

Ocean Lord 321

Chapter 321 - 321: Gilder, Business Negotiations

As they continued on their journey, taking various turns, they entered a less crowded road. However, the number of patrolling soldiers here had significantly increased, indicating the importance of security in this area.

The carriage came to a gradual stop in front of a spacious estate.

“Lord, this is an estate that the Maple Principality has officially allocated to the Crown of the Ocean as a token of gratitude for our contributions to the business in Maple Harbor. As long as the commercial activities continue, we can reside here permanently.

In addition, it comes with a batch of servants and a steward to attend to our needs.”

Ji Chen nodded, not particularly surprised.

Given the Crown of the Ocean’s substantial trade deals in the past, which brought in significant tax revenue for Maple Harbor, they couldn’t afford to be anything less than accommodating to such a benefactor.

After the carriage stopped for only a few seconds, the estate’s gate slowly opened with the sound of hurried footsteps from inside.

Behind the gate, two rows of maids stood on either side, led by a well-dressed middle-aged steward. They all bowed respectfully towards Ji Chen and his companions.

“Welcome back, Master.”

“Please remember, the owner of this estate is Lord Ji Chen.”

The steward looked at Ji Chen, who exuded an extraordinary presence and couldn’t help but be astonished.

As the appointed steward, he knew that this estate had been granted to a territory called the Crown of the Ocean. This territory had recently caused quite a stir in Maple Harbor, bringing in a significant quantity of weaponry and military equipment, amassing wealth from the northern conflicts, and even gaining favor from certain influential figures.

Yet, the lord of this territory was unexpectedly this young?

Though surprised, the steward’s impeccable manners allowed him to quickly react. He walked forward and bowed respectfully again.

“Welcome, my Lord. If there’s anything you need, please don’t hesitate to inform me. We are here to serve you wholeheartedly.”

Ji Chen nodded slightly, signaling for him to lead the way. In his every gesture and word, the aura of a superior and formidable individual naturally emanated.

With such an appearance, the steward was even more convinced that Lord Ji Chen was an extraordinary lord.

Especially with the breathtaking young lady accompanying him, more beautiful than any noblewoman or female aristocrat he had ever seen in the Maple Principality. It was as if she had been personally sculpted by the gods.

With such a stunning companion and an overall air of authority, Ji Chen was clearly no ordinary person.

No wonder the principality had allocated this valuable estate and entrusted him with their care.

Thinking up to this point, the steward's demeanor grew even more respectful.

While guiding them, he continued to introduce the estate.

"Master, this estate is quite extensive, with dozens of buildings serving various purposes, including a mansion, practice grounds, wine cellar, meeting hall, hot springs, and more. In addition, the principality provides fresh ingredients daily to ensure that it meets most of your daily dietary needs..."

Listening to the steward's explanations delivered with the utmost respect, Ji Chen occasionally nodded. Just based on this level of service, even the most discerning residents would find it difficult to complain.

Perhaps intentionally, in contrast to the well-dressed steward, the other maids were boldly attired in revealing maid outfits, tailored to accentuate their figures. Their low-cut tops and short skirts showcased their bodies exceptionally well, making their chests appear even whiter than seafoam.

It seemed that these maids had been assigned here not only for daily tasks but also to fulfill certain needs of the master if required.

In response, Ji Chen could only sigh silently about the changing times and the moral decay of society.

They entered a luxurious mansion at the center of the estate and took seats at a long table.

The steward smoothed his meticulously kept attire and asked with lowered head, "Master, would you like to dine? There's a batch of fresh seafood ingredients that arrived this morning in the estate. We can prepare an excellent seafood feast for you."

"No need," Ji Chen replied casually.

After days of long-distance travel, his appetite wasn't particularly robust, and he had grown tired of seafood. Besides, the Crown of the Ocean was located in the open sea, and seafood was abundant there, making it a mundane choice.

What he was more concerned about was how to find buyers for the Crown of the Ocean's goods and how to make successful sales.

In response, Raymond revealed a mysterious smile and said, "Lord, all we need to do is wait for a while..."

Before he could finish his sentence, a maid rushed into the room. As soon as she saw Ji Chen, her face immediately blushed.

No matter how you looked at it, she found this master extremely handsome, and his physique was robust. If she could gain the favor of such a master...

“What’s happening?”

Ji Chen’s magnetic voice pulled her out of her daydream, and she quickly explained, “A merchant lord named Gilder has come to visit.”

Upon hearing this, Ji Chen’s eyes revealed a hint of surprise. It seemed that Raymond, the chubby fellow, was indeed speaking the truth.

Raymond leaned in and whispered, “Lord, Gilder is a renowned and wealthy merchant in Maple Harbor. He has extensive resources and connections. Last time, he acquired nearly thirty percent of our weapons and military equipment.”

Thirty percent?

Ji Chen was slightly astonished. If he remembered correctly, the last fleet had consisted of forty ships, excluding the eight escort vessels. That meant there were thirty-two ships filled with weapons and military equipment.

A thirty percent share equated to consuming at least ten ships’ worth of goods, which amounted to over two hundred thousand items..

Chapter 322 - 322: Gilder, Business Discussion (2)

“It’s evident that this person’s wealth is quite substantial.”

Ji Chen, who was always welcoming to those offering money, gestured with a grand wave.

“Please, bring him in.”

“Yes!”

The man who entered was plump, with a face full of fat and a body considerably obese, especially his round belly, which shook with every step.

He was dressed in extravagant attire, and his short, chubby fingers, due to his obesity, were adorned with gemstone rings. A large gold chain hung around his equally short and stout neck, giving off the air of a super nouveau riche.

He entered with a retinue of servants.

Upon seeing Raymond, his face lit up. “Ray, my old friend, it’s been a while...”

But Gilder noticed Raymond desperately signaling to him and found it strange. It was only then that he realized Raymond was standing behind a young, handsome man, in a subordinate position.

His heart suddenly raced.

His mind quickly worked, and in the blink of an eye, he reacted.

He bent his body, arched his back, and his face turned extremely respectful.

“Your Excellency, you must be the illustrious Lord of the Ocean Crown, spoken of by Raymond so often. I have long admired you.

If I had known that you were coming to Maple Harbor in person this time, I would have prepared a grand banquet to welcome you!”

Gilder’s ability to change his expression, almost comparable to a Sichuan opera face-changing master, amazed everyone present.

They couldn’t help but marvel at the speed at which a businessman could change his demeanor.

Ji Chen calmly picked up his teacup, took a small sip, and gestured for the steward and maids to leave. Then he spoke slowly.

