

## **Ocean Lord 131**

### *Chapter 131: Dragon Blood Crystals, Dragon Blood Murlocs*

Several hours later.

After a challenging journey, Ji Chen and his group finally reached the mountaintop. It was covered in a pristine layer of snow, resembling a white carpet. From this vantage point, everything below appeared small and insignificant, giving them a sense of grandeur.

The mountaintop was rugged, with scattered boulders and a central lake that served as the source for numerous waterfalls. As they surveyed the area, they couldn't help but notice the enormous claw marks deeply embedded in the rocks. These marks seemed as if they had been perfectly carved, with smooth edges that indicated a great force.

Their attention soon turned to a massive cave that stood before them. It was undoubtedly the location of the Dragon's Nest they had been searching for.

Without wasting any time, Ji Chen led his army towards the cave, arriving at the edge of the lake.

Suddenly, the tranquil surface of the lake erupted into bubbling and churning water. Dozens of humanoid water elementals, standing at a towering two meters tall, emerged from the depths. Their bodies gleamed with a blood-red hue, and they advanced towards Ji Chen's group with their massive fists raised.

In an instant, a strange and oppressive aura emanated from these water elementals. It affected several units, slowing their movements and obstructing their magical abilities. The Naga warriors managed to hold their ground, albeit with some difficulty, but the lower-tier units like the Shallow Sea Murlocs and Pure Water Sea Pixies suffered significant losses in combat effectiveness even before the battle began.

This peculiar effect reminded Ji Chen of Alice's unit ability, the Siren Bloodline.

However, Ji Chen, Alice, and Anina remained unaffected by this oppressive pressure.

Perplexed by this new threat, Ji Chen quickly made a decisive command. "Everyone, retreat and remain on guard."

Hearing this, all the soldiers retreated a certain distance.

Ji Chen looked over.

[Dragonblood Water Elemental]

[Race]: Elemental

[Level]: 17

[Tier]: Tier 3, 9 stars

[Skills]: Dragon's Might (blue skill, as a water elemental infused with dragon blood, it possesses a certain Dragon's Might, which grows stronger as the distance decreases)

Elemental Body (blue skill, the elemental body is immune to negative effects such as mental control, curses, and plagues)

Mastery of Mana (blue skill, increases mana recovery speed by 30%)

[Unit Trait]: Elemental Form (immune to water elemental spells, can absorb water elemental spells for regeneration)

[Originally a normal water elemental, it evolved after absorbing dragon blood]

So, it was a water elemental infused with dragon blood. No wonder it possessed a trace of Dragon's Might that could suppress living beings. Moreover, it was at Tier 3, 9 stars, which was higher than Ji Chen's three main units. Its unit trait directly countered the Pure Water Sea Pixies.

Alice's singing had no effect on these elemental creatures.

It could be said that this was the most formidable monster unit they had encountered so far, directly countering Ji Chen.

The Dragonblood Water Elemental had no obvious organs on its body, only a faint human-like silhouette.

With fists raised, it swiftly shot out two water arrows, carrying an unstoppable momentum.

The energy contained in it was even more violent and dense than that of the pure water sea pixies. None of the soldiers present could withstand this attack.

Ji Chen's expression changed slightly as he raised his hands.

The invisible energy flew out and entangled with the water arrow.

These water arrows that were flying halfway gradually stopped. The two different energies clashed intensely, and after a moment of entanglement, they exploded with a loud bang, splashing water everywhere.

Boom!

The violent energy fluctuation brought about a strong wind, raising a large amount of smoke and dust. Like a hammer, it sent the nearby Dragonblood Water Elemental and Naga Warriors flying.

After the dust settled.

The Dragonblood Water Elemental stood up again without any injuries, but the scales of the Naga warriors broke and they spat out blood. It was obvious that they had suffered considerable injuries.

Benbo, leading his Shallow Sea Murlocs, shouted out as he swiftly hurled his trident towards the Dragonblood Water Elemental. The trident pierced deep into the elemental's body, akin to striking jelly.

As he pulled back the trident, a significant chunk of the Dragonblood Water Elemental's body came along with it, leaving a gaping hole.

Under Benbo's command, the Shallow Sea Murlocs, originally Tier 3, 3-star units, were empowered to a level almost equivalent to Tier 4. They now possessed the strength to confront these formidable Dragonblood Water Elementals.

The wounded Dragonblood Water Elementals trembled, visibly attempting to regenerate their missing flesh. However, their bodies gradually shrank as their wounds slowly healed.

Ji Chen's forces seemed to have a chance at wearing down the Dragonblood Water Elementals if they could continue their relentless attacks.

But the tides quickly turned as the Dragonblood Water Elementals closed the distance. The overwhelming Dragon's Might began to weigh down on Ji Chen's forces, making it difficult for them to breathe.

Even the fierce and mighty Nagas were now contorted with grimaces, their bodies trembling as they struggled against the growing power of the Dragon's Might.

The Deep Sea Murlocs, affected by the force, could no longer throw their tridents. They could only use them as support to endure the onslaught.

The Pure Water Sea Pixies, who had been mere spectators, huddled together in fear, trembling at the sight.

Ji Chen inwardly cursed their ineptitude and turned his gaze towards Anina.

"It's time to take action but be cautious."

The Dragon Whale girl nodded, wielding her colossal sword as she charged forward like a forceful whale in motion..

#### *Chapter 132: Dragon Blood Crystals, Dragon Blood Murlocs (2)*

As a Deep Sea Dragon Whale, Anina's bloodline already positioned her at the pinnacle of the ocean hierarchy.

Facing a genuine dragon head-on wouldn't faze her, let alone these water elementals infused with a mere trace of dragon blood.

Thus, she remained completely unaffected.

Seeing Anina charging towards them with an imposing aura, the Dragonblood Water Elementals unleashed a barrage of water arrows, descending upon her like a deluge.

Anina's expression remained unchanged as she positioned her colossal sword in front of her, its broad blade covering her entirely.

Thud. Thud.

The continuous sound echoed as more than ten water arrows collided with the sword, their powerful impact tearing several cracks in its surface.

Anina clicked her tongue at the sight.

The sword wasn't sturdy enough, slightly hampering her combat effectiveness.

Enduring three volleys of water arrows, the sword, made of ordinary metal, was now riddled with cracks, and on the verge of breaking.

But Anina had successfully closed the distance. With a casual toss, she discarded the sword.

Rushing towards a Dragonblood Water Elemental, she clenched her right hand into a fist and struck its body.

Boom!

A gaping hole pierced through the elemental's body, causing its gelatinous flesh to burst into fragments scattered on the ground.

This was the purest form of power—simple yet brutally effective.

After killing one, Anina didn't pause for even a moment. Her muscles and bones were flawlessly utilized as she instantaneously appeared before another elemental.

Once again, with a single punch.

This one met an even more gruesome fate, with half of its body obliterated.

As other Dragonblood Water Elementals reacted and raised their fists to unleash water arrows, Anina's eyes narrowed, and she let out a resounding roar towards the sky. The sound pierced through the air, shattering rocks and splitting steel, as if capable of dispersing the clouds in the heavens.

The surrounding Dragonblood Water Elementals froze in place, their raised fists slowly lowering.

[Fear of War (Purple skill, can use a roar to stun the enemy for 1 – 10 seconds, the effect depends on the level and level of the enemy)]

Seeing this, Anina grinned.

Her face, which had a little baby fat, actually looked a little valiant and heroic at this moment. She stomped his feet and started killing again.

Against an enemy who would not enter a stunned state and would not resist, the efficiency of killing would be even higher.

By the time the Dragonblood Water Elementals woke up, one-third of them had already been killed.

The most terrifying aspect was that with each passing moment of the battle, Anina's combat prowess grew stronger. Her speed, strength, and endurance were all steadily increasing, showing no signs of waning. With every enemy she vanquished, it seemed as though she was replenishing her stamina by sucking their blood. She became an unstoppable killing machine, moving effortlessly through the battlefield, annihilating Dragonblood Water Elementals with each passing second.

