

Ocean Lord 361

Chapter 361 - 361: Attack, Landslide, Caught a Big Fish (2)

As the bombardment raged on, the Deceiver had already taken refuge deep within.

Despite three rounds of firepower that could plow the ground, only a small portion of the exposed defensive apparatus was destroyed, and there were hardly any casualties among the personnel.

It could be said that these three rounds of seemingly formidable bombardment had very little actual killing effect.

But this was never meant for killing; it was a cover!

Little did they know that as the elven fleet launched the first round of attacks, the Maple Principality's army and the elves began their assault, surging toward the mudflats like a tidal wave, heading for the hill.

By the time three rounds of bombardment had passed, they had already crossed half of the mudflats and were only two to three hundred meters away from the hill.

At this moment, the Deceiver had returned to their various positions, ready to counterattack.

A massive alchemical cannon concealed in a cave, its firing port hidden by vegetation and camouflage, suddenly erupted in flames. Within the flames, a half-meter-diameter spherical shell was propelled out, exploding directly in the midst of the advancing soldiers. The massive explosion engulfed them, sending them flying high like rag dolls.

After the intense explosion, countless shards of metal and metal fragments shot out from the smoke and flames at a speed beyond the naked eye, leaving behind gruesome wounds on the soldiers. The air was suddenly filled with a dense mist of blood, staining the mud red.

Seeing this scene, the soldiers felt a chill in their hearts, but they didn't stop and continued to charge forward with their weapons in hand.

To stop meant death; moving forward still offered a glimmer of hope!

Bombs and arrows fell like raindrops, but they couldn't halt the advance of the soldiers.

Soon, the Maple Principality launched a counterattack. Dozens of small airships appeared in the rear, each equipped with multiple ballistae.

These small airships rapidly approached from the sky and unleashed a volley of fire against the exposed positions. Due to the angle of the weaponry, the Deceiver couldn't effectively target the agile and maneuverable airships, leaving them to be pounded.

Before long, dozens of firing positions fell silent.

With the reduction in firepower, the attacking soldiers below became even more audacious. They finally crossed the mudflats and entered the caves and tunnels at the base of the hill.

Yasen, who was commanding from the rear, wore a grave expression on his face.

The real battle had just begun.

The first wave of Maple Principality soldiers that entered the interior of the hill quickly became lost in the winding and complex caves, not knowing which path to take and splitting up to explore and search.

In the darkness, humanoid metal war golems revealed their forms. Four metal arms extended from their backs, each wielding a weapon. Familiar with this place, they launched surprise attacks from the darkness, causing significant casualties among the unsuspecting soldiers.

For a moment, the cave echoed with intense combat and screams.

Of course, these were all soldiers from the Maple Principality; the elven warriors remained outside the cave, guarding its entrance.

Ji Chen didn't choose to intervene. The Crown of the Ocean's forces by his side numbered just over four hundred units at full strength, which wasn't enough for a full-scale assault.

At the moment, he stood at a safe distance, observing the battlefield's developments.

The battle seemed fierce at the moment. The Maple Principality used airships to suppress the Deceiver's firepower while continuously deploying troops for the attack, resulting in apparent heavy losses.

However, in reality, the Maple Principality's soldiers and their coordination were undoubtedly superior to these war golems. As more and more soldiers entered the caves, the advantage of the Deceiver's side would gradually diminish in the face of both numerical superiority and strength.

Over the past couple of days, Ji Chen also learned about the Deceiver's organizational structure.

Within the Deceiver's ranks, their level of authority and rank was primarily determined by the color and pattern of their masks.

The Iron Masks were the lowest level and also the most numerous.

The Silver Masks were in the middle management and often served as leaders for various principalities and kingdoms.

Above them were the Gold Masks, which clearly belonged to the upper echelons of management. Each Gold Mask oversaw the affairs of several principalities, kingdoms, or even an entire empire.

Masks not only represented rank but also strength. The higher the rank of the mask, the stronger the individual behind it.

If one were to go even higher in rank, there was said to be the creator of the Deceivers, the one who wears a black mask.

However, it was quite regrettable that no one had ever seen them to this day. In fact, it's not even known whether it was been the same person beneath the black mask for thousands of years. It's an extreme mystery.

Apart from these, there are some special masks that exist.

From what it appears, the Deceiver with the Silver Mask who commanded the mountain trolls to surround Ji Chen that day was probably the leader of the Maple Principality.

If they could capture that individual, it would indeed be a significant achievement.

However, so far, there hadn't been any sign of the Deceivers showing up; it was only the war golems in combat.

Now, he was quite curious about how they planned to break through, or if, like the Deceivers in the city, they would choose to commit suicide to protect their secrets.

The entire hill and base were thoroughly blockaded, and no matter how one looked at it, it seemed like an unsolvable deadlock.

As Ji Chen gazed at the hill, which had a vast stretch of ocean surrounding it, a thought suddenly crossed his mind.

Could they be planning to escape from the direction of the ocean?

He looked into the distance.

Not all of the elven fleet had arrived; only eight warships were anchored. Their firepower was sufficient to seal off the sea surface.

If the Deceivers weren't foolish, they probably wouldn't attempt to break out forcefully from the sea surface.

But Ji Chen's gaze slowly shifted to beneath the sea surface.

Could they be choosing to quietly depart from underwater?

This idea seemed increasingly plausible.

The elven fleet certainly had alchemical devices for detecting underwater targets, but they could only detect depths of one or two hundred meters at most. Even with added spells, in most cases, they could only explore depths of two to three hundred meters.

At depths below 500 meters in the ocean, for most races, it's a restricted area.

Water pressure and light are insurmountable obstacles.

But for Ji Chen, who possessed many underwater shelters, it felt like returning home, with no difficulty at all.

He could enter or exit as he pleased.

The more he thought about it, the more Ji Chen felt the need to investigate.

He immediately led his troops to the seaside, entered the ocean, and dispersed the remaining 400 units of his army in a spider-web pattern, starting to search the surrounding waters of the hill.

They stayed on the sea surface, waiting silently.

However, as time passed, the search yielded no results.

Ji Chen began to doubt whether he had overthought things. Perhaps the Deceivers didn't have the capability to escape underwater.

Boom!

At that moment, a tremendous roar suddenly echoed in his ears.

His gaze filled with shock, and he turned to look.

The hill... had exploded.

The hill that couldn't be destroyed even by the elven fleet's bombardment was now shaking like it had experienced a magnitude twelve earthquake. It collapsed in all directions, massive boulders the size of houses rolled down from the mountain and crashed into the sea, creating towering waves.

Thick smoke billowed from various cave entrances.

Right before his eyes, the entire hill had dropped dozens of meters.

The extent of this collapse couldn't possibly have been caused by an external force; it had to be the power generated from within.

The Deceivers... had actually blown up the entire hill from the inside!

He gasped, feeling a chill run down his spine. This would have buried countless soldiers and elves.

How brutal!

At this moment, one of the Naga Berserkers in his sensory range suddenly lost contact.

Ji Chen was taken aback, his expression turning joyful.

Looks like the fish had bit the bait!

He immediately called for Alice and Benbo to gather all the troops and rushed to the scene.

The seawater carried their bodies, propelling them rapidly through the ocean.

Arriving at a cliff located about five to six hundred meters deep in the water, they quickly spotted the Deceivers engaged in a fierce battle with the Ocean Crown troops who had arrived earlier.

At a quick glance, there were at least four or five hundred of them.

Leading them was the Silver Masked Deceiver who had crossed paths with Ji Chen before.

Seeing this, Ji Chen couldn't help but be overjoyed.

This was like catching a big fish!

He squinted at them.

Whether the masks were attached to their faces or not, they all wore masks even underwater.

These Deceivers were wrapped in a layer of white membrane that seemed to isolate water pressure and provide oxygen. The source of all this was a glowing treasure held in the hands of the Silver Masked Deceiver.

At this moment, the Silver Masked Deceiver also spotted Ji Chen and fury surged in their eyes.

