

# The Mighty Dragons Are Dead

## #Chapter 91 - 0091: The Unopenable Bottle - Read The Mighty Dragons Are Dead Chapter 91 - 0091: The Unopenable Bottle

### Chapter 91: The Unopenable Bottle

The Metal Bottle had a shape somewhat like those used for packaging high-end rice wine, distinctively different.

Its color was a golden yellow, close to the color of a Gold Coin, but a bit more toward brown. There were engraved patterns on it, with complex designs wrapping around some images. It looked like abstract depictions of the Sun and a large tree, along with bows, a type of harp, a bear, and an eagle in flight.

In general, this Metal Bottle was just like the exquisite art pieces Nobles loved to collect.

Clang, clang, clang.

He tapped his fingers on the Metal Bottle, producing a peculiar sound, not one that metal should make—more akin to the sound of plastic. But it was clearly observable that this brownish-yellow bottle was indeed made of metal; it had the tactile sensation you'd expect of metal.

"Teacher Goltai, what metal do you think this is?" Liszt shook the bottle.

It seemed to be empty inside, with no movement.

Goltai spread his hands: "Gold, silver, copper, iron, it's none of the metals I've seen before, I apologize for my inability to determine what it is."

"It has no opening?"

"It appears to be a single piece. At the place where the opening should be, I've checked closely, there are no seams, and it cannot be twisted open."

Liszt tried it himself, indeed it could not be twisted open—the mouth of the bottle had no cap and was firmly in one piece: “What do you guess is inside?”

“A bottle of fine wine?”

“Wishful thinking doesn’t always come true, Teacher Goltai, I don’t think there’s any liquid inside.”

Goltai laughed heartily: “Ha ha, one can always fantasize a little before it gets opened.”

Liszt handed the bottle to Carter, instructing him to place it back in his study: “Keep it safe for now. When I find the time, I’ll take my time figuring out how to open it.”

“Yes, my lord.”

After Carter had left, Liszt gestured for Goltai to take a seat wherever he liked.

He inquired, “How’s the trade with the merchant caravan going?”

“It’s going smoothly. Ever since you started developing Fresh Flower Town and providing plenty of paid job opportunities, the townspeople have gradually had extra money to spend at the merchants’ stalls and pick out some small items. Nearly half of the merchandise the merchants brought has been sold, and even on the stage for the slapstick play, a few copper coins have been thrown.”

Slapstick plays are generally funded by the merchant caravan, who offer free performances to attract customers.

Only if the audience is sufficiently amused would they toss coins onto the stage, rewarding the hardworking clowns. Fresh Flower Town was poor, and its residents, despite likely laughing themselves to the point of stomach aches, would be reluctant to throw even a single copper coin. Unexpectedly, there were indeed people who actually tipped the slapstick performers.

“Who threw the copper coins?”

“I only saw one person throw copper coins, and that was your kitchen maid, Eileen Four Fingers.”

Eileen Four Fingers?

Liszt had little contact with this kitchen maid, barely seeing her once a day—the status of a kitchen maid was very low, they were prohibited from going upstairs, appearing in the first-floor hall, and especially showing themselves before the Noble lord—he just knew roughly about Eileen from what Butler Carter had mentioned, that she was a straightforward and lively young girl.

“Young people are always very generous,” he commented so.

Goltai really wanted to say that you too are young, only sixteen, and not even as old as the young maid. Yet he did not speak out. The current Liszt held a maturity and steadiness usually found in middle-aged men, almost letting people forget his slightly youthful face when interacting with others.

“Perhaps this is the talent that comes with Noble blood,” Goltai often thought this to himself.

When he first followed Liszt to Fresh Flower Town, he simply wanted to snag a consultant position for free food and drink. At his age, he had no illusions about reviving a family business or restoring Noble glory. What he didn’t expect was for Liszt to change Fresh Flower Town, and change his mindset of just getting by day-to-day.

Freya’s pregnancy was just a catalyst, Goltai was well aware.

At the end of the day, it was still Liszt’s will that determined the actions of those around him, otherwise, there was actually no need to pay such close attention to a mere bastard. Which noble didn’t have several bastards out there? For the sake of family harmony, many noble bastards could only remain serfs their entire lives.

“Teacher Goltai.” Seeing Goltai a bit distracted, Liszt couldn’t help but speak up to remind him.

Goltai immediately sat up straight and replied, “What would you like to say?”

“Regarding the trade caravan, as an official, you must supervise every transaction to ensure no duplicitous merchants exploit the civilians, and also prevent the patrol team and clerks from recklessly taking things from the caravan.”

“Rest assured, I emphasize this daily.”

“Ensure that the promotional work is done well, advertise that Fresh Flower Town welcomes outsiders to settle here and offers the most favorable taxes. Also, inform the people of the caravan about what Fresh Flower Town plans to develop next, show them the plans for the commercial district, workshop area, and residential areas, so they can see the bright future of Fresh Flower Town.”

“As you wish!”

After sending off Goltai, Liszt didn't immediately go to rest; instead, he went straight to his study and played with the metal bottle on the desk. This drift bottle piqued his interest.

He focused for a moment and summoned the Smoke Mission.

“Complete the mission, reward Sea Drift Bottle.”

“Mission: A bottle that cannot be opened, words that cannot be understood, do not indicate an unsolvable problem but rather a disparity in knowledge. The old tanner at the Tanners' Shop, blind and feeling his health declining, might be willing to trade a certain book in exchange for a son. Mission Reward: An unknown book.”

As expected, the metal bottle picked up by the fisherman was a reward from the Smoke Mission.

The transaction mission involving three Gold Coins for the merchant caravan had been completed some time ago.

However, seeing the new mission, Liszt couldn't help but show a wry smile on his face, “A bottle that can't be opened, does that mean I can't open the drift bottle? Words that can't be understood, does that mean there's a piece of paper inside, possibly in a foreign language? But what in the world is this latter part of the mission about, giving the old tanner a son?”

If the man's wife were still in the bloom of youth, graceful and enchanting.

Liszt wouldn't mind giving the man a son and a metaphorical hat.

But he had thoroughly reviewed the data on the town's craftsmen during a previous census. He remembered this old tanner, who was actually a widower

without kin. He had come to Fresh Flower Town ten years ago by begging and had since settled down, picking up his tanner's craft again.

For such a person, how was he supposed to 'give' him a son?

"Give a son... perhaps my thoughts are a bit off-track, let's have someone investigate the old tanner first." He shook the bell and called for Carter.

"Master."

"Mr. Carter, send a message to Teacher Goltai asking him to investigate the old tanner in the town. I need a detailed report; if the man is facing any difficulties, help him out along the way."

Upon hearing this, Carter responded, "Master, perhaps you should ask Jessie. He's quite familiar with the old tanner."

"Jessie?"

Jessie Asanobu was once a male servant assistant in the castle and has now been promoted to male servant, mainly responsible for running external errands for the castle.

A short while later, Jessie, who was playing in the town, was called back.

"Master, you were looking for me?" Even as a servant, he still felt awkward in front of Liszt, unsure of where to place his hands.

Liszt directly asked, "You're quite familiar with the old tanner? Tell me about him."

"Are you talking about Uncle Phil? I met Uncle Phil when I went to the Tanners' Shop to have my shoes repaired. Uncle Phil is blind, which makes his work very inconvenient, and now his health is deteriorating, so I often visit him to help out with some things."

"Have you heard that the old tanner wants a son?"

Chapter 92: The Old Tanner's Collection

“Uncle Phil wants a son?” Jessie was first taken aback, then nodded his head, “It seems so, I’ve heard him complain that he doesn’t have a son to take care of him when he’s sick.”

Liszt looked at Jessie.

Then he suddenly asked, “Jessie, if I remember correctly, you’re an orphan, aren’t you?”

“Yes, my lord, I was raised in the welfare institution of Coral City, grateful for the Tulip Family’s generosity, which allowed us orphans to survive,” Jessie said devoutly.

The welfare institution was an organization where nobles gathered orphans, as commoners often had accidents that left children without care. To display their benevolence, some wealthy nobles would establish welfare institutions on their family domains to gather orphans, who would then work directly for the castle when they grew up.

Jessie was such an orphan.

“Is the Old Tanner at the Tanners’ Shop now?”

“Yes, my lord, I was thinking of inviting Uncle Phil to go shopping with me, but he didn’t want to.”

“Then Jessie, come with me to see the Old Tanner, I have some business with him.”

“Yes, my lord, I will prepare the horses for you at once.”

In the castle’s stable yard, there was a rudimentary rest area where Philip and Zavier always stayed as Retainer Knights; they did not have the luxury of enjoying holidays.

Seeing Liszt mount the Fire Dragon Horse, they each mounted a nag and followed him.

Heading toward the Tanners’ Shop.

In every small town, there were generally Tanners’ Shops, where tanners made leather, sewed fur coats, and mended shoes. There were specific

crafts, including helmet tanners, armour tanners, vest tanners, drumhead makers, bag craftsmen, utensil tanners, and most commonly, shoe tanners.

The Old Tanner in Fresh Flower Town, Phil, was a shoe tanner.

In big cities, shoe tanners were often wealthy freemen because handcrafting a pair of leather shoes required a lot of money. However, in small towns, the treatment of shoe tanners was poorer, as few could afford leather shoes. Thus, the Tanners' Shop could only barely make ends meet—most serfs and freemen wore wooden shoes or straw sandals.

