

From Secret Clan to the Divine Dynasty

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Chapter 31: Chapter 30: Collapse

“Is this a joke? How is this possible?”

Lucius’s eyes widened, his body shivering, as he incredulously stared at the Black Tide slowly approaching from afar.

It wasn’t completely dark yet, and with his keen senses, he could vaguely make out that the so-called Black Tide was very likely the regular army of the Rhea.

Impossible! Absolutely impossible!

He knew how vast the East Coast was, how could this army have arrived here? And didn’t they plunder other refugee groups or scour Nasir at all?

Moreover, there was more than one path from Nasir to Fein City, damn it! The appearance of those people was like an ant from Nasir precisely finding another ant!

“Just bad luck, or rather, fate?”

Lucius felt a bitter taste in his heart, vaguely sensing that there was some kind of “inevitable” factor in this gamble that led to their failure.

They “cheated” to find this fleeing group so accurately and quickly.

Lucius suddenly turned back and looked towards the pitch-black jungle not far away and yelled:

“All members of the Fischer family, abandon everything except your personal belongings, and run into the jungle right now!”

Due to certain issues with rifled guns yet to be addressed, the armies on the Ouden Continent were generally equipped with smoothbore flintlocks, with an effective range of about a hundred meters. Reloading took at least tens of seconds, hence the very important first volley of collective fire on the battlefield would not be fired lightly.

And the Nasir refugees had not entered the range of the Rhea army’s bullet fire in the first place.

But in the world of Claud, extraordinary power existed, and aside from the soldiers equipped with flintlock rifles, the infantry retained other tactics based on the characteristics of their race.

At the command, the Rhea's unique half-orc units temporarily set down their flintlock guns and collectively threw a few short spears with extraordinary strength that ordinary humans could not match, from a great distance.

They rose into the dim sky and fell scattered over hundreds of meters into the fleeing crowd, followed by continuous screams and wails.

“Ahhhh! Run!”

“The Rhea are coming!”

“Help!”

A regular army might scatter in disarray, but the refugee group became like an anthill thrown with firecrackers upon being attacked, everyone went mad!

Everyone made a wild dash towards the jungle to the west, with many of the weak and even some adults being pushed down by others and ending up dead under the crush of the chaos.

The sparse throwing of spears stopped abruptly.

In the dim light, a detachment of Rhea's army resembling a black tide separated out, rapidly closing in. They were a well-trained cuirassier unit, charging towards the refugees on their fast horses.

Lucius, leading the Fischer family, didn't hesitate to rush towards the jungle. Encountering a regular cavalry unit in the wilderness left no chance of survival; they had to dive into the jungle right away.

Irene was clutching her dazed brother Chris, while Byrne kindly pulled Grandma Narda along as she ran; Grandma Narda let out a few wails trying to look for her sons but ultimately didn't go against the crowd to search for them.

A few strangers who weren't familiar blocked the way, begging and entangling, hoping to obtain the protection of the Fischer family, which had a high reputation and was well praised by everyone in Nasir.

“Get out of my way!”

Lucius roared loudly, cutting down anyone in his way without hesitation, tearing away the mask of the “Hero of Nasir” to reveal a ferocious and frantic face.

He knew it had to be done this way, as sheltering a few more would mean dozens more, even hundreds more. Having scared the shocked people away with his killing, Lucius led his family members into the edge of the jungle at the first opportunity.

The dark jungle was vast, more than enough for their purposes, and moreover, it would take the Rhea a long time to finish killing the majority of refugees and then proceed with the looting.

That's the logic, but for some reason, Lucius had a strong sense of fear deep inside.

It is coming!

All members of the Fischer family felt the hint given by the great Lord of the Lost!

Something even more terrifying is about to happen!

Suddenly, within the Black Tide, a silent blue rain rose into the sky, reaching tens of meters high before blooming into cold blue flowers, then falling like brilliant fireworks onto all the Rhea.

The spell's aura was extremely beautiful, yet Lucius and the others felt nothing but horror, and they immediately plunged into the jungle without hesitation.

It was a Ritual Spell cast by many, greatly enhancing the overall speed of the Rhea people. The cavalry, who were even faster, swept across the frozen river like winds of death, crossing it in record time!

The swiftest of the black-armored riders had already stood out from the pursuing cavalry!

The pitch-black warhorse beneath him galloped with lightning speed as if it possessed the terrifying bloodline of a mysterious creature, its hooves striking sparks of lightning that were extraordinarily visible against the dimming sky!

"He might be the Rhea people's commander!"

An Extraordinary knight from the Nasir knight family bellowed as he rode his warhorse, charging forward to intercept the black-armored rider breaking away from the main force. Killing him would surely deal a heavy blow to the enemy's morale.

In the instant they closed in on each other for close combat, the dazed people couldn't make out the details as the Nasir knight tumbled off his still galloping horse, body askew.

The black-armored rider quickly entered the rear of the fleeing group on his pitch-black warhorse. Anyone struck by him was instantly thrown aside, and soon the cavalry followed through the breach, swords raised high, relentlessly cutting down their foes.

The night had fallen completely dark, and in a few hours, it would be light again.

Surrounded by pitch darkness, the members of the Fischer family were utterly exhausted, but thankfully, the sounds of slaughter were no longer behind them.

Lucius exhaled and said, "Let's stop for a moment, count the numbers for the third time, and start with you, Byrne."

The original group of over a hundred people surrounding the Fischer family now numbered just over seventy, with more than thirty scattered. Fortunately, all the key members were still present, including Old Ramon.

He had been carried all the way by his son Hugh, who, large in stature, now lay on the ground panting, his face flushed and body trembling, unable to utter a single word.

Even with stamina far exceeding human limits, Lucius, fully armed, still felt exhausted and knew they had to rest.

Having already trekked for a day in the icy wilderness and then scrambling through the jungle for a long time, many had reached their limits. Grandma Narda had even fainted from exhaustion; fortunately, Irene's healing powers had saved her.

Lucius ordered everyone to hydrate and eat and then rise to continue marching in thirty minutes.

In the dark of the night, the resting group dared not to light any lamps, conversing in hushed tones, while subdued cries occasionally reached their ears.

Byrne approached Lucius and Irene, sipping water in small gulps, and said nervously,

"I looked at a rough map of this jungle yesterday. It's vast; we probably won't make it out until sunrise."

"Our current path leads to the southeast, it is less intuitive but safer."

Irene closed her eyes in ardent prayer, communing, then after pondering with her eyes reopened, she solemnly said,

“The great Lord of the Lost can bring misfortune upon our enemies, but He has not fully awakened yet, and His power should not be used lightly. The targets that can receive the Descending Divine Punishment are very few.”

“We can implore the great Lord of the Lost to intervene if we offer up our lifespans as a sacrifice.”

“I understand,”

Lucius nodded after listening, frowning deeply in thought.

He knew it was impossible to have the not-yet-awakened Lord of the Lost annihilate the enemy.

Like all gods of this world, they seldom interfere with worldly matters without extensive preparation and sacrifices.

Yet, His great power ensured that at least one or two, or slightly more, enemies would be slain if the chosen target was right, creating a surprising effect.

However, that was the worst-case scenario; the best outcome would be that they no longer encountered the Rhea army and made a safe escape.

In theory, it was nearly impossible for the Rhea to find them again.

Nevertheless, Lucius couldn't shake off an intense feeling of fear and unease from deep within.

Suddenly, his eyes widened in tremor, and he growled in a low voice,

“No, no, this is all wrong! Those Rhea are ‘cheating’ in the game!”

Chapter 32: Chapter 31 Fatal Gamble

The fleeing group rose to continue their journey, only this time everyone tacitly slowed their pace.

Most were at the limits of their physical and emotional endurance, and while they had managed to hold on without issue initially, a brief rest had almost instantaneously allowed exhaustion to overwhelm them.

Sighs, crying, and complaints intermittently arose from around, the jungle ahead completely dark and lightless, like a tunnel leading to a bottomless underground. The escapees could only move forward, guided by the memories in Byrne's head, silently hoping for light at the end of the darkness.

Chris, who kept moving forward, suddenly stopped and looked down at his feet where an insect, accidentally crushed underfoot, had its juices splattered all over the ground.

“What’s wrong?” his sister Irene whispered gently beside him.

Chris shook his head, said nothing in response, and continued to follow the group.

“It’s okay, we’ll definitely be fine.”

Irene took a deep breath, one hand tightly clutching a transparent bottle, while the other comforted her brother Chris.

She had thought Chris would be afraid, trembling just like the other children, but the young boy with silvery-white hair simply followed the group in silence, not uttering a word from the beginning to the end.

He seemed to be the only person in the fleeing group who wasn’t nervous.

Irene always felt she knew her brother best, yet sometimes she thought Chris was a bit too “mature”.

Some might even say that Chris seemed somewhat emotionally lacking, but Irene deeply despised such a statement—it was as if they were calling her brother handicapped.

He was just precocious and quiet.

“Irene.”

Old Ramon came over. As the pace of the group had slowed, Old Ramon, who still had enough strength, insisted on walking on his own and didn’t want to be carried by his son anymore.

He looked at Irene who had grown up, thinking that if his granddaughter could’ve grown up, she might have been just as beautiful as Irene.

“Irene, I know how cruel and terrifying the Rhea people can be. I’ve dealt with these bastards decades ago.”

“Mhm.”

Irene nodded. The once somewhat senile Old Ramon was now extraordinarily lucid.

