

From Secret Clan to the Divine Dynasty

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Chapter 21: Chapter 20: What, you're not convinced?

Baron Hovern's smile vanished abruptly, and he exuded a serious and undeniable presence from within.

"I have already thoroughly investigated the entire incident with extremely adverse effects, and I will share with everyone what has happened," he said.

Having said that, he gathered everyone attending the banquet and calmly explained:

"The tragedy that occurred in the night is chilling to the bone. After I returned, I investigated carefully at the first opportunity, and here is what happened."

Everyone was silent, simply waiting for Baron Hovern to continue, knowing that his announced "investigation result" would become the irrefutable "fact".

"First was a despicable servant from the town chief's house, who conspired with the jungle natives to abduct the town chief's granddaughter. Out of desperation, the town chief mobilized all the patrol guards to search for his granddaughter in the jungle."

Irene and Lucius already had a good understanding of Baron Hovern's thoughts on handling the town chief upon hearing this much.

Baron Hovern continued, taking a deep breath, and said, "With the sheriff leading the patrol team away, that servant opened the gates at night, ultimately leading to the horrible tragedy."

"The patrol team has arrested that servant, and in a few days, I will personally judge him. Those jungle natives are truly despicable, and the town chief has also lost his granddaughter, his grief immeasurable."

"He is willing to give up half of his wealth to fund our campaign against the jungle natives, believing their blood will appease the souls of the Cyart people."

He paused for a moment, calmly looked into each person's eyes, and asked:

"People of Nasir Town, are you satisfied with such investigation results and handling measures?"

Before anyone had a chance to speak, loud clapping suddenly resounded in the banquet hall.

It turned out to be Lucius from the Fischer family, who was surprisingly smiling while applauding loudly, saying:

“Worthy of Lord Baron Hovern, the handling is extremely appropriate. The Fischer family is very satisfied!”

The crowd followed suit with their stances, feeling that everything the Baron said was perfectly reasonable, with no dissatisfaction at all.

Irene silently observed the crowd, knowing there was a familial relationship between the town chief and the Baron, but she had still harbored a sliver of faint hope.

After all, more than fifty people perished overnight in Nasir Town.

Many were neighbors she knew, including a mother and daughter who sold eggs for a living; both had died. She had once treated the mother for an illness, and the daughter had since then brought a basket of eggs to the Fischer family every month with a smile.

After consuming eggs for more than half a year, Irene and her family could no longer stomach them, and out of politeness, couldn't refuse, so they quietly distributed them to the family's servants.

On the surface, she coordinated with the members of the Fischer family to tell the mother and daughter that the eggs were consumed by the members of the Fischer family themselves.

They had struggled to maintain this pretense, but now there would be no more need for it.

That morning, as Irene passed by, she saw some of the chickens the mother and daughter used to feed early in the morning had been burned to death. Other chickens which had returned after the disaster were wandering back and forth quietly in the same spot, still waiting for their owners to feed them.

At this moment, praises were sounding incessantly around her.

She wanted to say more, but her shoulder was firmly held down by the robust hand of Lucius.

Lucius's face beamed with an exaggerated smile, like he had encountered an extremely delightful event, and a feeling of unprecedented joy emerged from deep within him.

Finally, Irene nodded silently and saw the serious expression on Baron Hovern's face break into an elegant smile once again.

"And you, Lucius Fischer, the warrior of the Fischer family, my friend, you are our true hero!"

"I have decided to award you a modest honor in my personal capacity, please accept it as it is all for the glory of the Cyart people!"

After the banquet, various families from Nasir Town sent money and supplies, some even offering personnel.

The Fischer family contributed ten Gold Coins, without providing any manpower, and in turn, the reward they received from the Baron was a "Metal System low-level Knight Bequest."

Those with metal affinity bloodlines could progress to an Extraordinary Exponent of the first level by training with this Knight Bequest in conjunction with a Magic Potion, which included a matching defense combat skill, "Full Armor."

The value of the low-level Knight Bequest was around fifteen Gold Coins. In essence, the Fischer family had profited five Gold Coins.

Of course, Irene was very aware that the low-level Knight Bequest was a token of compensation from Baron Hovern.

After all, on that fateful night, the Fischer family was in the gravest danger, and two guards even met their unfortunate demise.

When everyone else had left, only Baron Hovern and the town chief remained in the banquet hall.

Not a trace of a smile could be found on Baron Hovern's face; he sat in his chair silently for a long time, the town chief standing beside him with bowed head, not daring to make a single move.

"Over fifty people dead, you really have some nerve. If you weren't a distant relative of mine, I would have sent you to Nasir's prison today."

The expression on Baron Hovern's face was extremely cold and grim, as the town chief took a deep breath, internally dismissing the threat.

He was friends with the largest sea merchant on the East Coast, responsible for helping to dump goods, and the money he supplied every year accounted for one-third of Baron Hovern's expenditures.

If he really killed me, wouldn't that be akin to cutting off one of Baron Hovern's own legs?

He could never let me simply die like this, but he still wanted to take advantage of the situation to seize half of my property, which was even more despicable than those jungle natives.

The town chief's face twitched slightly, but he still bowed respectfully and said,

"Lord Baron, I will never dare again, I am truly grateful for your rescue! From now on, I will serve the Hovern family with even greater loyalty!"

—

Three months later, as spring arrived, Baron Hovern's uncle, the East Coast Governor, finally sent for a regiment of Cyart Kingdom's infantry.

The gradual development of alchemy, technology, and group spells created an army that could threaten Extraordinary Exponents, changing the previous warfare pattern dominated by small-scale battles of Extraordinary Exponents.

In recent years, the Cyart Kingdom, taking a leaf out of the Lorne Empire's book on military reform, established a national unified standing army, dividing the troops into two parts: the standing army and the reserve army.

The infantry regiment had a total of 1,200 men, equipped with flintlocks, and had two field training days per week, each time providing seven rounds of gunpowder and live ammunition.

Accompanying the army in combat were fifteen Extraordinary Exponents, five spellcasters, and ten knights. Leading the forces were Baron Hovern himself and a Tempest Priest accompanying the army, the only two Level 2 "Transmutation" tier Extraordinary Exponents.

The bloody suppression lasted about three months, the jungle natives who could only steal a living were continuously slaughtered, and the battle situation was almost completely one-sided.

It wasn't until the jungle natives organized a very terrifying ambush by sacrificing their own flesh and blood.

The sudden emergence of that mysterious being, the so-called Lord of Bloody Cult by the natives, marked the appearance of the Mighty Bloody Demon, whose fearsome power instantly claimed the lives of over three hundred soldiers, with the rest suffering from the Curse and dying off gradually.

The governor was extremely enraged and convinced the East Coast's Tempest Bishop to personally go, only to quickly find that the natives had collectively migrated north, leaving no trace of enemies in the jungle.

The north was the territory of the neighboring Rhea, with which the Cyart people had a thirty-year peace treaty, making it improper to pursue and exterminate the fleeing natives.

This disproportionate war ultimately ended with the complete escape of the surviving jungle natives.

—

One sunny noon in Nasir Town,

Irene and her servants, having finished shopping in the market for festival necessities, were about to return to the carriage when she suddenly heard crying; soon after, she noticed a group of bound jungle natives not far away, mostly women and children.

They were spoils of this war, soon to be shipped to Fein City under the escort of Cyart soldiers, their fates hereafter unknown.

A jungle girl around her age was kneeling on the ground, crying, as a soldier lashed her bare back fiercely with a whip while the surrounding townspeople cheered on.

Deep in Irene's heart surfaced an instinctive discomfort.

She suddenly remembered the smiling face of the girl who brought eggs—if the Fischer family had not obtained the great power of the Lord of the Lost, then they would have been the ones to die that night.

Just like Byrne said, what mattered most to her were only the gods and her family; any excess pity could at best extend to acquaintances with emotional ties, not enemies.

She simply could not afford anymore sympathy, because that would eventually bring misfortune upon the Fischer family.

"Is something wrong, Miss Irene?" the coachman inquired.

"Nothing, let's go back."

Chapter 22: Chapter 21: The Establishment of Esoteric Buddhism: Dawn

Three years.

Time flew by, and the Fischer family had become the most respected family throughout Nasir Town.

Irene, healing diseases almost without pay, had aided many of the elderly, in whose eyes she was nothing less than a saint sent by the Lord of Salvation.

Lucius, the hero who had saved Nasir and led the guards to slaughter the despicable natives, was the man every boy in town looked up to.

For a full three years, Baron Hovern had not returned to Nasir Town. He had been gravely injured during the war against the jungle natives and was the only one to survive an encounter with the Mighty Bloody Demon. Accordingly, the baron, badly shocked, had been recuperating in Fein City and no longer visited.

At that moment, within the Fischer family's courtyard, an intense swordsmanship duel was in progress.

"Ha!"

Byrne, tall and lean, launched a casual thrust with his sword, and the confronting Guards Captain quickly parried. The two men, swords in hand, engaged in a give-and-take combat within the courtyard.

Thanks to his extraordinary memory, Byrne's skill in swordsmanship was advancing rapidly, to the point where even the most experienced ordinary guard could not best him.

The fierce swordsmanship struggle continued.

Byrne suddenly spun around, drawing a dark-golden flintlock from his bosom and pointing it at the Guards Captain.

The Guards Captain stood motionless, frozen in place.

"Bang, the times have changed, you've lost." He mimicked the sound of gunfire with his mouth.

Then both men could not help but burst into laughter.

"Hahaha, well fought, Captain. Let's call it a day," Byrne said with a mild smile, his face remarkably pale, his eyes clear and rational.

He was clad in a layered, light-colored Haute couture garment that exuded a grand design, truly the dashing image of a noble gentleman.

If Irene was the one many men longed for in their hearts, then the grown-up Byrne was the man most girls in Nasir Town dreamt of by their pillows.

In three years' time, Byrne had grown increasingly confident, no longer the boy who would shake behind his father at the sight of strangers.

"Eh?"

He suddenly looked down at his slightly aching palm and frowned, saying:

"My hand's a bit chafed. The craftsmanship of this sword isn't very good, is it one of Uncle Ramon's last few pieces before he retired?"

Byrne sighed, understanding that some things were inevitable; aging was a mighty force humans struggled to contend with.

Old Ramon, the blacksmith, had retired after he abruptly started producing some poorly made ironworks.

The truth was not that the old man was slacking off but rather that seventy-year-old Old Ramon was becoming senile.

The old man had just last week mistaken Dr. Irene, who had come to visit, for his granddaughter and, while talking, had suddenly burst into tears, leaving Irene quite embarrassed.