“I am indeed the Lord of the Ocean Crown, Ji Chen.”

“I wonder, Gilder, what brings you here on this occasion?”

Gilder’s face was filled with smiles.

“Of course, I have some important matters to discuss with Your Excellency Ji Chen. If my visit seems impolite, please forgive me...”

Ji Chen had no patience for such formalities and placed the teacup down.

“No need for such courtesy; please get straight to the point.”

Upon hearing this, Gilder was briefly taken aback. He seemed to understand that Ji Chen was a man of action and became serious.

“In that case, I’ll be straightforward. I’m very interested in the goods you’ve brought this time, Lord Ji Chen. Is there a possibility of cooperation?”

Hearing this, Ji Chen’s face showed a hint of interest. “Oh? Even someone of your stature, a prominent merchant, is interested in the Ocean’s Crown goods?” “Of course, the Ocean’s Crown is renowned for the exceptional quality of its weapon equipment. Its reputation has already spread throughout Maple City and even to the kingdoms and duchies further north.

The recent word is that the Ocean’s Crown’s weapon equipment rivals that of Dwarven forging!

Therefore, there are countless merchants who want to obtain such goods, and I am no exception.”

Rivals that of Dwarven forging?

Well, that statement might be a bit exaggerated.

Although Lizardmen forge high-quality weapon equipment, it’s highly likely that it can’t match the quality of Dwarven craftsmanship. After all, Dwarven-forged weapon equipment is renowned worldwide.

If Dwarves with already questionable temperaments heard such a statement, they might travel a thousand miles just to dispute it.

Ji Chen waved his hand and said, “That praise is a bit excessive.”

Gilder also chuckled. The statement was indeed somewhat overblown, but it wasn't entirely without merit.

In terms of quality, Dwarven weapon equipment might surpass that of the Ocean's Crown, but in terms of quantity and cost-effectiveness, it was a different story.

The number of weapon equipment forged and exported by Dwarves in a year couldn't compare to what the Ocean's Crown exported in half a month.

The price gap was even more significant. Despite a relatively small difference in quality, Dwarven-forged equipment was several times or even dozens of times more expensive. The price of a single Dwarven-forged weapon could buy dozens of Ocean's Crown products.

In terms of cost-effectiveness, Dwarven equipment was clearly outmatched.

Moreover, the market favored the Ocean's Crown. Ordinary soldiers didn't require top-tier equipment.

In this sense, as long as the purchase price wasn't too outrageous, obtaining these goods would allow Gilder to make substantial profits. It was like gold coins falling from the sky.

"So, are you interested in purchasing a batch of weapon equipment from me?"

Unexpectedly, Gilder nodded, then shook his head, with a flame of ambition flickering in his eyes.

"Lord Ji Chen, I want to establish a long-term partnership with the Ocean's Crown.

From now on, I hope to exclusively acquire at least thirty percent of the Ocean's Crown's production of weapon equipment for the Northern Continent."

Ji Chen's eyes slightly narrowed, and his interest grew even more.

This fellow has quite the ambition.

Considering the current efficiency and speed of the Ocean's Crown's transportation, they could make two round trips a month. Securing a thirty percent share would mean obtaining approximately three to four hundred thousand pieces of weapon equipment, with the involved amount reaching millions or even tens of millions of gold coins.

Once their transportation capacity increases in the future, this scale will become even larger.

"My Lord, not only is Gilder extremely wealthy, but it seems he also has ties to a high-ranking member of the Maple Principality. If we can establish a long-term partnership with him, our business here will receive protection and won't be coveted by certain envious individuals or forces..."

In addition, Gilder has broad connections and can easily find some things, such as a large quantity of rare resources. When I chose to cooperate with him, I also considered this."

Raymond lowered his voice and spoke in Ji Chen's ear.

Ji Chen squinted slightly. If that was the case, then there was indeed value in cooperating.

The resources and connections these natives possessed were unmatched by players at the moment. They often had a strong influence in certain areas.

Although he had some connections with Monica, the daughter of the Lienhardt Grand Duchy, and the elves, one could never have too many friends.

More friends meant more avenues for opportunities.

After a brief moment of consideration, Ji Chen made up his mind.

He smiled and said, "Lord Gilder, I believe the Ocean's Crown also has the intention of establishing a long-term partnership with you. After all, we don't want to go through the trouble of finding buyers every time we bring our goods. It wastes a lot of our energy and time.

If you have the time, we can have a meal together first and then sit down to discuss the share, pricing, and transportation matters."

Upon hearing this, Gilder's face lit up, and he eagerly replied, "I would be delighted. However, let's start the negotiations as soon as possible."

He seemed quite eager, and while Ji Chen found it a bit unusual, he agreed.

Next, although Ji Chen wasn't particularly skilled in trade and negotiations, with the assistance of the experienced Raymond, the initial discussions proceeded smoothly.

After the negotiations, Gilder secured forty percent of the Ocean's Crown's output of weapon equipment to the Northern Continent. Prices were determined based on the quality and type of weapons and were paid in various rare resources.

A whole shipload of weapon equipment would be exchanged for around 3,000 units of third-tier rare resources, such as crystals and mithril.

With the fleet Ji Chen brought this time, which included ten ships loaded with weapon equipment, they could acquire around 30,000 units of rare resources. While it wasn't enough to completely solve the resource issues in their territory, it would greatly alleviate the situation.

At the moment when the negotiations were completed, Gilder let out a heavy sigh of relief. He took out a fine handkerchief and wiped the sweat from his forehead.

Just then, there were footsteps outside, and someone knocked on the door.

"Come in."

The newcomer was the butler, and he entered with impeccable manners.

"Master, there are many businessmen outside the estate who wish to discuss cooperation regarding weapon equipment."

Upon hearing this, Ji Chen glanced at Gilder, whose expression had changed slightly. So, that's why he was so eager to negotiate. It all made sense now.

"Let them all in."

"Yes."

Soon, more than ten extravagantly dressed businessmen entered the hall. When they saw Gilder, who was still sitting there with a contented smile, their expressions changed instantly.

They couldn't believe it. Why had Gilder arrived so quickly?

Had they already finished the negotiations?

Goddammit, they had agreed to come together, but this guy had managed to slip away ahead of them!

In reply, Gilder shot them a scornful glance, implying, “You guys are way too late to the party, you won’t even have a chance to join the lucrative deals, let alone make any money..”