His calm eyes gazing into the darkness held determination and weight as he continued, “But let’s not kid ourselves, we Cyart people aren’t exactly saints either. You must be careful.”

“War is a game for the nobility; it’s usually the poor folks’ children who die while the nobles hardly ever kill each other.”

“One day, if you want to transition from being a pawn in their game to a player, you must find a way to become a noble.”

War is but a game for the nobles, and the children of the poor are the ones who die, Irene reflected thoughtfully.

Old Ramon fell silent for a while, then added, “Hugh actually has a son, my grandson, who was raised in his uncle’s home in a nearby village.”

Irene nodded again, initially thinking the old man would make some request about his grandson, but the conversation ended abruptly. Old Ramon fell silent and kept muttering to himself.

Lucius, leading the group, was deep in thought, desiring to know how the Rhea people had cheated, for only then could the Fischer family be entirely safe.

How exactly had they discovered our fleeing group? Did the Rhea troops target everyone or just a specific person or item?

Prophecy-type spells?

It was very possible. Lucius knew that prophecy-type spellcasters were extremely rare but they did exist, and perhaps the Rhea had used a prophecy-type spell to learn about the entire fleeing group.

But was that the answer?

He frowned tightly, not understanding the specific workings of prophecy-type spells and thus unable to fully assess the overall situation.

It seemed that everyone was gradually approaching the edge of the dark forest, and the sky was also slowly brightening, no longer the pitch-black path where one couldn’t see their own hand in front of them.

Everyone’s spirits lifted slightly—the most dangerous moment had completely passed.

Finally, the light of Dawn illuminated the jungle, and the reflection of the snow brightened the surroundings, filling everyone’s heart with the joy of relief.

Lucius couldn’t help but let out a sigh of relief as he patted Byrne’s shoulder and said,

“Let’s not leave the jungle just yet, I’ll go ahead and scout the situation. Let’s rest here for thirty minutes.”

The air around was still exceedingly cold, but the light had completely driven away the darkness, and deep in Lucius's heart, he couldn't suppress the feeling of joy at having escaped to safety!

We survived!

However, not long after Lucius had left, a warning from the great Lord of the Lost emerged in the deepest recesses of his mind.

The message contained within that great will was... not to move forward carelessly, there were enemies ahead!

Lucius was shocked as he gazed towards the bright exit of the jungle, falling into a long silence.

Karl's intangible consciousness rose high, centering on the transparent bottle in Irene's hand as he looked around, and quickly spotted an entire troop of Cyart cavalry waiting outside the jungle ahead.

Behind them, in several directions, hundreds of Cyart infantry were also advancing slowly, holding flintlocks and gradually enclosing on their position.

He was acutely aware that if things continued this way, the people of the Fischer family would be completely captured.

Karl's consciousness leapt a great distance to near the cavalry unit, which totaled only a hundred riders – not many – among which only three were Extraordinary Exponents who possessed different Knight Bequests.

The leader was none other than the black armored knight who had led the charge the day before.

Under the black helmet visor was the serious face of a middle-aged man, with a full head of red hair. His demeanor was entirely different from the surrounding cavalry, undoubtedly a true noble.

The entire situation was nearly hopeless.

They faced a blockage ahead and pursuers behind, and it seemed as if the Cyart could unpredictably pinpoint their location.

Karl immediately relayed the information back to the three members of the Fischer family.

“These Cyart people have really ‘cheated’ through and through.”

Lucius took a deep breath, feeling an overwhelming sense of powerlessness as sweat slowly trickled down his back, even experiencing a sense of déjà vu.

The current predicament was like the one from years ago, when he had encountered that giant black dragon—a gamble at every step, where one wrong move could mean no burial for the dead.

The immense pressure felt like an invisible force, continuously and tightly constricting Lucius’s mental and physical being, making it hard for him to breathe.

Lucius closed his eyes and bowed his head with genuine devotion, slowly speaking:

“Great Lord of the Lost, I pray to you.”

“I sincerely ask that you protect all members of the Fischer family.”

“Next, I will lead away the cavalry troop up ahead, please allow the rest of the family to immediately pass the road ahead, without the slightest delay.”

Lucius seemed to be talking to himself, but in fact, he was speaking to the Lord of the Lost.

His speed of movement was undoubtedly the fastest among them all, with the most abundant stamina and combat ability that went without saying.

If that cavalry unit directly engaged the people of the Fischer family, it would be over for everyone, so he had to lead them away himself.

Lucius did not look back but went alone, sword in hand, actively seeking out the cavalry unit.

He believed the great Lord of the Lost was protecting the Fischer family and would definitely convey his thoughts to Byrne and Irene.

The next thing to do was to briefly distract the cavalry unit, then try to survive. Although it was undoubtedly an extremely difficult and dangerous action, Lucius knew it was another deadly gamble he couldn’t escape, similar to the one from years ago.

Only this time, the “chips” on the perilous gamble were not just the important people beside him, but also himself!

Chapter 33: Chapter 32 The Smell of Iron in the Snow

The cavalymen clad in breastplates and helmets positioned themselves at the edge of the forest, awaiting the commander's order to attack with strict readiness.

Leading the cavalry formation was a red-haired middle-aged noble commander, Baron Bourette Meyer, one of the few younger brothers of Marquis Meyer.

He hailed from a prominent northern Rhea family, the Meyer family, the most important noble force among the many that had rebelled against the King.

But the Meyer family was too vast, and even if the family was defeated and negotiated with, the King would not dare to completely annihilate the Meyer family. From then on, the Meyer family would enter a long period of decline.

It might be a few years, decades, but after a century, the Meyer family would still undoubtedly remain one of Rhea's top noble families!

Every member of the Meyer family firmly believed in the future of the family, each willing to sacrifice life, freedom, and dignity to fight for the glory of the entire family!

Unity—that was the motto of the Meyer family!

Exhaling the chill air from within his black helmet, Bourette tightly grasped the reins in his hand and looked toward the two squire knights beside him.

"There's still time. Once we get that thing, we immediately head north."

The two squire knights, one burly and one frail, with the burlier one asking, "What about the infantry squads?"

"They can only remain within Cyart's reach."

Bourette fell silent for a moment before continuing with regret, "Duke Black Iron Houston's army is in Fein City; they will definitely come to intercept us."

"We're cavalry, we still have a chance to escape. The infantry squads are pretty much doomed."

The name of Duke Black Iron was well-known, the aged man was the terrifying demon, butcher, and madman who had repeatedly defeated the Rhea people.

Whenever they thought of such an old man, it always weighed heavily on the Rhea people's hearts.

However, Bourette thought that if his brother, Marquis Meyer, one day had the chance to face Duke Black Iron on the battlefield, he might stand a chance of defeating the legend.

Upon hearing that the infantry squads would be annihilated, the burly squire knight was shaken and couldn't help asking loudly,

"Baron Bourette, is it worth the death of so many brave Rhea soldiers?"

Bourette nodded without hesitation and said with firm conviction,

"Their deaths are valuable, precious. Only with that thing can the Meyer family step onto the highest stage with glory and join the ranks of the most splendid ruling families on this continent."

The two squire knights exchanged a glance; their ultimate loyalty was to the Meyer family. Since this action was beneficial for the family, they could only sacrifice those infantrymen.

Bourette bowed his head and felt the shards trembling inside the box on his body. Although he could sense the location of "kin" within a range, he couldn't pinpoint them more precisely.

He just felt one of the shard pieces was getting closer.

Of the five pieces of that broken thing, two were kept by his brother, one was with him, another on those Cyart people in the jungle, and the last one lay in the distant west of the continent.

In due time, the Meyer family would definitely be able to gather them all!

"Bang!"

A sudden gunshot immediately drew everyone's attention!

A cavalryman slowly collapsed among the crowd, the flintlock bullet having penetrated the unprotected part of his body at extreme range, instantly resulting in death.

A middle-aged man stood at the edge of the forest, holding a sword in one hand and raising a flintlock high with the other, clad in silver full-body armor.

When the breeze blew, the snowflakes reflected the Blazing Sun and Radiant Sun, resembling dancing shards of glass, sparkling with enchanting light, as though the surroundings were cast in a layer of illusionary light and shadow.

The light from above landed on the snow, and the reflected abundance of light made that challenging middle-aged man seem somewhat divine and inviolable.

The next moment, he turned and ran into the forest!

Bourette saw the man's speed was not weak, definitely a knight!

The odds of that thing remaining in the hands of an ordinary person were low, which meant that man was likely carrying a piece of that artifact!

Bourette immediately issued a serious order, commanding his two subordinate squire knights, shouting,

"I will stay here to lead the team and intercept the rest; you go lead people to block him!"

The two squire knights at once led forty cavalrymen in pursuit, while Bourette stayed behind with the rest, coldly waiting for the remaining "lambs."

The infantry squads moved closer according to orders, soon to close the net. Baron Bourette, with a stern frown, drew a deep breath of the ice-cold air.

"As expected, I couldn't lure all of them away. It's such a pity. They will have to find another way with the Lord of the Lost."

Lucius dashed frantically through the white, snow-covered forest, pondering whether Irene and Byrne had understood the hint he gave them that night.

At that time, he had hinted at something.

In the final moments, they could very well abandon everyone around them and flee with only Chris!

The core of the Fischer family, even what's so-called the Dawn Church, was merely those connected by blood, sharing a common fate!

However, making such a decision would be very difficult.

He knew very clearly that Irene would have the determination to forsake others at a critical moment, but the real issue lay entirely with Byrne.

That guy was the biggest fool in the group when it came to so-called "sentiments."