Ji Chen had originally wanted to lend a hand, but upon seeing this scene, he immediately dispelled the idea.

It was obvious that the child was holding it in. It had been a long time since she had killed an enemy so readily.

Bebo was dumbstruck as he watched Anina slaughter them like she was killing a fish. He began to recall if he had ever said or done anything that offended her before, afraid that Anina would hold a grudge against him and punch him in the head.

After completely overpowering the Dragonblood Water Elementals with her unmatched power, speed, and endurance, Anina left no survivors. The once formidable Dragonblood Water Elementals,

which appeared powerful to ordinary units, couldn't even touch the hem of her clothes before being swiftly and cleanly slain.

The battle quickly came to an end.

"Ding- You have achieved an honorable victory, earning 36,000 experience points..."

Seeing the system prompt, Ji Chen nodded and smiled as he approached Anina, who was walking back towards him.

"Great job, Anina. When we get back, you can ask the chef to make whatever you want."

Anina wanted to say something like "It was an easy battle" or "I didn't even break a sweat", but her eyes lit up upon hearing Ji Chen's words. "Really? Then I want to eat freshly grilled meat!"

"No problem, you can have as much as you want," Ji Chen said, reaching out to pat her hair and round little head.

Feeling the warmth of his hand on her head, Anina immediately closed her eyes, feeling comfortable and content.

At some point, Anina had developed a liking for this kind of reward.

Considering it, Anina was probably more like a killer whale, enjoying being stroked by others.

Witnessing this, Ji Chen always went along with it and gave her a good pat on the head.

After all, stroking her soft hair was a pleasant experience for both body and mind.

After a minute of brief caressing, Ji Chen gently patted her little head and withdrew his hand.

"Alright, we need to keep moving forward."

Hearing this, Anina reluctantly nodded.

Just as they were about to continue their journey, Benbo suddenly spoke up, "My Lord, look, there are some things on the ground. It seems like they fell from the Dragonblood Water Elementals."

Upon hearing this, Ji Chen lowered his head to take a look.

Sure enough, among the shattered bodies of the Dragonblood Water Elementals, there were blood-red crystals.

These crystals were translucent and seemed to flow like blood, appearing quite beautiful.

Ji Chen walked over and casually picked one up, carefully examining it.

[Dragon Blood Crystal]

[Level: 1-star treasure]

[Effect: Able to mix dragon blood into a soldier's body and obtain a chance to evolve.]

[Remark: The reason for the evolution of the Dragonblood Water Elementals. It has magical power.]

Dragon blood crystals?

Can evolve?

Before he could rejoice, the military talent tree suddenly popped up on its own.

“Dragon blood crystal detected, detecting soldiers that can evolve...”

“The compatibility of the shallow sea murlocs has reached 95%, opening a new direction in the talent tree.”

“Murloc Hero: Murky opens a new talent tree.”

[Unlocked node E-1: Dragon’s blood (purple skill). Consumes 100 (pieces) dragon’s blood crystals, 2000 crystals.]

Unexpectedly, these Dragon blood Crystals could actually unlock a new talent path for the Shallow Sea Murlocs.

This was the first time he had encountered such a thing!

Does this mean that besides the original talent tree for units, it was possible to develop new paths through certain items?

The Dragon Blood Crystals opened up a path called “Dragon Blood”.

Although he couldn’t determine the specific descriptions and effects of the skills, starting with a purple-level skill, it should be formidable.

From the name alone, it seemed to be related to the Dragon Blood skill of the Dragonblood Water Elementals.

Ji Chen looked at Benbo again and noticed that its new node was the same as that of the Shallow Sea Murlocs.

[Unlocked node F-1: Dragon’s blood (purple skill). Consumes 50 dragon blood crystals, 2000 crystals.]

Thinking of this, Ji Chen suppressed the joy in his heart and ordered the other troops.

“Collect these crystals for me.”

Hearing this, all the soldiers spread out and began to search the battlefield.

Soon, all the dragon blood crystals were gathered together.

There were more than 150 of them, which was exactly the amount of dragon blood and water elements.

As per the item description, a single Dragon Blood Crystal could only enable the evolution of one soldier, and even with over 150 crystals, only a maximum of 150 shallow-sea Murlocs could evolve. However, the military talent tree required only 100 crystals to evolve all the shallow sea Murlocs, ensuring that any future recruits would already be evolved.

There was no denying the power of this advancement. Ji Chen reopened the talent tree and proceeded to unlock the new nodes for Benbo and Shallow Sea Murloc.

“Consumed 50 (pieces) of Dragon Blood Crystals, 2000 units of crystals, unlocked node F-1 (Murloc Hero: Benbo).”

“Consumed 100 Dragon Blood Crystals, 2000 units of crystals, unlocked node E-1 (Shallow Sea Murlocs).”

“Shallow Sea Murloc (Tier 3, 3 stars) has advanced to Dragon Blood Murloc (Tier 4, 3 stars).”

Ji Chen gasped in astonishment.

To think that their rank had been elevated by an entire level! What a huge advantage they had gained!

After completing their evolution, both Benbo and the Dragon Blood Murloc now displayed the outline of a dragon’s head on their skulls. Their scales had become majestic and commanding, truly resembling dragon scales.

And the most remarkable feature was the flowing red blood throughout their bodies, which emitted a mysterious Dragon’s Might.

In the face of enemies, just as they had experienced with the Dragonblood Water Elementals, their strength diminished by thirty percent even before the battle began. And once they got close, their opponents would be utterly defenseless.

However, this aura of majesty had no effect on Ji Chen. Not only was there a significant gap in power, but he also held the position of their lord.

No matter how mighty they became, as their lord, Ji Chen possessed absolute control over them.

Witnessing the transformation of the Murlocs into Dragon Blood Murlocs, a formidable Tier 4 unit, his spirits soared.

Under Benbo’s leadership, the Dragon Blood Murlocs’ strength was now approaching Tier 5.

They had leapt to become the mightiest unit in the territory!

*Chapter 133: Dragon Nest, Volcano*

After unlocking the Dragonblood skills of the Dragonblood Murlocs and Benbo, the fog behind the talent tree cleared a bit, revealing the second node of this path.

It showed that they would need to consume more Dragonblood crystals to further enhance the Dragonblood concentration in their bodies and increase the strength of their Dragon Power skills.

This made Ji Chen feel a little restless, thinking about where to find a giant dragon to trade with.

Dragons were inherently greedy, but he happened to have a massive amount of gold coins, a fortune that would make even the giant dragon tempted.

You bleed, I pay, its fair.

But in order to achieve such a transaction, he still had to continue to improve his strength.

Otherwise, according to the greed of dragons and their innate nature, the dragons wouldn’t even consider trading if they found their opponents too weak.

Ji Chen could predict that the dragon would simply breathe fire at them and easily eliminate them before taking the gold coins.

And if he had enough strength, he wouldn't mind being a dragon slayer... after all, he would obtain more Dragonblood through slaying dragons.

Ji Chen and his group approached the lake once again, but this time no monsters jumped out. He extended his hand and condensed a "water path" on the surface of the lake, and the group crossed it smoothly.

They arrived at the enormous cave.

By using the Crown of Omniscience, they could see that there were no monsters or animals inside, not even the creatures that had invaded this place later.

Even though the giant dragon had already left, its smell and traces still intimidated other creatures.

So far, Ji Chen hadn't encountered any monsters that could evade the detection of the Crown of Omniscience, so he entered the cave feeling quite at ease.

After a brief darkness, the scene suddenly brightened before him.

Compared to the entrance of the cave, the interior was more spacious, several hundred meters long and wide, and dozens of meters high.