Chapter 323: The Black Iron Fortress: Secrets of the Past

Gilder cast a contemptuous glance at them, then turned to say respectfully, “Lord Ji Chen, now that we have concluded our preliminary negotiations, I won’t disturb you any longer. I’ll take my leave for now and return with gifts for our next meeting.

After all, a forty percent share in our long-term cooperation is not a small amount. I will immediately go back and expedite the follow-up matters to enhance our cooperation as soon as possible.”

Upon hearing this, the other merchants widened their eyes.

You’re really fucking greedy!

Aren’t you afraid that you might not be able to handle taking a 40% share all by yourself?

As it turned out, Gilder wasn’t afraid at all. He not only had considerable financial resources but also an extensive network of connections. With the backing of the top-tier individuals in the Maple Principality, he comfortably engaged in both legitimate and illicit enterprises, showing little concern for merchants like them who were just starting out.

“That’s good then. I will stay in this northern continent for a while. I welcome, Mr. Gilder, to visit again.”

Gilder nodded, then after another bow, he turned and departed amidst the crowd of servants.

Knowing that Gilder had already completed the negotiations ahead of them, taking a whole forty percent share, the remaining merchants felt a sense of urgency. They looked at each other, their eyes carrying a hint of hostility.

It became even more imperative.

Nowadays, every merchant in Maple Harbor knew that as long as they obtained the weapons and equipment of the Crown of the Ocean and transported them to the north, they would undoubtedly make money.

They need to work hard to secure as much of the remaining sixty percent as they can.

If they didn’t, others would.

Letting others make money was even more unbearable than losing money!

Unknowingly, in the small hall with only a dozen people, a sudden surge of tension filled the air, making it feel a bit explosive.

After learning that Ji Chen was the real decision-maker, one by one, the merchants crowded around with smiles on their faces, eager to speak.

“Lord Ji Chen, I am the president of the Snowwood Chamber of Commerce, and my funds are very substantial. It’s definitely the right choice to choose me as a partner.”

“Lord, I have more than a dozen ocean-going ships under my command, with strong transportation capabilities. I can transport goods directly from your territory...”

“I have a wide network of connections, ensuring that your business will go smoothly in Maple Harbor...”

Seeing the merchants with pleasing smiles on their faces, competing to speak, Ji Chen suddenly felt disinterested.

Coincidentally, the previous negotiations with Gilder, combined with the long journey, had finally brought a hint of fatigue.

So he waved his hand to summon Raymond and said aloud, “I hereby authorize you to allocate the remaining share of weapons and equipment. You will also be responsible for matters related to the Crown of the Ocean from now on.”

“I will rest for now, just inform me of the results tomorrow.”

Raymond was momentarily stunned, and a look of pleasant surprise appeared on his face.

To entrust such an important business, worth tens of millions of gold coins, entirely to him?

What a tremendous amount of trust!

This was something that only core members, no, confidants, could accomplish!

Ji Chen stood up, patted his shoulder, and said, “Don’t disappoint me.”

Suppressing the excitement in his heart as much as possible, Raymond replied with gratitude and seriousness, “I won’t let your trust down. I will definitely handle this matter brilliantly.”

Ji Chen nodded slightly, walked away in front of everyone, and disappeared at the end of the stairs.

The merchants watched the entire process, their eyes eager, and they crowded around Raymond.

Raymond was surrounded by many merchants, and his eyes shone brighter than ever before.

In a desolate wilderness.

A figure, short but incredibly strong, came to a slow stop.

Surrounded by dozens of desert giants with fierce expressions, each the size of a calf, closed in on him.

Looking at the figure before them, their mouths salivated continuously, hunger fiercely challenging their rationality.

The figure slowly raised its head. Under the rough beard hidden beneath the cloak, there was no trace of fear in its eyes. It gazed emotionlessly at the surrounding giant wolves. The massive hammer slung over its shoulder was placed on the ground with a heavy, resounding thud.

However, these sounds couldn't scare the giant wolves who had gone without food for days.

This heavy sound was more like a stone, snapping the last string of reason in the minds of the giant wolves.

Roar-

Dozens of desert wolves rushed forward, eager to tear this figure apart to satisfy their hunger.

“Bunch of beasts.”

Thotmudo said coldly and lifted the massive hammer with one hand. It seemed as light as a stick in his hand. With a casual swing, the all-metal hammerhead smashed a giant wolf's skull, bursting into a shower of blood and brain matter.

Thud-

Thud-

With each swing, it was as if the giant wolves willingly offered themselves up.

Every strike had the perfect force, angle, and precision, without a single wasted motion or ounce of strength.

One giant wolf after another either had its skull smashed by a single blow or its body's bones shattered, leaving it paralyzed on the ground.

Not even one of them could get close to Thotmudo.

In just a few minutes, this group of desert wolves, which could have hunted down an entire caravan, had suffered heavy casualties, and the few remaining ones fled with their tails between their legs.

Thotmudo glanced at them but didn't pursue them. He casually slung the massive hammer back onto his shoulder and continued forward, heading deeper into the wilderness.

He passed through barren hills, swift rivers, and rocky shores with strange formations.

In a river valley, he finally came to a halt.

In the distance, a magnificent and massive fortress stood nestled among the mountains..

Chapter 324: The Black Iron Fortress: Secrets of the Past

(2)

Excluding the numerous gaps and damages spread throughout, and even the grandeur unable to conceal the complete lack of vitality and desolation.

Thotmudo looked at it, his eyes filled with shock and disbelief.

“Black Iron Fortress, how could it turn out like this... What exactly happened to the Dwarven race over the past thousands of years...”

In his memory, the Black Iron Fortress was forged from countless rare metals using the “Solar Furnace”, weighing hundreds of tons, and it was known as the impenetrable fortress gate – the

“Dwarven Shield”. But now, there was a hole over ten meters wide on the gate, with melted traces along its edges.

Inside the fortress, the once magnificent sculptures and halls were now in ruins. The grand hall that could accommodate tens of thousands of people was also in chaos, and the symbol of Dwarven unity – the Dwarven Hammer – was shattered into pieces, scattered all over.

As Thotmudo looked at everything, his expression was incredibly complex.

Relying on his memory, he passed through one corridor after another, one hall after another, and what he saw was desolation everywhere. There were marks of axes and knives on the walls and floors, indicating how fierce the battles here had been.

Fierce to the point that not even the united Dwarves could stop them.

In an inconspicuous side hall, Thotmudo turned a broken Dwarven sculpture, and with a rumbling sound, a passage entrance appeared on the wall.

He walked in.

Perhaps because the passage was relatively sealed, there were still some bones left behind, some belonging to Dwarves, and others from different races. But with just a slight breeze, they turned into powder.