So, it's this filthy Divine Patron!!!

Chapter 362 - 362: Enlargement, Rampage, Expected Gains

Damn it!

The recent explosion that razed the hill was, of course, his masterpiece. The chaos it created was meant to provide cover for their escape through underwater means, evading the blockade of the Elven fleet.

But little did they know, as soon as they emerged from the secret passage of the base, they ran into a Naga Berserker charging straight at them, seemingly materializing out of nowhere. Just as they dealt with it, more Naga Berserkers and Dragon Blood Murlocs appeared, entangling them in this predicament.

It wasn't until he saw that detestable face that he realized it was the detestable Divine Patron's army.

Now, the Silver Masked Deceiver was grinding his teeth, wishing he could tear them to shreds.

Seeing the Silver Masked Deceiver glaring at him, his anger almost overflowing, Ji Chen couldn't help but raise a faint smirk.

His earlier frustration from being outwitted had also slightly diminished in his heart.

However, Ji Chen was someone who held grudges, and this wasn't enough!

Now that you've stepped into my territory, I must host you properly.

He gave a mocking smile and slowly raised his right hand.

The Silver Masked Deceiver watched this scene, a sense of unease flashing in his heart.

In the next moment, he suddenly felt the surrounding seawater violently compressing the white membrane around him, and the treasure in his hand began to flicker madly.

His expression changed drastically.

If this white membrane were to break, they would likely run out of oxygen soon, and they might even be crushed into meat patties by the water pressure at this depth.

Damn it! This despicable Divine Patron!

Not killing him back then was probably the most serious mistake he had ever made in his life.

There was no time to think too much.

The Silver Masked Deceiver immediately led the other Iron Masked Deceivers in a hasty retreat, rapidly ascending.

Ji Chen didn't stop them, just watching with mockery.

His left hand also slowly lifted, gathering a more formidable magical power.

Relying on their treasures, the Deceivers ascended rapidly, and as they saw the light getting closer and closer to the surface, a glimmer of hope appeared in their eyes.

But they quickly noticed something was amiss. Why was their ascent speed increasing, so much so that it was becoming difficult to control?

They attempted to slow down their ascent by manipulating their treasures, but it had no effect. Looking downward, they saw a powerful, substantial current pushing them upwards.

Moreover, the speed was increasing rapidly.

The Deceivers gazed at the rapidly approaching sea surface, and hope in their eyes turned to a shade of despair.

Boom!

Ahhhhh!

Hundreds of objects burst out of the sea, propelled into the air by inertia, their eyes wide with terror as they looked at the approaching blue sky. The Deceivers flailed their limbs frantically, emitting the most frightened screams of their lives.

Once the inertia was depleted, they plummeted from a height of several dozen meters into the sea, creating a series of massive water columns.

Falling into the sea from such a height was no different from crashing onto a stone floor directly, and most of the Deceivers perished instantly.

Only the Silver Masked Deceiver let out a furious roar, his body suddenly expanding into a giant standing five or six meters tall.

He crashed into the sea, sending up a spray of waves, but a moment later, he resurfaced, covered in injuries, and stared furiously at the sea not far away.

Looking at the bodies of his subordinates floating on the surrounding sea surface, a trace of sorrow welled up in his heart.

Most of the organization's manpower in the entire Maple Principality was lost here. Even if he survived as the leader, he would still face the organization's retribution, and by then, he might as well be dead.

At this moment, the sea not far away churned, and Ji Chen's figure slowly emerged. He seemed to be standing on the sea surface as if it were solid ground, a faint smile on his face.

This smile pierced deep into the Silver Masked Deceiver's heart, nearly causing him to lose his sanity in an instant.

All of this was thanks to him!!!

This bastard Divine Patron must be killed this time for sure!!!

Roar!

As a giant, the mask on his face had shattered, revealing a withered and haggard face underneath. His eyes, filled with bloodshot veins, overflowed with a vigorous intent to kill.

[Deceiver Duanbi]

[Race]: Human

[Status]: Giant Transformation

[Level]: 45

[Skills]: Giant Transformation, Strength, Impact Resistance, Combat Recovery, Metallization

[The leader of the Deceiver organization in the Maple Principality, in his giant form, possesses extraordinary strength]

Level 45?

A flicker of interest crossed Ji Chen's face as he glanced at his current level. After a series of battles with the Mountain Trolls earlier, thousands of them had provided a substantial amount of experience, pushing his level to 39, just a few steps away from the level 40 milestone.

Now, let's use this Silver Masked Deceiver as the stepping stone for him to reach level 40.

He squinted his eyes.

The giant could no longer hold back, leaping forcefully out of the sea like a missile.

A brilliant metallic gleam flickered on its enormous fist, and a fierce gust of wind stirred countless water vapors as it surged forward.

Duanbi watched as Ji Chen remained motionless despite the approaching danger. A great joy filled his heart, and a sinister smile appeared on his face as if he could already envision Ji Chen being smashed into a pulp beneath his fist.

If he could kill this formidable Divine Patron, it might make up for some of his responsibility.

But then he saw Ji Chen slowly reveal a smile, raising his right hand and conjuring a thin water shield in front of him.

This infuriated him even more.. What a joke!?

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Can such a thin water shield withstand his punch?

The power behind this punch, he had practiced it for a full thirty years!!

No matter what, this Divine Patron must die.

Blinking his eyes, his fist collided with the water shield, and Duanbi's face changed dramatically because he felt like his fist had hit a bundle of cotton, and all the force dissipated, causing no harm.

Subconsciously, he tried to retract his arm but found it stuck as if glued and couldn't free it.

Watching Ji Chen's unchanged smile, he suddenly felt a chill in his heart.

"Wait..."

He was about to say something when he was struck by a massive hammer. His several meters tall body flew backwards as if it had lost all its weight, spraying blood and a few teeth in the air. With a thud, he plunged into the sea and didn't resurface for a long time, as if he had died directly under this blow.

Frowning at this scene, Ji Chen released his spiritual power.

Soon, he spotted Duanbi desperately swimming using a doggy paddle technique, a few hundred meters away in the ocean.

Trying to escape?

Ji Chen raised his hands, and a vast amount of mana poured out.

A massive hand of water, thick and strong, suddenly rose from the sea in the distance, clutching Duanbi who was struggling ceaselessly.

Compared to this massive hand, Duanbi, who was five or six meters tall, looked as thin as a twig.

Ji Chen waved his hand lightly, and Duanbi was brought in front of him by the giant hand.

He said calmly, "Do you still want to continue the fight?"

Even in this situation, Duanbi still had a face full of hatred and resentment, his eyes as if wanting to devour Ji Chen alive.

This Deceiver had indeed been brainwashed quite effectively. Ji Chen sighed inwardly and didn't intend to continue playing with him. He was about to crush him with a single slap.

But then, there came an anxious shout.

"Hold on, don't kill him!"

Ji Chen furrowed his brows slightly and turned to look.

Yasen arrived in a small airship not far away.

Seeing Ji Chen's furrowed brows, he quickly said, "Your Excellency, I don't want to steal your credit. I will report everything you've done today truthfully. No one can take away your contributions.

In fact, capturing a Silver Mask Deceiver alive is more valuable than killing him. Please hand him over to us, and we will definitely give you a satisfactory outcome!"

Yasen spoke very earnestly, lowering his posture significantly.

Strength spoke for everything.

If he were dealing with a weaker individual, he wouldn't be this polite. However, he had just witnessed Ji Chen crush the enemy with absolute strength, and that imposing demeanor was enough to deter everyone and gain his complete approval.

At least, he felt that facing this giant-sized Silver Mask Deceiver wouldn't be so easy and comfortable.

Ji Chen glanced at Yasen, and his brow slowly relaxed. "Very well, I'll leave him to you."

Upon hearing this, Yasen breathed a sigh of relief. He was genuinely afraid that Ji Chen would refuse, which would have made things very difficult.

