delicious frozen delicacy, a special product of Fresh Flower Town Castle Kitchen, made from a unique recipe that is perfect for cooling off in the summer and as an excellent dessert after a meal. It's a great creation thought up by the master."

“Sounds like some sort of frozen cheese.” Lady Penelope remarked with a bit of disdain, “I’m not fond of cheese; it would make me feel nauseous all afternoon.”

Levis shrugged his shoulders, “I don’t like cheese either, perhaps I could have a cup of frozen juice instead.”

“Ice cream is not cheese, try it first, and I believe you will fall for the charm of ice cream, a food that is full of temptation,” said Liszt dismissively.

“You’re knowledgeable about gourmet food as well?” Lady Marie asked with a smile, “A dessert personally made by a noble, I must try it.”

Initially, the earl was just eating the roast meat on his plate.

Upon hearing Lady Marie’s words, his face turned slightly grim, and he spoke with greater seriousness, “Liszt, you’ve come of age and been granted your own land; you should be focusing on developing Fresh Flower Town and attaining knightly glory. Focusing on food is not in keeping with noble etiquette; the kitchen is a place for servants!”

Nobles absolutely never enter the kitchen, as it was deemed a place for lower-class individuals.

Liszt took a casual sip of chilled beer, not minding the earl’s scolding, “Father, ice cream is just an idea, and Mrs. Abbie made it based on this idea. As a noble, all I need to do is taste it and offer suggestions on the flavor.”

Saying so, he smiled at Lady Marie, “If you like it later, you could praise Mrs. Abbie; she is a dedicated and diligent cook.”

“I would be happy to.” Marie smiled.

She then lowered her head to cut the seafood on her plate, and her smile quickly faded.

In the short time of a few sentences, the servants had already brought out cups of colorful ice cream on trays, arriving beside each noble to place the ice cream on the table.

The cups were valuable crystal cups. Crystal is often an accessory mineral to dragon gems and, if of good quality with magic power, can be used to make

lamps; with poorer quality and no magic power, it is often crafted into various crystal vessels and becomes a symbol of noble status, power, and wealth.

The castle had twenty crystal goblets.

Normally used in banquets to hold red wine, they were now being used to hold ice cream.

“Hmm, this is ice cream? It looks pretty and smells great,” Li Vera said as she picked up the cup of ice cream and examined it carefully. Inside the cup, there were three round balls.

One pink, one light yellow, and one light green.

On top, there were also two tiny purple wild berries.

She then glanced at the cup beside Levis, which also contained three balls, but in the colors of light yellow, pink, and dark brown.

Essentially, there were only four colors: pink, light yellow, light green, and dark brown.

It was just that the color combination of the balls differed from one person’s cup to another’s.

Carter spoke with grace, “Lords, ladies, young masters, and misses, there are four flavors of ice cream. The pink is strawberry, the light yellow banana, the light green matcha, and the dark brown chocolate. You can choose different ice creams according to your own taste preferences.”

“It’s very cold.” Captain Mickey said, holding the cup without hurrying to taste it, but rather asking curiously, “Liszt, are they made of ice? If I remember correctly, Fresh Flower Town doesn’t have an ice cellar. Forgive my curiosity, but I cannot fathom how the ice cream is made.”

“Indeed, Fresh Flower Town lacks an ice cellar, but that doesn’t mean we have no ice,” said Liszt, looking into everyone’s curious eyes without any intention of hiding the truth, “I found a very small saltpeter mine in the town. I remember reading a knight’s novel that said saltpeter could be used to make ice, and hence, Fresh Flower Town had ice.”

“Saltpeter? Making ice?” The Earl looked at the increasingly unfamiliar Liszt, and couldn’t help but ask, “Is this the work of a magician?”

“While magicians can make ice directly, saltpeter ice-making is a kind of... natural phenomenon. Saltpeter dissolves in water, absorbing heat, and that can turn the water into ice.”

“Magical saltpeter, may I see it?”

“Of course, you can, but I’m afraid that’s not possible today, as the saltpeter has been used up. It takes so much saltpeter to turn a small amount of water into ice, and Fresh Flower Town has only a tiny saltpeter mine. Mining all the saltpeter, we can’t make two buckets of ice in a day.”

“As Captain Mickey sighed, “That’s really a shame.”

Li Vera spoke up directly, “Liszt, give me enough saltpeter for a bucket of water, and I’ll give you gold coins!”