Walking to the end of the narrow and winding passage, he arrived in a vast domed space.

This place had originally stored mountains of treasures from the Dwarves, but it was now completely empty. Clearly, when Black Iron Fortress was captured, this place had also been looted.

Thotmudo paused for a moment, then walked to a corner and touched a stone brick with a specific force and angle, rotating it.

With a clattering sound.

A passage entrance opened to the side, just wide enough for two people to pass through side by side.

Inside the passage, there were no bones or signs of battle.

Seeing this, Thotmudo felt a glimmer of hope.

This was a secret known to only a very small number of Dwarves within Black Iron Fortress. They had agreed that if Black Iron Fortress faced an unstoppable attack, in the face of impending destruction, they would record everything that happened and store it here for future generations to know.

Inside this passage, perhaps he could find out what had truly happened to the Dwarven race.

The passage was very long and winding as if it led deep into the heart of the mountain.

But Thotmudo was patient, and he walked down quietly.

Finally, he reached the end and slowly pushed open the last stone door.

Behind the door was a small, dimly lit chamber with only a platform inside. On top of the platform was a small stone pillar with a white crystal on top.

Beside the stone pillar, there rested a tiny Dwarf skeleton adorned in elegant attire, its bones gleaming with a golden hue.

In the chest, where the heart would be, there was a strange-looking dagger stuck, dealing him a fatal blow.

Thotmudo was stunned, his expression filled with sorrow.

He recognized whose Dwarven skeleton this was...

“Claudio, did you fall too?”

Claudio Blackiron, one of the epic Dwarven powerhouses of Black Iron Fortress in the past, and also his close friend who had guarded Black Iron Fortress and the Dwarven race together.

His fatal heart was attacked, yet he persevered to come here, which was enough to prove how sudden and fierce the events were back then, and how powerful the enemy they faced was.

Thotmudo felt a profound sense of guilt in his heart.

If he had stayed in Black Iron Fortress instead of going out back then, he wouldn't have fallen into the hands of the Archlich Krieg Theredell.

With his epic-level power, could the events that unfolded here have taken a different turn? Could Black Iron Fortress have remained unbreached?

His mind was filled with countless thoughts, but Thotmudo eventually calmed himself down, and his gaze gradually became resolute.

“Claudio, did you persist until this point to preserve this information?”

What kind of enemy was it that even you couldn't match and had to fall within this small chamber?”

Thotmudo stepped forward and gently touched the crystal.

A projection appeared.

In the projection, there was another rugged Dwarven figure, with a grayish complexion and lifeless eyes.

A horrifying wound cut across his abdomen to his right shoulder, with the pallid bones faintly visible.

If an ordinary person had suffered such an injury, they would have died long ago. Only an epic-level powerhouse could endure and reach this place to leave behind information.

In the projection, Claudio Blackiron slowly spoke, “I am Claudio Blackiron, one of the three epic heroes of Black Iron Fortress. If the situation is as dire as I suspect, then I must have already perished.

But I never imagined that Black Iron Fortress would fall in this manner. With just one blow, our pride, the ‘Dwarven Shield’, was pierced in an instant. In less than half a day, we were forced to withdraw, losing our outer defenses step by step...”

Pierced in an instant?

Thotmudo's face showed astonishment. Even epic-level powerhouses couldn't destroy the 'Dwarven Shield' in such a violent manner, let alone with just one strike.

Moreover, there were countless defensive fortifications and formidable defensive weaponry on the outskirts of Black Iron Fortress. With the advantage of its natural terrain, it should have been impervious to enemy attacks, even against a massive army.

But it was breached in half a day?

Chapter 325 - 325: The Black Iron Fortress: Secrets of the Past (3)

At first, Thotmudo couldn't believe it. But as he recalled the shattered gate and the expression on Claudio's face, he had no choice but to reluctantly come to terms with this reality.

Claudio Blackiron didn't waste a moment and kept talking, his words speeding up, clearly knowing his time was running out.

He answered Thotmudo's doubts one by one, revealing the buried secrets of that year.

"...The Deceiver was the mastermind behind the fall of Black Iron Fortress..."

The Deceiver?

Thotmudo's pupils shrank. The Deceiver, a group of godless rats living in the sewers, was known for their shady activities, but how could they have the power to conquer the formidable Black Iron Fortress?

His breath hitched, and he continued reading.

"...The Deceiver summoned a hellfire demon with power surpassing epic levels through large-scale sacrifices and made some kind of deal with it. Together, they attacked Black Iron Fortress, and the Dwarven Shield was destroyed by this demon..."

...To stop this terrifying demon, I and Theod Black Iron, another epic-level hero of Blackiron Fortress, were seriously injured. In the end, even though we used every means, we successfully delayed the demon until the world's rules expelled it back to hell.

However, this exposed a vulnerability, and Theod Blackiron was killed by an evil-aligned epic hero brought by The Deceiver.

As for me, I was struck by a dagger tainted with the curse of a dark god's power, both my body and soul suffering a terrible curse.

With such a curse upon me, there was no way I could survive. The downfall of the Black Iron Fortress had become an irreversible fact. So, I forced myself to come here and tell everything, hoping that the surviving dwarves would know what happened here."

At this point, Claudio Blackiron's face, already dark, became even more serious.

"Whether you're a dwarf who found your way here or belong to another race, please keep in mind, don't let The Deceiver discover your presence or your knowledge of

what transpired in this place. Otherwise, those fanatics who hold an intense hatred for all deities, all divine races, and divine entities will stop at nothing to hatch sinister plots aimed at taking your life.

Cough... I've said almost everything. I feel that my life is coming to an end. Cough, cough...

Oh, by the way, cough, cough, cough... You might be able to secretly find Thotmudo Blackiron. He's the only dwarf epic hero who survived this catastrophe in the Black Iron Fortress. He's a formidable force you can rely on, with forging skills second only to mine."

Claudio Blackiron showed a hint of sigh on his face. "Back then, I said the three of us, and Thotmudo, the most foolish but luckiest dwarf, would definitely be the one to survive until the end. It turns out that it's really the case, quite remarkable..."

At this moment, the light curtain closed, and the chamber fell into boundless silence.

After a while, a voice slowly echoed in the chamber.

"In the name of Thotmudo Blackiron, I swear to the gods that I will avenge you and Black Iron Fortress, and exterminate The Deceiver!

The Deceiver, those sewer rats, are highly likely to still exist... Ji Chen that kid carries a distinctly pure divine aura. He might have been able to stay concealed on the remote island, but as soon as he steps foot on the mainland, he's bound to draw their notice...