Choosing between the friendship and goodwill of a strong ally and a living Silver Mask Deceiver who could provide a wealth of information, Yasen would probably choose the former. But it would still be a somewhat painful decision.

Yasen understood that Ji Chen was extending a favor to him, and he couldn't help but feel a sense of gratitude in his heart.

He knew that this Silver Mask Deceiver had designed traps and schemes to frame Ji Chen, even posing a threat to his life with a substantial portion of his forces.

To hand over such an enemy so readily was a testament to the friendship between their Elves and Ji Chen.

The massive hand suddenly exerted force, and Duanbi spurted out a mouthful of blood, looking dejected. He was forcibly returned to his normal size from his giant form.

Then, Ji Chen tossed him onto the airship like garbage.

The Elves and soldiers on board quickly checked Duanbi's condition. Upon learning that he was not in mortal danger, they also showed gratitude.

For them, letting Duanbi die like this would be too merciful. The recent collapse of the hills had buried many of their comrades, and only by subjecting him to the most excruciating torment could they ease their hearts.

Ji Chen merely nodded in response.

Originally, he had contemplated dealing with Duanbi directly to vent his frustration. However, upon realizing that Duanbi was not just any Deceiver but the leader responsible for the Silver Mask Deceivers in the Maple Principality, he changed his mind.

After today, he, as someone directly or indirectly involved in resolving the majority of the Deceivers in the Maple Principality, would undoubtedly draw the attention of the Deceivers.

Given their recent behavior and their obsession with revenge, or what they called his "Divine Patron" identity, it was evident that as long as he remained on the continent, Deceivers would pose a continuous threat, both openly and covertly.

Ji Chen was not one to sit idly by.

But the enemy that scared him wasn't the Deceivers themselves; it was the unknown aspect of the enemy.

So, it was better to collaborate with the Elves and the Maple Principality, who had been in a long-term battle against the Deceivers, to gain more insights into this mysterious organization.

As the saying goes, "Know thy self, know thy enemy. A thousand battles, a thousand victories."

"I hope that after you extract useful information from him, you will share it with the Crown of the Ocean,"

Yasen readily agreed, "Of course, without your intervention, these Deceivers might have escaped."

"It's only right and proper," Ji Chen replied with a slight nod.

He casually inquired, "How is the situation at the Deceiver's base?"

Yasen sighed, a bitter expression on his face as he looked at the unconscious Duanbi, a hint of resentment in his eyes.

"That lunatic used several battalions of war puppets as bait to lure our soldiers into the caves, then triggered the pre-buried explosives to collapse all the entrances and exits, causing heavy casualties among our troops.

Currently, there are at least three thousand Maple Principality soldiers and a thousand Elven warriors trapped inside. Due to the complexity of the caves, we can't even pinpoint their exact locations.

In addition, they've buried a vast amount of strategic supplies, war machinery, and wealth plundered from various locations in the Maple Principality. It's as if they'd rather bury it than let us have it, damn it!"

Hearing about the strategic supplies and war machinery, Ji Chen immediately perked up and asked with great interest, "A vast amount of supplies? Does it include rare resources?"

Yasen found the question a bit strange but decided to answer truthfully, "It must include some. Previously, these Deceivers had plundered a batch of rare resources intended for overseas shipment.

Judging from the resources they left behind in Maple City, these rare resources were temporarily stored in this base. If it weren't for this surprise attack, they might have moved them away."

"Lord Ji Chen, may I ask why you're inquiring about this...?"

"I mean, I can help you retrieve these buried supplies and assist in rescuing the trapped soldiers."

"Is that true?!" Yasen was almost jumping with excitement, his face flushed.

It wasn't surprising that he was so excited. The scarcity of the Elven population was well-known, and these one thousand Elven warriors represented almost a quarter of the total Elven population stationed in the Maple Principality.

If they were to lose a thousand Elven warriors in one fell swoop, even in victory, as the commander of this offensive, it would be considered a Pyrrhic victory. He would undoubtedly face direct accountability from the Council, and he might not even retain his position.

As the highest-ranking commander of the Fifth Fleet, Yasen quickly regained his composure. He spoke earnestly, "If you can rescue our soldiers, we will offer these rare resources as a token of gratitude to you.

Furthermore, the various strategic supplies and war machinery stored inside will be distributed... with forty percent going to you!"

Yasen had risen to the position of the highest-ranking commander of the Fifth Fleet not only due to his strength but also because of his keen sense of self-interest.

He knew there was no such thing as a free lunch.

Since Ji Chen had taken the initiative to offer his assistance, it was highly likely that he had set his sights on what was inside.

Therefore, instead of waiting for Ji Chen to reveal his intentions, Yasen thought it was better to proactively propose an arrangement.

Listening to this, Ji Chen didn't hesitate and nodded in acknowledgment.

However, Yasen seemed more agreeable to him now.

Young man, it seems you know how to handle things.

A batch of rare resources along with a forty percent share of strategic resources and war machinery was more than enough to compensate for the losses incurred during this expedition..

Chapter 364: My Drill Can Pierce the Heavens

This journey, aside from expending some energy, hadn't resulted in much loss. The troops that suffered casualties could mostly be resurrected at the Resurrection Altar, and the resources spent were just a small fraction of what we're about to gain.

After Yassen's promise, he couldn't help but wonder, "Your Excellency, may I ask how you plan to rescue the trapped soldiers inside?"

Ji Chen revealed a mysterious smile and, as if walking on calm waters, made his way to the hill.

He casually chose an entrance and went in.

Yassen and the others, although puzzled, followed behind.

After entering the cave for several dozen meters, they found the path blocked by collapsed rocks and mud. Some elven warriors were vigorously digging with various tools, but their low-efficiency excavation methods had a minimal effect on the magically reinforced rocks.

Seeing Ji Chen and Yassen enter, they stopped their activities and saluted Yassen.

"Lord Yassen."

Then, with a solemn expression, they saluted Ji Chen, their eyes carrying a hint of gratitude.

They all knew about Ji Chen's feat of capturing the Deceivers who had intended to escape secretly.

Ji Chen waved his hand and asked, "What's the current situation?"

One of the elven warriors looked at Yassen first, receiving his nod of approval, before responding, "Due to the Deceivers' long-term use of the Eternal Fortification Spell to continuously reinforce the mountain's structure, the hastily placed explosives did not completely demolish the hill. The actual explosion only affected the surface caves and some interior spaces.

So, apart from some soldiers who were crushed by falling rocks, a considerable number are trapped in the deeper caves.

We dare not use explosives for clearing out of fear that it might trigger further collapses. But with the current excavation efficiency, it's unlikely our brothers inside can hold out until we break through.

The biggest problem at the moment is that we have no way of knowing where our comrades are trapped."

Ji Chen nodded slightly.

Although the situation was more challenging than he had anticipated, it was still within his control.

Amid the elves' astonishment, he slowly raised his right hand, gathering magical power.

Soon, they heard the sound of rushing water. Just as they thought it was an illusion, a floating stream of water slithered into the cave like a serpent. Following Ji Chen's gestures, it seeped into the cracks in the rocks.

Water could be tangible or intangible.

It could become a cutting blade under Ji Chen's control, slicing through enemies. Alternatively, it could return to its gentle nature under his command.

Water's exceptional malleability was one of its greatest advantages. By attaching his spiritual power to water, it became a flexible method of exploration, capable of delving into places that were typically difficult to reach.

Under his control, the water flowed through crevices and hollows, turned corners, and even flowed upwards.

Soon, his gaze focused on something.

Seeing this, Yasen, who had his heart in his throat, couldn't help but ask, "How is it going?"

Ji Chen withdrew his mental power slightly and replied, "In the depths of this passage, there are indeed dozens of elven warriors trapped, but the situation doesn't look good. Many of the elves are injured."

Yasen's eyes brightened momentarily, but his brow furrowed again. A new challenge had arisen. Although they had found the trapped soldiers, how could they rescue them as quickly as possible?