“Try the ice cream and see if it suits your taste, sister,” Liszt said, awkwardly changing the subject. This sister had been addicted to stealing his toys since she was little; she wanted every good thing for herself.

Li Vera glared at Liszt.

This brother, who she could bully when they were young, had grown up enough to ignore her.

“Even if only making two buckets of ice each day, it’s quite remarkable. Tulip Castle can’t open the ice cellar and take out ice every day, and in the summer, ice is more expensive than gold coins,” Marie turned her head toward the Earl, “Dear, saltpeter could perhaps be developed into an industry, you know, those nobles are always eying our ice cellar in the summer.”

The Earl scooped up a ball of ice cream with a spoon and said without looking up, “Magical as saltpeter is, two buckets of ice a day are barely enough for Liszt’s own use, not of great value.”

As he spoke, he tasted a scoop of the chocolate-flavored ice cream, and his eyes lit up instantly, “A very unique texture.”

Levis joined the conversation, “It is indeed delicious. It’s called ice cream, isn’t it? I like this strawberry flavor of ice cream. It’s creamier than frozen cheese but not so cloyingly sweet, more fluffy, melts in the mouth just right.”

“I prefer the matcha flavor,” said Li Vera, who had already eaten her light green ball of matcha-flavored ice cream.

“It makes a good dessert after a meal, especially after a summer banquet,” commented Captain Mickey.

The delicious ice cream instantly conquered everyone’s taste buds.

There was only one person at the table shaking her head, Lady Penelope: “Oh, I’m sorry, I’m not accustomed to such a taste. It doesn’t feel like food at all to me. Mr. Carter, I’d like a glass of iced sugar water instead.”

“Grandmother doesn’t like it? I do. Mr. Carter, another cup of ice cream for me, please. I want both chocolate and banana flavors,” Lidun said, having already polished off a cup of ice cream.

Ice cream was just an after-dinner dessert.

Liszt “invented” it merely to enjoy a cold treat in the summertime—not being able to drink iced beer all day long, but one could eat ice cream any time.

However, at today’s banquet, ice cream had truly stolen the show.

Aside from Lady Penelope, as well as the disinterested Captain Mickey and the Earl, everyone else was conquered by the taste of the ice cream.

The four large portions of ice cream made by Mrs. Abbie were eaten up in no time.

Eventually, the luncheon ended with the deliciousness of the ice cream.

Busily directing the servants to clean up after the meal, Carter stood up straight in the hallway, his tense mood completely soothed, and upon running into Butler Xi Er Wa, he smiled broadly, “Mr. Silva, thanks to the food brought by His Lordship, the gentlemen enjoyed the luncheon immensely.”

Chapter 75: The Serf of Twenty Silver Coins

Ice cream brought the festival banquet to a climax and nicely soothed the sultriness brought about by the hot weather.

But although the banquet was over, the nobles lying in their chairs, digesting their food, were still discussing ice cream. Li Vera was the most enthusiastic among them, having fallen deeply in love with the taste of ice cream.

“Liszt, tell me, how is ice cream made?”

“Let Mrs. Abbie tell you. I only provided the idea, she completed all the other steps.” Liszt had no intention of keeping it a secret.

If he could produce ice on a large scale, then he would definitely need to keep the ice cream recipe safe as a means of amassing wealth.

But without the ability to produce ice in large quantities, it was impossible to make ice cream on the same scale, let alone transport it long distances for sale. Keeping the recipe to himself was of no use.

Of course, extorting Li Vera was still necessary.

“I will tell only you the ice cream recipe, and it must not be revealed to others. Additionally, as part of a fair trade, you surely can’t expect to get my things for nothing, can you?”

“What do you want?”

“Pig iron or wrought iron.”

“A hundred pounds of pig iron, that’s all I can give you. If you ask for more, I would rather not have the ice cream recipe.”

“That’s fine.” Getting anything was better than nothing, and Liszt understood the balance—giving something away for free was foolish generosity, and the other party might even think you’re a fool; demanding too much was always not good, especially since they were siblings by blood, who could support and look out for each other.

Having struck this little deal, he felt somewhat sentimental.

He remembered his “youthful” self on Earth, when he had made ice cream by hand to win over the girl he liked. Although he did not win her heart, he did learn the skill to make ice cream, which, looking back, was not learned in vain.