Not good, I've heard that he's planning to visit the mainland soon. I need to hurry and remind him to prevent him from suffering any losses.."

Chapter 326 - 326: Solar Furnace, Money Collection, Trade Taxes

Considering this, Thotmudo gazed solemnly at the skeletal remains of Claudio Blackiron. He carefully swathed them in linen and secured them to his back.

He then picked up the enormous hammer and swung it towards the crystal pillar.

One strike, two strikes, three strikes, and the crystal shattered completely, losing its function.

Seeing this, Thotmudo breathed a sigh of relief as he carried Claudio Blackiron on his back. After closing the secret chamber, he navigated through the fortress to its deepest recesses, as if venturing into a vast underground cavern.

Scattered around were ores, various damaged smelting facilities, and battle scars. But amidst the ruins of the Blackiron Fortress, which had fallen thousands of years ago, this place had not been spared.

However, Thotmudo paid no attention to these details. Instead, he ventured deeper until he reached a massive lava lake.

At this moment, the location where the dwarves took great pride in their creation, the "Solar Furnace", which stood above the lava, was now empty.

Clearly, it had also been taken by the Deceivers.

The “Solar Furnace” was a furnace device painstakingly crafted by generations of Blackiron Dwarves. Just as its name implied, it was like a sun-shaped furnace.

With this furnace, the dwarves could efficiently forge weapons and equipment. Not only could it melt various metals and materials, but it could also create entirely new ones. The “Dwarven Shield” was one such creation.

But that wasn’t all; under the right conditions, the “Solar Furnace” could forge legendary treasures, and even... artifacts of demigod quality.

This was the foundation of the Blackiron Dwarves.

For a lawful and orderly race like the dwarves, it would be a safeguard for their people. However, in the hands of the Deceivers and their evil ilk, it would only become a weapon of world-threatening proportions.

The Deceivers had taken the “Solar Furnace” thousands of years ago. Who knew how many weapons and equipment they had manufactured with it, arming countless evildoers?

After a moment of hesitation, Thotmudo left the area, following his memories to a high point outside the Blackiron Fortress.

From here, he could see the exposed portions of the fortress clearly. It was also where he and Claudio Blackiron often stood in the past, making a vow to protect the Blackiron Fortress.

Thotmudo buried Claudio Blackiron’s remains here and skillfully chiseled a smooth tombstone with his name on it.

After a deep, final look, Thotmudo left without turning back.

Seeking revenge against the Deceivers now seemed like an uphill battle, especially for a race that had fallen so far from grace, no longer even on par with trolls. The odds were slim.

Moreover, he was aware of his own limitations. While he could engage in combat, forge weapons, and fight battles, uniting the fractured dwarf clans was a monumental task.

In this situation, Thotmudo naturally thought of Ji Chen, even though his current strength was not considered very high, and his territory consisted of a remote island in the open sea.

However, Thotmudo remembered Ji Chen’s past performances and the qualities that had earned him the favor of the gods.

Perhaps this seemingly weak human, in his eyes, could help him unite the dwarf clans and seek revenge against the Deceivers in the future?

He was somewhat hesitant.

But Thotmudo had been isolated from the world for thousands of years. Besides Elin, that pointy ears, and Ji Chen, he didn’t know anyone else. Those he knew were long gone.

There wasn’t much choice.

Compared to seeking help from the pointy ears, he found it more acceptable to seek Ji Chen’s assistance. That young man’s personality seemed to align better with his tastes.

As for the elves?

Not a chance!

The next morning.

In the same hall as before.

Raymond was reporting the results of his negotiations and discussions with various merchants from the previous day.

“Except for Gilder’s forty percent share, the remaining sixty percent has been distributed among nine merchants, each receiving a share ranging from half a percent to one and a half percent.

Because of our long-standing partnership, they agreed to some pricing concessions, resulting in prices about 15% higher than the previous agreement.

Considering their prices and their strong presence in the market, I turned down cooperation requests from other merchants, except for these nine.

Besides Gilder, these ten merchants will oversee the weapon and equipment business of the Crown of the Ocean in the Northern Continent.

I’ve provided a draft of the commercial contract for your review, my lord. Feel free to suggest any changes you might want to make.”

Raymond placed a stack of parchment on the table. It contained standard business contracts recognized and protected by the Maple Principality’s authorities. Once signed, they would become effective within the principality’s borders. Any party violating the contract would be subject to investigation by the principality’s specialized business regulatory agency. Due to the Maple Principality’s absolute neutrality and robust commerce, these standard contracts were widely used across the Northern Continent, recognized by multiple kingdoms and duchies, and held significant legal weight.

This world may appear to be one with a strict hierarchy, cloaked in medieval attire, but in certain aspects, its achievements are not inferior to Earth.

Ji Chen picked up one of the contracts and examined it. He didn’t find any issues and looked quite satisfied. “You’ve done a great job. It seems I made the right choice. However, you need to be careful not to let others with ill intentions plot against our trade.”

He wasn’t afraid of overt attacks, but rather, he was concerned about the indigenous people with hidden agendas who might secretly conspire to cause trouble for the Crown of the Ocean.

“Without the opportunity you’ve given me, my lord, I wouldn’t have been able to accomplish this task,” Raymond replied humbly. Upon hearing the rest of Ji Chen’s words, he spoke confidently, “As long as Gilder and the others want to make money, especially big money, they will proactively help us fend off those hidden troubles..”

Chapter 327: Solar Furnace, Money Collection Ability User, Business Taxes (2)

“After all, obstructing merchants from making money is even more antagonistic than killing their entire families.”

Ji Chen nodded, understanding the logic.

Pausing for a moment, he asked, “Do you know the location of the Elven Embassy in Maple Harbor?”

Raymond was slightly surprised.

“My lord, are you planning to meet with the elves?”

“That’s correct. My main purpose for coming this time is to make contact with the Elven clan. Everything else is secondary.”

Ji Chen stood up, walked to the entrance, and looked out at the lush meadow.

He said, “As a side note, let’s also send the dozen or so elves who are still on the ship along with us.”

Upon hearing this, Raymond nodded in realization. “That makes sense. Even if the Elven clan is quite proud, seeing that we’ve rescued so many abducted elves and established a trade relationship with them should improve their attitude. Plus, it’s a barrier that protects our business on the continent.”

“But the Elven Embassy is not in Maple Harbor; it’s actually in Maple City, which is over ten miles away from here. We’ll need to apply with the authorities in Maple Harbor and go through some formalities to enter the city.