There was no helping it. His family and friends had to persuade him to stop working. Although Old Ramon was reluctant, he retired to maintain the blacksmith shop's reputation and handed over the business to his son Hugh.

Injuries during training were common, and Byrne simply shook his head, no real concern in his thoughts.

He had to find Robert Taylor, the man who had studied abroad in the Empire and had become Byrne's best friend.

"Trouble you to put away the sword for me, please."

As Byrne put down his sword and walked away, the old servant responsible for gathering the weapons had already approached. He saw the bloodstains on the hilt and paused.

A rumor had long persisted among the people: if one obtained the blood of an Extraordinary Exponent, there was a chance to be an Extraordinary Exponent themselves.

In truth, the claim about acquiring blood was baseless “superstition,” yet many still believed in it.

“The blood of young master Byrne...”

What if the rumor was true?

The old servant silently looked around, nobody was passing by, and he couldn't help but lower his head and lick the bloodstain on the hilt with his tongue.

He didn't know whether the rumor was true, but it was something many had said, and even if the rumor was false, there was nothing to lose.

Within the transparent bottle, Karl's consciousness stirred.

He suddenly felt an unusual connection—not with the four members of the Fischer bloodline, but with someone else.

Who could it be?

Karl slowly elevated his will, and soon locked onto the individual forming the connection—a thatcher family's old servant.

He tried to convey his intentions but found no way to communicate directly.

The connection between them was too faint.

The next moment, the old servant knelt trembling with fear on the ground, shivering as an immense fear welled up from the depths of his heart.

Oh?

He had sensed his presence!

This was an interesting development.

Karl quickly realized that although he couldn't communicate and also wasn't able to bestow abilities or inhabit a body,

But the other party could detect his presence, and he could pinpoint the old servant's position anytime and anywhere, sensing his emotions.

“The time has come; the current development of the Fischer family has reached a bottleneck and must further expand the recruitment of more people dedicated to my resurrection.”

The resurrection was taking far too long, and Karl had realized deep down that the mere three and a half “chess pieces” at his disposal were utterly insufficient.

He had to further expand the scale of the “chess pieces” under his control.

It was late at night when Byrne returned home in the family’s carriage after dining with the Taylor family. As soon as he stepped out of the carriage, he saw the old servant approaching him with a tense expression, clearly having waited at the courtyard gate for a long time.

“Master Byrne, I heard it! I truly heard it!”

Byrne was slightly taken aback, not understanding the servant’s meaning at all, and asked instinctively, “Heard what, what exactly are you talking about?”

The old man looked at Byrne with an expression of sheer terror, incessantly claiming to have heard the voice of that great entity.

“Yes, it’s Him, I don’t know who He is, but I heard His voice!”

“He is the Lord of the Lost, so great; I am as insignificant as dust in His presence, utterly humble.”

Byrne’s expression grew increasingly troubled.

The old man, after speaking, could not help but kneel on the ground and began to silently pray.

Wait a minute!

The Lord of the Lost he is speaking of couldn’t be!

Byrne was extremely shocked in his heart, completely clueless about what was going on, and managed to say in a lowered voice, subdued by astonishment, “Come with me.”

He then took the old servant to the basement and summoned his father and Irene, telling them about the incident.

The core members of the Fischer family were shocked upon learning of the matter, finding it utterly incredible.

The old servant was ordered to wait outside the basement while the three Fischers resumed their discussion.

Karl’s will also took residence in Irene, becoming an observer of yet another Fischer family meeting.

Sometimes he found family meetings amusingly interesting, as the thought processes of mortals, constrained by their horizons, were often bizarre and curious.

"We must never allow our blood to flow out carelessly in the future; it appears that our blood contains mysterious power," said Byrne with a pale face.

"What exactly is going on? Someone actually noticed the existence of the Lord of the Lost," Lucius said, his face already showing traces of aging, his expression more grave.

The matter at hand was extremely important. Irene and Byrne remained silent, finding it difficult to directly reply.

"Perhaps, directly asking our Lord could simply resolve the issue."

Irene, with her flowing black hair and eyes like incredibly precious gems, closed her eyes and began to murmur to herself.

"Great Lord of the Lost, please let us know if this is your will."

"We are your faithful followers, the beneficiaries of the Fischer family, awaiting Your guidance here."

Lucius and Byrne both kept silent, and after a while, Irene finally reopened her eyes.

She spoke with a somewhat excited tone, "I have received the guidance of the great Lord of the Lost!"

Byrne and Lucius looked at each other and continued to listen.

The great Lord of the Lost desired them to share His blood with the common people as much as possible, as He could influence those ordinary individuals.

But the blood of members of the favored clans would have effects on common people, while the power contained by Extraordinary Exponents would neutralize the very weak influence in the blood.

For the time being, it could only affect ordinary people, but still, Lucius sternly instructed Byrne that they should not let the old servant be responsible for matters close to them in the future.

Lucius strongly approved of establishing a secret society, analyzing with utmost seriousness:

"The time has also come, the assets the family can possess are accumulating more slowly; we need new sources of income to acquire Extraordinary Materials and Mysterious Rare Artifacts."

The Fischer family itself had recently fallen into difficulties; after expanding the guard to twenty people, the prices of various goods had been rising year by year, while the family's wealth accumulation slowed down, just maintaining a balance between income and expenses.

Until now, the Fischer family had amassed about fifty-five Gold Coins, and the price of Extraordinary Materials had been increasingly inflated in recent years, even the cheapest Class 2 Extraordinary Material costing fifty-two Gold Coins.

Irene had no choice but to consider going outside the town to treat people in other areas, and next month she was about to visit the nearest other town, where wealthy locals suffering from diseases had already heard of "Dr. Irene."

The main reason the Fischer family had not established a cult in the past was that it was difficult to keep a secret; historically, no matter how unbreakable a society seemed, if it continued to spread and develop, it would eventually be exposed.

Now that the great Lord of the Lost had given His command, and moreover, His great power could influence the faithful who partook of His blood, ensuring a high degree of loyalty in the "Blood Receivers," the Fischer family could no longer afford to stay indecisive.

So, what should the secret society, established with the Fischer family at its core, be called?

After discussion among everyone, Irene finally suggested that the name of the cult should be "Dawn."

Lucius and Byrne both felt it strange after hearing it because the image of the Lord of the Lost was a black cross halo, so why should the name of the cult that believed in Him be called Dawn?

Irene explained calmly, "If the cult's name isn't chosen with a good intent, ordinary people will feel resistance when they hear it."

Karl truly felt the same inside.

A secret society called "Dark Killing Martial Fight Club" or "Pink Fluffy Rabbit" would likely scare and completely dissuade ordinary people from wanting to join upon hearing the name.

She paused for a moment, then continued to explain:

"Moreover, on that night, I saw a white light more dazzling than the sun, cutting through the suffocating endless darkness of the stormy night, bringing me the most beautiful dawn."

Chapter 23: Chapter 22 Peripheral Members

The East City District of Nasir is the poorest area in the entire town.

The people who live here are desolate and dependent, with the majority enduring illness without treatment, and if they cannot hold on, they can only die in agony.

In the past, the poor of the East City lived like ants crawling on the ground, unnoticed and uncared for.

Until five years ago, the appearance of Irene Fischer was like a tender light given to the poor.

She only charged the wealthy a high fee for diagnosis and treatment, while for the middle-class who sought Irene's help, their treatment costs were significantly reduced.

As for the poor, Irene herself came here once a week, her expensive shoes stepping into the filthy mud, to treat a sick or injured person for free.

Initially, she treated illnesses and injuries in private, but later, in order to increase her influence, she chose to heal people in public.

Whenever Irene treated diseases, everyone would gather around and silently watch; she would first pray in silence for a while, and all those around her would join the girl in her prayers.

Until the prayer was over, Irene would reveal the astonishing "Miracle."

Time and again, witnessing miracles, the people's hearts grew increasingly filled with reverence for the noble Irene, and she herself grew to be more pure, holy, and inviolable. Thousands of poor people in the East City gradually became a hidden and powerful force for the Fischer family.

In the East City, there was an old woman over eighty years old; everyone called her "Old Comb" or "Grandma Narda." She was respected by almost all of the impoverished for one important reason—her three sons were the leaders of the biggest thieves' guild in the East City.

They had hot tempers and were deceitful; their guild had around fifty to sixty people, making them a perennial scourge in Nasir Town. The only person who could restrain and reprimand them was Grandma Narda.

Grandma Narda had instructed them to never commit murder or rape, and surprisingly, the thieves' guild they formed has the best reputation in Nasir Town thus far.

Three years ago, on the night when jungle natives attacked Nasir Town, Grandma Narda was severely wounded by natives who fled into the East City to hide, bordering on death.

At that time, she lay in bed in agony, silently praying to her Lord of Salvation.

However, He never responded, and deep down Grandma Narda already understood that for decades no one in Nasir Town had witnessed a miracle from the high and mighty Lord of Salvation.

Even if He were a true and powerful deity, if He would never respond to us or save us, should we still revere and pray day and night?

Tonight, having prayed to the great Lord of Salvation for over seventy years, I'm about to die.

Submerged in despair and pain, Grandma Narda thought of many things, but she did not die in the end; her sons had called for Madam Irene Fischer from the Fischer family.

"Don't worry, you will be fine."

Irene arrived at the old woman's home calmly, while her three sons waited outside.

Her gentle breath was like soft silk sliding over the skin, soothingly warm and gentle like a spring breeze, the green mysterious power pulling the old woman back from the hands of the Death.

After being saved, Narda said weakly, "You've saved my life, I will definitely repay you."

However, Irene did not ask for anything then, simply saying with utmost tranquility,

"My Lord's will saved me and therefore redeemed your fate."

Grandma Narda fell into thought; she had never heard which deity the people of the Fischer family actually worshipped.

Later, she grew more familiar with Irene, and the two often conversed together, becoming friends despite the difference in age.

A year ago, during one of their exchanges on religious matters, Grandma Narda finally couldn't help but ask about her faith.

Irene did not say which of the True Gods Churches her god belonged to, only saying:

"I carry out my Lord's will, wielding the power of healing as I walk among the people, and if you are willing, you should pray to Him as well."

“Is your faith in the Lord of Salvation?” Narda asked, puzzled.

Irene just smiled and did not continue the conversation.

Narda faintly felt that the attitude itself was a hint.

Could it be that her faith was in some great being who, while powerful, had not yet made His name known in the world?

Tonight, both the red and silver moons were shrouded in thin clouds, the constellations a hazy sight.