It wasn't pitch black inside; there were numerous luminous plants growing on the ground, rock walls, and the top of the cave. The azure light illuminated the entire cave as if it were daylight, giving it a touch of mystery.

The ground seemed to have been deliberately maintained, appearing quite flat and orderly. He could even play football on it without any problem.

In the center was a large stone platform, which seemed to be where the giant dragon slept.

In the soil around the stone platform, faint traces could be seen. In one corner, there was a pile of skeletons as tall as a mountain, presumably creatures that the giant dragon had captured for its meal.

For some unknown reason, it was quite cold outside the cave several hundred meters up, but inside the cave, it was warm like spring, as if there was a constantly burning hearth.

Ji Chen didn't think much about it; he just marveled at how the giant dragon found such a lair.

Looking at the bare cave, a hint of disappointment flashed in his eyes.

He saw that before leaving this place, the giant dragon had already moved most of its treasures.

Only some leftovers were buried in the soil.

But it was slightly better than nothing. Perhaps that dragon overlooked something good and left it behind?

"Half of the Naga warriors will guard the entrance of the cave to prevent any targets from approaching. The rest will spread out and search for anything valuable."

Upon hearing this, the Naga warrior who was pointed at by Ji Chen immediately turned and left, returning to the entrance to be on guard.



The others scattered and began searching in various places.

With bone blades, tridents, and other tools in their hands, they pried up the surface soil, swept away the luminescent plants, and looked for anything buried underneath.

The cave immediately turned into a construction site, with pits and holes everywhere from the digging.

With each dig, they did manage to find quite a few things.

Scattered gold and silver coins, human bones chewed to pieces, broken weapons, and armor...

It seemed that there had been many dragon slayers who were crushed by the giant dragon.

"Sir, I found a dragon scale!" Anina, who had joined the excavation army with great interest, suddenly picked up a palm-sized scale and excitedly exclaimed.

Ji Chen quickly walked over and took it from her.

He examined it closely in his hand.

[Shed Dragon Scale]

[Level]: 3-star treasure

[Usage]: Can be used as a material for forging weapons and armor

The sight of the shed dragon scale left Ji Chen in awe. Even a single scale was considered a 3-star treasure, confirming the rumors that the giant dragon's entire body was a treasure trove.

One after another, the army also discovered many things.

A small number of dragon scales, muddy Dragonblood mixed with soil, dragon feces, but no treasures like dragon claws or Dragonblood crystals were found.

This made him sigh again.

The place had been completely stripped clean; not a single intact item was left behind.

An hour later.

Looking at the scattered bones, broken weapons and armor, and piles of enormous excrement, but only a few dozen dragon scales and a hundred or so gold and silver coins as the harvest, Ji Chen completely lost patience.

He ordered the pure water sea pixies to shoot water arrows into the ground.

The forcefully shot water arrows deeply penetrated the ground and exploded, sending the soft soil flying into the air, accompanied by falling excrement and bone fragments.

With such a violent excavation method, the nearby soil was quickly plowed, reducing the height by half a meter.

Another round of water arrows exploded.

But this time, something intact was blown out.

A piece of a door panel, no, a giant sword resembling a door panel.

The giant sword had suffered damage, with two-thirds of its blade shattered and the tip nowhere to be found.

He ordered the bombardment to stop, walked over, and tried to pick up the giant sword.

However, the weight of the sword far exceeded his imagination, as if he were trying to move a boulder—it didn't budge..

#### *Chapter 134: Dragon Nest, Volcano (2)*

Ji Chen's excitement surged as he used his mana to enhance his arm's strength. He managed to lift the giant sword from the soil with great effort and plunged it into the ground.

The sword hilt took the form of a cross, with a captivating ruby embedded in its center. Though the blade was shattered, its surface bore an intricate depiction of a majestic double-winged dragon. Even partially buried in the soil, the blade retained its sharpness and awe-inspiring presence, effortlessly capable of slicing through anything in its path.

Although Ji Chen wasn't knowledgeable about swords, he could sense that this was a rare and extraordinary divine weapon.

His curiosity was piqued, and he checked its information panel.

[Dragon Slayer Great Sword (Broken State)]

[ Level ]: 5-star treasure (Single)

[Effects]: ? Increases damage against dragon creatures by 50% @ The stronger the user, the more powerful the striking force @ The user will attract the hostility of dragon creatures more easily

[The Sword of Dragon Slayer Warrior Leonis Kuka, who was killed during a dragon hunt. The sword was broken during the battle.]

A 5-star treasure, the Dragon Slayer Sword... No, he had obtained the Dragon Slayer Great Sword!

This was merely its current state in its damaged condition. One could only imagine the potential increase in its Level once fully restored, potentially reaching the tier of a 6-star or even a 7-star treasure.

Such a heavy sword, not many people would be able to wield it properly.

Anina's eyes were already gleaming, and she eagerly asked, "My Lord, can I have this great sword?"

Her previous sword had been damaged in battle, and she was now in need of a suitable new weapon.

Ji Chen smiled and stepped aside, giving her the opportunity.

Seeing this, Anina hurriedly approached, lifted the great sword with one hand, and swung it casually, smashing the pile of bones aside with a clattering sound.

She looked just like a child who had found a well-suited wooden stick to play with, even though the stick was longer than her height.

As Anina sent the bones flying, Ji Chen interrupted her.

Anina stopped and looked around at the mess she had made, feeling a little embarrassed as she rubbed her head.

After a brief search, they found the broken tip of the Dragon Slayer Great Sword buried in the nearby soil.

Now, all they needed to find was a skilled blacksmith who could repair the sword and unleash its full power.

With this discovery, Ji Chen's spirits were lifted, and he ordered them to continue digging.

This time it was the Dragon Slayer Great Sword, and perhaps the next item would be something like the Heaven-defying Divine Blade.

The cave once again buzzed with excitement as they continued their excavation.

After more than ten minutes...

Thud—!

A Naga warrior inserted their bone blade into the soil, producing a metallic clash.

Ji Chen's eyes lit up instantly.

They had likely uncovered something.

He immediately instructed a few Naga warriors to work together and excavate the soil.

Soon, a gleaming object came into view.

Ji Chen crouched down, pinched the cylindrical object, about the thickness of a middle finger, and held it in his palm. He then brushed away the dirt that clung to its surface.

It was a key, and its material was unknown.

However, it emitted a peculiar radiance that seemed oddly familiar.

After observing it for a while, he suddenly realized its nature.

The radiant appearance was reminiscent of the treasure chests he had seen before.

Ji Chen's mind raced as he checked its information panel.

[Four-star Treasure Chest Key]

[ Level ]: 4-star treasure (Special)

[Effects]: Can open locked chests with a level of up to four stars

[Gift from the Goddess of Luck]

A chest key!

Ji Chen was ecstatic.

Because beneath the rainforest on the main island, under the water-filled well, there was a locked four-star treasure chest!

Only with this key could it be opened!

He hadn't expected to stumble upon it here a delightful surprise indeed!

Happily stowing the key in his backpack, he decided that after exploring the Dragon's Lair, he would immediately go to the well and unlock the chest.

A four-star treasure chest would yield treasures comparable in value to four-star items, at the very least.

If luck was on his side, he might even obtain legendary items like legendary weapons.

When it came to relying on luck, Ji Chen was not one to shy away.

By now, the two treasures—the Dragon Slayer Great Sword and the Four-star Treasure Chest Key—had thoroughly exhilarated him.

He had made up his mind not to leave the place until he had thoroughly excavated every inch of it, even if it meant digging until nightfall.

From morning until evening...

The third treasure was finally unearthed.

It was a two to three-meter-long irregular yellow object.

Its texture was somewhat rough to the touch and emitted a strong, pungent smell.

[Sulfur]

[Level]: Level 3 resource

It was actually sulfur!?

Ji Chen was astonished.

Sulfur, like mithril and fine gold, belonged to the level 3 resource category and was highly valuable in its own right.

This large piece of sulfur was worth at least forty units.