Of course, even more people went without any shoes at all.

“Is that you, Jessie?” The Old Tanner’s somewhat hoarse voice came from the table, as he fumbled to mend a pair of shoes. Even though his eyes were blind, his hands remained deft.

Jessie quickly said, “Uncle Phil, it’s Lord Landlord who has come, and Lord Landlord has some business with you.”

“Ah, Lord Landlord, Old Phil sends his regards to Lord Landlord,” the Old Tanner got up hurriedly from his chair, bowing respectfully, his hands trembling nervously, just as commoners do when they see a Lord.

Liszt surveyed the narrow, gloomy Tanners' Shop, noticing its signs of neglect and disrepair, as it was so dilapidated that the roof allowed glimpses of the sun above.

Just like the Old Tanner himself, it bore signs of age and decay.

“Old Phil, don’t be nervous, I’m just here to have a chat with you.”

The Old Tanner’s cloudy eyes showed no change in emotion.

But Liszt felt that the man’s hands had quickly stopped trembling—not because his nerves had been calmed, it appeared more like he had stopped putting on an act, as the earlier trembling was probably feigned. This was easy to understand; after all, nobles enjoyed seeing commoners tremble before them.

The aged man had long learned to cope with life: “Lord Landlord, it is an honor for Old Phil to have a chat with someone as noble as you.”

“You settled in Fresh Flower Town as a beggar ten years ago, so where are you originally from?”

“I was born on Dodo Island, Lord Landlord.”

“Dodo Island?”

“It is an unlorded wild island, even further north of Coral Island. The island is home to a kind of Dodobird that can’t fly and cries out as if saying ‘dodo’. There’s also a particularly tall type of tree with a terrible name, the Human Skull Tree, and its fruits are known as Human Skull Fruit.”

“Human Skull Tree?”

“Yes, Lord Landlord, those fruits are white and from a distance, look just like human skulls. But they taste really good. The natives of the island satisfy their hunger with Human Skull Fruits; even Dodobirds eat them, but Dodobird meat is particularly nasty. Life on the island is extremely hard.”

A Dodobird that sounds like “dodo.”

It reminded Liszt of the dodo bird that had become extinct on Earth.

He wondered if the Dodobirds here were the same species as the dodo birds on Earth.

“So, how did you come to Coral Island from Dodo Island? You were born on Dodo Island, so you should be a native there. Where then did the inhabitants of Dodo Island originate from?” Liszt asked.

Around the Duchy of Sapphire, there are still many undeveloped islands, and Dodo Island must be one of them.

“I am a native of Dodo Island. I don’t know where we came from. Ever since I can remember, we all lived on Dodo Island. Then when the volcano erupted, many Human Skull Trees were destroyed, and without food, we had no choice but to cut down trees to make canoes and drift along the sea... It was during that time that I drifted to Hot Spring Island and became an apprentice at the Tanners’ Shop.”

What followed was that Hot Spring Island was caught in wars, and he was sold into slavery to Coral Island as a serf. A Baron on the island bought him,



but after the Baron went off to war with the Earl, he never returned, all Domain Elves died, serfs feared punishment and started to flee.

The Old Tanner also fled.

Through twists and turns, he arrived in Fresh Flower Town.

“Back then, all the serfs were spreading rumors that the Baron had died in battle because a Retainer Knight who was of serf origin betrayed him. The followers were furious and decided to slaughter all the serfs on the domain to avenge the Baron,” the Old Tanner said, with a sigh perhaps lamenting his past ignorance.

It was a low-level rumor; nobles value their serfs highly.

The correct course of events should be—when the Baron died without an heir, the landlord he followed, which is Coral Island’s Count, reclaimed all the rights to the domain, including the serfs.

All in all, the Old Tanner’s life wasn’t dramatic nor was he a “man with a story”; even his blindness occurred naturally while he was in Fresh Flower Town.

The only thing close to a story was his identity as a native of Dodo Island.

Liszt carefully inquired about Dodo Island and found out it was just a tiny island, with fewer than three hundred natives living on it, ultimately devastated by a volcanic eruption. Apart from the surviving few Human Skull Trees, there likely wasn’t any value in developing it.

He was somewhat disappointed.

He had assumed that a person specifically mentioned in the Smoke Mission would have some mystery about them, but it turned out to be just an ordinary native.

He still planned to continue the mission to get the book as a reward—bringing Jessie along was to set him up with the Old Tanner as a son—a fatherless, motherless orphan, with a widower who had no children; they both got along well and should easily form a father-son contract.

But suddenly, he had a bold idea.

“Why should I follow the steps laid out by the Smoke Mission? I’m not its puppet. I can simply ask the Old Tanner for the book directly, instead of relying on completing a mission to get the book!”

The Old Tanner couldn’t possibly have many books, Liszt thought.

So.

He simply said, “Old Phil, I heard you have a collection of books, don’t you? I would like you to sell them to me.”

Given the command by the Lord Landlord, the Old Tanner dared not refuse and immediately agreed, “Yes, Lord Landlord, I do have a collection of books, but there is only one. I will present it to you right away.” Having said that, he stooped his back and, with Jessie’s support, took a wooden box out of a cabinet full of leather shoes.

“Jessie, the book is in the box, quickly give it to the Lord Landlord.”

Jessie opened the box, took out a very thick book, and handed it to Liszt. Liszt scanned it and saw that it wasn’t printed but hand-written, with Serpent Script and another foreign language on the cover.

He didn’t recognize the foreign language.

But he did recognize the Serpent Script “Philip, Scion of the Sun’s Diary”.

## Chapter 93: Descendants of the Sun

Serpent Script, the common script used in the Steel Ridge Kingdom, is also used in its vassal state, the Duchy of Sapphire.

In addition to Serpent Script, there are various languages and scripts on the continent, such as the Wind Language of the Eagle Kingdom, the Rock Script of the Blast Furnace Fortress Kingdom, the High Speech of the Neverfall Empire, the Dragon Language of the Blue Dragon Empire, and so on.

Liszt's predecessor did not speak foreign languages, and therefore, he did not recognize the other strange script on the page—actually, on closer inspection, it was less like writing and more like twisted drawings of little people.

“Philip, Descendant of the Sun's Diary”, quite a strange title,” he mused curiously. “Old Phil, what language is this other script?”

“I don't know, Lord Landlord, the truth is I am illiterate. This book is a relic left by a native of Dodo Island. He was my good friend; we were in the same canoe, but he died at sea, leaving only this book behind. I have kept it as a memento.”

“So it is a keepsake with sentimental value. In that case, I will return it to you after I finish reading it.”

“No, no, no, Lord Landlord, Old Phil is honored that you appreciate his collection. Old Phil hopes that you will accept it. Thank you, Lord Landlord, my Tanners' Shop is doing much better business now.”

“All right, I'll buy it.”

“Old Phil would like to offer it to you, Lord Landlord, to express my respect.”

“I accept your respect, but I will still give you a reward.”

Liszt returned to the castle with the diary.

He asked Carter to take out three silver coins and give them to Jessie. Even if a book was very expensive, it wouldn't be worth three silver coins, but after all, it was an item with sentimental value: “Jessie, give these three silver coins to Old Phil as a payment for the book. Also, tell Old Phil that I like his story very much and that he is welcome to add anything else at any time.”

“Yes, master.”

After Jessie left, Liszt did not immediately open the book. Instead, he summoned the Smoke Mission.

A moment later, a wisp of smoke appeared before his eyes, twisting into a Serpent Script passage. To his surprise and apprehension, the Serpent Script was no longer the usual sentences.

It was changing.

“The mission has changed.”

The Serpent Script lasted for a few seconds; the smoke gradually twisted and formed new Serpent Script: “Mission: Unlike other cordyceps that safely enjoy nourishment, the Thorn Cordyceps looks out in solitude. It has survived eight years and is about to age, but still, it is unwilling to give in. Please supplement nutrition for the Thorn Cordyceps. Mission reward: new species of Thorn.”

The apprehension in his heart settled, leaving only surprise.

He had been a bit adventurous and wanted to have a bit of a spat with the Smoke Mission, declaring that he was not just a puppet that could be led around. Yet, in his heart, he was actually worried that in doing so, he might lose the Smoke Mission—whether it was a golden finger or some hidden manipulator, it was an existence he could not refuse.

Besides, there was no need to refuse.

Up to this point, the Smoke Mission had been all benefit and no harm, helping him develop rapidly—even if there was a hidden hand behind it all, it was probably one he could not resist.

If it could not be resisted, then might as well enjoy it.

So much so that some base thoughts still wandered in his mind: “If I can ride a dragon, what does it matter if I sell these hundred-plus pounds to the hidden manipulator. As long as I can enjoy wealth and rank, hidden manipulator, I am willing to be your lackey!” There was no response. Sometimes, the Smoke Mission had a very low presence.

Now it seemed.

He might have a tiff with the Smoke Mission, but it would not quibble with him in return, continuing as usual.

And it also proved that those mission rewards weren’t concocted out of thin air by the Smoke Mission.

They already existed.