Irene came to Grandma Narda’s home again, to talk with her alone.

Treatment in front of others was customary, so Narda knew that when Irene Fischer of the Fischer family sought her out alone, it was often because there was something to discuss.

Irene’s demeanor was very calm, her eyes possessed a depth like the cosmos itself, and her words carried a mesmerizing aura.

“The grace that my Lord has bestowed upon you has been more than enough; for years, you and your children have not been troubled by sickness or pain, and now you can no longer enjoy, without offering anything in return, what should be reserved for the devoted believers.”

The implication was clear: the health trial period was over, and now it was time for a decision.

Grandma Narda’s expression changed for quite a while, as she no longer clung to life, but when she thought of her three children, they too had been gravely injured more than once.

Moreover, she did not reject the god who had saved her and was truly grateful to Irene; in fact, the priests of the True Gods Church on the East Coast would never rescue poor people like them.

With respect, Narda asked, “Your god, no, I mean my Lord, what kind of magnificent entity is He?”

“Dawn, the deity we worship, He is the lost Lord of Dawn, He is the embodiment of all things in the world, and the widely known Lord of Salvation is also one of His manifestations.”

Irene closed her eyes and continued indifferently:

“Remember not to spread the secret of His faith, only the chosen messengers of the Fischer family are qualified to proclaim His greatness.”

“Once the doctrine of secrecy is not adhered to, god will gradually become disappointed, and eventually withdraw the blessing bestowed upon you, and you will encounter a terrible curse.”

Narda hurriedly shook her head and nodded with great reverence in her eyes:

“No, never, messenger, I will surely adhere to the doctrine and keep the secret!”

In the world of Claud, deities are not superstitions, but truly magnificent existences; it's just that the number of True Gods is extremely scarce, and many conceptual beings similar to demons often seize the opportunity to usurp people's faith.

After finishing, Irene took out a bottle of dark red potion from her bosom and continued calmly:

“Then drink it, and you shall feel the lost Lord of Dawn.”

Grandma Narda didn't even hesitate for a moment, immediately smiling openly and drank the potion at once.

After a while, she said with some uncertainty:

“I, I seem to have not heard any voice, hasn't the lost Lord of Dawn come yet?”

“He will come, but the great One wants to first see your performance.”

Irene revealed a smile and continued, “If the performance is good enough, you might even have the possibility of being granted a permanent extraordinary power.”

Narda was utterly astonished internally and instinctively did not believe her.

Although mystical entities can grant temporary extraordinary powers to ordinary people, those without talent could never become true Extraordinary Exponents.

“Alright, I understand.”

Having lived for over eighty years, Narda of course understood the concrete meaning of “good performance” quite well.

Her and her children's health had been secured in the past and would be in the future. Even if it meant offering up some resources, it was only right and proper, Grandma Narda nodded quite lucidly.

Irene turned to leave, silently pondering the blood containing the Fischer family lineage would most certainly be effective.

Grandma Narda would become a peripheral member of the Dawn Church, and simultaneously another pawn of the great Lord of the Lost.

If she dared to betray, she would be noticed by my Lord in the first instance.

In the routine family meeting, Byrne took out the plan that had been repeatedly revised over several years, which contained a series of ideas on how to establish a secret church, with large portions of the doctrine and rules referenced from the True Gods Church's scriptures.

They ultimately decided to only recruit a very small number of prestigious people from Nasir Town into the Dawn Church, and every new member's admission vote had to be unanimously approved by all three core members to pass.

Besides the Five Great True Gods Churches, none of the other faiths on the Ouden Continent were recognized, and the inquisition of the True Gods Church also abhorred heretics extremely.

Once one's identity as a heretic was confirmed, the lightest punishment was lifelong imprisonment, while the most severe was to be "purified" on the spot.

The fewer people joining the Dawn Church, the lower the chances of the entire church being exposed; therefore, the structure of the organization had to be streamlined.

Irene was the most core priest, followed by other members of the Fischer family, and then the various peripheral members. The nascent Dawn Church's structure was exceptionally simple.

The current peripheral members of the Dawn Church were only Grandma Narda and the old servant of the Fischer family.

In the deep of the night, Grandma Narda stood beside the window, completely unable to sleep, constantly pondering the ins and outs of the whole affair; she could almost confirm that the Fischer family had been servants of the Lord of Dawn from the beginning.

She couldn't help but think, "Irene trusts me just like that, what if I report this matter to the inquisition, what would they do?"

Suddenly, a powerful will, as if sensing her subtle emotions, awoke from behind the scenes and looked down upon her coldly from the highest place, emitting a twisted and terrifying aura that seemed capable of utterly destroying everything in existence.

How magnificent!

Grandma Narda trembled uncontrollably and fell to her knees, sweating profusely, and began to pray fervently.

“Lord of Dawn! Great Lord of Dawn, please forgive my disrespectful thoughts...”

He was looking at her!

Chapter 24: Chapter 23: Promotion, Consecution 2

Taylor family.

They were one of the four great knight families in Nasir Town and possibly the strongest. The family's first in line for succession, Robert, had a very good relationship with Byrne.

There was a bathhouse in Nasir Town especially for the wealthy, and after bathing, the two sat in the steam sauna to fully relieve their fatigue.

Byrne turned his head and looked for a long time at his thin and blonde friend, hesitating to speak. In the end, he still said:

“Robert, you might have forgotten about our Fischer family's investment final payment.”

Robert smiled and remained silent for a while, then said:

“The final payment? Oh heavens, Byrne, do you really have to talk about this here?”

Byrne frowned slightly and, upon seeing his older-brother-figure, Robert, suddenly raise his voice, spoke up loudly and discontentedly:

“Haven't I already told you? I took that money to the empire to purchase new machines. When we resell them to the mine owners of Cyart, the profits for both of our families will multiply several times. I truly have no spare funds right now!”

Byrne clenched his fist, trying as much as possible not to be affected, and spoke calmly after a deep breath:

“You said the same thing half a year ago, Robert. We can't delay any longer. Our family urgently needs money.”

Robert left without saying a word, his face cold, but Byrne suddenly grabbed him.

Just as he was about to explode in anger or even yell, he was taken aback by the ferocity he saw in Byrne's eyes.

The fierce look in his eyes was like that of a starving wolf, a look Robert had only seen in his own Uncle. He knew how miserably those who had deceived his Uncle had died in the end.

Realizing that Byrne was no longer the curious and timid little brother, Robert relaxed his shoulders and said:

“Alright, how about this? I’ll pay you the agreed upon half first, fifteen Gold Coins isn’t a small amount after all.”

Byrne didn’t want to fall out completely with his friend either, and indeed, fifteen Gold Coins were sufficient.

“Okay, I agree,” he nodded with utmost calmness.

Robert hugged him with a smile, speaking calmly, “I am sorry, brother. I really didn’t want to delay it. It’s just that business is really hard to conduct.”

After leaving the bathhouse, Byrne heaved a sigh. If it weren’t for the promise he had made in front of his father, he wouldn’t have wanted to be so forceful either.

Pretending to be violent and aggressive didn’t suit him, but his father Lucius had said that he had to learn how to be tough with “friends”, or he would sooner or later be a burden to the Fischer family.

Last week, the neighboring northern Rhea Kingdom suddenly erupted into civil war.

Some pro-war nobles thought the King too weak and wanted to break the ten-year peace treaty still in effect with Cyart Kingdom, to reclaim the land once occupied by the Cyart people by force.

The King’s side still held an overwhelming advantage and the civil war wouldn’t last much longer.

However, people were panicked, and though the flames of war in the north had not yet truly reached Cyart, the prices in various regions of northern Cyart skyrocketed overnight.

And the price of Extraordinary materials, which was already high, began to rise gradually again.

The three members of the Fischer family decided in a family meeting to urgently gather funds to purchase a piece of Class 2 Extraordinary Material, because delaying any further would make it increasingly unaffordable.

Byrne only returned home in the carriage after getting the money from Robert.

Sea merchant John, the man who had already recovered his health, was waiting at his house with a smile. He had been chatting and laughing with Irene and Lucius, clearly having waited for some time.

“Mr. John, long time no see.”

Byrne greeted John with a smile and after a while, John went straight to the point, saying:

“I am willing to sell the Class 2 Extraordinary Material ‘Wind Shark’s Dark Blood’. I will not make money off the Fischer family this time, consider it an investment out of friendship. It’ll only cost you fifty Gold Coins.”

Before the war of the neighboring country broke out, the average price of Class 2 Extraordinary Materials had already risen to around fifty-two Gold Coins. Now was an excellent time to stock up, and John’s price was indeed a friendly one.

Irene spoke with a smile, “It’s so generous of you, Mr. John. You indeed have a keen eye. Investing in our Fischer family will definitely be the most worthwhile decision of your life.”

John smiled without speaking, knowing that money was important, but in these tense times, the value of martial force was rising more than anything else.

After several years of interaction, he had noticed that the members of the Fischer family were all extraordinarily powerful experts and indeed worth building a deep relationship with.

Not to mention anything else, just the powerful force that Irene wielded was extremely worth investing in—who in their family wouldn’t fall ill?

He had only heard of “Monarch” class healing-type spellcasters or forbidden-class mysterious rare artifacts possessing such strong healing powers.

Healing-type spellcasters of the “Monarch” level, when looked across the entire Ouden Continent, could be counted on one’s fingers, whereas the use of forbidden-class mysterious rare artifacts always required a significant price to be paid.

He had once wondered if Irene of the Fischer family was hiding some forbidden-class mysterious rare artifact, but seeing how she released that power without any hesitation, it did not seem like it at all.

Sea merchant John stayed for an official dinner at the Fischers’ on the first day, and the next morning, just as Radiant Sun had risen right after Blazing Sun, he personally came over to deliver the Class 2 Extraordinary Material “Wind Shark’s Dark Blood”.

Once sea merchant John had left, the four members of the Fischer family gathered in the underground chamber.

Inside the clean and tidy underground chamber, there was a small but exquisitely crafted altar, enshrining a rather plain transparent bottle.

Five-year-old Chris stood quietly beside the adults, his hands behind his back, like a little “grown-up”.

He was extremely adorable, with eyes as blue as the azure sky and slightly messy silver-white fine hair, standing there with the air of a finely crafted, large art piece.

Chris was always quiet, sparing with his words, rarely speaking even once a day.

In an era that had yet to conceptualize psychological disorders, the adults of the Fischer family initially thought he had a cognitive issue, only to gradually understand the situation.

He simply couldn't be bothered to communicate with others.

The members of the Fischer family knelt down, one after another, with Irene at the very forefront.