However, what puzzled him was why this place had sulfur as a resource.

Could it be that the giant dragon had brought it back from somewhere?

But sulfur had an unattractive appearance and a strong odor. It probably wouldn't have piqued the giant dragon's interest, would it?

As he pondered, another report came from the other side of the excavation team.

"My Lord, it seems we have unearthed diamonds."

Ji Chen went over and indeed saw a transparent diamond in the soil, the size of a fist.

If it were on Earth, it would be worth several billion yuan.

Unfortunately, in this world, diamonds were considered low-level resources, their value similar to that of copper.

What really caught his attention was why diamonds were being found here.

Suddenly, Ji Chen's mind stirred.

He remembered that diamonds were usually found in volcanic areas. So, if they appeared here, did that mean... this place was a volcano?

If that explanation held, it would also explain the presence of sulfur!

Volcanoes were rich in minerals like sulfur and diamonds.

Everything fell into place.

The warmth inside the cave and the abundance of mineral resources underneath the mountain could be attributed to the volcanic activity. The cave was situated above a volcanic vent.

During a volcanic eruption, magma carried minerals and surged up the mountain, or perhaps this entire mountain, or even the entire northeastern region and the entire island, was formed by volcanic activity.

This also explained the multitude of mineral resource points below this mountain range.

Everything originated from that powerful volcanic eruption.

With these thoughts, Ji Chen suddenly lost his enthusiasm for the minerals before him.

Although the geology of the New Moon Islands seemed stable, the fact that his territory was near a volcano made him uneasy.

Who knew when the volcano might erupt again?

He could escape, but his territory couldn't.

Lost in his thoughts, the ground beneath his feet began to tremble slightly.

Some dust fell from the cave ceiling.

It seemed like an earthquake.

Ji Chen's face immediately turned pale.

Seriously? Was it really happening now?

Without further thought, he immediately led his troops to run out of the cave, sprinting towards the path down the mountain.

But before they could take a single step down, the trembling abruptly stopped, as if it had never occurred.

Everyone looked bewildered.

"My Lord, what should we do now?" Alice asked softly.

Ji Chen contemplated for a moment before deciding to stay on the mountaintop and return in the morning when it was daylight.

It was already late in the day.

Climbing up the mountain had already been quite challenging, and descending in the pitch-black darkness would undoubtedly lead to a fatal fall before the volcano even erupted.

Thus, they returned to the cave and set up camp.

The cave provided warmth, and shelter from the rain. Moreover, Ji Chen had packed enough food in his backpack. There was also freshwater in the nearby lake.

Therefore, there was no need to worry about suffering from hunger or cold..

### *Chapter 135: Collapse: Raymond's Thoughts (1)*

They safely spent the night in the cave.

The next morning, they immediately started descending the winding mountain path.

As they stepped into their territory, Ji Chen saw Wilus anxiously pacing around the square.

He paused for a moment and walked over.

Upon seeing Ji Chen return, Wilus's face brightened, and he hurriedly approached, bowing in greeting.

"My Lord, you're finally back! You had me worried."

"Why do you look so anxious?" Ji Chen asked.

"There was a tremor throughout the entire island last night. Didn't you feel it on the mountain?" Wilus replied, his face filled with concern.

Jichen couldn't help but be taken aback.

Wasn't the tremor last night only limited to the mountain? The entire island shook?

If that were the case, it was no ordinary matter. Could there be some geological problem?

Seeing the expression on Wilus's face, he realized that the situation was not simple.

"What happened?" he inquired.

"The troops stationed in the underground cavern reported that a passage collapsed, blocking two mineral resource points," Wilus explained.

Jichen furrowed his brow. "Were there any casualties?"

"We haven't calculated it yet, but it seems that many Kobolds were trapped inside.

The troops currently stationed there are currently mobilizing manpower to clear the blocked passage, but progress is slow..." Wilus explained in detail.

Upon hearing that only Kobolds were trapped, Ji Chen breathed a sigh of relief.

Could Kobolds even be considered sentient beings... Oops, he unintentionally revealed his biased perspective.

Jichen nodded to Wilus. "Don't worry, I'll go and see what's going on right away."

With that, he hurriedly led his troops towards the underground cavern.

In the mining hall of the cavern, there was a significant gathering of Kobolds and stationed Murloc Rangers.

When they saw Ji Chen arrive, it was as if they had found their backbone.

Especially the Kobolds, each of them barked excitedly.

“The Lord has come! Our comrades will be saved!”

Ji Chen stood in front of them, delivering a motivating speech as usual, further increasing their loyalty.

He then instructed a few Kobolds to lead him to the collapsed passage.

This passage was located in a deeper part of the underground cavern and led to two iron ore mines.

However, it had been completely blocked by falling rocks.

The Kobolds made attempts to dig through, but it appeared that there was a layer of fragmented rock above them. No matter how much they dug out from below, an equivalent amount would fall from above.

After a whole night of digging, they had only managed to clear a distance of about a dozen meters.

With the passage so tightly sealed, aside from the question of whether the inside had completely collapsed, there was also the issue of air supply.

Ji Chen pondered for a moment before returning to the mining hall to gather all the Kobolds. He counted their numbers and found that about twenty Kobolds were missing. They were most likely trapped inside.

According to the information on the Lord’s panel, these Kobolds were not yet dead, but if they were not dug out in time, once the remaining air inside was exhausted, it would be a death sentence.

Twenty-something Kobolds was not a small number. It was worth searching for them.

He immediately ordered the other Kobolds to continue clearing the blocked rocks while reinforcing the passage to prevent a second collapse.

Luckily, the collapse in this passage was not extensive. The Kobolds were diligently excavating the tunnel, ensuring to place wooden supports at regular intervals to reinforce the walls and ceiling.

This time, the tremor resulted in a collapse spanning approximately one hundred meters.

By the afternoon, with the final large rock broken down and the smaller stones removed, the blocked section was finally cleared.

However, they didn’t see any Kobolds trapped inside, and the situation became even more unusual.

Ji Chen led his troops to continue further into the passage.

As they proceeded, they continued to find no sign of the Kobolds along the path. However, the presence of Kobold footprints on the ground indicated that the trapped Kobolds had indeed been there at some point. It remained a mystery as to why they had retreated and left the area.

They soon arrived at a fork in the road, with two separate paths leading to different iron ore mines.

To increase search efficiency, Ji Chen ordered Anina and a portion of the troops to search the right side while he himself led the rest to explore the left side.

Passing through a winding, intestine-like passage, they quickly arrived at an underground cave spanning several thousand square meters.

The cave's walls were embedded with chunks of reddish ore, with piles of iron ore nearby and scattered tools all around.

However, they didn't see any Kobolds, indicating that they weren't there.

Jichen wasn't disappointed; after all, there were only two resource points here. If they weren't on this side, they must be on the other side.

Returning to the fork in the road, they entered the left path.

Through the winding, intestine-like path, they soon arrived at the other iron ore mine.

In a secluded corner, Anina and her group had assembled, engrossed in a task.

"What are you doing?" Ji Chen asked.

Upon hearing his voice, Anina turned her head and exclaimed, "My Lord, there's a hole here!"

Ji Chen was taken aback. A hole?

The soldiers surrounding the hole made way for Ji Chen.

This so-called hole was about a meter in width and length. It was dark and deep, making it impossible to see the bottom.

"We didn't see any Kobolds, only this hole," Anina explained from the side.

"I didn't find any Kobolds on my side either," Ji Chen replied.

Anina was taken aback. "Then where did they go? Could it be that they entered this hole?"

"It's not impossible..." Jichen pondered for a moment, then ordered the troops to call a few Kobolds over.

"Has this hole always been here?"

*Chapter 136: Collapse: Raymond's Thoughts (2)*

The Kobolds looked at each other, slightly puzzled, and one of them said, "There wasn't a hole here before."