At most, the Smoke Mission went with the flow, lightly nudging the threads of cause and effect, tilting the trajectory of time a little. Like a breeze that gently

moves the crests formed by destiny's long river, whether they twist left or drift right, they eventually fall back into the water, returning to serenity.

"Perhaps one day, I will understand the meaning behind the existence of the Smoke Mission... but for now, I'm just going to enjoy the golden finger," he concluded with an accepting mindset, shaking off thoughts that troubled the layman.

All that remained was pure joy.

The reward for the new mission included a familiar term, "new species."

There were two instances of "new species" tasks before. The new species of Tulip brought the Magic Black Tulip, and the new species of mushroom, the Magic Flame Mushroom.

What kind of Magic Potion will this new Thorn species bring?

"Not enough nutrients, huh? Tomorrow, I will have the serfs transport over the prepared compost to replenish the Thorn Cordyceps with nutrients!"

What's somewhat regrettable, however,

is that the Thorn Bug has already lived for eight years, meaning it has only two years of life remaining.

"It seems, I need to find a way to acquire another Thorn Bug... Tulip Castle seems to have a young Thorn Bug; I should buy it back when I have the chance." Thorn is just a weed-like small shrub; therefore, Thorn Bugs aren't very useful, and the price shouldn't be too high.

He waved his hand to disperse the Smoke Serpent Script.

Liszt returned his attention to "Philip, Scion of the Sun's Diary": "Philip, Descendant of the Sun, that surname carries a bit of dominance. My Retainer Knight is also named Philip, but his surname 'Wool' pales in comparison—truly, the difference between a domestic chicken and a Phoenix."

Flipping to the first page revealed a very abstract drawing of the Sun.

Because it was handwritten, the Sun wasn't very round, and the surrounding Light was smeared in triangular shapes, with various haphazard lines inside the Sun.

It looked like the scribbling of a seven-year-old child.

Below the drawing was a passage in Serpent Script, perhaps a poem.

“My grandfather has such a tattoo on his back.”

“He said his father’s back was also tattooed with the same pattern.”

“I asked him why my father’s back wasn’t, and neither is mine.”

“He said our ancestors have abandoned us, we can no longer bear the pattern of the Sun.”

“I do not understand what it means.”

“My grandfather said we were exiled from our homeland to a sinful land, and it would take five hundred years before we could return.”

“After five hundred years, a great ship sailing in the sky, shining under the Sunlight, will bring us back.”

“Five hundred years have passed, but the Sky Ship has not come.”

Reading this poem,

Liszt found it very interesting. The description in the poem seemed to say—the author’s ancestors were a group of criminals, exiled to Dodo Island for five hundred years? They tattooed the Sun’s pattern on their backs to signify their lineage. But after five hundred years, the promised Sky Ship to take them back did not come.

So, assuming they were abandoned, the author’s grandfather no longer gave tattoos to his son.

“Is this how the ‘Descendants of the Sun’ came to be...”

“If the records are true, the natives of Dodo Island should be the descendants of the Nobles on the mainland. Only Nobles, especially those of the royal lineage who err, would be exiled; minor Nobles who err would simply be killed. Without the custom of recording their history, probably in a hundred years, the royal family would have forgotten about these exiled descendants.”

The first page contained a drawing and a poem.

The second page offered an introduction.

“My name is Philip, I’m twenty-six this year, just returned from working on foreign islands. I do not plan to go out again. Although the outside world is flourishing, life is tough. I plan to stay on Dodo Island, and marry Valissa. I will have my own son, whom I will raise. I am a Carpenter, able to build a big house for him to live in!”

“Starting from today, I will record every day; that way when I grow old, unlike my grandfather, I won’t forget his stories and even where we came from. My son, because of my journal, will understand his father, and the interesting experiences I’ve had.”

“However, I don’t have much card stock or ink, so I must write sparingly. Hmm, write smaller, and even less.”

“Philip, Descendant of the Sun.”

## Chapter 94: The Last Entry of the Diary

“Year 119 of the Grand Duchy, February 15th.”

This is the starting date of the first diary entry in “Philip, Scion of the Sun’s Diary.”

“The current year is 151 of the Sapphire Grand Duchy, which means this diary began thirty-two years ago?” Liszt calculated briefly.

The Duchy of Sapphire had no official calendar of its own and did not use the calendar of the Steel Ridge Kingdom. The concept of history was not popular in the Different World; generally, people had no thoughts about the past—there was no idea of learning from history.

Thus, the Duchy of Sapphire did not even have a National Day.

Sea Outing Festival and the New Year Festival were the most important holidays. Sometimes the national anniversary celebration would be held on the Sea Outing Festival; other times it would be scheduled on the New Year Festival, and sometimes it would be celebrated on a random day, according to

the wishes of the Sapphire Duke. Liszt concluded that the concept of “nationalism” had not taken root.

The subtlety of the feudal nobility system lies in the structure of Knight vassalage, the greatest essence of which is—my subject’s subjects are not my subjects; my lord’s lords are not my lords.

For example, Liszt’s master was Coral Island’s Count, not the Sapphire Duke.

Therefore, as a subject of the Earl, he had no obligation to pay attention to the Sapphire Duke; the Sapphire Family had no commands over him. To him, his true nation was Coral Island, not the Duchy of Sapphire. If he were to feel love, it would be for Coral Island, with no need to love the Duchy of Sapphire.

All Nobles were Landlords, even the King was merely a larger Landlord.

Of course, a widespread sense of nationalism could not form.

That’s why only Nobles commemorate the Sea Outing Festival, commoners simply don’t care. In Fresh Flower Town, Liszt’s birthday celebration was definitely more important in the hearts of the residents than the Sea Outing Festival—Lord Landlord grants me land, as if a parent. Who is the Grand Duke, can he be eaten, steamed or braised?

His thoughts digressed.

Liszt continued to read the diary.

“Clear skies, climbed trees to pick fruit, ten Human Skull Fruits; cut down three trees; dug foundations, preparing to build a house. Organized the knowledge taught by my grandfather, in the Sun Script ‘X’ represents ‘me,’ I am a Descendant of the Sun, my ancestors spoke Sun Script.”

This “X” represented a very twisted character.

It was complex, it looked like a painting, seeming like a little person with wings, carrying some kind of tool, dancing exuberantly.

“A single word is like a painting, which country’s writing is this, it’s too bizarre. I guarantee, with such writing, one wouldn’t learn five hundred characters even by the age of a hundred!” Liszt exclaimed. Of course, it was an exaggeration, but indeed, the so-called “Sun Script” was very complex.



Many subsequent pages of the diary contained inconsequential records of daily life—picking fruits, cutting wood, building houses, trading items with someone, seeing certain wild animals.

But at the end of each diary entry, a Sun Script character was recorded.

I, father, mother, grandpa, grandma, big, rice, soil, sky, earth, horse, flower, individual, ten, painting, above... For some words, Philip provided specific explanations, such as rice being a certain kind of cereal grain, horse referring to a unicorn, and flower referring to a sunflower, which he had never seen, only heard from his grandfather, common things to their ancestors.

“Unicorn? Could such legendary creatures really exist?” Liszt doubted.

He even doubted the Sun Script itself, which just seemed like various little drawings; he didn’t believe these depicted some kind of writing—perhaps it was just Philip’s grandfather, bored and concocting it himself, to fool his silly grandson.

A thick diary.

Most of it was Philip’s mundane daily routines on Dodo Island and Sun Script lessons.

Occasionally, he would recall his time working on other islands—meeting a noble’s daughter, a very kind young lady, who taught them the commoners’ language. Philip proudly stated that he learned the fastest and gained the young noble lady’s favor, even reaching the point of eloping.

Unfortunately, as documented in a certain diary entry—his affair with the young lady was discovered by her mother, who wanted to kill him.

With the noble lady’s help, Philip then escaped that island. He didn’t mention the name of the island, saying he did not want to sully the noble lady’s reputation.

Apart from these details.

The diary occasionally mentioned Philip’s ancestors—mainly stories his grandfather had told him.

Such as, the ancestors raising a troop of magical dragons with two heads, the ancestors once shooting down the sun from the sky, the ancestors drawing extraordinary powers from well water, the ancestors living in cities grown from trees, the ancestors befriending wolves, bears, eagles, and tigers, the ancestors immersed in music.

His grandfather referred to the ancestors as—Children of the Sun.

“So the question arises, why would the Child of the Sun shoot down the sun? Patricide?”

The stories were fragmented and vague.

Mainly because Philip’s writing was very succinct. He worried he didn’t have enough ink or thick leather paper to write on; the later entries became sparser, even reaching the point where he recorded his diary every few days—half of the thick leather paper had been used, perhaps he realized that this diary could not record every trivial matter in his dull life.

“One might as well rename the book to “Private Tutoring Records of the Sun Script”.” Liszt prepared to close the diary, having found no connection between it and the unopenable drift bottle.

He thought he might as well smash the metal bottle.

To see what exactly was inside it.

But just as he was closing the book, since he was closing it from back to front, the last page closing last, something caught his eye from the periphery—this page was not blank.

He casually flipped it open.

To discover there was another diary entry, or perhaps an essay.

“My will.”

“Grandfather told me upon his departure, should one day a golden bottle be found upon the sea, it was a letter written to us by our ancestor. Our ancestor had mastered a method of sending letters across the sea, the magic-powered bottle would travel across the ocean guided by our bloodline. A smear of blood is all it takes to open the bottle and retrieve the letter inside.”