Feeling the gaze of Yasen and the group of elves, Ji Chen smiled faintly.

The water stream retracted, and its front end condensed into a massive drill bit with grooves covering its surface, almost equivalent to the diameter of the cave.

The formerly pliable water had transformed into a solid, and the drill bit began rotating, drilling into the obstructing rocks with a thunderous roar.

Ordinary tools like pickaxes and mattocks were fragile compared to this water-turned drill bit.

Broken pieces of rock and soil were continuously brought out by the grooves on the drill bit, forming a layer of debris on the ground.

"Don't just stand there. Take these excavated rocks and soil outside, don't block the way here.

Also, reinforce the excavated passage to prevent a secondary collapse."

Ji Chen's words woke up the stunned elves, who nodded in a hurry and began clearing the debris. They also inserted wooden stakes into the sides and the top of the passage for support.

Their minds were filled with astonishment.

Could there be such a technique?

Watching them in their dumbfounded state, Ji Chen felt a rare sense of superiority over the people of this unfamiliar world, especially the elves who considered themselves powerful and civilized.

If a player were here, they would surely exclaim, "Isn't this a drilling machine?"

Through Ji Chen's condensation and manipulation, he had essentially created a simplified version of the device, consisting only of the drill bit. Everything else relied on manual operation.

This was an organic combination of modern scientific theory and the fantastical magic of this otherworld.

The difference was that the energy source for his drill was magic, whereas on Earth, it would have been diesel fuel.

The water, empowered by his magic, became incredibly hard, even more resilient than metal. It had a highly efficient performance in excavating rocks and soil. Due to the nature of water, the drill bit didn't need to consider issues of wear and tear at all.

Yasen watched the water drill bit vigorously rotating under Ji Chen's control, and there was a hint of amazement in his eyes. "How clever! Your Excellency, you truly surprise me."

"It seems you've seen something similar before?"

Yasen smiled and nodded as if recalling something.

"Although the form of this drill bit is somewhat different, it does bear a striking resemblance to our elven ironwood drilling device or the drilling tools used for alchemical mining. At the very least, they are quite similar in appearance...."

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"But compared to both, whether it's a metal drill bit or an enchanted solid wood drill bit, your water drill bit clearly has more advantages.

Unfortunately, this is created with your mana and not technology, a product of nature and magic. Nonetheless, it provides us with a fresh perspective. Perhaps the Imperial Research Institute can explore in this direction, to see if we can cultivate drilling materials that can transition between liquid and solid states and possess considerable elasticity."

In these words, he felt Yasan's praise and, at the same time, his own display of technology.

"So, do the elves also have similar mining equipment?"

Yasan was momentarily stunned, then said, "Of course, every elven mine is equipped with similar excavation devices; otherwise, with the low efficiency of manual labor, we wouldn't be able to meet the empire's vast mineral needs."

Ji Chen nodded.

Alchemy technology in this fantasy world was quite advanced. Although the paths to realization were quite different, the level of technology displayed in certain aspects was not inferior to that of Earth.

The water drill bit dug at a very fast pace. Between Ji Chen and Yasan's conversation, it had advanced dozens of meters, a speed hundreds of times faster than manual excavation.

A little over ten minutes later.

After the water drill bit broke through a layer of rubble, the sense of obstruction suddenly disappeared, and it drilled into an empty space. Ji Chen had an idea and transformed the drill bit back into water.

Before him appeared an undamaged cavity, inside which dozens of elven warriors were looking at him excitedly.

“Someone has finally come to rescue us. I thought we were going to die here.”

“Wait, is that Lord Yasan behind you? Is it Lord Yasan who personally came to save us!?”

These elven warriors subconsciously looked at Yasan standing in the background, ignoring Ji Chen in the front.

Yasan’s face changed slightly at this and scolded, “It was Lord Ji Chen who saved you. Hurry up and thank him.”

At his words, they were slightly taken aback but quickly said, “Lord Ji Chen, thank you very much for your assistance. Please forgive our earlier offense.”

Ji Chen waved his hand indifferently; he was getting used to the elves’ pride.

After all, this rescue was essentially a transaction, and there was no need to overthink it.

He just asked, “Are there any more elves or Imperial soldiers trapped further in?”

One of the elves immediately replied, “After going several tens of meters deeper, this cave will split into two paths. A group of warriors is trapped in the left fork, while the deepest part of the right fork is a storage room for the Deceiver.”

A storage room?

Ji Chen’s heart stirred, but he knew that rescuing people was the priority now, not looting.

“Let’s continue digging, and have the injured elven warriors leave first.”

Yasan nodded, then turned to the elves following him and said, “You take the injured warriors out, and the rest of you, continue to assist Lord Ji Chen in moving rubble and clearing the path.”

“Yes!”

After all the elves inside had come out, Yasan said to Ji Chen, “My lord, let’s continue.”

Ji Chen nodded slightly and condensed the water drill bit again to resume digging.

After digging another thirty to forty meters, a fork in the cave appeared before them.

Without wasting any time, they followed the left path as described by the elves earlier.

At this point, the passage was beginning to slope downward. The collapse of the upper rock layers didn’t seem to have a severe impact here, just some rubble blocking the path.

They could faintly hear the elves inside digging in the opposite direction.

Ji Chen didn’t stop the water drill, nor was he afraid that it might harm the people behind him who were also digging. He had great confidence in his control.

Inside, the elves were sweating profusely as they dug through the rubble, but suddenly, they heard a strange humming sound.

“Wait, did any of you hear something strange?”

“Did you? You’re not trapped here and experiencing auditory hallucinations, are you? You’ve lost your mind even before getting out.”

“Um, I think I heard it too, like the sound of some kind of drilling machine.”

“Nonsense! Even if Lord Yasan were to bring an alchemical drilling machine from elsewhere, it would take at least half a month, and how much time has passed now? Not even half a day!

If it’s true, I’ll give you all my secret stash money after we get out!”

At this moment, they listened carefully again and indeed, there was no strange humming sound anymore; it had turned into a distinct rumbling noise.

Soon, the noise grew louder, and the pile of rubble in front of them was suddenly knocked away, revealing a massive aqua-blue drill bit.

Just inches away from the elf who had sworn there was no unusual sound, it came to a slow stop, startling him backward, and nearly causing him to lose his soul.

The drill bit transformed into water, revealing a rather handsome human male behind it.

This human male cast a glance at them and said to the ones behind him, “Found them, a small group of elves, not more or less.”

As they emerged from the cave, Ji Chen looked up at the sky; it was midday.

Turning his gaze, there was only this one cave passage they had cleared so far, but there were at least dozens more like it, each trapping soldiers. It seemed like they would spend the whole day here, but the thought of the rewards that awaited him afterward filled him with motivation.

There was no time to lose.

Under Yasan’s guidance, they found the next collapsed cave.

It was a repetition of the same process.

First, he attached his psychic power to the water flow, then he drilled into the crevices to investigate if anyone was trapped inside. If they were, he would condense water drills to clear the way; otherwise, he would leave it aside for now.

Sometimes during the excavation, they discovered many elves and soldiers crushed by the collapsed rocks. Without Ji Chen’s powerful control, the high-speed spinning drill could have torn the bodies apart, splattering blood and flesh everywhere.

Each time they found the body of an elven warrior, Yasan’s face grew darker.

However, as the elf had mentioned earlier, the Deceiver had underestimated the strength of the cave structure, which had been reinforced multiple times by the elves. The hastily placed explosives didn’t cause a severe collapse.

Experienced warriors quickly found sturdy structures as they sensed imminent collapses.

As they dug deeper, although many were injured, most of them had survived.

Thanks to Ji Chen's efficient drilling speed, more and more elven warriors and soldiers were rescued, seeing the light of day again.

Outside the cave, news about Ji Chen began to spread among the saved elven warriors and soldiers. Without exception, they felt deeply grateful to the person who had rescued them from the pitch-dark cave.

Of course, Ji Chen only learned about this after he had come out.