If it didn't exist before, perhaps it was formed during last night's earthquake.

The trapped Kobolds, realizing that their path back was obstructed, stumbled upon this cave by chance and decided to venture inside for exploration.

Yes, this reasoning seemed reasonable.

Looking at the map, the cave extended downward, likely leading to a deeper underground area.

Without wasting any time, Ji Chen ordered one Kobold to go down and investigate.



The Kobold didn't hesitate and readily agreed to serve the Lord. It considered it the greatest honor, even if it meant risking its life!

In terms of fanaticism and loyalty, these Koboids were already on par with recruited soldiers.

A safety rope was tied around the Kobold's waist to ensure that it could be pulled out in case of danger.

Since Koboids had excellent night vision, they didn't need any lighting tools such as torches.

After securing the rope, the Kobold turned its body around, head facing down, and began to crawl down the cave, using both hands and feet, descending meter by meter.

Intermittently, some information was relayed.

"It's very dark here, with a steep slope, and dust and rubble are falling from the top. It could collapse at any moment..."

"I found the footprints of those Koboids and a broken rope... Ah! Pull me up quickly!"

As soon as the words fell, the safety rope suddenly tightened, and the cave echoed with the screams of the exploring Kobold.

Seeing this, Ji Chen quickly ordered the Kobold to be pulled up.

The Kobold, with a frightened look on its face and numerous scratches on its body, said, "At the end of the cave, there's a vertical pit!"

"Did you see any Koboids down there?"

The Kobold shook its head, "No, the height is at least several tens of meters, and I couldn't see the bottom clearly."

Ji Chen paused for a moment, and in his mind, he had already pronounced the verdict for those Koboids.

With its towering height of several tens of meters, even robust Naga warriors would sustain severe injuries if they were to fall. Considering the physical vulnerability of the Koboids, the outcome would be even graver, leaving them highly susceptible to grave injuries or worse.

Now he had to make a choice.

Should he continue the exploration and search for the missing Koboids?

Or should he abandon it and seal off the cave?

The cave originally didn't exist here and only appeared coincidentally due to last night's earthquake. The exact situation inside was still unknown.

Moreover, according to the Kobold's description, the structure inside was highly unstable, posing a risk of collapse at any moment.

If they ventured in, there was a chance that the passage would collapse behind them, trapping them inside.

While Ji Chen could freely roam in the ocean, in caves filled with rocks and soil, he was no different from an ordinary person.

After some consideration...

Ji Chen believed that since he was blessed with a lot of privileges, he could be protected from any challenges and obligations ahead.

Ji Chen decided to send a team of Koboids for exploration and let them enter on their own.

Ultimately, even if he lost some Koboids, he wouldn't be particularly heartbroken.

Within the depths of his heart, the significance of carrying on with the search had dwindled significantly. The balance had now tipped completely.

The value of these missing Koboids couldn't justify his personal involvement and extensive efforts to find them.

It was cruel, but it was also realistic.

This was a basic quality of being a Lord.

He had to weigh and assess the value of various things and make decisions and take action based on that.

Only then could he better develop his territory and establish a stronger foothold for himself and the Crown of the Ocean in this world.

Leaving some Murloc Rangers to guard the cave, Ji Chen left the underground cave with most of the army and returned to the territory.

He instructed Wilus to send people to the mountaintop to mine sulfur, diamonds, and other minerals.

These minerals would provide enough resources to introduce several additional exportable goods for the Crown of the Ocean.

Then he called Raymond, who had been idle.

This chubby man quickly arrived at the Lord's Manor and respectfully waited in front of Ji Chen.

"Do you have any business with me, my Lord?" Raymond asked nervously.

Ji Chen casually sat on a chair, his face amiable, and waved his hand, "Don't be nervous, please have a seat."

Raymond nodded and carefully sat on the opposite side of the table, only putting a third of his buttocks on the chair.

For someone who had entered the territory only a few days ago without accomplishing anything, even eating required caution and carefulness.

"I plan to send you to set sail in the next two days, heading to the mainland to sell goods and purchase resources needed for the territory."

Upon hearing this, Raymond's expression trembled, and he felt delighted.

Finally, he would be of use! He had been waiting for this opportunity for a long time!

“Thank you, my Lord, for giving me this chance. I will do my utmost to sell the goods at the highest price and buy the resources at the lowest cost!”

Seeing his enthusiastic appearance, Ji Chen smiled, “Let me ask you, where do you intend to sell the specialty products of the territory, and how do you plan to sell them?”

Raymond had already thought about these questions and started to talk confidently.

“In my opinion, it would be prudent for the Crown of the Ocean to temporarily steer clear of the Western Continent due to the predominant presence of the Hanseatic Chamber of Commerce in that area. Their extensive commercial networks in the region could impede our efforts to establish trade routes and promote the sale of our unique products.

Hence, I propose that we prioritize our focus on the Northern Continent. By establishing a trade route connecting the New Moon Islands with the Northern Continent, we can engage in profitable trade activities and lay a solid foundation for our ventures!”

Upon hearing this, Ji Chen’s interest grew. He had considered avoiding the Western Continent where the Hanseatic Chamber of Commerce was located, but he hadn’t thought about selling the specialty products to the Northern Continent.

“Why do you think we should sell to the Northern Continent?”

Raymond, seeing Ji Chen’s evident interest, became even more enthusiastic.

“This depends on the type of specialty products and the local culture and environment! The Northern Continent is located in the north and is covered with numerous trees, which has fostered the traditional preference for timber. Many noble families in the Northern Continent like high-quality wood, using it to manufacture various wooden furniture and decorations and as the primary material for building houses. In this regard, it is similar to the Western Continent, but currently, the Western Continent is not suitable. Therefore, the Northern Continent is the obvious choice. The Crown of the Ocean produces precious jungle wood of superior quality, which perfectly matches the market demand in the Northern Continent.”

Ji Chen nodded in agreement.

“In addition to the precious jungle wood, the Golden Sea Bass and premium coffee beans are also excellent specialty products. The nobles in the Northern Continent would be willing to pay a high price for them, and I can guarantee that!”

Raymond continued, oozing confidence.

Ji Chen looked at his confident appearance and asked with a smile, “I don’t doubt the premium coffee beans, but why do you think the Golden Sea Bass will sell well? After all, it’s just a second-tier specialty product, with nothing particularly remarkable except for being slightly delicious.”

This former member of the Hanseatic Chamber of Commerce immediately revealed a mischievous smile.

“My Lord, you’re mistaken. Even if we put the Golden Sea Bass in the Central Ocean, which is rich in fish, its taste and meat quality would still be considered excellent.

If it were merely delicious, I really wouldn’t have much confidence in selling it. But I can’t resist its exceptional appearance!

With its golden scales, we can package it a bit, create some hype, and do some pre-emptive advertising. For example, claiming that it possesses traces of golden dragon blood within its body or that it can only be found in forbidden waters, making it an extremely rare fish with limited supply.

This way, we can attract, ahem, convince more people to buy it. With my years of experience and skilled operations, I can ensure that the Golden Sea Bass sells at the highest price!”

Raymond patted his plump chest, exuding confidence.

Look, that’s what expertise means!

People shouldn’t be judged solely by appearance. Recruiting this chubby man was indeed the right choice.

Fundamentally, his statements revolved around the notion of artificially enhancing the product’s perceived value by various means.

Originally, the Golden Sea Bass was just a relatively tasty fish, but through reasonable operations and publicity, its value could be enhanced, selling at a price far exceeding its intrinsic value.

Diamonds on Earth were an excellent example of this.

In essence, diamonds were just carbon molecules, but with their beautiful appearance and catchy slogans like “A diamond is forever”, they became one of the most famous luxury goods.

Although some people might scoff at it, there would certainly be those who believed it.

And those who believed would become customers, or rather, faithful customers..