“It would be great if I could produce ice on a large scale. Making ice cream is still troublesome. If I made popsicles instead, I could definitely make a fortune... even just making ice could be lucrative.”

The ice cream recipe was sold to Li Vera.

But when it came to Levis, he gave it away for free.

“Brother, how many more days before the Tulip Fleet returns?”

“If we go by the usual timing, they should be back at Coral City’s docks in about a week.” Levis, lighting up a cigar, added, “Are you talking about the slave trade?”

“Yes, I hope to buy a batch of serfs on the next voyage of the Tulip Fleet.”

Having got the recipe, Levis was easy to talk to: “Okay, but what price can you offer?”

“Ten silver coins per serf?”

“That was the old price. Now there’s no fighting within the Grand Duchy, and serf trading is not so common, hard to come by.”

“But I heard not long ago that the lord of Little Papa Island was killed by pirates, and his territory was lost.”

“The Sapphire Duke is very angry about this, and the news has spread throughout the principalities, demanding cooperation to surround and trap these pirates. However, the pirates disappeared without a trace after wiping out Little Papa Island. Some believe this is not a group of pirates, but rather a lord in disguise. Da Pa Pa Island has offered a reward of three hundred gold coins for pirate clues.”

Levis briefly mentioned the reaction caused by the pirate attack on Little Papa Island, then continued, “Except for this incident, things have been calm within the Grand Duchy. Slave trading will require looking further afield, preferably

on the borders where the Eagle Kingdom and the Steel Ridge Kingdom are at a standoff.”

“Name a price; if it’s acceptable, I will agree.”

“Twenty silver coins per serf, it can’t go lower than that, otherwise there’s no profit for me,” Levis offered his price, “Another thing, if the number of serfs is too large, I need the gold coins paid now, or I won’t be able to explain it to our father on the accounts.”

Liszt considered for a moment and then nodded in agreement, “A hundred gold coins, upfront, to bring back five hundred serfs for me.”

“Straightforward.”

“I have one condition. These five hundred serfs should mainly be young people, buy more female serfs if possible, and if there are any who have a particular skill, prioritize purchasing them.”

“You mean serfs who are blacksmiths, tailors, tanners, that sort of thing? That won’t be easy; artisans are usually freemen, and the laws of all countries protect them. It’s hard to trade them as casually as serfs.” The various aspects of a city’s operation depend on the freemen, which is why they are protected by state law.

Liszt clenched his teeth, “I’ll add twenty more gold coins. Out of the five hundred serfs, at least a hundred should be artisans.”

“Okay.”

With aching heart, he paid Liszt one hundred and twenty gleaming Nalda Gold Coins.

Looking at the shriveled purse, Liszt felt somewhat wistful. Originally, he had about one hundred and fifty Gold Coins, but after continuously paying the wages of the civilian workers, he had already spent quite a few Gold Coins. Now, there were only sixteen Gold Coins left in his purse, which could run dry at any moment.

Fortunately, the passageway through Thorn Ridge was about to be cleared, allowing merchant caravans to be established, and the seafood from Fresh Flower Town could be sold in Coral City.

He believed that the delicious seafood could surely create decent wealth for him.

After discussing the matter of the serfs, Levis suddenly brought up saltpeter: “Liszt, can’t the production of ice using saltpeter be scaled up?”

“I wish it could, but unfortunately, it cannot.”

“You can mine more saltpeter deposits.”

“Brother, it’s not about me wanting to mine; there simply aren’t enough saltpeter deposits in Fresh Flower Town for me to exploit. I can give you some saltpeter powder and raw ore from when we mine it for you to try finding more. Maybe there are other saltpeter deposits on Coral Island.”

“Alright, I will look for them. You might not have realized that if you can make ice during summer, you can definitely earn a lot of Gold Coins,” Levis said, taking a puff of his cigar. “Once I find a saltpeter deposit, I won’t let you down. Have you noticed that Lady Marie is urging father to get involved in the ice-making with saltpeter?”

“I’ve noticed,” Liszt understood.

“Luckily, father doesn’t care much for ice-making with saltpeter. In the summer, he mostly goes to The Court to serve as the Grand Duke’s coachman, where there are innumerable Ice Blocks to enjoy. There are many ice cellars on Blue Dragon Island—the biggest one, they say, is like a maze. There were workers transporting Ice Blocks who got lost and ended up freezing to death right there.”