However, given the substantial taxes we’ve paid as the Crown of the Ocean, this should be relatively easy to arrange. You can leave this matter to me!”

Ji Chen nodded slightly, appreciating having a capable subordinate who could handle these tasks without his direct involvement.

In less than two hours, Raymond had completed all the necessary procedures.

In reality, much of this was thanks to the influence of their wealth; the Maple Principality was very welcoming to major taxpayers like Ji Chen.

Raymond simply explained the matter to the steward assigned to this area, who promptly reported it to his superior. In less than half an hour, a team of Maple Harbor personnel hurried to the estate.

They efficiently completed the entry procedures and presented a long-term valid city entry permit. They also expressed their warm welcome for Ji Chen to visit anytime.

As an added privilege, they provided two large luxury carriages adorned with a common griffin pattern.

According to the personnel, these two carriages were given to those who had made significant contributions to Maple Harbor.

They not only could bypass most of the permanent checkpoints along the way without being stopped by soldiers, but they also had exclusive access to Maple City.

Hearing this, Ji Chen couldn't help but sigh in his heart.

Indeed, money could buy almost anything, especially in a place as commercially prosperous as Maple Harbor.

With enough gold coins, one could clear any obstacles.

He instructed Raymond to bring the dozen or so elves who had been left on the ship to the estate. They each boarded one of the carriages, and amidst the salutes of the estate's steward and maids, they set off towards Maple City in the distance.

As they traveled north and gradually left Maple Harbor behind, they noticed that the harbor didn't have imposing city walls or defensive structures; instead, a simple two-meter-high stone wall marked the boundary between the inner and outer areas.

Between Maple Harbor and Maple City stretched a wide expanse of lush grasslands. A spacious brick road connected the two, allowing numerous pedestrians and carriages, enough to accommodate sixteen carriages traveling side by side, all heading towards Maple City.

Ji Chen's two carriages, however, attracted considerable attention.

The ordinary natives, on the other hand, didn't pay much attention. They recognized that this was a carriage only accessible to those with overwhelming financial abilities, and while they felt a touch of envy, they dared not make a move. In this world of strict hierarchy and social classes, uttering the wrong words was considered a crime.

However, the casual players were a different story.

They watched with envy, their eyes shooting daggers.

"Motherfucker, it's a Super Tycoon. I'm so jealous... Uh, I mean, it's despicable!

I would never associate with someone who smells of copper!"

"A carriage with a griffin pattern... I remember it's given to those who have invested, paid taxes or spent a million gold coins in Maple Harbor. When will I ever get to ride in one?"

"I wonder who's inside those carriages. It's piqued my curiosity."

As one player muttered this, they saw the curtains of the rear carriage being pulled back slightly, revealing a beautiful face with radiant white skin.

The player was left stunned and blurted out involuntarily, "Holy crap! An elf?"

This word instantly caught the attention of the players around them, as if it had hit their G-spot. "An elf? Where are the elves!?"

"They're in the rear carriage!"

Players craned their necks to look, but the curtains were pulled back for just a second before being lowered again, leaving them disappointed.

A wave of frustration washed over them.

In less than a few seconds, the curtains were slowly drawn back once more, rekindling the players' curiosity as they stared wide-eyed.

But behind the curtains, they were met with a fierce snake-like face, with blood-red eyes exuding an endless coldness, nearly scaring them to death. Their hearts pounded wildly.

The curtains were lowered once again, and the carriage continued on its way.

Once they regained their composure, their immediate response was to tackle the player who had mentioned the elf and start physically assaulting him, all while unleashing a torrent of furious curses.

"You son of a bitch, an elf? You're playing pranks, huh?"

"How dare you deceive us! Beat this bastard to death!"

The player who was being pressed down, taking blows to his head and being cursed at, wore a sorrowful expression. "I did see an elf, I swear! Don't beat me, it's a mistake!"

In the end, this group of players who had unilaterally assaulted others was caught by patrolling soldiers and charged with the crime of severely disrupting social order. They were each thrown into jail, where they paid for seven days of incarceration.

Inside the carriage..

Chapter 328: Solar Furnace, Money Collection Ability User, Business Taxes (3)

The elves burst into laughter and found the Naga Berserker, who was also riding in the same carriage, much more pleasing to the eye.

Due to the terrain and location, the obstructed view caused by the towering buildings of Maple Harbor had now opened up. It was easy to see a towering metropolis standing at the edge of the vast grassland, nestled beneath a mountain range.

With walls soaring up to a hundred meters, they seemed to compete in height with the mountains, stretching from the western side of the field to the east.

Arrow towers stood densely on the city walls, much like trees, while artillery platforms lined the wall, with guns of all sizes protruding, showcasing their might.

Intermittently, airships came and went from behind the city walls. The onlookers also spotted a fleet of hundreds of airships returning from the direction of the mountains. Among them was a colossal airship, comparable in size to the New Moon, flying in the sky like a floating island, casting a vast shadow over the ground.

Between the airships, numerous Griffon Knights flew like ants, ensuring the fleet's safety.

This scene was incredibly awe-inspiring.

It wasn't until the airship slowly descended and disappeared behind the city wall that they regained their composure, and the sound of breathing resumed within the carriage.

At that moment, Raymond suddenly thought of something and casually remarked, “The airship fleet should have just returned from the northern Alvin Mountains. It seems like the trolls up there are causing trouble again.”

Ji Chen looked at him and made a mental note of it.

The group continued to move forward.

Soon, they arrived at the foot of the city wall.

Maple City had a total of seven gates facing the south. The central gate was the largest, towering at fifty meters, while the other gates decreased in size from the center, with the two smallest side gates still standing at over ten meters.

At this moment, only four of the seven city gates were open. Three on the left and one on the far right.

In front of the city gates were over a hundred heavily armed elite guards, checking the information and entry permits of those entering the city.

The three left gates were crowded with people, while the rightmost gate was almost deserted.

Naturally, Ji Chen and his group didn’t have to squeeze with the others. They directly headed for the VIP lane on the far right and came to a halt in front of the security barrier.

The guards stationed here noticed the griffon emblem on the carriage and became more respectful. One of them came to the side of the carriage and politely said, “Greetings.”

“May I see your relevant entry permit, sir?”

Ji Chen pulled back the curtain and handed over the entry permit.

When the guard saw the permit, his expression became even more respectful.

This kind of permit could only be obtained by those who had made significant contributions to the Maple Principality. It could be used for an extended period and multiple times, making it a higher-level permit than the ordinary ones.