“I didn’t believe it, but, my descendants, if one day you come across it, remember to send a reply.”

This was Philip, Descendant of the Sun’s “will,” which is why it was placed at the end of the diary. After reading it, Liszt was completely unsettled.

The bottle Philip mentioned must be the one the fisherman had found by the seaside, now sitting on his desk.

“Does this mean that Philip and his grandfather’s stories are actually true, that they really are descendants of some exiled noble family? Is the Sun Script real too?”

He recalled the prior mission.

It mentioned an “unopenable bottle, incomprehensible script,” needing a book to guide one!

Without a doubt, it was this book.

Picking up the drift bottle, Liszt walked straight out of the study.

“Master, are you going out?”

“Off to the Tanners’ Shop. Mr. Carter, you stay at the castle, let Jessie come with me. By the way, has Jessie returned?” He remembered that he had sent Jessie to deliver silver coins.

“Not yet; he probably went to the town to watch the comedy play again, you know, young people always like to join in the fun.”

“Never mind, no need to look for him. I will take Philip and Zavier to the Tanners’ Shop.” Having said that, he hurriedly left the castle, took two Retainer Knights, and dashed straight for the Tanners’ Shop.

Chapter 95: The Thorn Bug’s Desire

“Old Phil, cut your finger; I need you to smear blood on this bottle,” Liszt said unequivocally. Philip was dead, and who knew how many of the indigenous people of Dodo Island remained—this old tanner was probably one of them.

As for whether he had the bloodline of the “Descendant of the Sun,” Liszt did not know.

All he could do was try.

Although the old tanner did not understand why, he must comply with the commands of Lord Landlord. He pricked his finger with a needle, squeezed out the blood, and smeared it on the beautiful golden bottle.

Liszt had already deployed his Eye of Magic.

He was intently observing the metal drift bottle.

The moment the blood touched the bottle, his vortex-like pupils suddenly expanded as he witnessed a miraculous scene—the blood seemed to activate the magic of the metal bottle, which flowed along the engraved patterns, quickly outlining the lines of the sun, a big tree, a bow and arrow, a lyre, an eagle, and a bear.

A man composed of lines emerged from the bottle, taking up a bow and arrow, shooting at the sun.

A woman composed of lines also emerged from the bottle, picking up the lyre and gently playing it under the big tree.

The eagle landed on the man’s shoulder, the bear snuggled up to the woman, and the magic lines on the body of the bottle were lively and vivid.

Suddenly, the sun pierced with arrows fell, and a well made of lines emerged, spouting a fountain that shot straight up to the mouth of the bottle.

Pop!

A crisp sound.

All of the lines formed by magic dissipated, leaving no trace of magic on the metal bottle; and where there had been no seam before, the mouth of the bottle cracked. Liszt gently pulled and the cap came off. He turned the mouth

of the metal bottle down and shook it, and out fell something rolled up into a small stick.

It was a very delicate, thin piece of leather paper, which Liszt unfolded.

On it was a line of hieroglyphics—no, more precisely, a line of Sun Script. Liszt remembered seeing these drawings but could not discern their meaning.

His heart was full of puzzles waiting to be solved.

Yet outwardly, he was in no hurry. He rolled the paper back up and glanced at the old tanner, “Old Phil, are you related to Philip?”

“I don’t know, Lord Landlord, maybe I am. Philip once said, he said we were all exiled criminals of some sort,” replied the old tanner.

In fact, they should be relatives.

Looking at the old tanner’s hunched figure and aged expression, Liszt felt he was meant to complete the last mission issued by the Smoke Mission—to at least give Old Phil a son, or rather, to at least facilitate a kinship contract between him and Jessie. It was the right thing to do, both morally and to aid in his mission.

“Old Phil, what do you think of Jessie?”

“Jessie is a good boy; he always helps me with chores, diving, sweeping... Thanks to him, the Tanners’ Shop smells much better,” the old tanner replied.

“Do you know Jessie is an orphan?”

“I’m aware,” said the old tanner.

“Have you ever thought that the two of you could form a contract of kinship?”

“What? This...” The old tanner was evidently a bit flustered, “Jessie is a servant of the castle, and I’m just an old tanner. He could have a better life; I wouldn’t want to hold him back. Lord Landlord, Jessie is a sensible child. He likes his work at the castle, and he works hard. I will tell him not to come here anymore, so he won’t be distracted from his duties.”

He thought that his relationship with Jessie had displeased Lord Landlord.

“You misunderstood me; I don’t blame Jessie at all. It was merely a suggestion,” Liszt suddenly felt that getting involved in such trivial matters of commoners wasn’t befitting of his noble status. Why should a landlord concern himself with such trifles of the populace?

He stood up, ready to leave the Tanners’ Shop, saying, “Decide for yourselves. I will inform Mr. Carter to oversee it.”

To be or not to be, it was just a suggestion.

After returning to the castle, Liszt casually mentioned his task to Carter and then set aside these miscellaneous matters to start working on the translation of the message from the drift bottle.

With “Philip, Descendant of the Sun’s Diary,” he found the corresponding meanings for the figures in the drawing one by one.

Soon, he had finished translating the message.

“The tower has collapsed, Tree City is burning, XX has perished, and the Child of the Sun will ascend with the flames. Children who are lost abroad, you are now free.”

The “XX” is a series of Sun Script, but there was no corresponding explanation in the diary, and its style was rather abstract. Liszt couldn’t make out its specific meaning, but he could roughly guess that it should represent the dwelling place of the Child of the Sun—perhaps a country or possibly a continent.

That is to say, the drift bottle brought bad news.

“The Child of the Sun, which country’s nobility calls themselves that?” Liszt had read knight’s novels, not a thousand, then at least one hundred, but none contained any record of the Child of the Sun.

Stroking the parchment in his hands.

He suddenly felt that this country might not be on this continent: “The parchment on the continent is made of thick animal hide, not easily preserved, and not convenient to write on. But this parchment in my hand doesn’t seem to be made of animal hide. It’s very thin; such technology hasn’t appeared on this continent yet, right?”

But apart from the continental countries, the Duchy of Sapphire was the first to venture out to the sea and establish their nation.

Immediately afterwards.

Liszt came up with a possibility: “Could it be that the Child of the Sun is not a human from this continent, but from beyond the Sea of Azure Waves?”

Fresh Flower Town’s East Coast faces the Sea of Azure Waves, and on the other side of it lies the legendary Devil’s Sea, where no one can navigate.

Legends are not entirely credible.

If this Different World is also a planet, then by comparison to Earth, perhaps the so-called Devil’s Sea is just a larger ocean.

On the other side of the ocean, there might be another continent.

Separated by an impassable ocean, perhaps there are also humans living on another continent.

“Well, there’s too little information to make any effective judgments. For the time being let’s assume that there’s a continent on the other side, and a group of humans called the Child of the Sun.” Liszt reined in his speculative thoughts, “For now, I have neither the capability to unravel this perplexing mystery.”

He put the metal drift bottle into the Gemstone Space without closing the lid—just in case he couldn’t open it.

The thin parchment as well as “Philip’s Diary of the Descendants of the Sun” were also placed in the Gemstone Space.

“Now, it’s time to focus on the Thorn Bug!”

The Thorn Bug, eight years of age, unwilling to die alone in solitude, wanted to struggle one last time. Liszt could feel that this Thorn Bug was indeed somewhat different from the other Elf Bugs.

He went to the Worm Room that Carter was taking care of and saw the Thorn Bug deep asleep in its box—Elf Bugs could sleep 24 hours a day.

An intermittent telepathic connection kept Liszt constantly aware of his own Elf Bugs.

“Little fellow, I can feel the deep weariness within you, as well as your desire for evolution. Even though I know the chances of you evolving are slim, I am still willing to help you to the best of my abilities. Not for the Magic Medicine Thorns or to complete the Smoke Mission,” he said as he gently touched the grey-white body of the Thorn Bug.

The Thorn Bug seemed to sense Liszt’s presence and opened its little black sesame seed-sized eyes, turning its head to look at Liszt.

Among the seven Elf Bugs, it was the ugliest one, with a duller color compared to the vibrant colors of the other Elf Bugs, and its body was also thinner and had a harder skin—Elf Bugs nurtured by shrubs and trees always seemed rougher than those nurtured by herbaceous plants.

Its black eyes gave away no discernible expression.

But Liszt could still feel the Thorn Bug’s closeness and docility towards him.

“I have instructed Goltai to stop supplying the compost to the farms for the near future. As long as your Cordyceps can absorb it, it will be prioritized for your use,” he said.

## Chapter 96: Lawbreakers Must Be Severely Punished

Thorn Cordyceps was located at the edge of Thorn Ridge, close to the dairy farm, within a not-so-large area of Thorn Forest. Thorn Ridge got its name from the abundance of short thorn bushes that surrounded it. However, the thorn bushes rarely grew in large clusters, typically appearing as small patches here and there.

Liszt had investigated this and theorized that one possible reason was that thorn bushes are shrubs—without a significant main trunk and tend to stay low to the ground in clumps.

More accurately, the area should be called a thorn bush thicket.



Clinging to the edges of a forest of tall trees, the lofty canopy blocked out the sunlight, limiting the shrubs' growth.