Liszt didn’t say anything.

The grandest Noble he had ever seen was Merlin Taro, and beyond that, he had no idea what life was like for a Noble family with a Dragon.

After digesting their meal, the Sun had begun to tilt westward.

The Earl and his entourage prepared to leave; if they did not set off now, they would have to travel at night. Before departing, the Earl rode on his horse with Liszt following on his own steed.

“Fresh Flower Town is very nice; I hope you continue to maintain your ambition. However, merely becoming a competent Landlord is not enough. The rise of the Tulip Family was due to military achievements. The Grand Duke is young and strong, and he has never extinguished the Flame of expansion. So, if you want to step out of Fresh Flower Town, do not give up the pursuit of a Knight’s glory.”

Wouldn’t it be faster to make me a Viscount?

Liszt felt somewhat critical in his heart. The Earl obviously did not like him, yet he played the stern father figure, which felt a bit off: “I understand.”

Afterward, neither of them spoke again, just riding quietly.

A moment later, the Earl glanced at the Li Dragon Horse that Liszt was riding: “That’s a fine horse. Take good care of it; it will be a Landlord’s most important companion.”

“Understood.”

Then the two returned, the Earl rejoining his convoy. Carter, accompanied by servants, stood at the gates of the Castle, respectfully seeing off their esteemed guests.

Liszt bid farewell to everyone one by one.

“Grandmother, be careful getting on the carriage.”

“My little boy, if Fresh Flower Town isn’t comfortable for you, come back to Tulip Castle. Although it doesn’t smell great there, you should find everything you need,” said Lady Penelope, looking back.

“I’ll visit Tulip Castle often.”

Li Vera embraced him and said, “A hundred pounds of iron, when will you come to Coral City to get it?”

“I will.”

Lady Marie, pulling along Lidun who was sullen at not being able to ride a horse, just smiled at Liszt and said goodbye.

Captain Mickey and the other Knight guards displayed standard Knight etiquette.

Like Li Vera, Levis also embraced Liszt, probably to show brotherly love in front of the Earl: "Liszt, the doors of Tulip Castle are always open to you."

"Thank you."

The convoy set off slowly, and Liszt watched them go.

Chapter 76: Three Merchants of the Town

By the time the caravan had left Fresh Flower Town, the castle had once again regained its tranquility, although there was a large pile of dishes, wine glasses, and the like that needed cleaning, and the small garden outside the castle had been trampled beyond recognition by the knights. But Carter could easily organize the servants to clean up at a leisurely pace.

The castle had fifteen servants, which was more than enough.

"Teacher Goltai, the festival will be over soon, and we need to pull ourselves out of the festive mood. The construction of the town must not stop; we must continue to expand the lumberjack team and the stone-breaking team, and the fence-building team, as well, and strive to open the passageway sooner."

Goltai was still savoring the moment, "As you wish."

He had been in his element at this banquet, engaging in lively conversation with the Earl, feeling a level of enjoyment he hadn't experienced in many years.

"Fresh Flower Town made quite the impression," he described today's luncheon, with its dazzling array of seafood and the ice cream so refreshing it tingled the tongue.

However, Liszt had a different thought.

That evening, he had a private drink of red wine with Carter, "Mr. Carter, I had intended to show the impoverished side of Fresh Flower Town, perhaps in

exchange for some aid from Tulip Castle. Accidentally, we threw a grand banquet with seafood, ice cream, Magical Beast Meat—there’s simply no excuse to pretend poverty now.”

Carter said with a smile, “My lord showcased his charm. Your performance at the banquet won people’s affection. If I were a knight, I might have just stayed in Fresh Flower Town to follow you.”

The other meaning of a noble ‘showing off wealth’ was to demonstrate power and attract followers.

Viscount Trick Lygrass was drawn by the Earl’s charm and became a follower. He helped the Tulip Family and took part in the Grand Duchy’s pioneering wars, eventually establishing the significant estate of Coral Island’s Count.

“But no knights stayed behind, did they.”

“I believe the seeds have been sown, perhaps one day they will suddenly blossom into flowers.”

“That’s a very philosophical phrase, Mr. Carter, for that, let’s have a toast.”

“To your health, my lord.”

A gulp of red wine soothed his throat, Liszt asked, “How much food did my father bring today?”