The snow fell thicker and thicker, and the ground, already difficult to traverse due to the snow, proved even more challenging for the cavalry once they entered the forest, forcing the forty-odd riders to dismount and search on foot soon after.

The two squires serving the Meyer family were Extraordinary Exponents of high-level Beginning, and their combat strength in one-on-one fights was no less than that of Lucius.

They were also well aware of the individual combat capabilities of an Extraordinary Exponent, so they ordered all the soldiers to not lose sight of the other two and to search the surrounding forest as cautiously as possible.

Gone.

Everyone quickly fell into bewilderment, the middle-aged man they had just chased here had disappeared, and no one could find a trace of him.

Where exactly could he be?

Long before charging out to provoke a challenge, Lucius had deeply dug a hole in the snow.

He had immediately run back to the hole to hide, swiftly covering the surface with a large amount of snow, leaving only a small crack exposed, and breathed quietly from within.

Lucius observed the situation outside calmly, completely motionless, even when at the most perilous moments, soldiers walked right up to his side, their boots crunching in the snow.

There were two Extraordinary Exponents with Knight Bequests, and forty dismounted cavalymen armed with flintlocks and sabers.

He calmly waited for the right moment.

Breathing, calming, breathing, calming, breathing, calming, breathing...

Until one of the knights, the slimmer one, slowly approached, every inch of muscle on Lucius' body trembled softly, and then all his strength concentrated, suddenly bursting from the snow with full force!

In an instant, the hostility from all directions triggered "Quickdraw!"

Everything around him became incredibly slow, the gradually falling snowflakes appeared sacred and immensely beautiful in the light.

Sound seemed to disappear.

He saw both of the Extraordinary Exponents with Knight Bequests staring at him in shock, while the rest of the soldiers instinctively tried to turn around, but they hadn't managed to do so yet.

The ambushed squire's helmet concealed eyes that were calm and ruthless, who in an instant swung his saber towards Lucius, who had suddenly appeared behind him.

Lucius, coordinating with "Quickdraw," did not hesitate to launch "sword brandishing."

His upper body's hands sped up, his sword blade inching closer to the squire, finally landing in the gap at the neck of the enemy's armor.

Bright red blood sprayed out in abundance and slowly, staining the beautiful snowflakes in the sunlight red.

The squire was struck by a blow capable of lethality, his swinging saber deflected on Lucius's full-body armor, failing to cause any effective damage.

"Tsst..."

In the vastly elongated span of reaction time, all movements and sounds were extremely slow.

As the snowflakes gradually fell, some people tried to scream in terror, some people's eyes grew angry, bulging out, and someone already clenched their teeth, lifting their flintlock ready to shoot.

Lucius suddenly plunged into the thick snow nearby, deploying the repelling force of the "protective runes" in the nick of time.

Time resumed its normal flow.

"Bang bang bang bang bang bang!" Gunshots from the flintlocks fired rapidly.

The knight's body slowly fell, eyes filled with disbelief, instinctively trying to grasp his neck to stop the bleeding, quickly trembling with signs of life fading away.

"Over there! He's right there!"

"Knight Kyle has been attacked!"

"He's gone again!"

Lucius frantically crawled through the thick snow with his strong physique, moving as swiftly as a champion swimmer.

The gunfire from that round had been completely blocked by the repelling power of the protective runes, and the ambushed squire was certainly done for.

His breathing gradually grew louder, then he immediately suppressed the sound as much as possible, the weight of his armor and weapons still a burden, even his physical abilities far exceeding human limits couldn't ignore them completely in the extreme combat.

Forty-one enemies remained.

Chapter 34: Chapter 33: The Scent of Snow in the Blood

The brawny squire came to the side of the dead squire.

He knelt on one knee and removed his helmet, revealing the beastly white tiger ears, and his half-orc's feline pupils glistened with a mournful sentiment.

"Farewell, brother."

"I will go back and tell your motherland that you were worthy of the knight's name, I will tell your mother that you fought bravely in battle, and I will tell your grown daughter that you always loved her."

The half-orc scooped up a handful of blood-stained snow and sprinkled it over his brother's face.

"Now, I will kill that man and avenge you."

The harsh and merciless wind blew, and the half-orc knight's white hair fluttered in the breeze, as he smelled the scent of blood from the bodies in his nostrils.

The blood carried the scent of snow.

If only he were a pure-blooded orc, even if it meant facing more discrimination, the stronger sense of smell would have allowed him to detect the enemy's presence sooner.

He put his helmet back on, drew in a deep breath of cold air, and looked towards the soldiers around him.

Indeed, due to invading the enemy's territory, the cold weather, and the long-distance raid, the morale of the Rhea soldiers had visibly declined.

"I know your mothers."

The half-orc knight's voice was loud and clear, and all the soldiers looked his way.

“Your mothers are just like my mother, who wanted us to grow strong, forgave our mistakes, and taught us to be better, and now it’s time for us to repay our mother.”

“The name of that mother is Rhea, her southern flesh stolen by the Cyart people. I can hear her crying; she’s lamenting! I believe you can hear it too!”

He roared loudly, and the blood of everyone present began to boil!

“We must achieve victory! Long live Rhea! Long live the Meyer family!”

Morale was boosted once again, but a shadow of somberness appeared on the stern face of the half-orc knight, knowing that if that man wanted to escape, he would likely do so with ease.

He didn’t want to flee; he wanted to kill the Rheans here.

Suddenly, the half-orc’s eyes brightened. No, perhaps that man intended to lead them away—for what purpose? Could it be that there was a “real target” in the jungle?

The thing that the Meyer family sought, could it truly be on that man? Or was it carried by the remainder of that group?

His tiger-like eyes narrowed quietly, the anger in his gaze undisguised.

Lord Baron Bourette would stop those people; what he needed to do now was to avenge his brother, to kill that despicable scoundrel!

In war, treachery is essential for survival.

Perhaps, aside from survival itself, everything else in nature is superfluous.

Lucius could often hear the sound of flintlock gunfire ringing in his ears; those soldiers would shoot at the snowy ground around them from time to time and then quickly reload, fearing that an enemy might suddenly emerge from the snow.

He wasn’t hiding in the snow anymore but had climbed up a tall tree and sat motionlessly amid the foliage, waiting for a new opportunity.

Lucius made no move as ordinary Rhea soldiers passed by. His target had always been clear—the Knight Extraordinary Exponents within the enemy ranks.

Once he completely dealt with two knights, the enemy’s morale would collapse quickly; the rest would be of little concern.

Before him, these ordinary Rhea soldiers were like children against an adult; he could methodically kill each and every one.

The perfect opportunity arrived even sooner than Lucius anticipated.

The half-orc knight, alone and out of sight of the many surrounding soldiers, came near to conduct a solitary search and would soon pass by this spot.

Lucius could see that he was extremely cautious, scrutinizing the surrounding snow before daring to move forward, each step as though he were walking on thin ice.

The opportunity, a rare opportunity, was approaching.

The runes could not be activated again; he would need utmost care and agility to seize the moment and kill the enemy with a single strike.

At last, the half-orc knight reached the foot of the tree. Lucius took a deep breath, his muscles tensed instantly, and he leaped downward vigorously!

Swinging the blade in his hand with the force of a dive, he aimed to cleave the enemy and his helmet in one vicious strike!

Time started to slow down.

That meant the knight had spotted Lucius and was simultaneously releasing hostility.

He felt an incredibly strange sensation, falling very slowly, a rate of descent that normal people would never experience in their lifetimes.

The weapon of the half-orc knight was not a sabre but an extremely heavy blade, and instead of choosing to parry or counter-attack, he was rolling to the side with extreme slowness.

Damn!

He was highly alert, reacting very quickly, the first strike meant to kill had missed!

Lucius cursed inwardly, his heart sinking to the depths in the instant he hit the ground because soldiers holding flintlocks and sabres were advancing from all sides.

They hadn't let the half-orc knight become too "isolated", just patiently waiting nearby for any sudden developments.

Lucius realized in a flash of understanding that the half-orc knight had purposely searched alone to draw the attack, clearly knowing his next target would definitely be him!

Using himself as bait!

What audacity and courage!

But it was precisely this kind of enemy that was most troublesome to deal with, Lucius thought as murderous intent boiled in his eyes, completely ignoring the Cyart soldiers gradually closing in and without hesitation charged towards the half-orc knight with his sword.

He had to kill him!

The flow of time returned to normal.

“Arrgh!”

The half-orc knight, rolling on the ground, roared as he rose, swinging his heavy sword to chop at Lucius, the clash of the two weapons emitting a loud noise.

“Clang!”

As the two combatants engaged in close combat were too close, the soldiers didn’t fire immediately, but many Cyart people had already drawn their sabres and were charging in.

Lucius knew he had less than five seconds before the swarming Cyart soldiers would kill him.

No more chances left!

“Sword brandishing!”

Lucius once again consumed Spirituality, and the speed of his sword waving with both hands instantly increased several-fold, while the half-orc knight also displayed the power of Bloodline of the magic beast “Wind Spirit’s Breath Bird,” suddenly increasing his own reaction speed.

The blades slipped past each other, followed by a backhand strike, the blades collided again, passing by each other, flecks of snow scattering from the ground as the two fighters’ frequent exchanges at extremely close range unfolded in the most dangerous manner.

Distance, time, strength—any slightest discrepancy could result in death for either side.

Less than three seconds to go.

“Ha!”