“We beseech the great Lord of the Lost, your will extends to where our fates lie.”

“When your gaze descends, those who you behold can't escape, when your voice resounds, the threads of destiny already reverberate in response.”

“We offer new mysteries to you, please grant the Fischer family further strength, O great Lord of the Lost.”

Karl felt the reverent emotions of everyone connected to him, each person's feelings bringing a different experience, like the thought of betrayal feeling akin to an insect bite.

He calmly absorbed the spirituality and traits from the extraordinary materials.

Advancing the 1st Rank of the God Pantheon stairway could still be done with multiple Class 0 materials as a substitute for a single primary material, but from the second rank upwards, it was not possible.

Higher-class extraordinary materials as the primary material was inevitable.

Karl's consciousness once again arrived in the Spirit Realm, seeing the black cross of light floating high in the sky of the Spirit Realm, gazing towards the Spirit Realm Ocean and the many islands above and below.

He skillfully found the brilliantly shining “constellation” in the endless firmament once more, picking out an empty star and dragging the spiritual traits of the “Wind Shark’s Dark Blood” into it.

Finally, Karl’s consciousness linked this “constellation” with the one containing the “Blazing Coral”, connecting the next segment of the Path of Conquest!

The new “constellation” also began burning with a resplendent golden-red flame, dazzling and captivating, yet the shadow contained within the flames had now become a young man elegantly dueling with a sword!

The Power of Consecution is “Duelist”!

At the same time, many extraordinary exponents around the world who had just fallen asleep awoke from their dreams.

They found themselves once again in the snowy clearing they had experienced years before, looking bewilderedly at the ashes that had composed into tall trees, everything around them silent and solemn.

However, this time was different.

Not everyone was confused or passive, for some had already begun researching the various aspects of the Spirit Realm over the years.

Having prepared for several years, even causing a collective rise in the price of extraordinary materials across the entire continent, these extraordinarily powerful experts employed all kinds of mysterious methods they had studied for years.

They tried every means to leave a mark in the Spirit Realm, one that would facilitate re-entry, not wanting to miss the hard-won opportunity.

Chapter 25: Chapter 24 “Duelist” Consecution

Many people in the woods kept moving forward, and some of them finally emerged from the ashen white ground and arrived at the true part of the Spirit Realm.

They came to distinctly different islands, where everything before their eyes gradually transformed.

The islands of the Spirit Realm were formed by the subconscious of numerous intelligent beings throughout history. Due to their strong aggregate nature, the islands would undergo mysterious reactions and gradually evolve into historical gaps made up

of those intelligent beings' subconsciousness when encountering conscious entities from reality.

An old man walked through the island, witnessing the illusions around him gradually materializing into reality.

His pale hair meticulously groomed, the eyes behind his glasses revealed the accumulation of years and the depth of experience, his wisdom as if a moving repository of knowledge.

The old man was the headmaster of one of the six ancient libraries, the Sapphire Library.

The so-called "ancient libraries" referred to the mysterious organizations primarily dedicated to collecting "Extraordinary materials", "Mysterious rare artifacts", "Extraordinary Bequest", "mysterious creatures", and even the "Extraordinary Exponents" themselves, among almost all other superhuman elements.

The Sapphire Library was the foremost of the six ancient libraries on the Ouden Continent, with its primary collection focus on "Extraordinary Bequests".

The headmaster calmly recorded everything he perceived, and as he muttered to himself, a feather quill floated by his side, automatically transcribing everything on paper:

"After entering this mysterious world, the consciousness of Extraordinary Exponents becomes much weaker than in the real world, and they can basically only perform at a lower major level."

"It seems that the root cause depends on the level of Spirituality. If mysterious beings or gods were to come to this world, their strength in theory would not weaken."

"Hmm, something interesting is happening around me. Those mysterious powers are forming shadows of history, resembling architectural styles from around three hundred years ago. It's as if I have returned to a bygone era."

"In theory, the subconscious left by intelligent life should be the side with the most intense emotions they had during life."

"Then, the historical gaps projected on the 'island' I am on should theoretically also be the points in time where those intelligent beings had their most intense emotions."

The next moment, the headmaster raised his head to see a meteor shower raining down from the sky, and suddenly, many panicked and fearfully fleeing people refreshed around him.

Everyone projected in the scene seemed vividly alive, with genuine emotions in their eyes, making everything appear incredibly real!

He quickly recalled something from the history books about an event three hundred years ago, when the famous city of Leone in the Lorne Empire was destroyed by a massive volcanic eruption.

Excitement involuntarily surfaced in the headmaster's eyes.

“So it is, what a magical Spirit Realm, it will probably be a brand-new world that we will be utterly fascinated with in the future!”

Afterwards, he sensed some extremely terrifying presence, emanating an aura of annihilation and distortion – the black cross shining high in the sky, as if signifying an end to all things, its power to destroy incomparably more formidable than the numerous meteors soon to fall!

For the first time in over a hundred years, the headmaster showed a look of fear; he stood among roaring flames, explosive blasts, and screams of agony, muttering to himself while submerged in the fire.

“What exactly is that great existence?”

Karl acquired a new Spiritual Radiance from the “Duelist” Spiritual Laws.

The advancing member of the Fischer family was, without a doubt, Lucius Fischer.

He was a seasoned warrior who had been through numerous battles, and also a temporary commander on the battlefield, able to play a role that was marginally greater than the sum of the other two.

Apart from Extraordinary Exponents of the “Path of Contract”, other rank Extraordinary Exponents could not switch to another God Pantheon stairway.

The golden-red Spiritual Radiance, brought out from the Spirit Realm to the real world by Karl, still saw all members of the Fischer family kneeling on the ground.

The Spiritual Radiance emitted an intense heat that made everyone's spirit surge with a strange sensation.

“My Lord, you truly are a generous and merciful deity!”

Irene couldn't help but praise from the depth of her heart.

How magnificent!

They suddenly saw a golden-red orb of light fly onto Lucius's body.

"Great Lord of the Lost, thank you for your gift and trust. I, Lucius Fischer, as your most faithful warrior, will fight for your will until the very end of fate."

Unfortunately, Karl could feel the emotions of those he was connected with.

The most sincere devotional emotions had only ever appeared in Irene over the years, and even Byrne only had them during the very few times he was lost.

As for Lucius, that man had never been truly devout in the real sense of the word.

It's just that Karl didn't really care.

"Huh!"

Lucius narrowed his eyes, excitedly clenched his fists tightly, and took a deep breath.

He had a premonition that he would be the one chosen to ascend to the next rank, but when the power truly arrived, he still couldn't contain his excitement in the depths of his heart.

Lucius felt he was getting closer and closer to that goal that had once seemed like an unattainable nightmare.

For that once distant goal, he kept using the power of the Lord of the Lost, feigning so-called loyalty, and perhaps all this clumsy acting had been seen through by It, no, by Him.

Someday, someone as cruel and selfish as himself would surely fall into hell under the curse of the Lord of the Lost, and tumble down into the deepest and darkest abyss.

He felt his physical fitness improve further, about twice as much as his original level, which was just slightly beyond that of an ordinary person.

The increase in spirituality was still not very significant. The spirituality of the 2nd Rank Duelist on the Path of Conquest was actually about the same as the 1st Rank "Squire" and "Chronicler" of the other two paths.

There was no helping it, that's just how the melee Consecution was.

Afterward, Lucius gained two new Extraordinary traits, namely "Quickdraw" and "Sword Brandishing."

“Quickdraw” is an extremely interesting and practical Extraordinary trait.

When enemies around you harbor hostility and want to attack you, your reaction speed would increase by dozens of times in the brief span of one second.

This is a very useful ability, especially for preventing surprise attacks. Even in situations beyond your line of sight, if you suddenly find everything around you slowing down, you’ll instantly realize that you’re being ambushed.

After a relatively safe trial, Lucius, in such a state, could even dodge the shots of a flintlock at close to medium range.

Lucius didn’t need to be faster than the bullets, he just had to dodge the trajectory of the bullets before they were fired while everything around him slowed down.

The second Extraordinary trait is “Sword Brandishing,” which briefly consumes some of his own spirituality, and suddenly increases his attack speed by several times.

Although the trait is named “Sword Brandishing,” the actual weapon could be anything: a sword, a spear, or a flintlock.

Since the acceleration effect only applies to the upper half of the body, it could entirely be considered as enhancing only “attack speed.”

However, “Sword Brandishing” lasts for only a very short duration, mere seconds.

Lucius’s increase in strength further emboldened the Fischer family.

The average power of the 1st Rank Consecution was roughly equivalent to that of a low-level Beginning knight, whereas stepping onto the 2nd Rank of Consecution was nearing a high-level Beginning knight.

However, this time the purchase of Extraordinary materials consumed too much money, leaving the Fischer family with only about seventeen Gold Coins, far from enough to buy other Class 2 Extraordinary Materials.

As everyone was bent on making money, one of Grandma Narda’s sons brought news that their band of thieves had stumbled upon information that a rare mysterious creature had been spotted in the jungle.

The good news invigorated the Fischer family; if they could not afford the Extraordinary materials, perhaps they could skip the middleman and start with raw materials.

Chapter 26: Chapter 25 Elf

After the jungle natives were driven away, various families from Nasir Town attempted to organize manpower to develop the jungle but paused due to the overwhelming difficulties encountered.

The members of the Fischer family were both surprised and delighted upon learning about the presence of mysterious creatures in the jungle.

Mysterious creatures refer to those non-civilized species possessing extraordinary powers.

While their existence differs from that of magic beasts, though magic beasts are also considered mysterious creatures, dragons, offspring of Curses, God's descendants, and other such entities also fall under the larger category of mysterious creatures.

The difference between mysterious creatures and mysterious existences lies in the fact that the former mostly have physical bodies and complete tribes, whereas the latter are often conceptual entities without physical forms.

What they have in common is that both mysterious creatures and existences can produce extraordinary materials.

According to certain heretical teachings, the so-called numerous deities of the world also fall under "mysterious existences."

Every believer of the True Gods Church would become infuriated upon hearing such claims.

"Everyone, be cautious. Even though those filthy natives have left, the dangers within the jungle have never diminished," someone cautioned.

Lucius led the way with Byrne following closely behind, both on high alert as they entered the jungle, accompanied by ten Fischer family guards.

The experienced mercenary Lucius had prepared everything the expedition team would need to survive in the wild in advance: insect repellent, food, water, tents, sources of fire, medical supplies, and, most importantly, weapons.

As humans and various foreign races developed on the Ouden Continent, the number of mysterious creatures across the continent has increasingly dwindled.