“A fair amount of various foods, though most were consumed during the banquet. The surplus consisted mainly of beer and fine wheat flour, along with some seasonings—fennel, ginger, pepper, licorice, as well as salt, and sugar.”

“How much wheat flour and beer do we have?”

“There are about five hundred pounds of fine wheat flour and thirty barrels of beer.”

The fine wheat flour was clearly intended for Liszt to make white bread. He was slightly lost in thought—he could feel that the Earl still had fatherly love for him.

Some details could reveal it.

For instance, coming to Fresh Flower Town for the festival was a gesture of closeness; if he truly didn't care about Liszt, there would be no need to visit this remote town for the celebration. Deliberately playing down the importance of saltpeter at the banquet could be seen as protection for him, especially since Lady Marie specifically mentioned that the Saltpeter Mine deserved development.

Now he had also brought a lot of extra food for him.

"Could the Earl also be one to rebuke with his words but benefit with his actions? This is a bit troubling." He was somewhat uneasy in his thoughts. If the Earl's family had nothing to do with him, he could easily maintain a gentleman's detached style of interaction, leisurely living his own life.

What he feared most was being entangled in family affection.

He didn't know how to deal with it, whether to embrace this affection according to his current identity or to keep his individuality and maintain a distance.

"Is this the bond of kinship, that every person is inescapably ensnared by this net?"

Having drained the red wine in one gulp, he decided not to dwell on these troublesome thoughts anymore—just let things take their course—neither initiating nor rejecting. Shaking off his reverie, he asked, "Mr. Carter, has the seafood gifted in return to Tulip Castle been sent out?"

"It has already been delivered to Mr. Silva, all of it top-quality dried seafood."

"Very good, one good turn deserves another."

He set down his wine glass.

Carter too finished his red wine, put away both glasses, bent slightly in a bow, "Lord, you should rest early, I wish you a good night, I will take my leave now."

"Good night, Mr. Carter, have sweet dreams."

In the following days, all was monotonous and calm.

Liszt, apart from supervising the lumbering work, was also paying attention to another matter—the training of the Fruit Thief Monkeys.

Initially, seven Fruit Thief Monkeys that were not seriously injured had been captured alive; all of them pulled through and regained their health. However, two of them were left with limps, and climbing trees was no longer much of a possibility for them.

The remaining five were handed over to the hunters of the town for training.

With ropes, whips, and fruits combined in use, they quickly subdued the arrogant Fruit Thief Monkeys, getting them to climb trees and enter cages on command.

“Three female monkeys, four male monkeys, I believe by the second half of the year, there will be ten Fruit Thief Monkeys.” The monkeys generally have two litters a year, but usually only one offspring per litter.

Liszt looked on at the increasingly obedient Fruit Thief Monkeys with satisfaction, “With no damage from the Fruit Thief Monkeys, this year’s Fragrant Coconut Fruit can mature. I believe in one or two months’ time, we’ll be able to drink fresh and sweet coconut juice.” The Fragrant Coconut Fruit was not seasonal; besides winter, it bore fruits continuously throughout the other seasons.

“It seems Coral City doesn’t sell Fragrant Coconut Fruit. Perhaps, if developed well, this could become another specialty of Fresh Flower Town. What a pity, though, that no Fragrant Coconut Tree Elf Bugs have been nurtured.”

As he envisioned the future of the Fragrant Coconut Trees, the hunters had already begun training the Fruit Thief Monkeys to pick fruit.

Faux fruits were tied to the tree branches for the Fruit Thief Monkeys to pluck; if they succeeded, they were rewarded with a peanut. Those who refused got whipped. The monkeys couldn’t escape, for they were tethered by ropes around their necks—dare to run, and they’d be pulled back and whipped.

“Remember this, animals can hold grudges and pitch fits as well. As long as they work diligently, there’s no need to lash out with the whip without good reason. I will administer these whips on anyone I find beating Fruit Thief Monkeys without cause,” he emphasized with a serious expression. He certainly didn’t want a rebellion of Fruit Thief Monkeys that could potentially kill several fruit farmers.

“Rest assured, Lord Landlord. We dare not forget any of your instructions,” replied the hunters, who were taking on dual roles and understood they would soon transition from being farmers to fruit growers, using the Fruit Thief Monkeys for labor. They were all delighted.

Had it not been for the need of training, they would have been loath to use the whip—a Fruit Thief Monkey to a fruit grower was like a horse to a knight.