“The Thorn Bug’s restlessness might stem not only from inadequate nutrition but also perhaps due to the limited expanse of the Thorn Forest; the trees overshadow the spread of the thorn bush thickets.”

To the south of the Thorn Cordyceps lay the dairy farm.

Liszt would not possibly shovel away the pasture grass to plant the utterly worthless thorn bushes.

Therefore, he planned to organize another lumberjack team to fell the trees surrounding the thorn bush thickets, enabling the thorns to expand outward. The more thorn bushes there were, the wider the range the Thorn Bug could influence, the more pheromones it could collect, and the greater the possibility of evolution—although he understood that the Thorn Bug’s chances of evolving were next to none.

The variety of thorns was too limited, making the collection of pheromones challenging.

The likelihood was too low.

“Even though I can’t discern the true essence of Elf Bug evolution, it often seems that the more plant varieties a cordyceps belongs to, the greater the potential for the Elf Bug to evolve. The extent to which plants grow also increases the chances of the Elf Bug’s evolution.”

This was evidenced by experience.

The Tulip Family had managed their operation for generations, amassing a considerable variety of tulips, and with these varieties, they had cultivated the Greater Elf Xiangxiang, along with three Little Minor Elves and eight Elf Bugs.

Of course.

It wasn’t to say that the Thorn Bug had no chance of evolving whatsoever.

One should always harbor dreams, for what if they were actualized?

“I’ll do what I can, and the rest is up to the Thorn Bug itself, to see if it truly harbors any discontent and wishes to challenge its fate.”

After patting the Thorn Bug, Liszt left the Worm Room.

Around four in the afternoon, the leader of the North Valley City Caravan came to the castle to bid Liszt farewell.

The leader was a middle-aged man with a large beard named Gabriel, who gave a deep bow: “Honorable Baron, under your governance, Fresh Flower Town has emanated a dazzling light. I thank you for your generosity and kindness; the caravan has spent a wonderful day in Fresh Flower Town, and now, Gabriel bids you farewell.”

“Are you satisfied with the caravan’s trade in the town?” Liszt asked with a smile.

“Very satisfied, Baron. The faces of the caravan members are brimming with the joy of their gains. We sold much more goods than imagined and also acquired some of the specialties of Fresh Flower Town. Personally, I am very fond of the business district environment, now that we are free from the trouble of dung.”

“So, Gabriel, does the caravan have plans for when it might visit again?”

“Not yet, but I think, now that the road through Thorn Ridge is safe, the caravan won’t wait too long. Perhaps in a month, we will return, laden with goods, to trade in Fresh Flower Town.”

“Fresh Flower Town welcomes the caravan’s visit at any time.”

“I thank you, Baron!”

Gabriel bowed and left the castle.

Returning to his team, which had already packed up their wares in the business district and was setting off at a leisurely pace, the horses pulled carts one by one along the road paved with a mix of pebbles and sand. Illuminated by the glow of the setting sun in the west, they made their way toward Thorn Ridge.

They arrived with cargo in abundance.

They left with laughter and cheerful voices in abundance.

And the delightful sound of Gold Coins, silver coins, and copper coins clinking against each other.

A moment later.

Old Geronte came to report the shopping situation this time, three Gold Coins in total. Apart from two small ponies, there was a pile of things, all handed over to Butler Carter, to be stored in the castle's cellar.

Liszt did not like these worldly affairs and went directly to the stable to see the small ponies.

In the stable, the two small ponies, which seemed to be newly born not long ago, were very shy and hid in the corner of the stable, not daring to run around. They were both very ordinary Nags, one with a reddish-brown coat and the other with a brownish-yellow coat. Even without knowing how to judge horses, Liszt could tell that they were not fit for the battlefield.

“Are they mares or stallions?”

“One mare, one stallion, my lord,” Jim, who was feeding the ponies, answered.

“Take good care of them, don't let the other horses bully them.”

“Yes, my lord.”

Afterward, Liszt took another turn through the separate enclosure, a few pregnant mares were eating bran and peas, not showing any change yet.

The Fire Dragon Horse, seeing his arrival, affectionately approached and stuck its head out of the fence.

Liszt patted it, looking forward to the foal it would bear, wondering if it would be as majestic as the Li Dragon Horse. Perhaps with the blood of a Magical Beast mixed in, its foal might be even more majestic than the Li Dragon Horse.

The banquet.

A celebration of the caravan's successful transactions at Fresh Flower Town, it was also a moment to report on work.

“Baron, the total transactions amounted to 7 Gold Coins, 63 silver coins, and 12 copper coins. According to the low tax rate incentive scheme you have established, with the fixed stall tax and twenty-plus-one fluid tax, a total of 18 silver coins and 15 copper coins were collected...” Isaiah reported the details of the tax collection.

The caravan transactions would certainly be taxed.

Generally, landlords’ taxation of foreign caravans was a standard ten percent, meaning one-tenth of the total transaction value. Some more demanding landlords might adopt a standard of one-fifth. However, at Fresh Flower Town, Liszt had significantly reduced the tax rate to attract caravans.

He set two standards.

One was the fixed stall tax; after paying a silver coin for the stall, no matter how much money you made, there would be no additional taxes.

The other was the twenty-plus-one fluid tax; that is, not paying according to the stall but extracting one-twentieth of the total transaction amount as tax.

This gave merchants a choice; if they believed their transactions could exceed twenty silver coins, they would save more by paying the fixed tax. If not reaching twenty silver coins, it was more economical to pay the fluid tax.

Considering the situation in Fresh Flower Town, the commercial tax collection was minimal, and Liszt did not intend to get rich from this aspect.

“There’s no need to add this commercial tax to the castle’s accounts; use it directly for the construction of the commercial district. Aim to complete the construction of stalls, parking spaces, livestock spaces, as well as inns and toilet facilities promptly. Also, the wells and sewers must be planned together. While there is plenty of time, I hope the work will be completed as soon as possible.”

“Rest assured, my lord,” Goltai nodded in agreement.

“Karl, tell us about today’s security issues.”

“Yes, my lord!” Karl was not attending the banquet for the first time, but he was still nervous, “The Patrol Team generally performed well. We apprehended thirteen merchants for urinating and defecating in public, who

were then punished with whipping; additionally, a thief was caught and redeemed by Gabriel. Among the townspeople, two were caught for theft, and three for coercive trading.”

Liszt asked, “Did you tell the caravan leader Gabriel that the first time a thief is caught, they can be redeemed with a fine, but if caught a second time, they will be detained and demoted to hard labor in the territory?”

“I have already notified Gabriel. He said that after returning, he would reprimand the thief, and the next time the caravan returns, absolutely no one will violate your lordship’s rules,” Karl hesitated, then continued, “My lord, how shall we punish the five criminals from the town?”

“Freeman or Serf?”

“Among the crimes of theft and coercive trading, there is one Freeman each, and the remaining three are Serfs.”

Liszt looked towards Goltai.

Goltai immediately said, “My lord, you place great importance on caravan transactions, and despite repeated publicity, there are still bold civilians who disregard the regulations. They must be severely punished! I think, the Serfs should receive fifty lashes, with all their possessions confiscated; the Freeman who stole should receive ten lashes and a tenfold fine. If unable to pay the fine, they should be demoted to Serfdom.”

“Proceed as you suggest,” Liszt consented.

The town had no real laws; his will was the law. Those who did not abide by his will had to accept punishment—breaking the law knowingly made the crime one degree worse.

## Chapter 97: The Constant Failure of Flame Mushroom Cultivation

Before dawn the next day, the serfs from each hamlet were busy scooping up fermented manure from the cesspits. The serfs carried this manure toward the dairy farms.

The disbanded Lumberjack Team also regrouped and arrived early at the Thorn Cordyceps Shrubbery, escorted by the Knight Squad. Marcus, carrying a quiver of Falcon Feather Arrows, scoured the shrubbery to ensure no Magical Beasts lurked nearby, before turning to nod at Goltai.

“Sir, the area is secure,” he said.

“Good,” Goltai turned around and shouted at the serfs, “Focus and get to work! You’ve taken the Lord Landlord’s copper coins, and anyone caught slacking off will be whipped to death by me! Remember, do not touch the Thorns; all other trees, without exception, must be cut down.”

The serfs responded in unison.

Then they began to cut down trees.

They did not know why they were there to cut trees, but they followed the town officials’ orders and also received a reward of two copper coins for a day’s work.

Before long, the manure-carrying team arrived, and Goltai hastily directed the serfs to fertilize the Thorn bushes.

Finance Officer Isaiah followed, tasked with calculating each serf’s pay. After tallying the number of workers, he recorded the data on thick parchment. Stretching leisurely, he conversed with Goltai, “What do you think the Baron is planning with such care for the Thorn Bugs?”

“I don’t know, but there must be a purpose to what he does,” Goltai replied.

“Goltai, you’ve become more and more invested in Fresh Flower Town,” Isaiah noted.

“Why not? With its booming development, I’ll probably spend the rest of my life here. It’s good to see it prosper. A barren countryside is unbearable, but in a prosperous one, there’s plenty to discover,” Goltai said.

“Of course, nobody likes poverty.”

“For the Lord, and for ourselves, we must strive forward, Isaiah,” Goltai said, glancing at his old friend, who had recently become enamored with the idea of following Liszt.