At this moment, he was still inside the pitch-black cave, working the drill like a miner, hoping to strike the "ore" (meaning the elves and soldiers).

Soon, another cave was opened, and another group of elves and soldiers were rescued.

Ji Chen waved his hand, dispersing the water drill.

His breath was somewhat rapid and heavy.

Sustaining the drill for an extended period and keeping it spinning at high speed was quite mana-consuming.

However, at the same time, his control over mana and water was gradually strengthening. His mana output became more precise and efficient, with fewer unnecessary losses.

If he had been careless with his spending before, it was now a matter of optimizing every expenditure.

Efficiency in mana utilization greatly increased.

Ji Chen had a sudden flash of insight and came up with an idea.

Could he simultaneously create two, three, or even more water drills and have them work together? Wouldn't that significantly improve efficiency?

Excited by this idea, he decided to give it a try later.

Once his mana was sufficiently replenished.

He condensed the water drill once again.

This time, not just one, but two.

Creating them individually was a breeze; he could easily form a hundred or a thousand.

However, making them move in a coordinated manner was a challenging task..

Chapter 366: Multi-tasking, Soldier's Actions, The Lonely Red Dot

Under Ji Chen's control, two water drills slowly took shape.

He placed his mental focus on them, causing them to rotate and operate simultaneously. Instantly, he felt the difficulty of controlling them increase several-fold.

But he didn't stop at two. After getting used to it for a while, Ji Chen's mind conjured a third water drill, attaching his mental power to it as well, and it began rotating too.

The difficulty increased several-fold once again.

His mental power felt the pressure of having to control three drills at once. One would stop inadvertently, while another would spin too fast.

However, Ji Chen seemed to find joy in this challenge. He worked hard to control them, making them operate at the same rhythm and cooperate with each other.

This was different from Alice's mental manipulation. Alice used the inherent intelligence of monsters as a foundation to bewitch and control them, essentially controlling the spirits of these creatures and making them follow their original consciousness to fight. It had a material basis.

But Ji Chen's current operation was about giving inanimate objects that he had condensed from water a certain degree of self-operation capability. It was akin to making lifeless things move on their own, and the difficulty was not even on the same level.

Under his diligent efforts, his control gradually improved, and it didn't feel as challenging as before.

The three water drills could now operate perfectly simultaneously. During excavation, they could also look out for each other and coordinate, even performing both self-rotation and revolution at the same time, greatly increasing their digging efficiency.

Vaguely, Ji Chen felt that he could condense more water drills, but the current situation clearly didn't allow for more. The combined force of the three water drills had already blocked the entire cave entrance.

Under the astonished gazes of Yasen and his team, the three water drills went all out. The obstructing rocks were like paper, easily broken through, and the entrance to the cave swung open.

Efficiency had increased by more than ten times compared to before.

As a military commander who had come to power through martial force, Yasen may not have been a spellcaster, but from the beginning to now, he had some understanding of how difficult it was to simultaneously control three independently operating and cooperating drills.

This was a display of control over magic power and a manifestation of tremendous mental strength.

In his heart, Yasen had a greater appreciation for Ji Chen.

At this moment, he suddenly noticed Ji Chen's actions coming to a halt, with a somewhat dazed look on his face. He couldn't help but ask, "Your Excellency, what's wrong?"

"Nothing, just feeling a bit tired," Ji Chen coughed lightly, but he was quite perplexed in his mind.

Upon hearing this, Yasen tactfully said, "Then take a break for now, don't exhaust yourself due to excessive use of magic power.¹"

Ji Chen nodded and dispersed the water drills with a wave of his hand. He leaned against the rocky wall and closed his eyes as if resting, but his mind was still open to system notifications.

Just moments ago, he suddenly received a system notification in his ear.

“Ding- Due to your attempts and development, you have comprehended a new skill: Multitasking (Purple Skill).”

???

What just happened? How did he suddenly comprehend a purple skill?

He opened the panel to find this new skill.

“[Multitasking (Purple Skill): Can infuse mental energy into several condensed objects, granting them a certain degree of autonomous action capability].”

Although the comprehension was somewhat sudden, Ji Chen quickly recognized the enormous potential of this skill.

As the name and description implied, Multitasking allowed him to grant a certain degree of autonomous action capability to several objects he had condensed.

Today, he had condensed the form of water drills. That meant he could also condense humanoid water warriors. If he attached his mental power to them, similar to how he controlled the water drills, according to the skill’s description, it wouldn’t take long for them to become warriors capable of autonomous combat.

He pondered deeply.

This appearance was somewhat like Sea Heir. All the water warriors he had condensed were indirectly controlled by him, fearless in the face of life and death.

However, the specific usage and level of strength required would only become clear after he had conducted precise experiments.

Ji Chen opened his eyes and continued with the excavation.

Under his efforts, blocked caves and passages were dug open one by one, and trapped individuals were rescued. Soon, thousands of elves and soldiers had gathered in the camp on the high ground by the marshes.

It wasn’t until the last collapsed cave was opened, and the final group of elves was rescued, that Ji Chen let out a heavy sigh of relief.

Exiting the cave, he looked up at the sky.

A bright moon hung high, and it was already evening.

From early morning until now, he had been digging, exhausting his magic power, then recovering, and exhausting it again, repeating this cycle at least six or seven times. At this moment, he felt more drained than ever, as if his body had been emptied.

But when he thought about the gains he could obtain from this effort, he suddenly felt a sense of fulfillment.

Working hard and exhausting oneself for resources were all worth it!

Yasen, who had been by his side throughout the process, also had a hint of weariness on his face. He was busy commanding the removal of rubble and transporting the rescued injured soldiers,

which was not an easy task. However, seeing that most of the trapped elves had been rescued, he couldn't help but relax internally.

Seeing that it was getting late, Yaseen spoke to Ji Chen.

"Your Excellency, it's quite late now. This place is quite a distance from Maple City and Maple Harbor. How about resting here for the night in the temporary camp?"

It's a good opportunity to continue excavating the remaining caves tomorrow and uncover the Deceivers' various storage rooms."

After a moment of consideration, Ji Chen nodded in agreement. Following Yaseen's lead, they crossed the now-tide-covered marshes and arrived at the temporary camp on the nearby high ground.

However, what surprised them was....

Chapter 367: Multi-tasking, Soldier's Actions, The Lonely Red Dot (2)

The camp was brightly lit, with thousands of elves and soldiers from the principality gathered in the central square.

Even some lightly wounded soldiers stood there, some with bandages and crutches.

All eyes were on them, or rather, on Ji Chen.

Just as Yaseen was about to get angry, an elven officer ran over and whispered a few words in his ear.

Yaseen's face showed some surprise, but he still nodded and looked over.

Ji Chen seemed to sense something and walked a few steps forward, coming in front of the many soldiers.

Silently, the soldiers of the Maple Principality made a gesture of respect, clenching their right fists and thumping them against their left chests, bending their waists to Ji Chen.

Likewise, the elves bowed their heads in a solemn military salute to Ji Chen, their eyes filled with gratitude.

At this moment, they finally recognized Ji Chen.

If it weren't for Ji Chen's intervention, most of them would probably have been trapped inside, swallowed by those pitch-black, lightless caves.

They also knew that Ji Chen not only saw through the Deceiver's plan to escape in secret but also captured one of the silver-masked Deceivers, preventing this gang of troublemakers from escaping.

So they spontaneously gathered to express their gratitude to Ji Chen.

Brave warriors could fearlessly face life and death on the battlefield, but straightforward words of affection are probably hard to come by. They could only express their feelings in this solemn manner.

On the other hand, players who were involved in logistics work within the army couldn't believe what they were seeing.

In their eyes, the usually proud elves and soldiers of the principality were actually bowing their heads to a human?

And it wasn't just one or two of them.

Under the bright moonlight and amidst the blazing fires, over a thousand elves and more than seven thousand principality soldiers lowered their heads, creating a sea of bowed heads.

It was a truly breathtaking sight.