The nearby presence of a mysterious creature was indeed an extremely rare opportunity not to be missed by the Fischer family, which couldn't afford to miss the chance to harvest extraordinary materials.

With Lucius at the forefront, sword in hand to clear the way, he calmly surveyed the surroundings and inquired,

“Byrne, did you get all that?”

Byrne calmly observed his surroundings, adjusted his glasses, and using his extraordinary trait of “Profound Memory,” memorized the jungle paths with exceptional memory.

His role was critical outdoors, akin to a human map, his excellent memory virtually guaranteed that the team would not get lost.

“I’ve got it. So far, all paths in the jungle are etched in my mind,” Byrne responded.

Lucius gave a slight nod and said, “Good, that mysterious creature is said to have white fur. Everyone must be alert to any unexpected white colors that might appear in the jungle.”

Despite searching the jungle for the mysterious creature until noon and finding nothing, Lucius wasn’t the least bit discouraged; instead, he remained quite composed.

They found a relatively safe place to rest for an adequate amount of time, with the guards taking turns maintaining vigilance for any dangers.

While resting, Byrne couldn’t help but ask a question.

“Father, do you think the Rhea from the north will attack us?” he inquired.

Lucius shook his head, answering indifferently, “I don’t know. Maybe they will, maybe they won’t. Do you understand the dispute between Rhea and our Cyart people?”

Byrne nodded and said, “I’ve read that the meaning of ‘Cyart’ is ‘the exiled,’ and both we and the Rhea were originally from central countries on the continent a hundred years ago.”

“Later, both nations were expelled by the Empire and migrated collectively to the east of the continent.”

Byrne paused there, as history books were filled with tales of survival of the fittest, a common fate shared amongst almost all beings, from which no one could escape.

Were the previous Cyart people as helpless as the jungle natives before the citizens of the Empire?

Lucius remained silent, clearly waiting for Byrne to continue.

“Eighty years ago, the Rhea seized the northern lands of the Cyart, after which the Cyart people continuously learned everything from the Empire, gradually forming the concept of a national state, and their national strength began to grow.”

“Fifty years ago, the Cyart people, who had grown in power with the help of the Tempest Church and the Salvation Church, reclaimed the north.”

“Since then, there has always been conflict and warfare between the Cyart people and the Rhea until a ‘Thirty-Year Peace Agreement’ was signed under the Salvation Church’s leadership twelve years ago, bringing things to a standstill. There are still eighteen years left until the peace agreement comes to an end,” Byrne detailed.

After pondering for a moment, Byrne shook his head and said, “War shouldn’t break out prematurely. The authority of the two great True Gods Churches is strong; divine punishment is not something mortals can withstand.”

His father, however, shook his head and dismissively stated, “Heh, you are as naive as ever.”

A seriousness previously unseen crossed Lucius’s face, his gaze seemingly drifting back to the wars from over a decade ago.

“The reason the civil war erupted in Rhea was that part of their nobility wanted to tear up the peace agreement, which inevitably represents some people’s deep-seated desires. You haven’t experienced real war, so you don’t understand that some people are just madmen; rational thinking does not exist for them,” he explained.

Madmen without rational thinking?

Byrne was astonished. Whenever he encountered something, he would always think it over repeatedly and subconsciously weigh the pros and cons, and he also felt that his father and Irene would do the same.

But there are those who simply don’t care about pros and cons or rationality at all, huh, they really do exist, like the drunkards and gamblers he had seen somewhere before.

Those people would kill for the most trivial impulses and unimaginable reasons.

But would the nobles of the upper class really act like this?

Deep down, he couldn’t imagine a war waged on whims, always feeling that the nobles of the upper class were more rational, wise, and clever, incapable of acting without logic.

After the lunch break ended, everyone continued searching for a while before declaring a halt to the search as night fell.

Byrne awoke groggily from his dreams, glanced at the family guard responsible for the vigilance, and hazily sensed a white figure in the nearby woods.

What's that, a mysterious creature?

He was startled and instinctively stood up to wake the people around him but then realized that it wasn't any mysterious creature at all; it was an elf.

An elf!

Although Byrne had seen illustrations and descriptions of elves in books, he had never actually seen one.

On the Ouden Continent, it's difficult to encounter members of a foreign race in the Eastern regions, be it elves, dwarves, or orcs, as they mostly reside in the west of the continent.

He got up instinctively and walked slowly, looking towards the other with extreme curiosity and fascination.

It really was an elf!

She was staring back at the approaching human, her eyes filled with wariness.

The elven girl had a slender figure, her light green hair flowing like a waterfall, her unusually bright eyes revealing wisdom and mystery, her skin a pure, pale color.

Her facial features were delicate and soft, giving an eerily transcendent and strange sense of beauty with her indifferent expression.

So beautiful.

"Byrne!"

Suddenly, a loud shout came, jolting Byrne out of his reverie. The white figure not far in front of him had vanished in an instant.

"What are you doing!"

Lucius ran over with a severe look on his face, ready to fight at a moment's notice, with the guards also very vigilant.

Byrne was dazed for a while, then shook his head and murmured, "Nothing, I just, I think I saw an elf."

"An elf?"

Lucius frowned deeply and immediately organized everyone to huddle and start searching the area. After more than two hours, they hadn't found any trace of an outsider; there simply was no such thing as an elf here.

"Did you see that white mysterious creature and mistake it for an elf?"

Lucius looked at his son, puzzled, and continued:

"Even though the large-scale slave trade was officially abolished decades ago, every other country in the west of the continent still allows the trade of foreign races in secret. The legendary elves are like walking gold, and due to the distance, the Eastern Four Kingdoms very rarely see elves."

Byrne shook his head and said:

"I'm not mistaken, absolutely not, you know my Extraordinary trait."

Lucius's frown deepened as he fell into deep thought, while Byrne recalled the scene he had just witnessed.

His "Profound Memory" Extraordinary trait made that scene he had just seen incredibly clear and real, capable of being replayed in his mind at any time.

Even if he wanted to forget, it was simply impossible. Byrne couldn't help but recall every detail of that figure in his mind meticulously.

Such a beautiful life.

That elven girl was like the most moving song of nature, the babbling brook flowing through the green mountains, full of tender breaths of life.

He suddenly felt afraid, knowing that he would never be able to forget that beautiful figure.

But would I ever have the chance to see her again?

Chapter 27: Chapter 26: Accidental Gains! (Please Follow)

"

For three full days, the members of the Fischer family had not been able to find any trace of the mysterious creature, and the guards were feeling weary, yet due to Lucius's authority, no one dared to voice their desire to return.

Lucius also knew not to expect too much in terms of the guards' obedience and couldn't help but question the reliability of the information.

In theory, Grandma Narda wouldn't betray them, but some information might be considered true by the informant, yet could still be a false report in reality.

Just then, Byrne's expression changed slightly, and in a respectful tone he said, "I sense Its will... Father, it's over there."

After speaking, he extended his finger and pointed in the direction of a jungle.

Lucius quickly understood that what his son referred to must be a hint from the Lord of the Lost and nodded immediately.

"Alright, everyone heighten your alertness!"

The people of the Fischer family walked in that direction for another thirty minutes, but still found nothing.

Suddenly, Lucius was shocked to find that the speed of the surrounding guards had slowed down, a slowness that was starkly apparent, including Byrne, everyone moved at a near standstill pace.

He immediately realized that the Extraordinary trait "Quickdraw" had been activated!

A second's duration slowed down to twenty or thirty excruciating seconds, Lucius slowly moved his hand, attempting to draw his sword, all the while keenly observing his surroundings and soon pinpointing the source of hostility.

A bear with white fur was hidden within the dense jungle dozens of meters away, its limbs as sturdy and powerful as steel, and its eyes carried a ferocious and murderous intent akin to that found in human eyes.

It was very cautious and extremely careful, and if not for his own Extraordinary trait, it would have been very difficult to discover the presence of this bear.

There were too many mysterious creatures in the world, and Lucius had no idea what kind of magic beast it was, but he could feel that its strength was formidable.

It seemed to possess strength close to that of a low-level Transmutation, and with his own power, it would be impossible to be its opponent in a one-on-one fight!

The gaze shifted!

In the brief moment of staring, Lucius suddenly noticed the Moonshadow White Bear's gaze shift and collide with his own! A confrontation!

It realized it had been spotted!

Although his reaction speed increased by tens of times, his body still moved at normal speed, Lucius used all the strength in his body to draw his sword, yelling, "Dodge!"

At the same moment, the bear's massive body moved slightly, crouching down, its limbs touching the ground as it began to run, then, it charged towards the people of the Fischer family at a speed that was only slightly slower than a normal person's, "slowly" coming at them.

Lucius felt his scalp tingle, utterly horrified!

Could it be that this speed, theoretically slowed down tens of times, was the creature's actual sprinting pace?

In the final slow moments, he dodged to the side, while a few guards behind him looked around nonchalantly before turning their heads vaguely in his direction.

Those guards had no time to evade, fortunately, Byrne wasn't on its path!

If, if Byrne had been right behind him, what would he have done?

The thought suddenly occurred to Lucius, and the next moment he felt ashamed of the ignoble doubt that had sprung from deep within him – as a father, he should never have such disgraceful hesitations.

The second of slow motion brought by "Quickdraw" finally came to an end.

"Move quickly!"

"Arr!"

Lucius yelled fiercely, drawing his sword and dodging to the side, only to see a terrifying sight!

Three guards who had been right behind him screamed as they were knocked into the air, after rising several dozen meters, their bodies fell to the ground like noodles, twisting, contorting, and even shattering in a horribly casual manner.

"Moonshadow Demon Bear!"

Byrne only saw a white blur charging at them, and after finally getting a clear look, he shouted out in shock and anger.

His swordsmanship was already quite good, and he retreated immediately, then decisively pulled out an alchemical flintlock and aimed at the white bear to shoot.

"Bang!"

Lucius was surprised to find that the bullet had hit the Moonshadow Bear squarely in the abdomen, the bear with blindingly fast speed had not dodged it!

That's it!

It must have used some "Extraordinary trait" or perhaps only "straight-line charge" to attain the speed it did just now!

Under normal circumstances, the creature's movement speed would definitely not be so exaggerated.

"Arr!"

"^

The Moonshadow White Bear, struck in the abdomen, howled in pain, its agony infused with even stronger rage. It then attempted to crouch down to launch another charge!

"Ha!"

Lucius charged forward with great valor, instantly activating "sword brandishing" and repeatedly slashing at the bear several times. The blade rolled up flesh and blood, and the howling bear instinctively retreated, failing to complete its charging stance.