Both sides let out a loud shout at the same time, their attacks growing even more ferocious and ruthless, their eyes filled with unadulterated murderous intent, a seemingly infinite rage!

Only attack, no defense!

Lucius's blade precisely sliced through the right eye of the half-orc knight, while his own left flank was torn open by a blade, the hot flow of blood unabated.

He seemed to feel nothing at all, angrily slashing with his backhand to sever the weapon-wielding right arm of the half-orc knight.

The balance of victory tilted, and the wounded half-orc knight, oblivious to the blood spouting profusely, did not hesitate to roar out loud.

"Fire! Fire! Kill me too!"

Everyone hesitated, though it was just for an instant, their respect for this half-orc knight officer led to the worst outcome.

Lucius's eyes flashed with purple light, suddenly deploying the repulsive force of the "protective runes" once more! The cooldown was finally over!

"Bang!"

Then, an explosion sounded above them, and the accumulated snow fog on several trees shook and dispersed, instantly transforming into a wide veil, obscuring the vision within ten meters.

Indeed, from the beginning, Lucius had left two alchemical explosives on the trunks to create an environmental effect conducive for escape!

The Cyart people could not see anything within the snow fog for a moment.

Then someone fired the first shot, followed by everyone shooting together, instinctively lowering their muzzles to avoid injuring their own people on the other side of the encirclement.

By the time the veil-like snow fog had completely dispersed, Lucius was nowhere to be seen, leaving only the heavily wounded half-orc knight kneeling on the bloody ground, his tiger-like eyes full of resentment.

Chapter 35: Chapter 34 Inviting the Lord of the Lost

The members of the Fischer family pressed on through the jungle, each deeply questioning in their hearts the most important matter.

Can we survive?

Byrne's body trembled slightly, feeling extremely tense, not only for himself but also because his father had not returned.

The great Lord of the Lost conveyed His will, devoid of sadness or joy, as if it were destined.

He said, the father had led away a portion of the enemies.

Byrne had never felt so tense while fighting alongside his father or when facing danger alone; yet now, deep within, he was consumed by fear and worry.

He won't die, he definitely won't. That old man will always find a way to survive until the end, hasn't it always been like that?

Byrne shuddered, the fear within growing ever more immense and unshakable.

The group strained to stealthily make their way out of the jungle, hoping to avoid detection by the Cyart people. Finally, they emerged from the woods to find themselves on a vast expanse of snow.

The snowfield reflected the sunlight, like a pristine stairway to heaven, and there was no sign of the Cyart people around. Everyone breathed a sigh of relief at the same time.

Have we survived?

However, they soon saw quivering shadows in the distance.

Everyone's face turned pale, Cyart cavalry was approaching, and they instinctively wanted to run back into the jungle.

Irene shook her head, saying, "No, there are more Cyarts behind us. We have no chance to go back now, no matter what."

As the situation became desperate, the group prepared to fight to the death.

Among the remaining seventy or so people, only thirteen guards were capable of combat, and even including Irene and Byrne, there were only fifteen people who could be considered fighters.

The approaching cavalry numbered over fifty, with the black armored knight leading them riding a pitch-black warhorse with magic beast lineage, undoubtedly very powerful.

The people almost succumbed to the deepest despair, crying, screaming, and wailing, as the battle was lost from the start, without even the need for a token resistance.

“Is everything going to end here?”

As she watched the cavalry coming closer across the snowfield, Irene knelt down, taking a deep breath of the bitterly cold air.

No, it won't end.

She closed her eyes, as if she was transported back to over five years ago.

Back then, Irene was as helpless as she was now, facing sudden malice and about to share the most terrible fate with her loved ones, where a single misstep could lead to an unmarked grave.

Yes, everything was so similar!

A look of nostalgia and devotion appeared on Irene's face.

But there was also a difference, for she was no longer as fearful as before, and she would not pray to the so-called gods!

Whether Cyart or Rhea people, both worshipped their gods. Why then do they still slaughter each other? What else would those high and mighty deities do besides watch indifferently?

The transparent sacred object was wrapped in cloth in her arms, sheltering the great existence that could bring an end to all things and protect the Fischer family as they moved forward.

Irene had long understood that only by praying to Him could she reach the destiny the Fischer family hoped for.

The Cyart cavalry drew ever closer, finally coming to a slow halt just tens of meters in front of them.

The slaughter did not begin immediately. Baron Bourette Meyer, the leader and the black armored knight spurred his black warhorse, stirring up small sparks of electricity in the snow.

He approached alone to within a dozen meters of the group and said in an eerily calm voice, “Grasping at what should not be obtained is the shortcut to death for the weak.”

Baron Bourette extended his hand, and two flames rose from around him, forming a scorching firewall that encircled everyone present in the snowy weather.

He was a descendant of the top-tier Meyer family bloodline, possessing the powerful heritage of one of the ancient magic beasts, “Adranus.” Even among those of the Transmutation class, few could match him.

“Your deaths are insignificant. Hand over the treasure, and the Meyer family will ascend to the highest throne on the Ouden Continent because of you.”

Byrne swallowed hard, even feeling warmth in the harsh winter, as the rising flames formed a firewall that left no possibility of escape for anyone.

That black armored knight was definitely an Extraordinary Exponent of Level 2 “Transmutation!”

He also possessed extremely strong bloodline power, able to kill everyone with just a raise of his hand, making resistance utterly futile.

It was a dead end.

But what exactly was the “treasure” the other party mentioned? Could it be...

Byrne couldn't help but glance at the transparent bottle wrapped in cloth that Irene was holding. Could it be that the other party was targeting the Lord of the Lost from the very beginning?

Cries, howls, and pleas for mercy were incessant at that moment.

Baron Bourette looked down from his high position, gazing mercilessly at the people surrounded by flames.

He needed to resolve this quickly.

He couldn't linger any longer, as the threat of Duke Black Iron's death was on its way.

Bourette extended his hand and slowly began to close his fingers, as the surrounding firewall gradually moved inward. In a little while, those dozens of people would be completely reduced to ashes.

Everyone was in utter despair, their cries of agony, screams, pleas for mercy, and sobs were pierced by a distinctly different and utterly out-of-place voice.

Byrne held Chris tightly, looking towards Irene, who knelt on the ground with her eyes closed, incessantly praying, and vaguely sensed that something was about to happen.

Chris, Old Ramon, Hugh, and others suddenly noticed Irene on the ground, murmuring to herself with a voice filled with mysterious reverence, as if whispering the fate of destiny, the final prayer.

“The future He sees will be executed by His great will; everything we are experiencing now is but a test He has given.”

Her voice was incredibly devout and powerful, an unwavering faith at its core.

“Great Lord of the Lost, Your will is the destiny we must follow. I hope You can hear my most humble prayer. My soul, body, past, and future, I am willing to offer up everything that rightfully belongs to You!”

“Please forgive my greed, but I only ask that You save the desperate Fischer family, those who are about to suffer. Repay brutality with the blade of brutality, and cleanse the enemies before us with destruction!”

As the raging flames were about to engulf them and death seemed imminent, Byrne and the others were inexplicably drawn to this scene.

Irene calmly uncovered the transparent bottle in her arms, wrapped in cloth, and lifted it high.

Karl’s invisible will soared high into the air, seeing the myriad of colors that emerged from within the girl’s body—life span, emotions, memories, sensations, wisdom.

He could distinctly feel that the black armored knight possessed enough power to withstand a strong curse; simply the lowest tier of the “weapon” was not enough to kill the foe.

And even if he exhausted all the spiritual power he had accumulated, it wouldn’t be enough to kill all the enemies.

Fortunately, it was only the consumption of spiritual power and not the capacity of the soul itself, avoiding any impact on the progress of breaking the seal.

Karl focused his attention, using up all his spiritual power to draw out more white light until half of Irene’s black hair turned pure white.

The next moment, Irene, Byrne, Chris, Narda, they all looked up at the sky in astonishment, their hearts stirred with tumultuous excitement and reverence. A boundless white light exploded in the sky, almost like a third sun in broad daylight!

It lined up with the Blazing Sun and the Radiant Sun in the sky, intensifying all colors!

It was as if there were three suns hanging in the sky!

It resembled a miracle!

Chapter 36: Chapter 35: Voting

Yesterday, when Grandma Narda brought the black iron box, Karl felt an extremely special sense of danger coming from it, and it was also filled with a deadly lure.

But he soon discovered something; it was a fragment of some powerful mysterious rare artifact, not the core part imbued with Spiritual Power.

Not edible.

If all the parts and the core could be collected, one would obtain an artifact even more powerful than the transparent little bottle could compare with.

As the cavalry drew increasingly closer, Karl once again felt that exceptionally special sense of danger.

He suddenly realized that the cavalry commander was also carrying a fragment, perhaps the very reason everyone had been relentlessly chased all this time.

Karl used his will to transform the white light into a weapon and hurled it at the numerous enemies before him, with the Rhea baron commander occupying fully half of the white light.

The endless white light flashed incessantly in the sky, like swords descending onto the snowy field, landing on the bodies of half the enemy soldiers.

Irene and the few others who could witness this scene were involuntarily excited deep in their hearts.

They sensed something was about to happen, the great power of the Lord of the Lost was about to reveal itself to the world!

Baron Bourette suddenly became aware of an extremely intense sense of danger!

He didn't understand what was happening, thinking it was a might enemy from another country attacking, and subconsciously went on alert.

The next moment, Baron Bourette suddenly found that the wall of fire was no longer contracting according to his thoughts. Instead, without warning, it gradually flew into the sky.