This moment would be etched in their memories forever.

Seeing this, Ji Chen's emotions stirred like ripples, but he didn't say anything, just nodded slowly.

As if it were a signal, the elves and soldiers of the principality raised their heads one after another. Yaseen took the opportunity to say, "Besides those on alert and patrol duty, everyone else can go back and rest."

Then, he smiled at Ji Chen and said, "Your Excellency, you've had a tiring day. Please rest in your tent for a while; dinner will be delivered soon."

Ji Chen didn't say anything, just nodded, and followed an elven officer to the central part of the camp, where a large tent was set up.

"Your Excellency Ji Chen, this is your tent. If you need anything, feel free to order me."

The elven officer's demeanor was extremely respectful, speaking with the attitude of someone addressing a superior.

Ji Chen recognized him; this elven officer seemed to be one of those he had rescued from the cave. He smiled and nodded in response.

After the elven officer left, he began to examine the tent.

As an elf, even in a temporary tent, the decoration was still very luxurious and elegant. Tables, chairs, cabinets, flower-patterned carpets – all of it showcased the elves' refined aesthetic sense.

There was even a faint floral fragrance in the air.

In two words: upper-class!

A few minutes later, the elven officer pushed a food cart in and placed exquisite dishes on the table, a feast for the senses.

It was rumored that when the elven army went on a campaign, they would bring along a whole team of chefs skilled in various cuisines for the nobility and officers to enjoy during wartime.

Now it seemed to be true.

After enjoying dinner, he quickly went to sleep.

The next morning.

Refreshed, Ji Chen once again transformed into a miner and continued digging, clearing one blocked storage room after another.

The Deceiver's resources were incredibly abundant. Even if it was just the base of a principality, it stored a vast amount of supplies, piled up like mountains, enough to support the consumption of a medium-sized battle.

According to the information left behind, the Deceivers in Maple City had indeed been planning to launch an attack on the city, in collaboration with the mountain trolls. For this purpose, they had secretly transported a considerable amount of resources and equipment from other regions, hoping to gain the benefits they desired.

But no one could have anticipated that everything would be disrupted by Ji Chen.

The silver-masked Deceiver Duanbi had originally thought Ji Chen was just a lucky Lord of Glory, favored by the gods. However, it turned out that he was a big boss deeply hidden in the shadows.

Not only did the plan to besiege Ji Chen fail, but Ji Chen also managed to get Luo Yang to his side, obtaining a wealth of information. This directly led to the exposure and downfall of the gathering place in the city and this hidden base. In the end, they even captured him alive.

If they had another chance, they would undoubtedly go all out to besiege Ji Chen, rather than relying on the unreliable mountain trolls.

This ultimately led to the loss of both their people and the stored supplies in this base.

Looking at the towering pile of supplies in the storage room, Ji Chen felt a surge of motivation. According to the agreement with Yasen, forty percent of these supplies were his spoils of war, not to mention the batch of rare resources.

Perhaps this was the biggest harvest the Crown of the Ocean had obtained from the outside world.

This wave of discoveries was simply a huge windfall!

Soon, there was only one unopened passage left, which led to the deepest part of this base.

The deeper the place, the better the things stored there.

The Deceivers were well aware of this, so they took special care of this passage. It had been badly damaged by the explosions, making it much more challenging to excavate and clear.

However, under the relentless power of the water drill, they gradually cleared a path.

When the last massive rock was drilled open, a spacious underground hall appeared before them.

The hall was as large as several soccer fields, and faint runic patterns could be seen on the surrounding walls, preserving them despite the explosions.

At the top of the hall, a dazzling crystal sphere hung from the circular dome, emitting a scorching light that made the place as bright as day.

Upon closer inspection, on the left side of the hall, there were neatly stacked wooden crates containing siege equipment, a large number of potions, fine weapons, and armor. These items alone were enough to arm tens of thousands of soldiers.

If these things had fallen into the hands of the mountain trolls, it would have been a severe blow to the Maple Principality.

On the right side, there were metal crates filled with precious resources like crystals. It seemed that the batch of rare resources Yassen had mentioned was here.

On the north side, there was a closed metal gate, pitch black and leading to an unknown place.

In the middle of the hall, about four to five hundred war golems were roaming. Upon hearing the commotion, they picked up their weapons and rushed toward Ji Chen.

Ji Chen didn't need to handle this personally. With a wave of Yassen's hand, the elven warriors behind him swarmed forward and engaged the golems in battle.

After about ten minutes, all the war golems were reduced to fragments. The elves, under Yassen's command, began to transport the supplies from here, which would be divided among them once everything was outside.

Ji Chen walked over to the closed metal gate on the north side, looked through the gap, and saw complete darkness on the other side.

A chilling coldness emanated from within.

Could this be some kind of cold storage?

He hesitated for a moment.

After searching the surroundings and finding nothing resembling a switch, he summoned the water drill again and started drilling holes in the gate.

The harsh sound of the drill grinding against metal drew everyone's attention.

Yassen approached with curiosity and asked, "Lord Ji Chen, is there something inside the gate?"

"At the moment, I don't know. We'll only find out once we open it."

The metal gate seemed to be made of some rare material, incredibly sturdy. If it weren't for his water drill's ability to repair itself with water, it would have likely been damaged a long time ago.

Even so, it took a full three hours to drill a hole in the gate large enough for a single person to pass through.

However, as they witnessed this scene, everyone's curiosity grew stronger.

What could be stored behind such a sturdy gate?

Before entering, Ji Chen casually opened the omniscience map to check for any war golems inside, to prevent any surprise attacks.

But on the map, there was only a solitary red dot..

Chapter 368: Dwarves and Elves, Mysterious Prisoner

There's someone?

Yassen noticed the subtle change in Ji Chen's expression and quickly asked, "What's going on?"

"There seems to be someone inside."

Upon hearing this, Yaseen's expression darkened, and he immediately ordered the elves and soldiers of the principality to stop moving the goods and remain on guard.

"Your Excellency, we don't know what or who is inside. Should we send a team in for reconnaissance first?"

Ji Chen nodded, not refusing. While he had confidence in his own abilities, a confined and narrow space like this was not conducive to unleashing his powers. Charging ahead wasn't the role befitting a mage like him.

A mixed team of elves and soldiers entered, and their green markers on the map slowly moved deeper along the narrow passage. When they stopped dozens of meters away from the red marker, they split into two groups and circled around, conducting an internal inspection before returning.

In the darkness, their figures gradually became visible, but they looked as though they had encountered a snowstorm. They shivered uncontrollably, their breath visible in the cold air, and even their eyebrows carried a frosty sheen.

"Your Excellency, the temperature inside is extremely low, and we didn't see any enemies. However, there is a sealed cage in the middle."

"A cage?"

Ji Chen furrowed his brows slightly.

Inside the Deceiver's base, there was actually a cage?

Could it be used to detain someone?

Yaseen also found this quite surprising and instinctively looked at Ji Chen."

Your Excellency, what should we do now?"

"Let's go in and find out."

Since there were no enemies inside and only an unknown being trapped in the cage, it was safe to investigate.

The group entered the passageway beyond the gate, holding torches as they proceeded cautiously.

After advancing a few hundred meters, the surroundings suddenly opened up, and a violent cold air rushed toward them, making everyone shiver involuntarily.

Frost quickly formed on their eyebrows and hair.

Glancing ahead, in this underground space that was less than the size of a football field, the surroundings were elevated, with a central depression where a completely sealed metal cage stood.

Around the cage, layer upon layer of deep blue ice, icicles, and ice columns extended in all directions, even clinging to the rocky walls, creating a thin layer of ice.

The deep blue ice emitted a faint glow, creating a mesmerizing scene under the torchlight, with a soft blue light reflecting off the ice.

This scene left everyone astonished.

As they regained their senses, a sense of wariness crept in.

It was clear to everyone that this terrifying cold air and ice were emanating from the cage in the center.

For a moment, no one dared to make a move.