Although it was a bear-type magic beast, Lucius noticed that, contrary to common sense, its defensive capabilities were not strong, and an ordinary person wielding a weapon could wound it.

"Charge now!" Lucius immediately roared.

The recent scene had been devastating to morale, and the seven surviving family guards, pale-faced, still managed to raise their three-meter-long spears and surround the bear from all sides with extreme caution.

Still not good enough, Lucius thought. Even though he had trained these guards for years, their quality was still not up to par.

If they coordinated with him and rushed in together, they could further damage the bear before them!

Despite knowing he wasn't an outstanding instructor, Lucius was extremely disappointed.

"Roar!"

The bear swung its paws fiercely, its monstrous strength effortlessly sending several spears flying from the guards' hands, while the remaining trembling guards immediately took several steps back.

As soon as the encirclement broke, it glared menacingly at Lucius, the male human who was clearly the most threatening presence.

Byrne had already pulled out his pen and paper, his head covered in sweat as he sketched, not even needing to look at the bear anymore, simply drawing accurately from memory.

It's coming!

Lucius tensed up, and then the bear lunged at him again, its speed significantly slower than its initial charge.

He was already prepared to block, but his whole body shook violently from the impact, uncontrollably thrown into the air, flying several steps before barely managing to stabilize his stance.

Such tremendous strength!

It must be in a straight line, its charge can only be straight!

No sooner had Lucius landed than he rolled on the ground, and sure enough, the bear, already in a four-limb stance, charged at him like a moonshadow—too fast!

Impossible to block the charge; the best strategy was to try to avoid it completely, thought Lucius, dripping with sweat as he struggled to his feet, gasping for air.

Just one hit would be the end of him!

But he soon saw a glimmer of hope, noticing that the bear, having charged past at high speed, seemed unable to stop.

"Ow!"

The bear crashed into a large tree in the jungle, halting only with great difficulty. It had just turned around when it noticed two black alchemical explosives rolling at its feet.

"Boom!"

The violent explosion tore one of the bear's arms to shreds, but it was unfortunate that the alchemical explosives Lucius had predicted to throw were a bit too far, failing to kill it.

“Woo woo woo ow!”

It started to howl miserably, not immediately engaging in battle again, giving the humans time to catch their breath.

The bear, having lost an arm, lost its will to fight and turned in fear to run away. Lucius did not choose to pursue it, only then did Byrne finish his drawing, rendering the bear “fragile.”

“I couldn’t draw any faster, I’m sorry,” Byrne said, looking down awkwardly.

Lucius laughed heartily, saying nonchalantly, “It’s absolutely fine, we’ve already won. We’ll clean up the corpse when we return. Now we need to follow the blood trail from afar.”

He didn’t lead everyone to chase after and kill the Moonshadow White Bear; instead, they followed the blood trail from a hundred meters away. After tracking it for a day and a night, the magic beast finally collapsed from excessive blood loss and didn’t move anymore.

The group waited for another half an hour without getting closer. Then Lucius picked up a spear and threw it with sharp precision, piercing the bear and causing blood to burst forth.

“Ow ow ow ow ow!”

The Moonshadow White Bear suddenly opened its eyes, rising furiously, its expression wild, trying to charge at the humans. But after a few staggering steps, its massive body finally fell backward.

A joyful smile spread across Lucius’s face as he lazily said with narrowed eyes, “Tsk tsk, now it’s thoroughly dead, unable to get back up ever again.”

Only then did Byrne breathe a sigh of relief, revealing a thoughtful expression as he said:

“There are two problems, the first is that extracting extraordinary materials requires a specialized spellcaster. In Nasir’s town, only the elder of the silver descendants clan has this skill.”

“Also, the extraordinary materials on the Moonshadow Demon Bear are Class 3. You haven’t digested the current Magic Potion yet, so we can’t use them directly.”

Class 3 Extraordinary Materials? Lucius was taken aback.

Chapter 28: Chapter 27 Night Talk

“

After dealing with the aftermath, everyone was exhausted. Transporting the enormous bear carcass and three bodies also required a cart, so Lucius ordered two guards to go back first and call for more people, while the rest temporarily stayed in the jungle. In the end, they camped for the night.

For some reason, Byrne still longed deep inside to see that stunningly beautiful elf again.

In the middle of the night, he sat up again, feeling somewhat sleepy but unable to fall asleep.

“Byrne.”

A deep voice came from nearby, and Byrne saw his father Lucius keeping watch, arms folded across his chest, gazing at him wearily.

Ever since that battle, Lucius had been constantly reflecting, with abrupt selfish thoughts hidden deep within, always feeling uneasy.

Byrne was the only son of his own flesh and blood.

But would I really be willing to die for him?

On the lips, relatives of the same blood are the most important, but when it comes to a critical moment, the selfishness and baseness deep inside still surge forward, Lucius shook his head.

Byrne sensitively perceived that something was off with his father but couldn't specifically pinpoint it.

“Father, what's wrong?” he asked.

Lucius looked at Byrne calmly and suddenly realized that at some point, he had grown into a man, even more handsome and dashing than himself when he was younger, like a truly noble gentleman.

And what about himself? He had inevitably aged somewhat.

Ageing, a word Lucius had never thought about before, suddenly overwhelmed his thoughts and refused to leave.

He began very slowly, “There are some things from the past that I want to talk to you about, things I've never told you before.”

“Alright, sure.”

Getting up, Byrne felt a bit excited inside. In fact, he had always known little about his father’s past.

Byrne grew up solely under his mother’s care after birth. His mother, the daughter of a famous painter, had a great talent for painting, but her family did not believe a woman could become a painter, so she was never able to study painting systematically.

All along, she had placed her hopes of becoming a painter onto Byrne, but in the second year of Byrne’s painting studies, a terrifying plague struck, and half the city’s population perished during those dreadful, months-long epidemic.

After his mother’s death, he arrived.

The man who claimed to be his father, whom his mother rarely mentioned and when she did, it was with admiration in her voice.

Byrne, who had survived the plague but was frail and sickly, numbly followed Lucius as they left, endlessly observing this stranger yet familiar man during their aimless and prolonged journeys.

He appeared languid, yet he was brave and shrewd, able to adeptly deal with any sudden situations, his eyes and speech filled with the confidence and charisma that could lead others forward.

Father might not be the grand hero from the poetry collections, but Byrne truly admired him, and found himself increasingly subconsciously learning from this dangerous man who narrowed his eyes in a smile.

The campfire crackled in the night, and the two made their way to the edge of the campsite.

The old man with a resolute face, in his forties, sat on a stone, silently staring into the darkness for a long time, as if gazing deep within his heart, before he finally slowly began to speak:

“I have long since forgotten your mother’s name. In fact, I forgot it not long after leaving that place; after all, I only spent a month with her.”

What?

Byrne looked astonished!

“Our mercenary group once stayed in your childhood city for a month, where I serendipitously met your mother. Perhaps it was the dangerous aura I carry that is fatal to those living in tranquility; she fell in love with me quickly,”

With his head bowed, Byrne listened, while Lucius continued expressionlessly.

“I grew up in a rather well-known mercenary group, those old mercenaries were like my family. I never thought about leaving the mercenary group and wanted to die there.”

He had never thought of leaving the mercenary group, so why did he come back for him and his mother? Byrne couldn't help but feel puzzled deep inside.

Somewhat unexpectedly, Byrne found himself wishing that his father would not continue.

The voice of Lucius sank lower.

“I used to love gambling, and I loved cheating even more. I often used cheats to win money, until I met a wealthy guy one time.”

It was an old man with a black robe and yellow eyes, his pupils chilling like those of a serpent.

“He stared at me with a cold laugh at the gambling table, as if he could see through my cheating, but in reality, he lost to me time and time again. At first, I was ecstatically pleased with myself.”

“But as I kept winning more and more money, a fear set in subconsciously, as I had never won so much before.”

“So I made an excuse to leave the casino, and after getting back to the mercenary group, I never went there again. Within a few days, I completely put that incident out of my mind.”

As he spoke, Lucius gradually became entirely engrossed in his memories.

Then, he intuitively discerned an unsettling aura around the old man in the black robe, hastily making excuses to leave the casino. For the first few days after returning to the mercenary group, nothing happened; their team continued to move through the wilderness as they usually would, everything proceeding as normal.

Until one morning, just after he had woken up, he felt a terrible malice erupt suddenly from inside the tent.

“`

That was a scent of death I had never encountered before, one that made my body tense up involuntarily!

Lucius was extremely vigilant as he cautiously stepped outside the tent.

His muscles tensed up in an instant, totally fearful at the sight of everyone around him being petrified, each member of the mercenary group turned into lifelike stone sculptures amidst their blank expressions!

The old man in black robes had finally come!

He recognized the eyes at first glance, even though the “old man in black robes” was revealing his true form as a black giant dragon nearly a hundred meters long, those yellow serpent-like pupils hadn’t changed at all!

It said, “Let’s gamble again, you just need to beat me once, and it’s all over. I will let everyone go.”

It sneered, “Either your own innards or those people of the mercenary group, you can choose your stake.”

Under the terrifying dragon’s might, Lucius was extremely scared, his heartbeat quickened, sweat poured down his forehead, his palms were damp, as if something was stuck in his throat, making it hard for him to breathe freely.

He had to make a choice, but when he saw the cold, mocking gaze of the black dragon, his heart instantly felt like it had plunged into an ice cellar, subconsciously knowing that winning the gamble was almost impossible.

But I really don’t want to die! No matter what, I don’t want to die!

Lucius spoke with great difficulty, his voice trembling as he expressed his deepest thoughts.

“They, let them be the stakes.”

The moment he spoke, he actually felt a sense of relief and happiness as if a burden had been lifted.

But Lucius still subconsciously thought that he had hardly ever lost a bet in his life, and might not necessarily lose terribly. He had to try to win the upcoming gamble as much as possible.

It burst into loud laughter!

“Good!”

In the gambling that lasted for a day and a night that followed, involving all sorts of previously unseen games, Lucius tried every trick in the book even attempting to cheat, but he could never win even a single game; most games were simply impossible to complete by an ordinary person's strength, with the results almost invariably one-sided.

And for some reason, the black dragon's luck was always incredibly good. Even if Lucius managed to have a slight chance, the dragon would overturn the situation every time in the end.

Fear, helplessness, despair, and madness, a vast sea of negative emotions flooded his mind. Lucius trembled, kneeling on the ground listening to the continuous sound of the sculptures shattering.

As the sculptures made from the members of the mercenary group shattered, one by one, he finally learned a horrifying truth.