Everyone was stunned, hardly able to comprehend the miraculous event they were witnessing. The massive fireball incinerated the surrounding snowflakes in the sky, boasting even more heat than the wall of fire before, as if the fierce sun hung high in the sky!

"How is this possible!"

Baron Bourette couldn't believe it, staring blankly into the sky; even though he could feel the heat of the flames around him, there was still a chill to the bone.

"Scatter!"

In the last moment, he could only bellow hysterically.

The enormous flames suddenly plummeted down, like the giant fist of a Sun God of destruction, and in an instant, swallowed up Baron Bourette and many cavalrymen together, even the snow on the ground was completely annihilated.

"Boom!"

The explosion shocked everyone, and then they saw a scene of dreadful devastation. At the very center, Baron Bourette was instantly charred, and even his noble ancient fire-type magic beast bloodline couldn't give him a chance to survive.

The violent flames did not devour all the cavalrymen, and Karl, having expended almost every bit of his Spiritual Power, had only managed to mark half of the enemies.

A peculiar thing was that those not marked by the white light remained completely unharmed despite being close to the explosion. It was as if they were unbelievably lucky, or as if it was fated to be so!

"Retreat, retreat quickly! Leave this place!"

The remaining cavalry were in utter shock, their hearts almost completely filled with fear, believing that an "Monarch" level power from Cyart had suddenly arrived; their will to fight was utterly gone.

Without the enhancement of a magic array, ordinary soldiers, no matter how numerous, are hard-pressed to contend with a Level 3 "Monarch" level top exponent – that was common knowledge among all nations' militaries.

When there is no "Monarch" level top exponent in the army, facing an enemy's "Monarch" level Extraordinary Exponent, soldiers could decide to retreat based on judgment without any punishment from the higher-ups.

It's an unwritten rule supported by all nations that helps preserve the overall strength.

If the two knights who could have taken over the command were still there, the terrified cavalry might have looked for an opportunity to regroup and return. However, both knights had already been lured away by Lucius.

Karl, watching the remaining cavalry retreat into the distance, felt a very familiar sense of dizziness, although his soul's overall capacity wasn't affected, his accumulated Spiritual Power was completely spent.

He last conveyed his will, coldly demanding Irene to retrieve the fragment carried by the cavalry commander, then fell into a brief slumber.

The people of Nasir stood dumbfounded at the scene, witnessing a miraculous event from the brink of death and hopelessness, their emotions tumultuously complex – a mixture of incredible stupor, confusion, and joy intertwined.

“Great Lord of the Lost, I am wholeheartedly grateful for Your merciful salvation and will fulfill and enact Your will.”

The girl's black hair was now half pure white, but her eyes remained as bright as ever.

She slowly got up and went into the wreckage to dig out a container that had not been destroyed by the explosion; that was what the Lord of the Lost needed.

Irene desperately wanted to tell the world, “Look, that is the miracle triggered by the great Lord of the Lost!”

The gods had decayed and declined long ago; only the great Lord of the Lost could intervene in the various calamities and hardships of the world, rescuing us from fire and water.

However, she could only endure in silence without speaking out, as “keeping secrets” was one of the mottos of the Fischer family, and another was “caution”.

From the very beginning, the Fischer family had set a rule that they would only carry out missionary work on someone if three family members agreed.

“We're alive!”

“A miracle, it was just a miracle! We were saved by the gods!”

“Really, it was, it was...”

Grandma Narda almost shouted out, “The lost Lord of Dawn has bestowed a miracle,” but seeing Irene's calm yet icy warning gaze, she immediately changed her claim and continued to speak to the others.

“It's definitely a miracle from the Lord of Salvation! Our country has signed a treaty with those dog-like Rhea people, and it was under the witness of the Salvation Church! Since the Rhea people have breached the treaty, the God of Salvation naturally couldn't stand by!”

Everyone was half knowledgeable about mysteries and religion, and miracles, a rare sight, were not understood in principle by many in the entire country, so most of them believed Grandma Narda's words in the heat of the moment.

Irene took a deep breath and said, "Let's keep moving forward. There are still many pursuers behind us; we must leave quickly."

An invisible close connection made her vaguely feel that the Lord of the Lost seemed to have fallen into slumber. Any further delay and they would all truly be doomed.

"Wait!"

Byrne suddenly shouted out, his eyes red, his emotions clearly very unstable.

"My father hasn't come back yet. He just stopped some of the pursuers, he will be back soon... He might need our rescue."

"Byrne, we had already agreed that if we get separated inadvertently, we'll regroup in a safe place."

Irene's tone became incredibly soft, full of compassion, yet leaving no room for doubt.

"Even if we go back, we would only hold him back, and the miracle won't happen a second time. We must save ourselves."

Byrne clenched his teeth tightly, finding it difficult to make such a painful choice: "But we can't just abandon him, he did it for us."

The people who had survived the ordeal exchanged glances; even though they all wanted to flee quickly, they could not voice such treacherous and deserting words, not daring to be the first to speak out.

"Many people fell behind during the escape, but we never looked back, did we? Madam Irene, Mr. Byrne, let's vote on it."

Grandma Narda suddenly looked at Byrne calmly, speaking gently:

"We all respect Mr. Lucius, his actions saved everyone, but as a mother, I also know what his deepest wish is in his heart—it is absolutely that you, Byrne, do not go back."

"Also, you understand he did it not for us, but for you."

After speaking, her face showed a sorrowful expression; up until that moment, Grandma Narda did not even know whether her three scattered sons were still alive.

If they had all died, Grandma Narda had already decided in the deepest part of her heart that she would choose death.

The vote was completed in less than ten seconds, with a solid seventy-one of the seventy-three survivors raising their hands. Old Ramon hesitated for a long time before looking at his son and raising his hand, leaving only Byrne and Chris not raising theirs.

Chris looked silently at the eyes of everyone around him, with people feeling that he was too young to understand the significance of voting.

Irene calmly stroked her brother's head and said, "Chris, you're very brave."

"But I'm a coward. I just want more members of our family to survive."

As their gazes met, Byrne sank into deep silence.

He wanted to go back alone to find his father, but instinctively felt fear and dread, and then shame and anger at these emotions, until finally, when he wanted to turn around, the words that Grandma Narda had just spoken echoed in his head.

The one thing that man least wanted was for him to go back.

Chapter 37: 36 Chapter Step Over My Dead Body (Vote!)

"Seventeen."

He had killed seventeen of Rhea's cavalymen; the rest of the enemies should have scattered without their commander.

Snowflakes danced wildly in the sky, soft and light, twirling and swaying, mystical and beautiful.

Lucius stumbled forward, aware that the severe loss of blood was affecting him, and the effect of the blood potion could only provide limited healing.

"If not for the Extraordinary trait 'Fight to the Death,' I wouldn't have been able to fight at all."

But he had just realized one thing—that even a passive Extraordinary trait required a minuscule amount of Spiritual Power to maintain.

The blow that the half-orc knight had delivered to his waist had been nearly fatal; his liver was ruptured.

Moreover, the power of the protective runes lasted only an instant. At that time, they had failed to stop all the bullets, and the last few shots fired by the men were not blocked by the runes; one of the bullets had successfully hit an artery in his thigh.

Dizziness.

It felt as though the ground beneath his feet had lost its gravity, everything swayed on the brink of collapse, and all the surrounding scenery spun rapidly in the same direction.

Lucius tried to steady himself but could only see the constantly tilting snowy ground. Then came the buzzing noise in his ears.

Buzz...

The world fell silent.

He lay quietly feeling the chill of his cheeks against the snow, watching the snowflakes falling, while an assortment of strange, nonsensical thoughts suddenly sprang to mind.

Why did I leave that city in the first place? Lucius vaguely remembered that gentle and beautiful woman, Byrne's mother, who had pleaded with him tearfully, wanting him to stay.

But he was very afraid.

Family, marriage, everything related to the concept of relatives, filled Lucius with enormous fear, restlessness, and sleepless nights. It was more unbearable than any sharp knife or axe.

Family meant constraints, meant he could no longer fight unrestrained, couldn't do whatever he wanted, had to share all his property for free with another person, and his enemies would have a vulnerable point to exploit.

Essentially, it also meant he had to bid farewell to the people from the mercenary group who had accompanied him for decades, completely abandoning the familiar past of his former life.

Back then, just thinking about it shook him with fear, feeling as if facing death was nothing worse.

Lucius cowardly left, fleeing with the people from the mercenary group, not even daring to say goodbye to that gentle beautiful woman. The others in the group weren't surprised; they just felt it was a shame.

"So that's how it was; I had forgotten..."

With that thought, he gradually fell into an overwhelming sleepiness, his thoughts slowly fading away.

So cold!

“Cough, cough, cough!”

As he opened his eyes again, what entered his vision were shrinking snowflakes, and blood surged from his painfully sore throat, abruptly waking him.

Lucius sat up shivering, wondering why his body seemed to be filled with strength again. Could it be that the Spiritual Power had naturally recovered and reactivated ‘Fight to the Death’?

He stood up again, surprisingly finding his mind exceptionally clear.

“Huh.”

Unable to contain his elation, Lucius continued to step forward. Very soon, a new thought emerged in his mind. Why did he go back then?

It was after everyone from the mercenary group had died that he returned to the city he had fled.

All members of the mercenary group were dead, and at that time, Lucius had lost almost everything. He spent his days in a daze, squandering the inheritance of the mercenary group, eventually becoming a detestable drunkard.

People would take detours to avoid him; he reeked and was so drunk every day he couldn’t even lift his sword anymore.