“I think... yes.”

The town officers, Goltai, Blair, Karl, and Marcus, had all become followers of Liszt. As the only official who hadn't yet pledged allegiance, Isaiah naturally felt the pressure.

Goltai didn't say much more; it was ultimately Isaiah's own decision. “Isaiah, let's check the Thorn Cordyceps Shrubbery to see if there are any unusual Thorns. The Lord mentioned that the Thorn Bugs have been restless lately, perhaps due to changes in the shrubbery.”

“What are we waiting for? I'll have to search carefully. If I find a Magic Medicine Thorn... well then. By the way, have the ingredients for cultivating Flame Mushrooms in Mushroom Hamlet been researched?”

Goltai spread his hands helplessly, “It's not so easy. Various ingredients have been tested to cultivate Flame Mushrooms, all to no avail. If it weren't for Crooked-neck Bob's mushroom shed still growing Flame Mushrooms, we might have botched it entirely. The Lord places high importance on Flame Mushrooms; I don't even know how to report on this,” Goltai said.

The cultivation of Flame was in a predicament.

Goltai had mobilized all Mushroom Hamlet cultivators, distributing Flame Mushroom seeds for them to grow.

Unfortunately, all attempts ended in failure—allegedly, Crooked-neck Bob had become obsessed, staying in his shed day and night, watching the Flame Mushrooms grow, but unable to fathom why, after replanting with new ingredients, they failed to thrive and the seeds died.

“Perhaps I should tell the Baron. He might have some good suggestions,” Isaiah suggested.

“Why do you say that?”

“Goltai, don't you think the Baron is knowledgeable? He knows a lot. His vision is broader than all of ours; he can see the vast world that we cannot,” Isaiah said.

“Is that how you see the Lord?”

“Actually, it was Marcus who said that. This Retainer Knight, who aspires to become a Noble, holds the Baron in high regard,” Isaiah conveyed.

After contemplating for a moment, Goltai replied, “Perhaps I really should report to the Lord. The matter of the Flame Mushrooms isn’t something with which I can afford to be complacent.”

He wanted to prove himself to earn an advisory position.

But he was even more aware that if he screwed up with the Flame Mushrooms, Liszt might well kill him—the importance of Magic Potions to a Landlord was something anyone could comprehend.

At noon, Liszt went for a round in the Thorn Cordyceps Shrubbery to inspect the progress and casually inquired about any unusual varieties of Thorn that might have been discovered.

The officials had not made any progress, and even when Liszt used his Eye of Magic, he did not see any aberrant Thorns.

He had now confirmed that the Smoke Mission could not create reward items out of thin air, the rewards were things that truly existed in this world, and as long as one was willing to dig, they could obtain the reward items even without going through the mission.

This gave him great choice.

He could choose to complete the mission, allowing the Smoke Mission to deliver the reward items to him effortlessly and comfortably.

He could also choose to bypass the mission, directly obtaining the reward items, to “refresh” new tasks.

He even thought that perhaps the mission could fail, but he didn’t know what kind of “punishment” would follow a failure, whether it would be the reward items being kept from him or some other additional punishment. Or, he wondered if new tasks would be available after a mission failure?

“Perhaps one day, I could try to see the consequences of mission failure, but if it’s possible to complete, I should still try to do so to avoid creating adverse outcomes,” he mused.



He shook his head.

Liszt was no longer troubled. Since there were no anomalies with the Thorns to be discovered, he could only wait to complete the mission to acquire new varieties of Thorns.

Goltai approached, “Lord, there seems to be a problem with the cultivation of the Flame Mushrooms.”

“What problem?” Liszt immediately became anxious.

“We have assigned Flame Mushroom seeds to all the serfs who plant regular mushrooms, but not a single one has successfully cultivated a living Flame Mushroom. It seems that Flame Mushrooms can only grow in Crooked-neck Bob’s mushroom shed. However, we can’t find any differences between his mushroom shed and the others.”

Almost a month had passed.

The Flame Mushrooms still hadn’t been successfully cultivated.

Liszt felt there must be a significant issue at hand. In fact, he had been monitoring the situation all along but wanted to give the serfs time to solve it—the Lord couldn’t be expected to toil every day.

To his surprise, a month had gone by.

None of the distributed Flame Mushroom seeds showed any signs of life.

Logically, the cultivation of mushrooms is quite rapid; once the spores germinate, they can usually grow from mycelium to fruiting bodies in just a few days, ready for harvesting in less than two months. However, the Flame Mushroom seeds (the mycelium) simply couldn’t survive, no matter the variety of substrates and environments the serfs tried.

Without specialized researchers, Liszt could only ask Goltai to lead the way to Mushroom Hamlet for an on-site investigation.

To see if he could deduce some reasons with his knowledge.

Arriving at Mushroom Hamlet.

He saw Crooked-neck Bob, with bloodshot eyes and an exhausted appearance beyond recognition, kneeling on the ground, trembling all over, “Lord Landlord, Bob is a waste, unable to cultivate the Flame Mushrooms alive in a month.”

Liszt did not blame Bob.

He merely asked Bob in detail about the process of cultivating the Flame Mushrooms.

After listening, he cast his gaze over the Flame Mushrooms and used the Eye of Magic, wanting to identify the root of the problem. He looked at the few Flame Mushrooms growing in the mushroom substrate and then at the Flame Mushroom seeds prepared in the new substrate. He noticed something puzzling.

Normally, the Magic Power in a Flame Mushroom is a process of congealing.

This included the Flame Mushroom seeds produced by it, which also continually condensed Magic Power.

But after inoculation, the Flame Mushroom seeds in the new substrate could not condense Magic Power and instead slowly dispelled Magic Power.

“What could be the reason for this?”

## Chapter 98: Speculation on the Cultivation of Flame Mushrooms

The dissipation of magic power was something Liszt could see, even though he wasn't a magician and couldn't delve into the essential reasons behind its loss. But as a transmigrator with a scientific mind, he had his unique insights.

“What's the biggest difference between the mushroom cultivation substrate for Fragrant Mushrooms and the new substrate?”

“According to Crooked-neck Bob, the growing conditions for most mushrooms are roughly the same, with slight differences in temperature, humidity, and nutrient ratios at most.”

“But the fact that Flame Mushrooms can grow in the Fragrant Mushroom substrate indicates they don’t reject it outright. We’ve been experimenting with the new substrate for quite some time, trying all kinds of ratios, yet still unable to help Flame Mushrooms thrive. It mustn’t be an issue with the substrate.”

“If it’s not an issue with the substrate, then what is it?”

A moment later.

He formulated a hypothesis—the most significant difference between the Fragrant Mushroom substrate and the new substrate is that Fragrant Mushrooms grow on the former!

Mushroom Hamlet had cultivated Fragrant Mushrooms for many years with no other mushroom species invading, yet Flame Mushrooms emerged, suggesting that Flame Mushrooms could be a mutant variety of Fragrant Mushrooms. This mutation might not result in an entirely new species but rather a coexisting variety during the growth of Fragrant Mushrooms.

Mushrooms are fungi.

Fungi are always full of surprises. The mycelium of Fragrant Mushrooms and Flame Mushrooms might entangle with and promote each other’s growth.

Therefore, he said, “Teacher Goltai, please inform the serfs involved in the cultivation to try intermingling the Flame Mushroom spores with those of the Fragrant Mushrooms to see if it works.”

“Intermingling the cultivation?” Goltai didn’t quite understand, but he did as instructed.

Crooked-neck Bob, upon hearing Liszt’s words, was greatly energized, “Lord Landlord, Bob will try intermingling the cultivation right away, I must cultivate Flame Mushrooms for Lord Landlord!”

“This Fragrant Mushroom shed, remember not to mess with it at all, don’t destroy the environment needed for the growth of Flame Mushrooms,” Liszt later emphasized sternly.

It was alright if the Flame Mushrooms took a bit longer to cultivate; he wasn’t yet at the stage where he needed to rely on magic potions to increase his Dou Qi.

But if he ended up killing all the Flame Mushrooms, he would go mad.

In the blink of an eye, five days passed.

Liszt would visit the Thorn Cordyceps Shrubbery every day to check on the progress of fertilization and logging. The Lumberjack Team was experienced, and especially after the Smithy made a batch of sharp axes, the efficiency of cutting trees increased significantly. A large circle of trees around the shrubbery was completely cut down.

Basically, all the trees within the region that could be affected by the Thorn Cordyceps were felled.

The Fire Dragon Horse calmly ate various weeds; it was pregnant, but it didn't show, and riding it was still normal. According to Marcus, riding it for a few more months posed no problem.

In its box, the Thorn Bug lay on jade powder, comfortably wriggling.

Over these days, Liszt could distinctly feel the Thorn Bug's spirits were high, constantly in a state of excitement. That was abnormal as, typically, the emotional fluctuations of Elf Bugs are very small—after all, no matter how magical an Elf Bug is, in essence, it is still just an insect; one could not expect it to exhibit human-like emotions.

“Could this little fellow really be wanting to evolve?”

No sooner did the thought arise than he swiftly extinguished it, for the likelihood of success was too slim. Greater hopes lead to greater disappointments, so it was better not to indulge in unrealistic fantasies.

At that moment, Blair, responsible for supervising the work, came over.