*Chapter 137: Giant Octopus, Hero Insignia (1)*

After listening to Raymond’s words, Ji Chen’s confidence in Raymond greatly increased.

He immediately said enthusiastically, “Then I will entrust you with the operation and sale of these three special products from the territory. For every unit sold; you will receive a 5% reward based on its selling price!”

Upon hearing this, Raymond’s face lit up with joy, and his inner self trembled.

At first, he thought he would be working for nothing, gradually gaining Ji Chen’s trust, and then finding an opportunity to seek revenge against the Hanseatic Chamber of Commerce.

Although he was mentally prepared, the thought of doing work without receiving any money dampened his spirits.

After all, he was a businessman! What's the point of being a businessman if he doesn't make money!?

Earning money through transactions had become ingrained in his nature.

When he heard Ji Chen not only offering money but also a commission of up to 5%, he was instantly filled with motivation.

He didn't expect Lord Ji Chen to be so generous.

These three special products would definitely have a good market, and he had confidence in their sales.

Moreover, he didn't have to spend time searching for goods, purchasing merchandise, hiring guards, and dealing with the hassle of merchant ships. He only needed to transport the goods and sell them at the highest possible price.

It could be said that this was like giving him money!

Ji Chen looked at Raymond, who was filled with excitement, and teased him, "If you don't want to do it, I'll have to find someone else."

"No, no, I am very willing. Please, Lord Ji Chen, give me this opportunity! I swear I will earn the most money for you!" Raymond replied eagerly.

Upon hearing this, Raymond became anxious, and the layers of fat on his face trembled.

Who wouldn't want such a good opportunity? Anyone who refused would be a complete fool!

If he gave up this chance, he would regret it for the rest of his life!

Ji Chen laughed heartily. "Alright, I was just teasing you." <sup>1</sup>

"In addition to selling these three special products, I will also return the White Sands Princess to you and provide another two-masted merchant ship and two three-masted warships to form a long-distance fleet. I will also assign a military force to accompany the ships to ensure your safety. Now, you won't have to worry about being chased or running away in a sorry state, right?"

Raymond scratched his head sheepishly, knowing that Ji Chen was teasing him about being chased by the Black Skeleton Pirates and fleeing to the New Moon Islands.

He was also emotional.

If he hadn't entered the Stormy Sea and landed on the New Moon Islands, he might have died under the pirates' blades a long time ago, and he wouldn't have met Ji Chen.

In that case, there would have been no subsequent kidnapping by Gassani or his current allegiance.

Everything seemed like a series of coincidences that led him to a different path in life.

"Of course not, please rest assured, My Lord," Raymond replied, feeling grateful.

Ji Chen nodded and didn't say much more, "You can set off in a couple of days. The territory is in urgent need of various resources."

“Yes!”

Watching Raymond's chubby figure leave the Lord's Manor, Ji Chen pondered with a contemplative look in his eyes.

Raymond was different from others who chose to pledge loyalty to him. Many of them had no other options and nothing left, coupled with the desire for revenge, which led them to work under him.

As a merchant, Raymond naturally valued his interests the most. Absolute loyalty wasn't necessarily guaranteed, especially since the Lord System didn't display loyalty levels. It all depended on the Lord's judgment.

However, there was something Ji Chen could be confident about.

In order to motivate Raymond to work more efficiently, he understood the importance of offering incentives, just as a horse needs grass to run. By promising him specific benefits, he could forge a stronger bond and commitment to his cause.

But he wasn't so careless as to completely trust Raymond to act alone.

The military force assigned to protect him was actually an insurance policy. If Raymond played any tricks, did something dishonest, or even rebelled, they would swiftly change from protectors to executioners.

After dealing with the matter concerning Raymond, Ji Chen led a group of soldiers and set off for the building complex in the forest.

Today, he planned to open the treasure chest beneath the courtyard, so he wouldn't have it on his mind all the time.

Since the last time he cleared out the gorillas in the building complex, many roaming monsters had taken up residence there.

After the soldiers fought and cleared out all these monsters, they arrived at the edge of the courtyard.

Looking at the slightly murky well water, Ji Chen didn't hesitate and jumped right in.

At the moment his body touched the water, an invisible membrane appeared, keeping the water at bay.

His feet propelled him like a propeller, and in an instant, he reached the bottom of the well.

Compared to last time, he was much calmer and unconcerned about oxygen and visibility issues.

With a quick search, he found his target.

The four-star treasure chest was just like the one he had seen before, lying quietly in a corner.

However, this time was different. He had come prepared.

With the key in hand, could he still not open this treasure chest?

He took out the chest key and inserted it into the lock, twisting it forcefully. The lid of the chest clicked open.

A certain rule's power came into play, keeping the water out of the box. Inside, there were two items.

One was a recruitment core for a unit, and the other was...

Another recruitment core? Ji Chen muttered to himself.

At this point, he wasn't particularly short on units anymore, especially since the Murloc had advanced to a four-star, three-tier Dragon Blood Murloc, whose combat power was more than enough.

Besides the Dragon Blood Murloc as a melee and ranged damage dealer, he had Naga warriors as ranks and vanguard, Pure Water Sea Pixies as spellcasters, Deep Sea Roamers for transportation, Tidal Sea Spirits for possession, and a bunch of pirates, Murloc Rangers, and Kobolds..

*Chapter 138: Giant Octopus, Hero Insignia (2)*

After counting and calculating, there were a total of eight different military units.

If it wasn't for filling out the formation or recruiting advanced units, Ji Chen didn't plan on wasting resources.

The recruitment core contained a small and delicate octopus with a dart-shaped head and long tentacles with suction cups.

It looked more like food than a soldier.

Ji Chen secretly mocked and then checked its unit panel.

[Giant Octopus]

[Race]: Octopus

[Tier]: Tier 4, 8 stars

[Skills]: Entangle (Purple skill, powerful tentacles capable of coiling and grabbing heavy objects and enemies)

Toothed Suction Cups (Purple skill, suction cups with sharp teeth capable of anchoring and biting enemies)

Ink Spray (Purple skill, able to spray poisonous ink to obscure vision and poison enemies)

Swift (Purple skill, increases speed by 200% while swimming in the ocean)

[Unit Characteristics]: Binding (Due to its living habits, it prioritizes using entanglement to kill enemies in battle)

[This is the ancestor of binding play!]

Okay, Ji Chen admitted that he regret looking down on this unit.

With an impressive Tier 4 and 8-star rating, coupled with four radiant purple skills, it was almost overwhelming to behold.

What does it mean to be an advanced unit? This is the answer!

Judging from the tier and the name, this giant octopus in the recruitment core probably wasn't as small and delicate as it seemed, and its size was likely not small either.

It might be as huge as the great king octopus that existed on Earth, with a massive body reaching up to twenty meters.

Undoubtedly, the giant octopus was a purely oceanic unit, restricted to activities in the sea.

This also seemed to indicate that with the discovery of the final location in the New Moon Islands, the focus of operations would shift to the ocean.

Just imagine the fleet of the Crown of the Ocean sailing on the sea.

In addition to the troops on board the ships, there were also giant octopuses lurking beneath the surface, ready to extend their terrifying tentacles and drag enemies into the sea at any time.

Ji Chen looked at the resources required for recruitment.

[Giant Octopus]

[Tier]: Tier 4, 8 stars

[Recrutable Unit Type]: Giant Octopus (Tier 4, 8 stars)

[Weekly Recruitment Limit]: 5

[Current Recruitment Count]: 5

[Recruitment Cost]: 700 crystal units

The higher the tier of the unit, the less basic resources like wood and fiber seemed to be needed for recruitment.

Both the Tidal Sea Spirit and the Deep Sea Roamer, as well as the current Giant Octopus, required crystals for recruitment.

Ji Chen opened the territory panel and checked how many crystals were left.

He had spent quite a few crystals on repairing the lighthouse, summoning heroes, and recruiting units, but there were still about 35,000 crystal units left, which was quite sufficient. Recruiting these five giant octopuses was no problem.