In simple terms, it was the permit of the top-tier elite.

The guard carefully verified the authenticity of the permit and respectfully handed it back to Ji Chen.

“Esteemed guest, you may proceed.”

He then loudly announced to his colleagues, “Let them through!”

Other guards quickly moved the barriers aside, creating a clear path.

The carriage resumed its journey towards the city gate.

Ji Chen was curious about the guards’ reactions and asked Raymond, “How much commercial tax have we actually paid to the Maple Principality for our Crown of the Ocean?”

Raymond grinned and held up three fingers.

“It’s a moderate 15% commercial tax, neither too high nor too low.”

The fuck?! A15% commercial tax was surprisingly high!

No wonder the service from the Maple Empire was so good; they were making a substantial profit from this level of taxation.

In that instant, Ji Chen made up his mind to find another place to sell their goods. He couldn't let these greedy individuals make a fortune off him..

Chapter 329 - 329: Is This an Elf? Miligas

In the blink of an eye, the carriage had already passed through the thick city gate and entered the city.

Compared to the open and bustling Maple Harbor, Maple City had a different architectural style.

The buildings inside the city were not tall, mostly only six or seven stories high, in stark contrast to the towering structures of Maple Harbor.

Most of the buildings were primarily white in color, adorned with pointed arches, pointed arch doorways, and large stained glass windows. When the sunlight shone on the colored glass, it created a kaleidoscope of colors.

Occasionally, one could see elegant and grand cathedral-style buildings on street corners, which appeared quite sacred and pure against the backdrop of white walls and stained glass windows.

However, the Maple Principality had a belief in deities, which seemed at odds with their love of wealth and their extreme commercial development.

But upon further reflection, it likely boiled down to the age-old advice: "After eating a satisfying meal, it's wise to take a moment for gratitude."

Compared to the bustling Maple Harbor, Maple City was relatively less crowded, but it still had a steady flow of people.

The carriage meandered its way through the city, leaving the main road to enter a quieter area. It was stopped by a squad of soldiers at a checkpoint.

"This is the embassy district ahead, unauthorized persons are not allowed!" spoke a soldier captain clad in armor. His proud demeanor and attire bore the emblem of the Old Maple Cross.

Raymond descended from the carriage and began negotiating with him.

"...Returning the kidnapped elves..."

"If there's any delay, you won't be able to bear this responsibility..."

He pointed to the carriage behind him.

Ji Chen could only faintly hear Raymond say a few words before seeing the soldier captain turn his head. Through the drawn curtains, he caught a glimpse of the young elf. The soldier's expression changed from arrogance to doubt, and then to apology.

After careful examination of their entry permits and credentials, the soldier nodded.

He walked over to the carriage and made a respectful gesture. “Respected guests, I apologize sincerely. I will now clear the way for you.”

Ji Chen remained expressionless, merely nodding slightly and maintaining a dignified posture.

Amidst a salute from the soldiers, the two carriages gradually moved away.

“Boss, this guy is too arrogant. He didn’t even say a word. We are soldiers guarding the embassy district, not like those guarding the city gates.”

“You better keep your mouth shut!” the soldier captain reprimanded. “Didn’t you see the second carriage with the elf inside? If we really delay them and offend the elves, the higher-ups will hold us responsible.”

“Maybe our bonuses for the year will be deducted!”

Hearing this, the soldier’s expression changed slightly, and he kept silent.

When it came to matters concerning elves, even the Maple Principality had to take them seriously, especially now when the elves were at the height of their power, and the Elven Empire was flourishing.

The strength of their nation had given the elves a prominent position, and all kingdoms, duchies, and races of the lawful alignment, at the very least, held great respect for the elves in public.

They were afraid that one day, these highly proud pointed-eared individuals might come looking for trouble.

After entering the so-called embassy district, Ji Chen and Raymond saw vast estates, each surrounded by diverse walls, and flags representing different factions were displayed on the gates.

Red Dragon Flag, White Tower Flag, Sword and Shield Flag...

Some were kingdoms, some were duchies, and some were powerful races.

Among these flags, he saw one that was exceptionally large.

On it were two standing trees, one gold and one silver.

—This is the Double Sacred Tree Flag of the Elven Empire.

Ji Chen’s gaze slightly narrowed.

They had reached their destination.

Perhaps due to their national power, this Elven estate was exceptionally spacious, ten times larger than the neighboring kingdoms and duchies. A tall wall made up of intertwined tree trunks and vines formed a barrier that blocked any intrusive view from the outside.

In front of the gate, similarly made up of branches and vines, a fully armed guard of elves stood watch, observing them closely as they approached.

When Ji Chen saw the appearance of these elven soldiers, he couldn’t help but be stunned. His body stiffened, and he could hardly believe what he was seeing. Furrowing his brow, he asked, “Are these elves?”

Raymond, seeing Ji Chen's expression, also paused for a moment. "Yes, that's right. Is there a problem?"

Ji Chen fell silent.

How should he put it? In his impression, elves were not only known for their unparalleled archery and formidable magical abilities but also for their exceptionally beautiful elven ladies. Even the male elves in various strange books were often depicted as delicate and cute elf boys.

But the scene before his eyes shattered his illusions like a power hammer, scattering them to the ground.

Standing before him was a group of burly, tall, muscular individuals, each with a height of nearly two meters, broad-shouldered and sturdy. They had long, pointed ears that were almost parallel to the ground. Their muscles, like bronze, seemed as if they were about to burst out of their clothing. Veins in their arms crisscrossed like tree roots.

Their expressions were resolute, like coiled tigers ready to pounce.

Were these really fucking elves? If someone were to say they were a group of incredibly burly dudes, like trolls or some green-skinned orcs, Ji Chen would fully believe it..

Chapter 330 - 330: Is This an Elf? Miligas (2)

Silence lingered for a while.

He reluctantly accepted this fact, comforting himself with the thought that female elves were generally quite beautiful.

Indeed, how could the elves, who had created such a powerful empire, be anything but tough? They carried large swords on their backs and wielded hefty longbows.

The carriage gradually came to a stop in front of the Elf Embassy.

Before Ji Chen could give an order, the elven squads eagerly jumped out of the carriage, running toward the gates with joyful expressions.

Seeing them, the initially cautious elven guards were taken aback. How could there be fellow elves here?

After explaining the situation to the elven guards, one of the officers hurriedly dispatched an elf to inform someone inside the embassy.

Soon, a group of elves emerged from the embassy, led by a male elf in a golden robe. Unexpectedly, this male elf had a refined appearance, and his stature was similar to that of a human.