“My Lord.”

“Have you made any discoveries?”

Blair hesitated a bit but then spoke up, “I don't know if I'm making a big deal out of nothing, but around the shrubbery, many young Thorn shoots have sprung up like grass from the soil, already reaching about half a finger in length.”

His eyebrows raised.

Liszt followed Blair to inspect these Thorn seedlings.

Indeed, on the cleared land where trees had been cut down, tender but lively Thorn seedlings were poking through piles of fallen leaves.

The Thorns weren't like any variety found on Earth, being merely a type of spiny shrub that, at most, grew to a person's height, non-toxic, not flowering, and not fruiting, propagating by continuously extending roots to sprout new seedlings. To be exact, Thorns were considered weed-trees, with Thorn Bugs being merely wild Elves.

The wilderness jungles, untraveled by man, always be home to a small number of naturally bred elves.

But the wild vegetation is messy and the soil poor, which means the probability of breeding Elf Bugs is very low. This chance is far less than with species that humans have been cultivating over a long period, which produce a greater number of Elf Bugs.

Moreover,

the varieties of Elf Bugs found in the wild are hard to guarantee. They might be a weed or a poisonous fruit tree, with relatively low utility value.

The greatest use of a Thorn Bug bonded by humans is to construct a hedge.

Especially for the Nobles, who plant a hedge around the perimeter of their estates to separate themselves from commoners.

In Fresh Flower Town, the Thorn Bug really doesn't have much use—the space outside the castle has all been converted into a racecourse, with absolutely no need for any hedge to act as a barrier.

Regardless, since it's an Elf Bug, Liszt still decides to cultivate it.

“Did all these thorn seedlings just sprout up in the last two days?” He gently pulled out a seedling. It was tender, but there wasn't the slightest trace of Magic Power flowing within it.

“I didn't pay much attention at the start,” Blair shook his head, “It wasn't just me, none of the serfs noticed either, as if they had all grown overnight.”

Liszt inspected the situation carefully.

Indeed, these were not the “Magic Medicine Thorns” he had imagined but merely common thorn saplings.

He still decided to summon the Smoke Mission to check on the situation. When the smoke twisted into Serpent Script, he finally understood—  
”Complete mission, reward: fast-growing thorn species.”

This meant that the mission to nurture the Thorn Cordyceps had been completed. It was disappointing that he didn’t receive Magic Medicine Thorns as a reward, just a fast-growing type of thorn.

“A fast-growing thorn species, what do I need this for?” Liszt sighed in his heart, recognizing that not every Smoke Mission would bring a sizable reward.

He didn’t dwell on it and turned his attention to the newly issued mission.

“Mission: Without the devastation of the Fruit Thief Monkeys, the Fragrant Coconut Trees have finally borne ripe Fragrant Coconut Fruit. However, the fruit from one of the trees seems different. Please find out why. Reward: an Elf Bug.”

Having read the mission, the sense of disappointment he felt just before was quickly smoothed over, and he became excited.

Why was the Fragrant Coconut Fruit different?

Because it was nurturing a Fragrant Coconut Tree Elf Bug!

The familiar pattern and familiar rewards shifted Liszt’s gaze away from the thorn seedlings. He said to Blair, “Don’t stop fertilizing the shrubbery, but the logging work can be scaled back, shifting focus to fence building. Keep a careful eye on these thorn seedlings and record their growth.”

“As you wish.”

Moments later.

Liszt had arrived at Oyster Village.

The construction of houses in Oyster Village was not rapid, barely managing to accommodate a few hundred serfs. No longer haphazardly built, the houses are arranged neatly into blocks, following the sketch personally planned by Liszt.

Near the sea in the block, a huge plaza is reserved.

In the plaza, a small hill made of colorful seashells symbolizes the specialty of Oyster Village—seafood.

On the East Coast beach, stands a clump of tall Fragrant Coconut Trees, among which, one near Oyster Village has a slightly larger house and yard beneath it—the Fruit Thief Monkey Training Ground.

A few of the best serfs at training Fruit Thief Monkeys live here; they have been freed from the fields and seawater to focus on training and raising Fruit Thief Monkeys, becoming the honored—Fragrant Coconut Fruit Farmers.

“Lord Landlord!”

Upon seeing Liszt, several Fragrant Coconut Fruit Farmers knelt and paid their respects.

“Stand up everyone. You’ve been training the Fruit Thief Monkeys for quite some time now. Can they climb trees and pick fruit yet?”

## Chapter 99: The Unique Fragrant Coconut Fruit

The East Coast stretches for several kilometers, and there are a total of 171 Fragrant Coconut Trees of various sizes.

The smaller Fragrant Coconut Trees might be only a few meters high, and there are even some that have just sprouted. The largest Fragrant Coconut Tree, which was the site of the battle between the Wind Falcon and the Fruit Thief Monkeys, is nearly sixty meters tall and leans towards the sea.

Liszt rode his Fire Dragon Horse and took shelter under the shade of the tallest Fragrant Coconut Tree. He guessed that if there truly was an Elf Bug, it would definitely be in this “Tree King”.

Cordyceps are generally larger, stronger, and more vigorous than ordinary plants.

If it had been before, he would have had to search each tree one by one to be sure of the Cordyceps. Now it was different; he just needed to deploy the Eye of Magic and look up at the top of the sixty-meter-tall Fragrant Coconut Tree.

A few changes appeared in his field of vision.

Faint traces of pale blue Magic Power circulated in the foliage at the top, not very clear, but certainly enough.

“There are traces of Magic Power, just as I thought, this Fragrant Coconut Tree has become Cordyceps. My eighth Elf Bug is about to arrive! However, this Elf Bug has climbed quite high,” Liszt thought for a moment and then decided not to investigate personally—climbing trees was really not becoming of a lord’s dignity.

He turned to look at a farmer next to him, “You’re Jiggs, the steward of the Fruit Thief Monkey Training Ground, aren’t you?”

Jiggs nodded hurriedly, “Yes, Lord Landlord.”

“Can you climb trees?”

“I can.”

“Then climb this tree for me. Be careful not to damage the bark. Go up and take a look for me to see if there is something unusual about the Fragrant Coconut Fruits.”

“Yes, Lord Landlord.” Jiggs immediately set to work, climbing hand over foot toward the crown of the tree.

He was not as agile as the Fruit Thief Monkeys, but he was steady enough, gradually making his way to the foliage. Moments later, Jiggs climbed down and began to report, “Lord Landlord, it’s very strange. There’s a Fragrant Coconut Fruit that looks like it’s fully ripened, smells very sweet, and it’s very large, oh, about the size of a basin.”

The size of a normal Fragrant Coconut Fruit is about that of a sea bowl.

Now that a basin-sized Fragrant Coconut Fruit has appeared, there’s no doubt that an Elf Bug is hidden inside.



Liszt smiled, “Jiggs, remember this, the tree is Cordyceps, and my Elf Bug is growing inside its Fragrant Coconut Fruit. You guys must guard this tree for me, not allowing anyone to touch the Fragrant Coconut Fruits, and you must go up each day to observe. If the Fragrant Coconut Fruit cracks open, notify the Castle immediately, do you understand?”

“My goodness, an Elf Bug? Incredible!” Jiggs was overjoyed and replied eagerly, “Please rest assured, Lord Landlord. Jiggs will definitely guard the Elf Bug!”

He nodded lightly.

Liszt concentrated his mind and summoned the Smoke Mission.

He felt somewhat lightheaded; he had just completed a Smoke Mission half an hour ago, and now, he had finished another one—this efficiency couldn’t be too high.

Just as expected.

The Serpent Script formed by the smoke said, “Mission completed, reward: Fragrant Coconut Tree Elf Bug.”

Suddenly, a new mission appeared, “The new-style milky bread brought by the trade caravan has sparked an inspiration in Reynard, the baker. He wants to make a new kind of bread, perhaps adding some meat would be a good idea, but he’s distressed that he can only sell black bread. Please help him realize the development of a new bread. Reward: Sunken Ship Treasure.”

“Sunken Ship Treasure?”

Liszt’s eyes gleamed at the sight of the word ‘treasure’; there’s nothing more exciting than discovering treasure and gaining an unexpected fortune.

A task that must be completed.

“Reynard wants to make a new type of bread, with a bit of meat? Is he planning to invent meat-floss bread?”

In this world, the culinary realm is still at a very primitive stage of food processing—roasting meat, roasting fish, boiling eggs, boiling meat, frying steaks, tossing salads; sauce was invented, and everyone likes to spread it on

everything they eat; milk is only used to make cheese and pudding, and they also like to stuff it with minced meat.

The worst is their fondness for baking complete ingredients into a batter—the respectable name for it: “Pie!”

Mrs. Abbie was previously very skilled at making a dish called mushroom pie, the specific method being—mix flour with sugar and oil into a paste, then sprinkle the whole mushrooms into it, stuff it into the oven, and bake it till done—with that, a mushroom pie was ready to eat.

Liszt really couldn't get used to these “pies,” always feeling like it was an insult to his taste buds.

Even to his intelligence.

But many times, he had to endure the torment of this dark cuisine and deeply regret why he didn't go to New Oriental to learn how to be a chef before.

Eight hundred stainless beds, two hundred...