Leaving the Fruit Thief Monkeys behind, he returned to the castle and summoned a few of the new serf merchants.

“Old Geronte, Sherlock, Abagon, were you all merchants on Little Papa Island?” Liszt repeated the question for confirmation.

“Yes, Lord Landlord.”

“Is there a merchant named Poliuxigin on Little Papa Island?”

Old Geronte replied, “Lord Landlord, there are only the three of us who deal exclusively in small commodities on Little Papa Island. I can call out the name of everyone in the city, but there is no one named Poliuxigin.”

“All right, I was just asking.” Liszt gave Old Geronte an appreciative look. The implication in the words “I can call out the name of everyone in the city” showed his significance. “I’ve called you here today to establish a merchant fleet belonging to the castle, and I hope to entrust you three with its management.”

Chapter 77: The Milk Tea Gets Better and Better

The management of caravan trade, Liszt had no intention of letting the townsfolk organize it spontaneously; he planned to establish a merchant group exclusive to the Castle. Without the drive and ideas for reform and innovation, he simply followed the practice of most nobles, managing his own domain.

Old Geronte was elected as the head of the merchant group.

Abagon and Sherlock assisted from the sidelines.

“The only product you can currently trade in is seafood, and I hope that from Coral City onwards, the seafood from Fresh Flower Town can gradually begin to be sold in all cities,” Liszt said.

“As you wish, Lord Landlord.”

“So tell me, how do you plan to sell the seafood? It’s a new thing, most people haven’t eaten it before and will obviously fear it.”

After a brief moment of thought, Old Geronte replied, “Lord Landlord, we can advertise along the streets, claiming that even the Earl raves about the seafood. I believe countless subjects will flock to the food praised by the Earl.” This was leveraging a celebrity’s name for hype, not creative but very effective.

Sherlock added a suggestion to Old Geronte’s method: “We can also first make contact with most of the noble families’ kitchens, offering them free samples of seafood to taste.”

“Coral City has a large number of freemen who are also potential buyers of seafood. We can set up stalls in the streets and cook seafood for free, allowing the passing freemen to taste. I believe it won’t be long before everyone in Coral City knows the delicious taste of seafood,” Abagon suggested.

Liszt felt that both methods were good: “It seems you already have a complete notion of how to do business. Once the road through Thorn Ridge is finished, you can start trading.”

Old Geronte hesitated for a moment before speaking, “Lord Landlord, we have no carriages, how will we transport the seafood to Coral City?”

“After the road is finished, I will buy several carriages first thing,” Liszt mused, remembering that there were still sixteen Gold Coins in the Castle, and a standard carriage suitable for hauling goods with a cargo cover was one Gold Coin apiece.

He could buy six; any more would not be feasible, as there weren’t enough horses to pull the carriages.

After sending off Old Geronte and the others, Liszt sighed softly.

He had thought the Castle's Gold Coins were sufficient, but now he saw they were far from enough. Five hundred serfs had cost him one hundred twenty Gold Coins, and in order to grow the town to a population of five thousand, he would need at least another six hundred Gold Coins. To reach a population of ten thousand, almost two thousand Gold Coins would be necessary.

"Otherwise, should I sell the Crimson Blood Sword? To Levis or Captain Mickey? It's too expensive for them, but they might afford a price of a thousand Gold Coins, right?"

However, when he gripped the Crimson Blood Sword hanging at his waist, the gentle touch of Magic Power made it impossible for him to decide.

This was a Gemstone Weapon.

Produced by Dragons, it symbolized power.

And it matched his Dou Qi attribute, so even if he became a Sky Knight in the future, the Crimson Blood Sword would still befit his status.

"I can only develop things slowly. Hopefully, this year, relying on compost for farming, Fresh Flower Town will have a good harvest. Alongside the Elf Bug I brought and the ones bred here, the tax revenue for the next quarter might exceed fifteen Gold Coins?" The taxes for this quarter had already been submitted to the Castle.

After Isaiah's careful calculation, the various crops and handicrafts collected this spring were worth around seven Gold Coins.

In previous years, the tax revenue in spring was usually around three Gold Coins.

There was virtually no tax revenue in the winter, about four in the summer, and around seven in the fall—less than fifteen for the whole year.

With the Elf Bug this year, relying on compost for farming, and seafood fishing, Liszt was confident that the summer tax revenue could reach last year's annual level.