Wearing a pair of gold-rimmed glasses, he exuded an air of sophistication and affability.

After conversing with the elven guards again, he walked toward the carriage.

Seeing this, Ji Chen also stepped down from the carriage and waited.

At this moment, the elven guards, who had initially been reserved and aloof, visibly softened their expressions.

Especially when they looked at Ji Chen, there was a hint of gratitude in their eyes.

The elf in the golden robe approached and spoke with a friendly demeanor.

“Sir, I’ve already learned of your noble actions from Kris.

Thank you for extending a helping hand to our fellow kin. Without your assistance, our kin would have suffered unimaginable torment.

Elves never forget any friend who offers us help.”

Kris was the captain of the elven squad.

Ji Chen waved his hand dismissively, showing no concern.

“It was just a small favor; there’s no need for such gratitude.

They also helped me fend off our enemies, displaying the courage and glory of the elves with their exquisite skills. I admire them for it.”

Seeing Ji Chen’s magnanimity, the elf in the golden robe’s eyes brightened slightly, and he carefully examined the human before him.

In his every move and gesture, he naturally exuded the air of someone superior, displaying exceptional strength. Coupled with his handsome appearance which was no less striking than that of the elves, it was easy to evoke a sense of goodwill.

Perfectly matching the description of a powerful, friendly, and affable lord provided by their kin.

Thinking this, his expression became even friendlier.

“Oh, I almost forgot to introduce myself. I’m Miligas Heidrich, the Ambassador of the Silvermoon Dynasty Embassy in the Maple Principality,” he said. “This is the embassy’s military affairs officer, Brett Lasoga.”

Miligas gestured toward the elven guard officer, who offered a polite nod.

Ji Chen nodded in return, “I’m Ji Chen, the Lord of the Crown of the Ocean.”

“The Crown of the Ocean? That territory sounds somewhat familiar...” Miligas pondered for a moment. “Isn’t it the territory of the special supplier of timber we added last month? I recall their timber quality was quite excellent, perfect for crafting bows.

It seems there are some special coffee beans, ground into powder to make brews that might be helpful for mana recovery or entering a meditative state.” “Your memory serves you well, Mr. Miligas.” Ji Chen smiled and took out the elven badge. “Indeed, both the timber and coffee beans are specialties of the Crown of the Ocean.”

Seeing the elven badge, Miligas’ smile grew broader. “What a coincidence that the savior of our kin and our supplier turned out to be the same person. It seems, sir, that you have a connection with our elves.”

Indeed, he was running into elves and all sorts of things associated with them wherever he went.

Ji Chen thought silently to himself but maintained a polite smile.

“The outside world is crowded and full of prying eyes, Sir. How about we continue our discussion inside the embassy?”

Ji Chen nodded slightly and, with his entourage, boarded the carriage, following Miligas into the embassy.

In his preconceived notions, elven homes were usually large trees, with elves living in tree hollows, harmonizing with nature, and subsisting on fruits and dew.

However, in reality, elven architecture was quite splendid, with intricately carved beams and pillars, adorned with exquisite reliefs and statues made from expensive stones, boasting a unique yet elegant style.

Even the fountain behind the main gate was constructed with stone blocks worth thousands of gold coins, and the material of the elven statue atop it was an entire piece of jade, meticulously sculpted to look lifelike.

Expansive gardens revealed ingenious designs, combining openness and seclusion, flower clusters, and flowing water, showcasing exceptional artistic aesthetics.

To be honest, on the journey here, Ji Chen had indeed gained considerable insights and further felt the profound heritage of this world’s powerful race.

Even an embassy stationed in a foreign country had this level of luxurious decoration. Thus, it could be assumed that more important places within the elven empire would be even more extravagant.

When a nation’s military power was sufficiently robust and its people had no worries about basic necessities, part of their attention would naturally shift to other fields, such as art, architecture, and literature. It was an inevitable trend.

Miligas led Ji Chen and his entourage to a lavishly decorated reception room. In this spacious and luxurious room, only Ji Chen, Alice, Raymond, Miligas, and the military affairs officer Brett were present.

The remaining elven guards and Naga Berserkers had to wait outside.

Sitting on a soft sofa made of an unknown material, feeling as if his entire body sank into it, Ji Chen let out a silent sigh of relief. He listened as Miligas began to speak.

“I heard about it yesterday. A certain lord brought a large batch of high-quality weapons and equipment, causing many human merchants to vie for a share, and the thresholds were breached.

Now, matching the pieces together, it seems that this lord is none other than Your Excellency Ji Chen. However, I am quite curious; does the Crown of the Ocean produce weapons and equipment as well?”

Ji Chen waved his hand dismissively. “These are just small business ventures, merely subsidizing the territory’s expenses.”

“Haha, if amounts in the tens of millions of gold coins are considered small business, then there’s nothing big left. We’d like to engage in such business, but we don’t have the connections for it, so we can only do small trades.”

This was pure nonsense. With the forging capabilities of the Elven Empire, they couldn’t produce top-quality weapons and equipment?

Most of the weapons and equipment they forged were for their own use, primarily to maintain the massive Silver Moon Dynasty’s army, and very few made their way outside.

Elves focused on high-end businesses, like enchanting and monopolizing potions. They didn’t usually dabble in these low-end businesses.

But what to do? Elves were known for being extravagant, rich, and sometimes a bit pretentious.

What Ji Chen despised the most were these show-offs!

After some internal venting, Ji Chen smiled and continued.

“Mr. Miligas, besides those weapons and equipment, I also brought another batch of the same wood and coffee beans as last time. I was wondering...” Miligas, being an ambassador of a nation, was astute and instantly understood his meaning. He adjusted his glasses and said with a smile, “We’ll take all of that wood, even for us, high-quality wood like this is rare.

Alright, we’ll purchase the wood at 250% of the market price, and we’ll buy all the coffee beans. Personally, I quite like their taste.”

What a generous boss!

Ji Chen had a beaming smile; this was 50% higher than the price agreed upon last time, an absolute windfall!

From now on, elves were his good friends!

The principle of wanting something from others required giving first.

Miligas’s generosity went beyond just repaying the favor of rescuing the elves. There must be some other motives behind it.

Elves weren’t known for being naive, especially when it came to money.

As expected, after some polite exchanges, Miligas’s expression turned slightly serious, and as expected, he asked, “Your Excellency, I heard from Kris that you know a member of our elven royal family who’s been living outside our lands?”

A glint of intrigue flashed in Ji Chen’s eyes.

The interesting part had begun..