Bread is the staple food of the Different World, from the king down to serfs, they all eat bread. Except nobles eat white bread, and the poor eat black bread. The nobles' requirements for food are definitely aspirational, but alas, the chefs' talents are limited, and after so many years, white bread is still white bread, black bread is still black bread.

“How do you make meat floss bread?” Liszt tried to recall the meat floss bread he had eaten, “It seems like it's just bread with some meat floss sprinkled on top? But, how is meat floss made?”

He couldn't figure it out.

He quickly gathered his thoughts, gave a few instructions to the fruit farmers, mounted his horse, and left Oyster Village. The retainer knights had already gone to inform Goltai that Liszt wasn't too concerned about the protection work for the Fragrant Coconut Tree Cordyceps. He was ready to head straight for the town's bakery, to inspect the lives of the common people.

The bakery was in the most conspicuous position in town, a rare two-story wooden building.

The first floor sold bread, and the second floor was the residence of the baker's family.

The bakery provided two main services, one was naturally selling various kinds of black bread, the other was to bake bread on behalf of others. Not all serfs could afford black bread, they would more often come to use the bakery's oven, bringing their own various bran and other ingredients to bake black bread.

Reynard was a freeman, and also the richest freeman in town, it was said that his family wealth amounted to as many as five gold coins.

The undisputed richest man in Fresh Flower Town.

However, some said the Old Drunkard was the richest man, as he had sold his smithy to the landlord for three gold coins, and despite his love for fine wine, his excellent blacksmithing skills still brought him a great deal of wealth.

At the moment, Reynard stood watching the baking oven, waiting for a new batch of bread to come out, but his mind was wandering. He was one of the few people in town who could regularly taste white bread, and the cream bread brought by the caravan a few days ago, he bought a bit and tasted its unique and wonderful flavor.

It also made him realize that bread could be made even more delicious.

"Could I make better-tasting bread?" In the past, he wouldn't have thought about it because even if he made it, no one in town could afford it.

But now it was different, the road to Thorn Ridge had been opened, and the castle's caravans went on trade missions almost every three days. He could definitely follow the caravans to sell his own bread outside—as long as he could get to North Valley City, where many nobles resided.

"And, I could also sell to Lord Landlord." Reynard thought of the day the caravan arrived, when he met Mrs. Abbie and chatted with her, learning that she could only make the simplest white bread, "Lord Landlord must be tired of the monotonous white bread by now, most of the cream bread was bought by the castle."

Just at that moment.

He suddenly heard his wife shouting loudly, “Reynard, come out quickly, Reynard, are you listening, the landlord, Lord Landlord is here!”

## Chapter 100: The Development of New Bread

In the bakery, Liszt saw the plump Reynard.

Without showing much concern for his serfs or adopting a friendly demeanor, he went straight to the point, “Reynard, how long have you been baking bread?”

“I started baking bread as soon as I arrived at Fresh Flower Farm, Lord Landlord, It’s been eighteen years,” Reynard said respectfully, “My mother was once a kitchen maid at Tulip Castle, and she taught me the skill of bread-making. I followed her here when Coral Island’s Earl started the Fresh Flower Farm in Fresh Flower Town.”

The developmental history of Coral Island is hard to trace, with claims that people were already living on the island even before the Sapphire Duke came overseas to establish the kingdom.

Later, the Sapphire Duke declared Coral Island property of the kingdom and sent officials to govern it.

By the time Li Weiliam Tulip was granted the title of Earl of Coral Island for his military service twenty years ago, Levis was just two years old, and both Li Vera and Liszt had not been born yet. In those years, the Earl massively purchased serfs to populate and cultivate the wastelands of Coral Island.

Eighteen years ago, new Tulips were discovered in Fresh Flower Town, prompting the Earl to cultivate Fresh Flower Farm there.

At its height, the Tulips reached two hundred acres in size, and the small castle was also constructed during that time.

The following year, which is seventeen years ago, as increasingly more serfs gathered at Fresh Flower Farm, Fresh Flower Town was built. Reynard, transitioning from a baker who made bread exclusively for Fresh Flower Farm,

became the town baker and settled down here. Life in the small town was hard, but Reynard quite enjoyed it.

In a blink, eighteen years passed.

He had become the wealthiest commoner in Fresh Flower Town.

Liszt then asked, “Have you always made black bread?”

“Occasionally, I also make white bread, especially during festivals, and, well, when commoners get married, they also order some white bread from me.”

“How is your skill in making white bread?”

“I... I don't know, Lord Landlord,” Reynard said, a bit embarrassed and with his head bowed, “But, Mrs. Abbie from the castle has tasted my white bread, and she said it was delicious.”

Aside, Reynard's wife suddenly interjected, “Lord Landlord, Mrs. Abbie also said she wanted to collaborate with Reynard on researching milky bread, which she mentioned you're quite fond of.”

“The Lord Landlord didn't ask you a question, who gave you permission to speak!” Reynard glared at his wife and then quickly apologized, “I'm sorry, Lord Landlord, Rebecca is a foolish woman, she meant no disrespect to your authority.”

Liszt didn't mind.

He wasn't the kind of noble prickly to the touch, unable to accept the slightest offense—besides, he didn't feel that Rebecca's interjection was an affront at all.

On the contrary, he was pleased that Abbie seemingly was collaborating with Reynard about creating milky bread.

He always supported culinary research, so he smiled and said, “Reynard, the castle needs bread with better taste. Since you and Mrs. Abbie are communicating, that's good, create more bread with different flavors. Don't worry about not being able to sell them, as long as they're tasty, the castle will purchase them in large quantities.”

Reynard was overjoyed.

This was exactly what he wanted, and he immediately accepted the order, “Please rest assured, Lord Landlord, I will surely work with Mrs. Abbie to develop milky bread and many more wonderfully flavored new breads.”

“I’m looking forward to it.”

Liszt stood up, adding another suggestion, “I like adding a bit of meat to the bread, but roasted meat is too dry and hard, which doesn’t go well with bread. Maybe you could try to make the meat very tender, almost as if it were mixed with the bread, that might taste good.”

“Reynard will remember that!”

Reynard and Mrs. Abbie would likely need at least ten days to half a month to bake meat floss bread or any other new type of bread. There was no way they would finish this task before Liszt attended Levis’s birthday party.

The date was rapidly approaching August 16th.

Only three days were left until Levis’s birthday, after which he would turn twenty-three. By that age, the Earl and Melissa had already conceived Li Vera. However, Levis still hadn’t found a suitable match for marriage and remained single.

Honored Knight Layden from Tulip Castle had sent the invitation for Levis’s birthday party.

Upon receiving the invitation, Butler Carter got busy with the preparations for the gift, “My lord, are we really just going to use seafood as the birthday gift?”

He asked with some uncertainty, as Liszt had instructed him that giving some seafood as a gift would suffice.

But seafood was the cheapest food in Fresh Flower Town, cheaper even than black bread — it was found everywhere on the East Coast, not only collected by fishermen but even serfs would pick up some shells to eat.

Liszt, engrossed in his book, didn’t even lift his head, “Mr. Carter, besides seafood, what else do we have in Fresh Flower Town that’s worth offering as a specialty?”

This rhetorical question left Carter speechless.

The remote little town truly had no special produce worth boasting about, but he still tried to think of something, “My lord, perhaps we could send some wild fruits from Thorn Ridge.”

“No, no, no, I have been poisoned by wild fruits before. Although I am now able to differentiate between the types of wild fruits, there is still a risk.”

“I apologize, my lord, it was thoughtless of me.”

“That’s nothing. After all, the castle picks a lot of wild fruits every day, we’re used to it. I just feel that gifting wild fruits isn’t a good sign.”

Liszt had occupied his predecessor’s body and memories because of wild fruits, so of course, he wouldn’t disregard them.

He had ordered people to pick and test all the wild fruits from Thorn Ridge and eventually identified two poisonous kinds — including the Black Date Fruit that had poisoned his predecessor, a fist-sized, slightly purplish-black fruit.

All other wild fruits were edible.

However, whether there were more poisonous wild fruits deep within Thorn Ridge was not something he could guarantee. Those fruits were picked by the braver serfs from the edge of Thorn Ridge.

The small town also had some fruit trees, but not many, with just a few fruits scattered here and there.

Liszt had already ordered the collection of various wild fruit seeds, planning to plant them en masse come spring next year, but regrettably, he couldn’t ensure a high germination rate. Without the Elf Bug, the growth of wild fruit trees was bound to be a challenge; the serfs had thought of planting them but couldn’t make them thrive.

The castle’s wild fruits could only be picked from Thorn Ridge for the time being.

With wild fruits ruled out as a birthday gift, Carter didn’t know what else to give, something more appropriate than seafood.

But then Liszt remembered, ordinary wild fruits from Thorn Ridge might not be suitable, but there were plenty of Fragrant Coconut Fruits on the East Coast,

“Calculating the time, the Fragrant Coconut Fruits should also be ripe by now. Mr. Carter, contact the fruit farmers and pick a bag of Fragrant Coconut Fruits. We’ll pair them with the seafood as our gift.”

“Yes, my lord.”

August 19th.

Early in the morning, Liszt dressed in leather armor and strapped on the Crimson Blood Sword, setting off with his retainer knights just as the sun began to rise, facing the gentle breeze.

Heading to Tulip Castle.