By autumn, the tax revenue would certainly be even higher, and surpassing Falcon Town governed by Li Vera wasn't impossible.

“My Lord, your milk tea is ready,” Butler Carter, holding a freshly brewed cup of milk tea, entered the study. A cup of milk tea before bed each night was Liszt’s habit.

“Thank you.”

Taking the milk tea, Liszt, who was already a bit thirsty, drank it right away, downing half of the perfectly-tempered drink in one gulp.

His tongue lightly licked the dab of milk tea froth on the edge of his lips, and with slight hesitation, he asked, “Mr. Carter, is today’s milk tea still brewed by Mrs. Morson?”

“Yes, my lord, is there a problem with the way the milk tea was brewed today?” Carter became a bit nervous.

Liszt shook his head, “There’s no problem with the brewing, but I always feel that Mrs. Morson’s skill is getting better and better, the milk tea is becoming more and more delicious.”

“I will convey your compliment to Mrs. Morson, I believe she will be very happy.”

On the first day of July, the afternoon sun was lazy, and the clouds occasionally concealed the sun as if a naughty child stealthily covered a companion’s eyes.

The weather wasn’t too hot, and there was a breeze blowing.

Liszt, inspecting the woodcutting work, stood on the other side of Thorn Ridge, with a handsome smile on his face, he solemnly announced, “The trees within a distance of one hundred meters on both sides of the road have all been chopped down, the Lumberjack Team has done a very good job in completing my orders, and as the landlord, I express my respect to you.”

Respect was just a matter of lip service.

Next, it was still the commoners’ turn to continue working, “Clearing the road through Thorn Ridge means that Fresh Flower Town will now be connected with the outside world, no longer secluded in the corner of Coral Island. Now anyone can go out and take a look. However, to further strengthen road safety, we must insist on finishing the fence.”

He paused, then said, “Therefore, the original Lumberjack Team will not be disbanded for the time being, but will go directly to constructing the fence, completely isolating the forests on both sides of Thorn Ridge outside of the fence.”

The wood needed for the fence was sourced on-site; there was a large amount of felled timber just lying on the ground.

The best timber was transported to the castle for storage, the second-best timber was hauled to build homes in Oyster Village, the next best for the fence construction, and the leftover scraps were taken by the commoners to burn for cooking.

The opening of the road was a moment worth celebrating.

Liszt gathered Goltai, Marcus, Isaiah, and Blair to arrange the following tasks.

First was naturally the issue of the merchant caravans; after purchasing carts, seafood trade had to start immediately; second was procurement, Liszt planned to spend his last ten Gold Coins to purchase a batch of scarce food, including hops beer; then was to advertise to merchant caravans from various cities in Coral Island, telling them that Fresh Flower Town was now open for access.

The castle’s merchant caravans were responsible for the large trades entrusted by Liszt, generally not involving too much trade between commoners.

Merchant caravans from other regions entering Fresh Flower Town would enliven the atmosphere of the small town, bringing wealth and a circulation of goods for daily life.

“Lastly, there’s one more point to note, Fresh Flower Town will welcome freemen to settle here by lowering taxes, make sure to spread this news in every city,” Liszt now longed for more population, not at all concerned about the bit of tax revenue, as the development of the domain was the first priority.

The others busied themselves with carefully noting down Liszt’s orders.

Marcus suddenly said, “My lord, I plan to take a day off to bring my family to live in Fresh Flower Town.”

Upon hearing this, Isaiah let out a long sigh, "My foolish son probably doesn't want to come to Fresh Flower Town; he's used to loafing around in Coral City."

Blair, however, cheerfully said, "Then I will also bring my family over on the way. Life here is somewhat monotonous, but the air is fragrant."

Goltai gave an awkward smile, "Liszt, I also want to bring my family here, but... Freya is already pregnant, I'm unable to handle it well."

Liszt solemnly said, "Teacher Goltai, although keeping mistresses is a common indulgence of nobles, it's ultimately immoral. I have no intention of telling you to stop immediately, especially since Freya is already pregnant. So, in Fresh Flower Town, just treat Freya as your wife."

After a moment of contemplation, he added, "If her child is a boy, I hope he could become one of my Retainer Knights in the future."

"Your generosity shames me, my lord, Goltai is willing to serve you!" Goltai stood up, walked over to Liszt, and bowed earnestly.

This was the same form of loyalty shown by Marcus before, true allegiance.