Why would the Deceiver keep an unknown being here? Friend or foe?

As their doubts multiplied, curiosity also grew stronger.

Soon, the bone-chilling cold became unbearable for the elves, and they all retreated from the area.

Only Yasen, with his exceptional combat skills, and Ji Chen, who possessed the power of the tides, were able to stand their ground in this frigid environment.

However, despite their resilience, the cold continued to cut into their bones like knives, infiltrating their bodies relentlessly.

As Ji Chen gazed at the metal cage shrouded in ice, he hesitated.

The fact that this cage could contain such a being and emit such terrifying cold and ice meant that it was no ordinary creature.

Opening it rashly now might release an unknown monster.

Yasen seemed to have similar thoughts and suggested, "I recommend that we leave this place for now and open it later after interrogating that silver-masked Deceiver."

Ji Chen nodded slightly.

Just as they were about to leave the area, the elven officer who had delivered food to Ji Chen the previous night rushed in, looking anxious.

"Lord Yasen, there's a dwarf causing a commotion outside in the camp!"

"A dwarf?" Yasen was momentarily surprised, his face contorted with anger. "A dwarf causing trouble here, and you didn't fight back!?"

"We did fight back, but that dwarf is too strong. We couldn't match his strength. Several dozen of our comrades have already been defeated."

One dwarf defeating dozens of them?

Ji Chen was somewhat astonished. He had witnessed the combat prowess of these elves, but one dwarf being able to defeat so many indicated exceptional strength.

However, the appearance of a dwarf causing trouble in the elven sanctuary of the Maple Principality was indeed an unusual occurrence.

Upon hearing this, Yasen's expression changed slightly.

He turned to Ji Chen and said, "Your Excellency, I need to return to the camp immediately to assess the situation. I won't be able to accompany you here."

Ji Chen nodded in agreement.

When Yassen returned to the camp, he saw from a distance a stout dwarf, small in stature but remarkably robust, tossing an elven warrior like a ball and grumbling as he did so.

“You elves have been boasting for so long, but is this all the strength you’ve got? Too weak, I must say! Apart from being a bit taller, I can’t find anything praiseworthy about you.”

“I’ve heard so much about your mighty pointed ears, but I don’t see what’s so impressive. I alone could take on a hundred of you!”

The dwarf’s words were undoubtedly like dancing in the minefield of the elves. The surrounding elven warriors were seething with anger, their temples pulsing with veins, but when it came to this dwarf, their eyes were filled with fear.

They considered themselves elite warriors, even among the numerous elven armies. However, against this scruffy-looking dwarf, none of them could last a single move. When they rushed forward, they couldn’t even see the dwarf’s movements clearly before being sent flying..

Chapter 369: Dwarves and Elves, Mysterious Prisoner (2)

From the beginning until now, the dwarf had sent more than a hundred elves flying back, but none of them witnessed how he did it.

However, the dwarves didn’t use the Warhammer next to him, otherwise, they would have already picked up their bows and swords.

“Are you elves capable of handling me? Well, forget it, all of you can come at once, so you can’t say I didn’t give you a chance.”

The dwarf continued with his trash talk.

Upon hearing this, the elves, their eyes filled with anger, were on the verge of disregarding their principles of combat and launching a collective attack to teach the dwarf a lesson.

“Stop all of you!!!”

A furious shout made them stop in their tracks, and they all stood at attention, saluting.

“Lord Yassen, you’ve returned!”

Yassen walked over with his hands behind his back, looking annoyed, and gave them a fierce glare. These freeloaders couldn’t even defeat a single dwarf, truly bringing shame to his face.

He fixed his gaze on the scruffy dwarf and said unfriendly, “Sir Dwarf, I don’t know what brings you into our camp. You’ve intruded without permission and injured many of our warriors. If you can’t provide an explanation, you will pay the price for your reckless actions.”

His words were filled with threats.

So what if this dwarf had some strength?

Could he withstand powerful bows and magic attacks? Could he withstand a sword formation formed by thousands of elven warriors?

Behind them stood a powerful elven empire, and when it came to dealing with the dwindling and struggling dwarves who had lost their last homeland, they didn't even need to lift a finger. At a mere command, countless races were willing to act as vanguards.

Upon hearing these words, the scruffy dwarf gave a disdainful smile, completely disregarding the implied threat in the words.

This dwarf was none other than Thotmudo, who had returned from the Western Continent. After learning that the Deceiver was the mastermind behind the destruction of the Black Iron Fortress, he traveled day and night to reach the Northern Continent, intending to warn Ji Chen to be cautious of these lunatics.

Back on the New Moon Islands, he heard that the cargo of the Crown of the Ocean was primarily delivered to Maple Harbor. So, he guessed that Ji Chen's likely destination in the Northern Continent would be Maple Harbor.

Therefore, he inquired along the way and followed various clues until he finally arrived here.

However, these elves were extremely arrogant, and seeing that he was a dwarf who didn't seem to want to talk much, they treated him with hostility and tried to drive him away in a rude manner.

So, he couldn't help but take action to teach them a lesson.

But it seemed that in the end, he would have to rely on the elves to find that kid, so for now, he wouldn't argue too much with them.

In reality, due to the Maple Principality and the elves actively blocking related information, the outside world didn't know that Ji Chen had provided the location of the Deceiver's gathering place and secret base in the city. They only knew that the elves had destroyed the base of an evil organization.

In the Maple Principality, which could be called an elven paradise, Thotmudo, as a dwarf, clearly couldn't obtain more information.

He also had no knowledge of Ji Chen's specific relationship with the elves, only that there seemed to be a business relationship between them.

He didn't provoke any more challenges and straightforwardly asked, "Do you know a Lord of Glory named Ji Chen?"

Lord Ji Chen?

A sinking feeling welled up in Yasen's heart.

What did this dwarf want with Lord Ji Chen?

According to the information they had received, Lord Ji Chen should be visiting the Northern Continent for the first time this time, and he should have been active within the Maple Principality throughout. It was unlikely that he had come into contact with dwarves, and it was highly improbable that he had any connection with them.

Moreover, a figure of his stature would hardly have any dealings with a declining race like the dwarves.

Subconsciously, Yasen was about to say the denial.

But in just that brief moment of hesitation, the thoughtful glint in Thotmudo's eyes, like that of a clever monkey, was noticed. "Have you met him?"

"I don't know any Lord of Glory named Ji Chen, Sir, you may have come to the wrong place."

Yasen denied decisively. He couldn't admit to this matter, whether it was for Lord Ji Chen's safety or the friendship between the elves and Lord Ji Chen.

Especially when it was a dwarf who was asking, it was even more impossible to disclose anything.

Seeing this, Thotmudo became even more suspicious. Looking at Yasen, who was desperately trying to hide something, his thoughts began to wander.

He had heard about that kid's Crown of the Ocean before, and it seemed that there were some business dealings with the elves here.

He was very familiar with the elven temperament—proud, greedy, and pathologically obsessed with any rare treasures. Perhaps the elves in Maple City had their eyes on the treasures brought by that kid and secretly made a move against him.

Otherwise, why would this elf have such a strange expression when mentioning the name Ji Chen?

With his already less-than-favorable impression of elves, combined with what he was witnessing now, Thotmudo instantly thought of the worst-case scenario.

His eyes narrowed slightly, emitting a hint of danger.

"You'd better tell me where that kid is. Otherwise, I don't mind letting you taste the wrath of a dwarf."

Yasen widened his eyes, finding it hard to believe what he had just heard.

It had been so long since he became the commander of the Fifth Fleet that he couldn't remember the last time someone dared to speak to him like this. Just who did this dwarf, who came out of nowhere, think he was?

Sure enough, this dwarf had ill intentions toward Lord Ji Chen!

The elves couldn't allow their enemies to harm their friend!

In an instant, a strong smell of gunpowder filled the air.

Yasen's muscles tensed all over, his heart pumping a large amount of blood, carrying a mighty force that flowed through every part of his body. A sharp edge radiated from him, causing a stinging sensation on his skin.