Then one day, that despicable man recalled the gentle and beautiful woman. The selfish wretch wanted to return and receive her pity, even a bit of consolation would have been enough to make him feel reassured.

But he never saw her again; instead, while peering into the house, he saw a thin, sickly, and inarticulate boy.

He was like some frail little animal, weak, young, and unsettlingly vulnerable as if the slightest malice from anything could easily destroy him.

The next moment, Lucius realized that this was his son.

He carefully inquired and confirmed this, and also learned that the boy’s name was Byrne, which meant the wise and warning bird, “raven”.

Lucius, after a long absence, took a bath again, shaved, and then came to the doorstep once more, hesitating to knock and acknowledge the other.

Byrne must surely despise him.

So, he grew afraid, going back and forth numerous times without entering the house, constantly debating whether to just leave for good, yet unable to completely put his mind at ease.

After secretly observing, Lucius discovered that the boy was timid to an extreme, and if not for the proactive charity of the neighbors, he probably would have secluded himself to the point of starvation.

How could there be a life so fragile and so foolish!

Until one day, Byrne, struggling to live on his own, collapsed from illness.

Lucius, unable to concern himself with anything else, could only burst into the house immediately to carefully tend to his unconscious son, while constantly berating himself for his cowardice.

Until the boy woke up, looked at him, and without a second thought, asked a question.

“Are you my father?”

He was silent for a long time, then finally nodded.

“Yes, I am your father.”

The boy’s naive eyes flickered with unhidden joy, grievance, unease, and finally, he asked in a timid, low voice:

“Will you leave again?”

“I will, but I will take you with me.”

He reached out his sturdy palm and gently stroked the boy’s hair, suddenly no longer fearing certain things in his heart.

The skinny boy was none other than his own son, with a pair of innocent blue eyes, unlike anyone from the mercenary group, and even different from that gentle and beautiful woman.

Lucius let out a smile from the depths of his heart, as the hatred for revenge was no longer the driving force urging him to hurry on, replaced by some newfound, deeply rooted strength.

“Byrne, I’m sorry, I’ve never been at peace with myself.”

“Thank you.”

He murmured, deeply aware that on that day it wasn’t he who saved the ill Byrne, but his appearance that had utterly saved himself.

There are some things that cannot be touched or reached, existing only in the gaze of people, yet shining brighter than diamonds, more noble than constellations, even greater than gods, providing more comfort than all the things in the world!

The Blazing Sun and Radiant Sun arrived overhead; their light rendered the surrounding snowscape immaculately white, as he was about to step out of the woods completely.

At some point, Lucius could no longer hear the sounds around him, feeling an unparalleled silence and peace in his heart and the whole world.

Snow.

Finally stopped.

Suddenly, a loud shout came from behind the man.

“Fire!”

He turned around sharply, and then time around him seemed to slow down.

A dozen Rhea infantrymen tensely raised their flintlocks, standing tens of meters away, as bullets were already firing out of the scorching muzzles.

Lucius instinctively wanted to dodge, but found both his Spirituality and physical strength had reached their limits, he couldn’t even activate the runes.

In the end, he could only watch the scene unfold calmly.

Everything was very slow.

Lucius pondered continuously as he faced death, but for some reason, there was no strong sense of regret in his heart, even though he still had important things to finish, like settling the score with that giant black dragon.

He soon understood, the giant dragon’s lifespan stretched for thousands of years, and the Fischer family would eventually become a powerful clan on this continent.

Generation after generation, succeeding one after another.

One day, someone will take his place to bring down that once unreachable giant black dragon!

He looked up calmly, as if speaking to the sky, to fate, or perhaps to a god.

Maybe it, or He, could convey his will.

Byrne, Irene, Chris, and the future members of the Fischer family.

“Step over my body and go forward.”

From Secret Clan to the Divine Dynasty

#Chapter 38: 37 Evolution of Runes (Thanks to the Alliance Leader for the reward!) - Read From Secret Clan to the Divine Dynasty Chapter 38: 37 Evolution of Runes (Thanks to the Alliance Leader for the reward!)

Chapter 38: Chapter 37 Evolution of Runes (Thanks to the Alliance Leader for the reward!)

Consciousness was shrouded in darkness and chaos; he could see nothing, hear nothing.

Karl was about to sink back into slumber when he suddenly felt the familiar warmth of spirituality returning to him, accompanied by a man's soul and the spiritual imprint of a purple crucifix rune.

In the dark space, Karl was like a boundless, colossal star while the man's soul revolved around it like a tiny planet.

Lucius.

He couldn't help but sigh as he gazed at the bewildered soul of the man and made a promise to it.

“Sleep, in the comfort of a fleeting dream, quietly await the moment of awakening that is yet to come.”

“One day, thou will awaken once more.”

Lucius's perplexed soul fell into slumber, quietly awaiting the day of its revival.

Karl noticed as Lucius's spirituality was absorbed by his own soul, the second seal at its deepest core had become significantly loose, signifying that the time to fully unravel it was close at hand.

He quickly realized something momentous.

Nourished by the soul and baptized by the dust of the mortal world, the purple crucifix rune "protect" evolved, changing from a cross shape into a grid-like shape to become a stronger spirit rune "Iron Wall."

Compared to "protect," which could only manifest a repelling force momentarily, the user of "Iron Wall" could maintain it indefinitely as long as they remained stationary.

Furthermore, "Iron Wall" had a range of nearly ten meters and could also protect multiple allies and objects that the user was aware of.

"So it is, the soul and the constant shedding of emotional energy in the mortal world can promote the evolution of runes to a new stage."

He came to a realization and then bestowed the spiritual imprint of the "Iron Wall" spirit rune upon Chris.

Neither Irene nor Byrne's soul capacity could bear a second spiritual imprint, leaving only young Chris as the recipient of "Iron Wall."

Yet those who had merely received the blood of the favored clan were unable to secure the spiritual imprint of a rune through such a feeble connection.

Karl observed the predicament of the Nasir townsfolk during his short slumber and through the jar, he saw they were now in a makeshift military camp.

A military camp?

He pondered, unclear about where Irene took the transparent jar.

The next moment, Karl felt the unique essences of two matching components, instinctively becoming exhilarated.

Both now in Irene's possession, alas, they were merely powerful components of a mysterious rare artifact, devoid of innate spiritual power.

He had reason to believe that the Meyer family held even more such components.

Unfortunately, the Meyer family was a colossus of the enemy Rhea Kingdom, and the Fischer family, with its current ant-like strength, couldn't possibly shake it.

Inside the temporary camp, soldiers clad in black uniforms patrolled, trained, and worked with discipline; they belonged to the direct forces of Duke Black Iron, tasked with reinforcing Nasir Town and carrying out the search operation.

The Fischers and the other seventy or so people were now in two rather cramped large tents in the temporary camp, waiting with complex emotions for the next steps to be arranged.

Most of them felt a sense of relief, after all, they had been found by their own country's military rather than falling into enemy hands.

However, Byrne and others who had lost relatives remained filled with unease, restlessness, and worry.

Byrne paced restlessly in the tent, gritting his teeth and getting up from time to time, longing for news of his father but dreading any information about him.

Contradiction, anxiety, restlessness, regret—all these emotions swirled around the depths of his heart.

Soon, a soldier came from outside the tent, surveying the civilians within.

"Which one is Byrne Fischer? The Duke has summoned you."

"I'm here."

Byrne instinctively raised his hand, and next to him, Irene, who was cradling Chris, blinked when she saw a purple glow emerge within Chris's eyes.

The soldier looked toward the source of the voice and nodded: "You, come with me."

The Duke, such an important figure wanting to see him, Byrne rose in a daze to follow the soldier out of the tent.

He entered the largest tent and saw a burly old man clad in black cotton, strong and with a military bearing in every movement, yet his skin was abnormally pale.

The old man sat behind a desk piled with documents, his sharp gaze like that of a shrewd and seasoned old griffon, constantly fixated on its prey, never relaxing its vigilance.

Byrne subconsciously felt tense, standing before a "Monarch" of Level 3, a pillar of the Cyart Kingdom, and a revered figure; even the Cyart King treated the stalwart Duke Black Iron with great respect.

A woman with short golden hair and glasses stood beside the old man.

She looked calm, dressed entirely in black, her skin pale and smooth, and a fluffy, snow leopard-like large tail behind her buttocks most eye-catching.

Duke Black Iron, without any superfluous words, asked coldly and directly,

“You are Byrne of the Fischer family, son of Lucius?”

“Yes, my lord.”

Byrne nodded, a bad premonition slowly rising from the depths of his heart.

Duke Black Iron stared into his eyes, his tone becoming grave,

“Your father bravely died in battle, desperately killing two knights and a dozen enemies, showing extreme valor amid the fight, a warrior, a role model, a paragon among the Cyart people. You, his only son, what reward do you seek?”

Byrne was momentarily unable to respond, hesitating for a long time as if confused by what he had heard.

The old man just sat there silently, waiting for him to come back to his senses.

“I wish...”

Byrne was silent for a long while, incessantly thinking how his father would have answered if he were here, and finally spoke in a somewhat hoarse voice,

“I wish the Fischer family could become a member of the Cyart aristocracy.”

Duke Black Iron shook his head decisively, his icy gaze piercing the overly greedy young man,

“Impossible, only the Cyart King can confer nobility. I can only make you a knight, and the Fischer family a knight clan nominally loyal to the Romann family.”