"Your stakes are used up, worm, goodbye... no, never to see you again."

The black dragon's voice was particularly cold and void of any emotion, not even bothering to mock anymore. Then it took to the sky with immense pride, leaving Lucius alone, collapsing on the ground and weeping bitterly.

At the edge of the campsite, Lucius's thoughts gradually emerged from the memories, as he continued speaking in a calm tone.

"At that time, I fell into complete despair, having almost everything taken from me in an instant, I was dazed for I don't know how long."

The giant dragon is also a rare and powerful existence among mysterious creatures. What Byrne's father recounted was simply beyond belief, leaving Byrne staring agape.

A certain emotion began to stir in Lucius's eyes, and his breathing became progressively faster.

"Since then, I haven't gambled for many years. To truly speak of it, perhaps only this chess move of actively seeking out the Lord of the Lost counts as gambling, and it's the most important gamble of all."

His eyes filled with hatred and malice, he uttered his words with a rasp nearly hysterical, chilling to the bone:

"As an ordinary person, I could never win; many of the games that black lizard played required extraordinary power to complete. One day! One day when I become powerful enough, I will find it again!"

"I must win it over! Then kill it! Skin it with my own hands!"

Byrne stared at his father sitting beside him, his expression fierce, completely losing his usual easy-going demeanor, almost like a man he had never truly known,

He opened his mouth and finally asked, with great difficulty:

“If the people of the mercenary group hadn’t died, would you have come back for us?”

“Of course I...”

Lucius’s expression faltered for a moment, wanting to say “Of course I would,” but for some reason, he couldn’t complete the sentence, unusually at a loss during a conversation.

Byrne understood, and so he silently got up and walked to the other side of the campsite.

He didn’t continue to press the issue, only realizing a hard truth.

His mother didn’t matter at all in his father’s heart, and his own existence was nothing more than an emotional substitute.

A few years ago, Byrne might have been devastated, feeling completely unable to accept it, even crying, but now as an adult, he just felt a deep-seated discomfort that he couldn’t shake off from the bottom of his heart.

Lucius shifted his toes slightly, wanting to stand up and smooth things over with his usually skillful words.

In the end, he didn’t stand up, but quietly looked towards the jungle outside the campfire with a profound gaze.

That completely dark jungle, devoid of any light as if to swallow all hope, where almost any rational kindness would be choked by the night’s cold madness; the people by the campfire, just like the members of the Fischer family, should never venture into that Tranquil night on a whim.

Chapter 29: Chapter 28 Consecution “Pharmacist

The only person in Nasir Town who could use an “Extraction Spell” to turn mysterious creatures into extraordinary materials was the elder of the silver descendants clan.

However, cooperation between the Fischer family and the elder of the silver descendants clan was not going smoothly.

Silver descendants are one of the sub-human species, characterized by their white hair, not only their head hair but even their eyebrows and all body hair.

Their average lifespan is half that of ordinary people, but their spiritual power is naturally stronger. The probability of newborn silver descendants awakening the talent of a spellcaster is several times higher than that of mainstream humans.

The drawback is that the mental state of silver descendants is more prone to instability.

One of the most powerful and influential spellcasters in the history of the Ouden Continent was a female silver descendant who had created a top-tier “Element-type Spellcasting Bequest” and soon after vanished without a trace along with the bequest.

There were only a few hundred silver descendants in Nasir Town, but they lived together on a street at the edge of South City, and anyone who dared to bully a silver descendant would be met with collective retaliation.

They were very hostile to outsiders, and the other townspeople rarely ventured to their street. Since the silver descendants universally worshiped the Lord of Salvation, they only allowed those who shared their faith to come and do business with them.

The members of the Fischer family had never publicly declared their faith.

Lucius suggested that the family collectively pretend to worship the Lord of Salvation, the most influential deity. Byrne felt that it did not matter whether they pretended to follow the powerful Lord of Salvation and the Sun, or the seemingly weaker Order, Storm, or Silver Moon.

The problem lay with Irene; the mere mention of feigning belief in the Lord of Salvation made her uncomfortable, and even the idea of pretending to convert left a bad taste in her mouth.

In her own words, it was unbearable to see others praising other gods as the greatest right in front of her, to the point where she could not eat.

It wasn't until Lucius presented her with many examples of endurance and psychological preparation that Irene finally agreed to the pretense, albeit reluctantly.

The devout Irene's soul wrestled with a strand of black light; the original black radiance had been expended in a night battle long ago, and the new black light was the result of her devout prayers re-condensed through “God Worshiping” over three years.

Thus, the negotiation with the elder of the silver descendants clan was left to Irene, but the prospects did not look hopeful. Despite having studied the religious teachings of the Lord of Salvation beforehand, their attitude toward her remained poor.

The fundamental reason for this was that she was not a silver descendant, but a mainstream human.

Byrne had thought so initially, but Lucius scoffed at this reason with blatant disdain.

Wasn't Baron Hovern, who had originally come to collect money, also not a silver descendant? And yet, didn't that "very principled" clan elder still put on a smiling face at the banquet?

In the end, the elder of the silver descendants clan quoted a price that Irene simply could not accept.

The rationale behind the outrageous demand was simple: there were not many spellcasters with "Alchemical Spellcasting Bequest" in the whole of Nasir Town, and he was the only one who could perform the "Extraction Spell." Otherwise, the Fischer family would have to look for someone else in Fein City.

The Fischer family indeed could not afford to delay any longer, for as time passed and without proper preservation techniques, the extraordinary power contained in the Moonshadow White Bear's corpse would gradually diminish.

The deal was eventually struck, and the members of the Fischer family soon rejoiced. From the bear's carcass, they acquired a Class 3 Extraordinary Material "Moonshadow Bearskin," and in addition, a Class 2 Extraordinary Material "Moonshadow Tongue," amounting to a significant fortune.

The Moonshadow Bearskin couldn't be used immediately, as Lucius, who had already reached the 2nd Rank, was still far from assimilating the Magic Potion. However, after some discussion, they also decided not to sell it.

Fortunately, the Class 2 Extraordinary Material "Moonshadow Tongue" could be put to immediate use, as both Irene and Byrne had fully digested the magic potions of the 1st Rank.

The ceremony unfolded once again. After the Fischer family members sacrificed the "Moonshadow Tongue," Karl entered the Spirit Realm again, yet did not immediately expand the Extraordinary laws.

He silently contemplated whether to elevate Irene or Byrne to the next step.

"Between the Path of Knowledge and the Path of Divine Sacrifice for the 2nd Rank, the Path of Knowledge takes priority for the entire Fischer family," he concluded.

Karl then created the 2nd Rank of the Path of Knowledge. In the "constellation," there existed the image of a middle-aged man in green robes, holding a potion bottle with swirling liquid.

"Pharmacist" of the Consecution!

A pale green Spiritual Radiance entered Byrne's body before the eyes of all present.

Even though she wasn't the second to receive the blessing, Irene felt no jealousy or dissatisfaction, but rather heartfelt joy for her relative and was filled with even greater reverence and gratitude toward the great Lord of the Lost.

Byrne took a deep breath, closed his eyes, and keenly sensed the new power he had gained.

"I am deeply grateful for the power you have bestowed upon me, O great Lord of the Lost."

First and foremost was the considerable increase in spirituality, which had risen by about eighty percent from its original foundation.

There was also a moderate improvement in the quality of his physique, although not the primary enhancement, yet it was already on par with a "Gladiator" of the 1st Rank.

The "Pharmacist's" extraordinary trait had two aspects: "Drug Verification" and "Self-Extracted Formula."

"Drug Verification" was a very simple and practical ability, whereby the effects of any potion, medicinal herb, or extraordinary material could be known at a glance by the holder of the Pharmacist's Power of Consecution.

As for the other important effect, "Self-Extracted Formula," it granted the "Pharmacist" an inheritance akin to that of an "Alchemical Spellcaster," possessing the capability to craft and develop various magic potion formulas on their own.

Moreover, while they were attempting to make and research magic potions, hints leading to the correct approach would occasionally surface in their minds, significantly increasing the success rate of potion-making.

Because the financial situation of the Fischer family was rather dire, Karl judged that the "Pharmacist" Power of Consecution, which tended towards increasing monetary income, would be more suitable.

Two months later, the residents of Nasir Town learned of an exhilarating piece of news.

The rebelling nobles of the northern kingdom of Rhea had suffered a massive defeat, with their main force nearly decimated, and the higher-ups leading the armies on both sides had entered into peace negotiations.

The people, who had been worried about the war spreading to them, all breathed a sigh of relief, and even the overall prices in the northern part of the Cyart Kingdom gradually began to fall.

At the age of five, Chris had already begun to learn swordsmanship, combat, stealth, and other fighting skills with Lucius.

The quiet lad had a tremendous talent for movement; he seemed to pick up various fighting techniques almost instantly, leading Lucius to even wonder if he had a hidden talent for coaching.

The health of Old Ramon from the smithy was not promising; his dementia was becoming increasingly serious, to the point where he often couldn't recognize his own son and would burst into tears whenever he saw Irene.

The visage of the once robust and tough old blacksmith seemed to be gradually fading away.

Lucius, inexplicably fearful, avoided passing by the smithy as much as possible; perhaps "disappearance" was more terrifying than death itself.

He didn't know how many more years he had left to live; he just wanted another chance to face that black giant dragon while he was still alive.

"There will definitely be another chance, there's absolutely still time!"

After acquiring the power of the "Pharmacist," the Fischer family set up a simple workshop, and Byrne began trying to develop new medicines. The family's existing "blood potion," used for healing injuries, was among the experimental subjects.

He mixed different substances and Class 0 Extraordinary Materials with the blood potion in various proportions. Thanks to his "Self-Extracted Formula" trait, Byrne's mind was twice graced with mysterious voices giving directions, like "Add another ten milliliters of water" or "Keep heating."

The voices were as if someone was whispering in his own mind, eerily peculiar yet inexplicably reliable.

Winter came, with snow blanketing the mountains, and the frozen lakes and rivers, a slight breeze shaking the hanging ice crystals from the tree branches.

Another year was nearly over.

In the Fischer family's rudimentary workshop, an extremely weary Byrne suddenly stood up, walking back and forth while cheering, his face unable to contain the surging excitement and elation.

"Success! I've finally done it! Hahaha!"

“The original blood potion, with an added ten milliliters of water heated continuously to boiling, and finally mixed with five grams of the Class 0 Extraordinary Material ‘Ghost Starfish’ precipitate, can attain a powerful detoxification effect on top of its base properties!”