After putting away the recruitment core, he looked at something else in the treasure chest.

A shining golden badge.

[Hero Insignia]

[Level]: Special

[Effect]: Can transform an ordinary citizen into a hero. The tier and potential of the transformed hero depend on the qualifications and resources invested by the person initiating the transformation.

Wow, what a great item!

Holding the hero insignia in his hand, Ji Chen thought about which person in the territory was qualified to be transformed into a hero.

Raymond?



No, he had just joined the Crown of the Ocean, and his contributions were not yet established, plus there was still some uncertainty about his loyalty.

And as a businessman, it seemed unnecessary for him to become a hero.

A merchant hero? Can he negotiate even lower prices?

The cost-effectiveness of using him would be relatively low...

There were also many citizens in the Crown of the Ocean with life skills, such as blacksmiths, tailors, weavers, and shipbuilders.

If the hero insignia were used on them, it might create a hero with powerful life skills, greatly boosting the development of a certain aspect of the territory.

For example, a blacksmith who could repair the Dragon Slayer Great Sword after becoming a hero.

Or a shipbuilder who, after the completion of the shipyard, might be able to oversee shipbuilding and even develop more powerful ships.

But that didn't quite fit Ji Chen's idea. Instead of specializing, he preferred comprehensive development.

So the candidate was clear—Wilus was the best choice!

This middle-aged man was one of the earliest residents of the Crown of the Ocean and had been through thick and thin with it.

He had always been diligent and committed, without making any mistakes. He was full of merits.

And as the internal affairs officer managing the territory, he needed to experience growth to better manage the increasingly large territory in the future.

So it was perfectly reasonable to give him the hero insignia.

After examining the two items, Ji Chen returned to the ground and returned to the territory with his army.

He called over Wilus, who was busy coordinating and building resources for construction.

"My Lord, do you need something? The Cannon Manufacturing Plant and the Large Water Fort are still in the intense preparation phase..."

Ji Chen looked at the middle-aged man, who was covered in sweat and devoted to the construction of the territory, and smiled with satisfaction, "Sit down and take a rest, I have something to discuss with you."

Hesitant, Wilus sat down but didn't dare to pick up the water cup and drink.

After being persuaded several times, he took a cautious sip and put down the cup. Unable to contain his curiosity, he asked, "My Lord, what is it? Did I make a mistake?"

"You didn't make any mistakes. You have always done well," Ji Chen shook his head and directly took out the hero insignia, placing it on the table.

"Now I have an opportunity for you to become a hero. I wonder if you're willing."

Upon hearing this, Wilus looked at the insignia emitting a strange power on the table, and his excitement surged. He couldn't believe it and asked, "Can I... become a hero?"

As the internal affairs officer of the Crown of the Ocean, he naturally knew what the term "hero" represented.

Power was its synonym.

This power could be in terms of combat strength or various abilities.

Either way, it would instantly make him one of the few at the top of the pyramid in this world.

But at this moment, Wilus hesitated and shook his head after a moment of contemplation.

Ji Chen's brow furrowed. Was there someone who didn't want to become a hero?

"Why don't you want to?" Ji Chen stood up, and with a slightly serious expression, he interrupted him, "If I give it to someone else, it would be unfair to you. Furthermore, giving it to you is not a waste. As the internal affairs officer of the Crown of the Ocean, you are an indispensable part. Your current abilities and energy are sufficient for management. But what will you do when the territory becomes more powerful in the future and affairs become busier and more difficult? Are you willing to give up your position as the internal affairs officer?"

"But..." Wilus wanted to say something.

"Enough, this is my order," Ji Chen's expression turned slightly stern as he said.

"...Yes." Wilus could only nod in agreement.

Seeing this, Ji Chen's expression eased slightly. He clenched the hero insignia on the table and designated Wilus as the recipient.

A process of evolution was about to begin..

*Chapter 139: Wilus, Glorious Excess (1)*

"Target selected: Wilus."

"Analyzing qualifications... Target can evolve into a white common-grade hero and undergo further enhancement with additional resources."

Ji Chen's expression remained unsurprised.

Considering qualifications alone without any additional resources, evolving into a white common-grade hero was within his expectations. After all, Wilus was originally just a steward from a minor noble family, and his abilities had their limits.

The Hero Insignia could increase the user's limit by investing resources, similar to the Military Talent Tree. Both required resources, but Ji Chen wanted to determine which method would be more resource-efficient.

He decided to try the former first, investing basic resources like wood and fiber, which were not valuable, to see if it would yield any results.

He contemplated which resources to use. Apart from wood, he had secondary resources like copper and diamonds, tertiary resources like crystal and mithril, and even quaternary resources like sulfur.

Naturally, higher-level resources would be preferable.

After careful consideration, he chose to invest crystal since he had an abundant supply and felt confident about it.

He started by investing 500 units of crystal.

This time, it worked. The Hero Insignia emitted a faint glow and became warmer to the touch.

However, there was no response. Clearly, 500 units of crystal were not enough to elevate Wilus to a higher-level hero.

Ji Chen proceeded with further experiments.

By investing 2,500 units of crystal, the hero's rank could be raised to green elite grade.

The green elite grade was already on par with Sparrow's tier, but as an administrative-type hero, it fell short of satisfying Ji Chen's expectations.

He continued experimenting.

By investing 7,500 units of crystal, the hero's rank could be elevated to an blue exceptional grade.

The blue exceptional grade was equivalent to Benbo's rank. Players with heroes of this level were few and far between in other territories, as these heroes were considered top-tier.

After a round of experiments, Ji Chen obtained the desired data.

To upgrade from white common-grade to purple exceptional-grade, it would require a whopping 20,000 units of crystal, equivalent to at least 150,000 units of basic resources.

However, if he were to upgrade through the Military Talent Tree, it would only require a total of 30,000 units of resources.

The advantages and disadvantages of the two methods were evident.

Ji Chen couldn't help but marvel at the power of the Military Talent Tree.

Not only could it significantly increase the tier, but it also required far fewer resources compared to the Hero Insignia.

It seemed that the Hero Insignia could only be used to help Wilus transition from an ordinary person to a hero, serving as a temporary measure.

"Do you wish to consume the Hero Insignia and make the selected target a white common-grade hero?"

"Yes."

"Ding- Wilus has become a white common-grade hero."

With his new hero status, Wilus naturally became part of the Military Talent Tree, and the fifth page appeared.

Ji Chen wasted no time and immediately opened the Military Talent Tree to help Wilus advance.

One node after another was unlocked, propelling him from white common-grade to purple rare-grade.

A dazzling radiance enveloped Wilus.

After a while, an energy seemingly descending from the heavens itself, mysterious and majestic, like a waterfall cascading from a towering cliff, flowed directly into his head.

Vast power lingered in the surroundings.

The advancement lasted for half an hour.

When the light dissipated, Wilus' figure reappeared.

At first glance, there seemed to be no external changes, but his overall demeanor had transformed, exuding a sense of dignity.

His formerly slightly clouded eyes became clear, radiating a shrewd and spirited gleam.

Combined with his neatly fitted steward attire and meticulously groomed dark hair, he appeared to be a noble or wealthy merchant at first glance.

Ji Chen's interest grew, and he examined Wilus' attribute panel.

[Wilus (Hero)]

[Tier]: Purple rare-grade

[Skills]: Administration Management (Purple skill, possessing powerful administrative capabilities, more than sufficient even for managing a small principality)

Thrifty (Purple skill, adept at food management, reduces food consumption speed by 50% without affecting the territory's morale)

Coordination (Purple skill, able to coordinate territory development, reducing resources needed for construction by 20-30%)

Propaganda (Purple skill, increases loyalty of newly joined residents, reducing the decline in territory morale)

Wow, the luxury of his skills was on par with Anina and Alice. Each skill was tailor-made for administration and none of them were wasted.