The Romann family was Duke Black Iron’s family, one of the top three prominent noble houses in the entire Cyart, whose colossal influence and status were second only to the Royal Family.

Byrne nodded with reddened eyes, showing a sorrowful smile, “That is enough, my lord. I am truly grateful for your mercy and generosity.”

Duke Black Iron nodded dispassionately, “All right, you may leave now.”

Without a chance to ask another question, Byrne was taken away by the soldiers, while Duke Black Iron lowered his head to continue his work, not sparing the young man another glance.

“Only eighteen years are left until the peace treaty between the two nations expires!”

The old man sighed and then fell silent, his eyes filled with deep wisdom as he pondered, “Whose handiwork was the so-called ‘divine sign’ those people encountered?”

On his way back to the tent, Byrne was completely dazed, his mind filled with memories of his father, recalling how light-heartedly he had said goodbye, claiming he was just going ahead to scout the road as he had done many times before.

He couldn’t comprehend why everything in the world was so absurdly wrong; that day turned out to be the last time he ever saw his father.

Suddenly, Byrne felt nauseous, but as he crouched down, the tears wouldn’t stop, he cried and retched continuously, nothing coming out since he hadn’t eaten anything.

It turns out, people can vomit from extreme grief.

He still remembered the words spoken by the black-armored knight with an arrogant tone,

“Your deaths are of little consequence. Hand over that artifact, and the Meyer family shall ascend to the highest throne of the Ouden Continent.”

The Meyer family!

That might be a noble house in the Rhea Kingdom, not inferior to the Romann family, extending for hundreds or even thousands of years, a terrifying behemoth that Fischer family now cannot shake.

Kneeling on the ground, Byrne clenched his fists so tightly his skin broke and bled, and he roared in a low voice,

“Father! The Fischer family will remember all the hatred! I swear to the Lord of the Lost, I will avenge you, and one day, we shall repay everything with the blood and tears of the Meyer family!”

Chapter 39: Chapter 38 Consecution ‘Listener

Nasir Town.

The masses of fleeing people slowly returned to the town, those who survived felt fortunate, while those who lost loved ones mourned and wept.

This suicidal raid by the Rhea people even led to the destruction of a knight clan, with all the Extraordinary Exponents of their family dead, and only a few others surviving.

Grandma Narda's sons miraculously all survived; the routes they fled nearly went in the opposite direction of the Rhea's search paths.

Old Ramon's illness grew even more severe, to the point where he even forgot his son's name, and Hugh, left with no other choice, finally decided to hire a servant to care for him.

The members of the Fischer family eventually returned home, and upon seeing the familiar surroundings, they felt an odd sensation as if they were in a different world.

Lucius's body was found by Duke Black Iron's troops in the jungle and was quickly brought back to Nasir to be returned to them, and Byrne broke down in tears once again upon seeing his father's body.

Irene purchased a piece of wasteland outside of Nasir Town and had it turned into a cemetery, where everyone watched the burial of the man in silence under the gloomy skies.

Byrne no longer cried, only silently watching the face of the father lying in his eternal sleep.

Why was there a smile on the man's face?

He could not understand his father's expression, nor did he know the man's final thoughts, but he was very clear about one thing without needing to hear it directly from the man.

The Fischer family must push forward!

Byrne prayed to the Lord of the Lost, something he rarely did, having grown more devout in the depths of his heart after this experience of salvation.

Oh great Lord of the Lost,

Please shelter his soul, I know he will surely return to Your embrace.

One day, when my destiny is fulfilled, I too will go to where You are, to find peace.

May we all finally find rest.

Days later, as Byrne gradually regained composure, he received two pieces of terrible news.

The first bad news, the Meyer family who had violated the peace agreement, were not punished at all; they produced evidence that they had already severed ties with Bourette well before, claiming it was all individual action.

Even though such a ridiculous excuse could fool no one, the Salvation Church and the Cyart Royal Family in the end still recognized their “evidence,” the behind-the-scenes deals that were made remained unknown.

The second bad news, the people from the Taylor knight family never returned to Nasir Town, but instead, not long after, they sent a letter to Byrne.

He was astonished after reading the letter; Robert said that the head of the Taylor knight family had finally succeeded in reaching the “Transmutation” level of the 2nd Rank, preparing to officially become Cyart nobility.

The Taylor family, thus, received a house donation and an invitation from a certain guild in the capital, and in the end, the family head decided to move the entire family to the capital, completely leaving Nasir Town and the East Coast.

Regarding the outstanding debt of fifteen Gold Coins, he only left a quite playful sentence at the end of the letter.

“The dumbest moment for a person is when they ask ‘but you promised me’.”

Irene and Byrne held a family meeting in the basement, with only the two of them present, confirming three new goals for the entire Fischer family moving forward.

The first matter was of utmost importance; both were clear in their judgment that in eighteen years, war between the two nations was inevitable, and if the Fischer family remained as weak as they were, they might not have a chance to survive in the war.

In the next decade or more, they needed to seize every opportunity to enhance the overall strength of the family.

The second matter concerned the items obtained from the black iron box and from the Rhea people.

They were two smooth bronze components, which they took out and assembled together, eventually forming an unusually shaped vessel resembling a “boat.”

Byrne had to consult books to find out what it was, and it turned out to be an oil lamp from a foreign continent; the two components joined together just right to make up the body of the lamp, but still lacking the cover and base parts.

The incomplete ancient bronze lamp held no power, but no one knew what kind of extraordinary power a complete lamp could possess, or why the Meyer family had been so obsessed with it.

The Lord of the Lost was extremely interested in it, and should the Fischer family manage to collect all the components, they would inevitably receive His immense favor and blessing.

They had to find a way to search for all the remaining missing components of this mysterious rare artifact.

The third, and final, long-term goal for the family, which no one knew when they could achieve, was this:

It was for the Fischer family to seek full revenge against the Meyer family, the top noble clan of Rhea, for Lucius's death!

This was less a goal than it was the sad wish of the entire family.

The disparity between them was too vast, like a giant dragon in the sky and an ant crawling on the ground—if the Fischer family did not have the help of the Lord of the Lost, they wouldn't even dare to harbor the obsession for revenge.

There were two matters deep in Byrne's heart that belonged to him alone, not the entire family.

One was to get back the fifteen, or perhaps more, Gold Coins from Robert and, someday, to find that black giant dragon for that man and complete his obsession.

A few days later, the servants of the Romann family arrived, bringing Byrne's proof of knighthood and thirty Gold Coins as a "gift" from Duke Black Iron according to tradition, bestowed upon the Fischer family.

Normally, the ceremony of knighthood would be quite complicated and grand, but the decline of the knight class over the past century had been such that there was no longer any land to be bestowed, and Duke Black Iron himself had no wish to come to the poor, remote Nasir Town.

Thus Byrne received only a sword forged from black iron, a certificate of his knightly identity, a common codex from the World Order Church, which was the faith of the Romann family, and those thirty Gold Coins.

Nevertheless, from then on, at least in name, the Fischer family had become one of the vassal powers under the Romann family, eligible to apply for their protection in the event of a clan-eradicating crisis.

Although there were already hundreds of knight clans sworn to the Romann family within the Cyart Kingdom, it was still a quite good choice for the Fischer family.

As tensions between countries escalated, they did not hesitate to purchase a piece of Class 2 Extraordinary Material, “Black Serpent Demon Skin,” before prices soared again. The sea merchant John also survived the escape, but the deaths of two relatives left him deeply sad and depressed.

A few days later, the Fischer family once again pleaded with the Lord of the Lost, offering up the Class 2 Extraordinary Material “Black Serpent Demon Skin” and receiving the great Lord of the Lost’s grace once more.

A new consecution of the Extraordinary law formed, Karl expanded the “Path of Divine Sacrifice” to its 2nd Rank “Listener,” bestowing the Spiritual Radiance upon Irene, who knelt on the ground in devout prayer.

The “Listener” consecution.

In the shadow of the Extraordinary law, there was a calm, middle-aged woman in blue light, listening attentively with her ear inclined.

After becoming a “Listener,” one could passively use the Extraordinary trait ‘Listening for Malice’ to hear the thoughts of those with hostility nearby, and automatically master two Spells: the “Silence Spell” to block casting and vocalization, and the “Secret Ear Technique” to eavesdrop on others.

Irene’s Spiritual Power had more than doubled, while her physical enhancements were minimal.

Clearly, the “Listener” was a more functional consecution; the overall consecutions of the “Path of Divine Sacrifice” lacked direct combat ability in the early stages.

“The Fischer family will forever be your servants, and will ultimately bring about your great revival.”

The young girl, having acquired new powers, was profoundly excited. Having gone through so much, the entire Fischer family now longed for extraordinary power even more.

Three weeks later.

Byrne, dressed in black finery, sat in a carriage, looking at those seeing him off and waved with a smile.

He and his guards were on their way to the city, to Fein City at the center of the East Coast, to the busiest place to sell that homemade effective antidote.

Meanwhile, Irene had just returned from curing wealthy patients in a nearby town, for no matter what, the Fischer family had to leave one core member behind.

As the carriage started moving slowly, Byrne put on a gentle smile and kept waving goodbye to everyone.

“No need for further send-offs! Goodbye, we will return soon!”

After a while, he withdrew his hand, took a deep breath of the brisk air, and with great serenity took out a piece of paper and a pen from his chest pocket. He placed the paper on his knee, pondered for a long time, and finally wrote the first sentence.

“Lucius Fischer, born in the year 1760 of the Blazing Sun Era, taught the entire Fischer family what wisdom, courage, and sacrifice mean...”