He was ecstatic; the powerful antidote was much more expensive than the blood potion!

“Bang, bang, bang!”

Suddenly there was knocking at the door, followed by Irene entering sternly, ignoring Byrne’s sign on the door that read “Do Not Enter Without Permission.”

Byrne was stunned, looking at his cousin whose expression was solemn. Irene took a deep breath.

“A family meeting must be convened immediately, Byrne... Based on very reliable information, an army of Rhea people has suddenly crossed the border and is headed in the direction of Nasir!”

Chapter 30: Chapter 29 Boomerang

In the Fischer family’s basement, three members of the family were momentarily silent.

Byrne even harbored a glimmer of hope, thinking the Cyart army might bypass Nasir Town, but in the end, he couldn’t bring himself to say it aloud.

The Cyart and the Rhea were the most sworn enemies among the Eastern Four Kingdoms, waging war and looting each other in the decades before they signed a peace treaty. The last battle, which occurred on the border of the two countries twelve years ago, had left a heavy toll of dead and wounded, marking the memories of many Cyart people.

The Rhea were known for their fierceness and brutality, far from the civilized reputation of the Cyart in mainstream opinion.

They were even one of the rare countries on the Ouden Continent that still adhered to a feudal lordship system, where the Rhea kings’ cohesion and control fluctuated between strong and weak.

After much thought, Irene asked, “What’s the situation in Nasir like now?”

Lucius said, “The news hasn’t been released yet. It’s only circulating among the major families, but I think it’s only a matter of time before it spreads throughout the whole city.”

Narrowing his eyes, he spoke gravely, “We don’t know how many troops the Rhea have sent, nor when Cyart reinforcements will arrive, but in any case, we can’t gamble on it.”

The standing armed forces of Nasir Town consisted of a hundred or so patrolmen armed with flintlocks, and when counting the extraordinary exponents and guards from the major families, there were only about three hundred people capable of joining the battle in total.

Moreover, they were not professional soldiers, and their actual combat power was incomparable.

“Each family is packing up valuable goods, preparing to leave Nasir temporarily. I think fleeing to Fein City is the best route.”

“Good.”

Having made their decision, the three didn’t hesitate any longer and went off to take care of their respective tasks.

Irene was in charge of deciding which valuable items to take with them, while Lucius went to call the Fischer family’s guard and servants, informing them of the situation and instructing them to notify their families to bring their belongings immediately.

Suddenly, Lucius said, “Byrne, go to the Taylor family right away. We still have to retrieve a sum of fifteen Gold Coins from our investment.”

Not long ago, Byrne had spent a considerable amount of money on pharmaceutical research, and now the Byrne family had only about ten Gold Coins left in assets, which would likely be insufficient for the journey as refugees.

No sooner had Byrne left his house and reached the street than he realized the news had already spread. People were hustling about in panic, running back and forth very anxiously.

Because the servants of the various families in Nasir were related to many townsfolk, the news spread like wildfire, from one to ten, ten to a hundred, making it impossible to keep a secret.

He jogged through the noisy streets to the Taylor family residence, only to discover that the entire family’s estate was deserted.

Byrne stood stunned for a while, then realized that the remaining half of the payment could not be retrieved for the time being.

But, the Taylor family could run temporarily, but not forever. As long as they remained in the vicinity of the East Coast, Byrne was confident they could be found.

Moreover, he believed in his heart that several years of acquaintance with Robert would prevent him from outright defaulting on the debt.

By the time Byrne returned to his family, all the neighborhoods were in an uproar.

No, he quickly realized that it wasn't just the people on this street who were shaken by fear; the entire Nasir City was in great panic.

Baron Hovern was absent, the town chief was utterly unreliable, and with no one to lead the townspeople in resistance, everyone was thinking of fleeing as quickly as possible.

Most of Nasir's adults had experienced war and knew all too well how cheap human life became once war broke out, the overwhelming fear instantly pressing down on them.

Just as Lucius had thought, many people decided to flee westward to the safest place, Fein, the only city on the East Coast. Their caravan quickly became massive.

The Fischer family's dozens of members blended into the first few thousand refugees, along with Old Ramon's family from the blacksmith shop and sea merchant John's family, making the final count about a hundred or so.

Irene suddenly noticed with surprise that Old Ramon's mind had become very clear, talking and handling matters in an orderly fashion.

The escape had begun.

Dragging families and carrying many belongings made the large refugee caravan slow, likely taking seven to eight days just to reach the territory of Fein City, and with the impact of the snowy environment, it could take even longer.

On the third evening of the escape, the outdoor climate grew increasingly cold.

Snowflakes danced gently through the air, weaving a tapestry of purity, floating like elves, lightly brushing everything on the ground.

As the sun set, thousands of fleeing refugees chose to make camp next to the forest after crossing a frozen river.

Different incidents emerged within the throng of refugees during several days, with frequent acts of theft and even outright robberies occurring.

The town chief had disappeared at the first opportunity and the Taylor family as well, while the other three knight families discussed that night who should lead them in maintaining overall order.

The Fischer family, however, experienced no attempts at theft or robbery, partly due to their high reputation and partly due to their considerable martial strength.

The dozens of the Fischer family were setting camp, with the tired guards and servants all working hard. So far, Irene had managed to handle all sorts of situations very adeptly.

In the first years, most matters within the family were handled by Lucius, but now she had become adept at managing the internal affairs of the Fischer family, even more patient than Lucius.

After comforting two frightened cooks, Irene approached Lucius and Byrne, her inner unease prompting her to ask,

“Our caravan is a conspicuous target, could anything go wrong?”

Fully armed, Lucius shook his head and calmly, pointing his sword to the north, said,

“That troop from the north, from Rhea, will be heading straight for Nasir after passing through the jungle. For them to find our group in the vast wilderness is virtually impossible.”

Indeed, several thousand people might seem like a lot, but in the vast expanse of the East Coast, they were like a small bunch of ants, and the chances of them encountering another small bunch of ants by chance were extremely slim.

Lucius continued,

“Moreover, if the Rhea troops wander aimlessly in the wild, the risk is too great. It would be better to raid Nasir and then turn and run,”

Byrne, who was listening nearby, suddenly looked up and said,

“There is one exception, though. I’ve heard of an exceedingly rare Spellcasting Bequest, the prophecy-type spells, that can accurately pinpoint a target’s location.”

Lucius remained silent. The strategically valuable prophecy-type spells did exist, but the chances of them being in that Rhea troop were not high.

Moreover, the likelihood of this group of Rheans stubbornly insisting on going after their group was nearly non-existent.

Unless there was someone or something extremely important within the entire escape party.

Lucius revealed a smile and calmly said, “This is a low-risk gamble; nothing will happen.”

“Um, I understand.”

Irene nodded gently, turned, and continued to console members of the Fischer family.

Soon, people came seeking treatment for sickness, as several elderly people had nearly succumbed to the cold weather and the demands of the journey.

Irene did not refuse, striving to save the old people's lives, and the people of Nasir were all deeply grateful to her.

Until a group of people with white hair and beards approached her.

Irene was slightly taken aback. The members of the Fischer family looked over; it was the silver descendants from Nasir Town, who not long ago had swindled a sum of money from the Fischer family.

Irene calmly watched them as a man with white, long hair stepped forward, clearly someone of higher status among the silver descendants, his clothing bearing symbols that flaunted a spellcaster's identity.

The silver descendant man fell silent for a while before finally asking with neither subservience nor arrogance,

"Madam Irene, the elder of our clan suddenly collapsed and has not regained consciousness. We suspect it may be a disease triggered by the cold weather and the fatigue. We beg you to save our elder, seeing as we are both followers of the Lord of Salvation."

Upon hearing this, Irene revealed a bright smile as if delighted by some happy thought.

She had healed too many people and knew that the cold, combined with fatigue and emotional excitement, could easily cause malignant changes in the hearts and brains of the elderly.

"As a fellow devotee of the Lord of Salvation, of course, I will save the respected elder of the silver descendants. Rest assured," Irene said.

Irene paused here, causing the middle-aged man to grow anxious before she continued,

"However, the Fischer family is currently in a very difficult situation, and we hope that you will offer assistance in the name of the Lord of Salvation."

The middle-aged man nodded, unsurprisingly asking, "Fischer family, how much assistance do you need?"

But when Irene finished, his expression changed.

"We left Nasir in a hurry, and we urgently need thirty Gold Coins."

Although everyone among the silver descendants knew Irene was asking a sky-high price, they had no choice but to oblige her. After all, just as only the elder of the silver descendants clan possessed the “Extraction Spell,” Irene of the Fischer family was the best healer among the thousands in their party.

Ultimately, it was the shortsightedness of the elder of the silver descendants clan that had led to this unfortunate situation, unlike sea merchant John, who would rather take a loss to make a good impression on the Fischer family.

The silver descendants clan was extremely unified and quickly gathered the thirty Gold Coins, earnestly beseeching Irene to save their elder’s life.

When she treated the elder of the silver descendants clan, she didn’t completely heal his ailment but left a portion untreated, ensuring that the silver descendants clan must beg Irene daily.

After returning to the Fischer family camp, the sky had gradually darkened, and the snow grew denser, falling slowly like suspended feathers.

Irene suddenly discovered that Grandma Narda, the mother of the thieves’ gang leaders, was silently waiting for her with a black iron box.

Because of the Dawn Church’s basic principles of “secrecy” and “caution,” Grandma Narda rarely came directly to the Fischer family.

Irene asked in puzzlement, “Grandma Narda, what brings you here?”

As soon as Narda saw Irene, she quickly approached, speaking excitedly,

“A few days ago, my children came across something from a merchant, which could very well be a Mysterious rare artifact.”

She leaned in and lowered her voice, “You once said that the lost Lord of Dawn needs them, and these past days I’ve not had the chance to hand it to you. I feel now is the time to give it to you.”

After saying this, Grandma Narda respectfully presented the black iron box.

Suddenly, Irene felt a tiny tremor from the powerful will of the Lord of the Lost! Inside the black iron box seemed to hide something extremely important, something that even the great gods could not disregard!

She was utterly astonished. What exactly was inside the black iron box?

Just then, puzzled murmurs arose from the crowd around her, followed by gasps of surprise!

“Someone’s here!”

“Look over there, quick!”

“Ah!”

Irene and Grandma Narda abruptly looked up, their gazes joining the crowd’s in the direction everyone was staring.

In the dim light of day, black figures were gradually multiplying on the far side by the riverbank, becoming more distinct and moving closer, appearing like a terrifying Black Tide slowly advancing as if to devour everything.