Administration Management and Thrifty were already known, but they had evolved to a whole new level.

Coordination and Propaganda were both incredibly useful skills. One reduced construction costs, while the other mitigated the decline in morale when a large number of people joined the territory.

It had cost quite a bit of resources, depleting nearly everything he had accumulated during this period.

Although he felt a bit reluctant, Ji Chen believed it was worth it.

Compared to a purple rare-grade administrative hero, a few tens of thousands of resources were quite affordable. If others were to learn that they could obtain a purple rare-grade hero with just a few tens of thousands of resources, they would surely be envious.

Resources could be obtained, purchased, or plundered, but heroes were not easy to come by. Obtaining one relied on luck..

#### *Chapter 140: Wilus, Glorious Excess (2)*

Having successfully evolved into a hero, Wilus was naturally grateful to Ji Chen. He immediately swore absolute loyalty and devotion to him, vowing to give his all for his lord.

After a few encouraging words, Ji Chen let Wilus leave.

Through the partially open door, he noticed that the sky had already darkened.

He stood up and stretched lazily, remarking how quickly the day had passed. It seemed like just a blink of an eye.

Recalling the events of the past few days, a lot had happened. After returning from the sea, he immediately faced an attack from the Hanseatic Chamber of Commerce. After defeating them and subduing Raymond, he began exploring the Dragon's Nest on the mountain peak, only to be startled and quickly retreat...

One thing after another, but undoubtedly, the rewards obtained from these events were plentiful.

Compared to the day he returned from the sea, the Crown of the Ocean had become even more powerful.

All of this... couldn't have happened without his efforts as a lord!

As he pondered, he couldn't help but praise himself in a conceited manner.

Seeing that the sun was already setting, he contemplated whether to rest or continue managing the territory.

At that moment, six graceful and beautiful maidservants with large white breasts walked in, each holding delicate plates of food.

Seeing this, Ji Chen immediately dismissed the idea of inspecting the territory. After all, he had worked the whole day, so what's wrong with taking a break?

However, he realized that he hadn't instructed these maidservants before.

So he asked them, and the answer he received was:

"Lord Wilus sent us. He said that you were exhausted and hungry after a long day of work, so he asked us to serve you food and assist you with bathing." Upon hearing this, Ji Chen immediately gave a thumbs up to Wilus in his mind. Great! He truly deserved to be the chief administrative officer. He was indeed a loyal vassal! It seemed that the effect of advancing to a hero was immediate!

Since it was a gesture from his subordinates, he couldn't refuse. He reluctantly accepted, so as not to be seen as ungrateful.

With this in mind, Ji Chen smirked and waved at the maidservants.

The faces of these charming maidservants blushed with allure, and their eyes were sparkling as if they could drip water. Each of the six maidservants had their own charm—adorable, enchanting, pure, shy, bold, or even longing—as they looked at Ji Chen.

Several of them had arrived here through the Hanseatic Chamber of Commerce's ship and knew the importance of having a lord who could provide them with a stable life.

If they could attach themselves to the ruler of this territory, their future would be more secure...

That night, they spared no effort to please Ji Chen, allowing him to truly experience the indulgent life of a lord, which was ten times more stimulating than the attire of the blonde girl from before.

Fresh fruits and fine wines were brought to him whenever he opened his mouth. A mere gesture of his legs would summon soothing massages. Incomparable pleasures were readily at his fingertips, defying any adequate description.

It fully embodied the concept of an extravagant lifestyle.

The next day at noon, Ji Chen looked at the dark circles under his eyes in the mirror and felt uneasy.

He made up his mind and said firmly to himself, "I have been harmed by wine and lust, resulting in such haggardness. From this day forth, I shall quit drinking!"

As he stepped out of the lord's mansion, he saw Wilus approaching with a smile, bowing and greeting him.

"Lord, did you have a pleasant night? Those maidservants were carefully selected by me among the slaves. They perfectly match your aesthetic taste. Dealing with one would be enough for most people, but you managed to handle six. You truly are a great lord!" Wilus said, his face showing admiration.

Ji Chen was about to praise him, but he caught sight of Alice walking towards them. His expression instantly changed, and he scolded, "Do you know that I can barely get up today because of what happened last night? It's all your fault!"

Wilus was stunned by the sudden outburst of scolding.

But as a hero, his mind was now much sharper, and he quickly recovered, apologizing, "I'm sorry for my shortcomings. I failed to understand your intentions. I hope you can forgive my mistake."

Seeing this, Ji Chen's expression improved slightly, but he still wore a stern face. "I hope you reflect on this and don't disappoint me."

At this moment, Alice had also arrived and looked at him with a slightly aggrieved expression, remaining silent. She just stared at him.

Awkwardly, Ji Chen coughed a few times and gestured to Wilus with his eyes.

The moment their eyes met, they understood each other. Wilus quickly said, "Lord, I have something important to report, a matter of utmost urgency!" "An urgent matter? Then let's discuss it inside the lord's manor," Ji Chen said, closing the door after they entered.

Through the crack in the door, Ji Chen sighed in relief after seeing Alice leave.

How should I put it? He had a guilty feeling of being caught by the main concubine, as well as a... sense of excitement.

Turning to Wilus, he smiled and praised, "You did a great job. I'm very satisfied with those maidservants."

"As long as Lord is satisfied..." Wilus replied. "Actually, I have something to report."

"What is it?"

"Just now, the fishermen who went out to fish discovered traces that resemble the Sea Heir!"

"Why didn't you say it earlier?" Ji Chen's face changed. "Where were they discovered?"

"It was near the northeastern sub-island. According to the fishermen, there were only about twenty of them, like a reconnaissance team, wandering around the nearby sea area."

Ji Chen relaxed a little. It seemed that the Sea Heir hadn't discovered the location of the territory. It was probably because all the Sea Heirs that had come here for food had died, so they sent a reconnaissance team to investigate. Near the northeastern sub-island...?

After encountering the Sea Heirs last time, Ji Chen had already prepared himself for a battle against them.

But naturally, in a battle, one had to choose a favorable location.

He had already selected the location on the northeastern sub-island. Abundant remnants of city walls were present, offering the opportunity to establish a defensive system against the assaults of the Sea Heir.

As a result of its geographical position, the Crown of the Ocean was situated on a sea island, unlike other mainland players who had managed to establish certain fortifications. In contrast, the Crown of the Ocean remained entirely defenseless.

Once the battlefield expanded to the main island, it could potentially affect the safety of the territory if the Sea Heir's numbers were large enough, resulting in losses beyond his imagination.

So it was best to limit the battle to the northeastern sub-island.

"Lord, how should we deal with that Sea Heir reconnaissance team?" Wilus asked.

He had already learned about the tenacity of the Sea Heirs and their unlimited evolution, which was a nightmare for any living being.

Perhaps they could be defeated once, but who could guarantee what would happen after the second or third encounter? They might develop targeted abilities.

“Now, how much stone material does the territory have?” Ji Chen didn’t answer but asked instead.

Wilus was taken aback but answered truthfully, “During the time you were away at sea, we discovered several stone resource points in the underground storage. So far, we have accumulated quite a lot of stone material, about twenty thousand units.”

Twenty thousand units?

Although it was not enough, it was close.

During the battle against the skeleton army on the northeastern sub-island, Ji Chen noticed the remaining fortifications and the warning lighthouse. They could be repaired.

However, repairing such a large section required an astronomical amount of stone material that the Crown of the Ocean couldn’t currently afford.

If he repaired only a few sections, it would be within his capabilities.

As long as he could complete the repairs on those sections, even if a Sea Heir’s force several times their size arrived, Ji Chen had confidence in holding them off!

But for now, the priority was to quickly eliminate that Sea Heir reconnaissance team.

Otherwise, if they discovered the territory on the main island, their hive mind would instantly relay the information, and Ji Chen would no longer have control over the location of the battle..