Chapter 40: Chapter 39 Major Reforms

On the streets of Fein City’s main urban area, Byrne, clad in black finery, adjusted his glasses, instructed guards and servants to go for a meal, and sought out the similarities between this city and the one where he spent his childhood.

He soon deeply furrowed his brow, for he could see garbage strewn everywhere, completely unmanaged, and the sewage-strewn ground was even dirtier than Nasir.

People bustled by in a hurry, houses on either side of the street were chaotically built and crowded, all contributing to a claustrophobic oppression that surrounded Byrne.

With the emergence of steam engines and factories in recent years, the people from the towns and countryside of the East Coast had gradually begun flocking towards Fein City; the massive influx of outsiders, primarily settling in the suburbs, was part of an inevitable, broader trend of explosive urban population growth across many cities on the Ouden Continent.

He quickly fled the general area towards Fein City’s center, noting the environment around him gradually improving.

The city center streets were wide and flat, with a clean pavement, free from any trash, and lined with tall, lush trees whose branches let dappled sunlight scatter in patches on the ground.

Byrne surmised that this part of the street in the city center must be where the wealthy lived.

A boy wearing a hat approached, giving Byrne a shy smile.

“Sir, would you like to buy a newspaper? There’s big news about the Seven Stars Alliance today! Oh, it’s not quite accurate to say that, as there is no longer a Seven Stars Alliance.”

Byrne was slightly stunned and saw that many around him who had bought newspapers were also looking astonished; clearly the boy wasn’t lying, something astonishing had indeed occurred.

Although the Seven Stars Alliance was a bit far from Cyart, Byrne was still curious about what had happened, having never seen a newspaper in Nasir but only heard of such a thing; he wanted to try buying one today.

“Alright, I’ll take one.”

So Byrne spent a copper nal to buy a newspaper from the newsboy’s hands, and began reading this paper named “Cyart World News.”

Byrne was astonished to see it filled with knowledge and information from all over the world, almost like a handy paper treasure chest!

Soon he found the largest page of the newspaper used a giant font to detail a major upheaval in the northern Seven Stars Alliance, and his face instantly changed.

“If this isn’t a double prank, it’s truly terrifying.”

The first matter was the official renaming of the Seven Stars Alliance to the Seven Stars Empire, completely abolishing the longstanding republic structure, as an officer of sub-human status successfully ascended the throne as Emperor of the Seven Stars Empire.

“Miller Corsica of the Seven Stars Empire, from an obscure small noble family, now called the ‘Military God’ is likely one of the most powerful knights on the Ouden Continent, or even in the world today.”

He took a deep breath; if the first matter was utterly shocking, then the next was simply absurd enough to make one question the sanity of the world.

The Sun Church, one of the Five Great True Gods Churches, publicly acknowledged the legitimacy of the Reforging Church, considering it the sixth of the Great True Gods Churches!

“It’s utterly nonsensical; the descent of the God of Reforging is one of the most negatively impactful events over the last century.”

Initially, He slew large numbers of nobility and the Extraordinary Exponent overnight after the Arrival of the Seven, even the then-Emperor perished.

Byrne remembered all too well how countries and churches once regarded the Reforging Order as a scourge; before today's newspaper, he couldn't imagine the Reforging Order being recognized as a True Gods Church.

The Reforging Order honored the "furnace" and "steel" as their symbols, and the increasingly popular steam engine of recent years was rumored to be their inventive creation.

"At least both matters won't affect Cyart, whatever happens in the continent's north, the distance here is ultimately too far," he muttered to himself.

Cyart, one of the Eastern Four Kingdoms, is located to the southeast on the Ouden Continent, quite a distance from the Seven Stars.

The city center was much cleaner, houses in the area no longer felt as oppressive, but Byrne was not relieved; the content on the newspaper was too sensational.

"The Sun Church acknowledged the Reforging Church's status, even after doing such terrible things, they still have a chance to turn around public opinion?"

He recalled the many history books he had read and suddenly felt that in a few decades, the perception of the Reforging Church in people's minds might indeed change.

"If the Reforging Order could become recognized as a True Gods Church and gain a foothold, perhaps one day, Dawn might also gain legitimacy in people's hearts."

A longing arose within him, yet he clearly felt it was a goal almost as challenging as ascending to heaven, even more tangible than the crazy idea of annihilating the Meyer family.

Some fifteen minutes later, Byrne located the bank of Fein City.

In Nasir there were no banks, and intrigued, he walked into the spacious lobby, noticing the candlelight from crystal chandeliers reflecting off the marble floors.

The Fischer family only had those chandeliers with many curved arms and candles; Byrne had never seen more beautiful crystal chandeliers, always irresistibly looking up at them a second time.

"In the future, the Fischers' house must have such chandeliers," he thought silently to himself.

A middle-aged dwarf with a big beard approached, dressed in loose bright yellow clothing, with kind eyes, appearing very friendly and approachable.

“Good day, sir, haha! What can I do for you? Feel free to discuss anything with me, especially if it’s about money!”

Nordivar Bank, a giant joint-stock bank spread across the Ouden Continent, is said to have an unusually high number of dwarves among its upper echelons, yet it was the first time Byrne had seen this rare sub-human species in Cyart.

Indeed, today was a day of many firsts for him.

“A loan, I want to borrow money,” Byrne said without hesitation.

The dwarf, standing only about one meter tall and squinting as if he were a stone stump with a human face, laughed heartily, “Hahaha! Good, very good! I swear I like that term you just used! You can call me Milward, I am the head of Nordivar’s branch in Fein City!”

Milward paused for a moment then continued, “However, we are also afraid of bad debts when it comes to loans, so you need to provide some reliable proof.”

Byrne calmly produced the knight identification signed by Duke Black Iron himself, and the dwarf Milward immediately beamed with joy.

“Hahaha! I see, since we are both people of status and identity, it will be easier to talk!”

After leaving the bank, Byrne’s feelings became extremely complex.

The matter of taking out a loan to expand their venture had been discussed with Irene a week earlier, and they both believed that as long as they used the “Pharmacist” ability to continuously develop and improve new potions, the Fischer family could make a steady stream of money.

But after really borrowing a full fifty gold coins, Byrne, borrowing for the first time, felt a heavy psychological burden, because it would be very troublesome if he couldn’t repay the debt eventually.

Later, he found a local merchant in Fein City using the address given by sea merchant John, and they agreed to meet at the merchant’s home.

Byrne, leading his servants and guards, arrived at a glorious mansion, far more beautiful than the town chief’s house and almost as luxurious as Baron Hovern’s residence in Nasir, quickly realizing that he was meeting with a true major merchant.

According to what John said, most of the goods he shipped by sea were sold off nearby with the help of Mr. Gold, whose abilities and connections were extremely strong.

Mr. Gold was a Cyart man, two meters tall and weighing at least three hundred pounds, with a shiny bald head not sporting a single hair, and possessing an intimidating butcher-like gaze.

It was said that his brother-in-law was the lord of Fein City, Viscount Bast.

The interior of Mr. Gold's mansion could only be described as opulent, and deep inside Byrne hazarded a guess that the ordinary man before him was perhaps even wealthier than Baron Hovern, who was part of the Extraordinary nobility.

Dinner time came, and they started to talk business.

"You want to sell this?"

In his hand, he held a red potion, and his tone was deep, almost aggressively inquisitive, but Byrne sensed no malice—only perplexity.

Byrne, prepared for this moment, nodded briefly, and explained calmly,

"This is a potent detoxifying potion, capable of counteracting all conventional toxins and low-level mysterious creature toxins. The average market price is three gold coins, but my cost is less than one gold coin."

Mr. Gold pondered for a moment, then asked, "Shelf life and method of transport and storage?"

Byrne went on, "The shelf life is three years, after which the effect will weaken until it becomes ineffective after five years. Remember to avoid impacts during transport and storage."

He was confident in making money because the cost of the new potent detoxifying potion was too low, at just over a dozen silver coins, leaving a large margin for profit.

Mr. Gold shook his head, gazing at the young man with eyes full of experience and insight, as if reading his character, and spoke calmly,

"Still doesn't make sense, how many people in the country would be poisoned every day? Ordinary detoxifying potions can handle most situations; the market is too small, not to mention you seem to have forgotten about the costs of storage, transportation, and promotion."

Byrne was stunned for a while, falling into a long silence. Mr. Gold wasn't entirely right; he had already considered those costs, but he hadn't expected Mr. Gold to dismiss those profits entirely.

It turned out that a big merchant backed by the viscount family didn't care for such small gains; the bald man before him probably only wanted to make big money.

All of a sudden, a smile appeared on Byrne's face, his eyes brimming with the same confidence once seen in Lucius, as he continued effortlessly,

"In truth, our Fischer family is cooperating with a genius alchemical Spellcaster, who possesses strong research and development capabilities in medicine."

His eyes gleaming with confidence as if he had already succeeded, Byrne said with a smile,

"As long as you are willing to help, we can bring forth other new potions within a year, and you will be given priority for cooperation."

Finally, Mr. Gold revealed an intrigued smile, nodding as he said,

"Well, this sounds a bit more interesting now. But I'll need to sign a contract with you first, and if you can't bring out something new within a year, I will require compensation from the Fischer family."

The potent detoxifying potion was only one outcome of the "Pharmacist" ability; Byrne was sure he could produce many more new types of potions in the future.

Unable to hide his excitement, Byrne clenched his fist slightly and said with a smile, "Alright, I'm willing to sign the contract."