Thotmudo squinted his eyes, a glint of determination flashing in his cloudy eyes. His hand slowly rested on the Warhammer, and a heavy, mountain-like aura surged, seemingly exerting infinite pressure.

Dwarves didn't point their weapons at others, but when they did, it meant they considered them enemies.

Just as the two sides were about to come to blows.

A group of elves suddenly rushed into the camp from outside, looking somewhat panicked.

“Lord Yasen, it seems something has happened in the depths of the cave where Lord Ji Chen is. Ice is spreading out!”

Hearing this, Yasen’s aura suddenly stagnated. He was about to inquire further when he saw a shadow darting out from his side.

It was the dwarf!

Despite his short legs, this dwarf was incredibly fast. In just a few breaths, he had run hundreds of meters and quickly disappeared from the camp.

Yasen was momentarily stunned, his expression changing dramatically, and he immediately exerted all his strength to chase after him.

Behind him, a large group of elven warriors quickly followed suit. They had witnessed everything and saw that the dwarf appeared highly suspicious, possibly posing a threat to Lord Ji Chen.

Lord Ji Chen was their benefactor, and even if they couldn’t defeat the dwarf, even if it cost them their lives, they would stop him!!!

More than ten minutes ago.

Ji Chen, who was completely unaware of what was happening outside, looked at the sealed metal cage in the center with confusion and uncertainty.

Just as he was preparing to leave, a voice suddenly emanated from within the cage.

“Save me...”

This voice was incredibly hoarse, filled with exhaustion, pain, and extreme weakness, as if it might die in the next moment.

However, within this feeble voice, there was an incredibly powerful aura, like an abyss, like the stars, and it felt like its strength... was at least greater than his current level.

Ji Chen’s expression changed slightly. His mana surged within him, and he summoned a golden gem-encrusted sword – the Sword of Warlords. If anything went wrong, he would immediately use the sword’s accompanying skill to create a protective barrier.

At the same time, he mentally connected with the Void Ring, ready to teleport at any moment to prevent any unexpected events.

At this moment, he was extremely cautious!

After completing these preparations, he felt slightly more at ease and asked in a steady voice.

“Who are you? Why were you imprisoned by the Deceiver here?”

After a moment, the voice rang out again.

“My name is Verena Lana, a follower of the Goddess of War. I am despised by the Deceiver, and they captured me using deceit when I was weak. They have kept me imprisoned here all this time.”

Verena Lana?

A follower of the Goddess of War?

Ji Chen nodded in understanding and continued to ask in a deep voice.

“How long have you been imprisoned here?”

Trapped within the cage and still unseen by Ji Chen, Verena replied.

“I don’t know, probably for several centuries now.”

“They used the ‘Solar Furnace’ to forge this cage that suppresses my powers, binding me with chains of scorching, subjecting me to the constant agony of soul-burning, intending to break my will and faith.”

Soul-burning for centuries?

Well, the Deceiver really was merciless..

Chapter 370: Verena and the Contract

They captured people but didn’t lull them, instead, they specially created such a unique cage to detain them and even burned their souls to break their will. These Deceivers are indeed a bit twisted. What kind of grudge do they hold?

Did Verena commit an act that made the Deceivers believe that merely killing her would be too lenient a punishment?

Ji Chen said in a deep voice, “What did you do to make those Deceivers hate you so much? They seem to only have a grudge against the Divine Race and Divine Patrons.”

“Because I killed everyone in their entire base,” Verena said emotionlessly as if it were the most ordinary thing in the world.

At these words, Ji Chen was slightly taken aback. Well, it turns out she’s a killer.

“Those Deceivers have kept me here for hundreds of years, and in these hundreds of years, you are the first outsiders to enter here.”

“Sir, I implore you to break this cage and set me free...”

Ji Chen fell into silence for a moment.

Looking at the cold air and ice that couldn’t be contained even by the metal cage, he hesitated.

Having single-handedly slaughtered an entire Deceiver base, just from this point of view, Verena must possess remarkable strength.

After gathering his thoughts, Ji Chen spoke with determination.

“I know nothing about you, and I can’t even be sure if you’re a friend or a foe. If I rescue you, and you turn against me afterward, wouldn’t that be like digging my own grave?”

From what I know, the followers of the War Goddess... are mostly war maniacs.”

The War Goddess, also known as the Goddess of Slaughter, was rumored to be addicted to war during the era when gods walked the world, constantly instigating wars between her followers and other divine realms.

As the saying goes, birds of a feather flock together, her followers were primarily war enthusiasts who took pride in slaying their foes and aspired to enter the Hall of Heroes for eternal glory after they died.

However, after the disappearance of the gods from the world, these followers who were either at war or on the path to war were quickly hunted down by various forces and suffered heavy casualties.

In the time that followed, due to various obstacles and killings, the followers of the War Goddess gradually became rare, becoming a rare and exceptional existence.

Ji Chen was also curious about where the Deceivers had captured this follower of the War Goddess.

Clearly, Verena was aware of her reputation beyond these walls, and she remained silent for a long time.

The chains that pierced her body were constantly burning her soul, but they were always maintained at an appropriate level, preventing her from quickly dying, so to ensure that she would always suffer.

Centuries of torment had pushed her will to the brink of collapse, and while her body might still support her for some time, her spirit was nearing its end.

In the end, one would only lose all reason and become a lunatic.

“I swear by the War Goddess that after gaining my freedom, I will never harm you, sir, or your army. If I violate this oath in the slightest, my soul will be extinguished, and my spirit will not return to the Hall of Heroes.”

Swearing by one’s own faith?

For all believers in deities, swearing by the deity they worship is the most solemn oath, not to mention that followers of the War Goddess believe that they could enter the Hall of Heroes after death.

This carried significant weight.

Ji Chen nodded slightly.

The conversation took a turn.

“So, if I rescue you, what benefits and advantages can I gain?”

In a bustling world, everything was driven by self-interest.

Ji Chen was not a philanthropist; he would not engage in a losing deal.

Verena remained silent for a moment and then said, "I have nothing to offer you, and I possess no special talents. I only know how to kill. If you allow me, sir, I can help you with killing."

Truly a follower of the War Goddess, with nothing but thoughts of fighting and killing in her mind.

Ji Chen thought for a moment, his expression turning serious.

"Very well, but we must sign a contract. You will need to serve me in battle for thirty years.

If you agree to this condition, then I will rescue you."

Thirty years?

Verena's heart sank for a moment, but she quickly replied, "I agree."

Thirty years might seem quite long, but for her, it was nothing significant. After enduring hundreds of years of captivity for the sake of freedom, what were thirty years?

Seeing Verena's straightforward agreement, Ji Chen nodded. After the lesson he had learned earlier, he couldn't just trust the "prisoner's" words.

Just like Elin, when she had made the promise initially, she had appeared so sincere and even swore in the name of a warrior.

But then, there wasn't a trace of her, and no one knew where she had gone.

So, it had been better to have a contract, a highly effective measure, to put his mind at ease.

Ji Chen extended his right hand and immediately drew up a contract—an Oath of Loyalty.

Compared to the Master-Servant contract, this type of contract was more equal, resembling an agreement between a knight and a lord. The knight had to be loyal to the lord, and the lord had to treat the knight fairly. After both parties fulfilled the contract's terms, it could be terminated.

With the final stroke of his pen, he gently pushed the hovering contract text in front of the cage.

Verena was clearly familiar with this type of contract and quickly condensed a wisp of frost, writing her name on it.

"Ding- The Oath of Loyalty has taken effect. Verena Lana is now loyal to you."

With the contract in effect, Ji Chen suddenly felt a peculiar connection between himself and Verena within the cage. It was milder and more equal compared to the bond he had with Luo Yang.

The contract was established.

He was the master, and Verena was the subordinate. It was absolutely impossible for her to harm him, and Ji Chen felt at ease.

"Rein in your power; I will rescue you right now.."