

Stay At home 321

Chapter 321: Nothing Can't Be Resolved With Money

Miles was standing outside Andrew's pork chops shop. He was looking at Andrew with an excited expression as he said, "Hey, Andrew, have you heard? This is the first day that they're releasing the Aden Square food competition rankings, and all five of Mamy Restaurant's dishes have made it into the top 100. On top of that, two of them made it into the top 30."

"My workers told me this morning. I'm surprised that the other three didn't reach the top 50. All five of the dishes deserve to be in the top five." Andrew was a little disappointed as he put down his knife.

"It's not like you don't know about the inner workings behind the rankings. Mamy Restaurant is still too small, and this is its first time participating in the competition, so two dishes in the top 30 is already very impressive." Miles sighed. "The rankings are all being fixed by the Chamber of Commerce. You weren't even in the top 20 this time, and if things continue like this, you'll be out of the top 30 sooner or later."

"That's true. Our restaurant has been running for close to two decades, and we sell more than a thousand servings of our signature dishes every day. Even so, we still can't break into the top 10. Those guys are just getting more and more shameless." Bernice joined the conversation, and shook her head with a hint of indignation.

"I feel like the rankings are more interesting this time. Mag has forced his way into the top 30, and taken two spots in the process. Those people who purchased rankings must be furious. The Chamber of Commerce's stranglehold has been shaken, and this is something that has never happened before." Old man Bishop chuckled as he strode over with his hands clasped behind his back. His spring onion bing was still outside of the top 100, but he didn't really care anymore.

"Indeed. It's been many years since a black horse like this has appeared. I'm just afraid that Mag will encounter some trouble as a result. He's only one man, while the Chamber of Commerce is a colossus. It would be really bad if they were to target him." Bernice was a little concerned.

Everyone gathered together and conversed freely. They were elated that someone had been able to rain on the Chamber of Commerce's parade, but at the same time, they were concerned for the future of Mamy Restaurant.

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In a large room in the Chamber of Commerce, Cyril was playing with a colorful little snake while sitting in his leather chair behind his desk. Mars, who was standing on the other side of the desk, asked, "Young Master, Boss Ricky of Ricky's Rotisserie was assaulted this morning. Should we report this to the president?"

Cyril didn't even raise his head as he asked, "Ricky? Who's that? And why would we report news of him being assaulted to the president?"

"Ricky's Rotisserie is a board member of the Chamber of Commerce. They have paid for three consecutive months to guarantee a spot in the top 30 in the Aden Square food competition, and today is

the first day that the rankings have been released. Ricky's Rotisserie was ranked at number 31, and the restaurant that had taken the 30th spot was Mamy Restaurant. They were the ones who assaulted Ricky." Mars paused momentarily before continuing, "Devoe and Goodenia were also detained because of that restaurant. It's said that one of the hired thugs from the Devoe Tavern was killed by the boss of Mamy Restaurant."

Cyril finally raised his head upon hearing that, and looked at Mars with a thunderous expression as he asked, "Who is this guy? Is he trying to oppose our Chamber of Commerce?"

"I've already done some investigating, and I found that the boss' name is Mag, but I wasn't able to dig up any information about his background. He opened Mamy Restaurant in the northwestern corner of the Aden Square about a month ago, and attracted many customers in that short span of time. The prices at his restaurant are extremely high, and even the cheapest dish costs 200 copper coins. The altercation that he had with Goodenia in the past..." Mars began to introduce Mag, as well as how the conflict between Mag and Goodenia had arisen.

"He's just a cocky little clown. A restaurant owner like him dares to declare that our Chamber of Commerce will close down?" Cyril pursed his lips with disdain, and said, "There's no need to report something so insignificant to the president. Just tell the Catering Association to wipe the restaurant from the rankings, then go and cause trouble for them regularly. Let me see if his little restaurant or our Chamber of Commerce will close down first."

"But his daughter has two 10th-tier magic casters instructing her. If we do that..." Mars was a little concerned.

"So what? It's not like we're attacking them. Are those two magic casters going to attack us in Chaos City? Give that fatso at the Catering Association some money, and he'll be more than happy to do our bidding." Cyril smiled nonchalantly, and said, "There's nothing in this world that can't be resolved with money."

Mars opened his mouth to say something, but he was abruptly cut off.

"That's enough. You've become more and more cowardly, Mars. Back when your father was working for the president, he was renowned for his decisiveness." Cyril glanced at Mars as he wound the colorful snake around his finger. He then stood up and left, but he paused at the door, and said, "Sometimes, you have to make a decision. Those who can't make decisions will be left behind."

Young Master, it really is difficult for me to bet everything on you. Besides, the first lesson my father ever taught me was to never place all of my eggs in the same basket. Mars looked at Cyril's departing figure, and shook his head as he also left the room.

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Mag faltered momentarily upon hearing the system's words before asking, "What did you just say?"

"You can choose a dish as one of the options on the wheel. After completing the tofu pudding mission, you will have the chance to secure that recipe—if you can get it on the wheel," the system repeated.

"System, did you rediscover your conscience?" Mag's raised an eyebrow skeptically.

“As a system with an ever-present conscience, the system refuses to answer this question,” the system replied a little unhappily.

“Any dish is fine?” Mag was still in disbelief.

“All dishes on Earth are applicable,” the system confirmed.

“Let me have a good think about this.” Countless thoughts ran through Mag’s head. Shandong cuisine, Sichuan cuisine, Cantonese cuisine, Jiangsu cuisine, Zhejiang cuisine, Fujian cuisine Hunan cuisine, Anhui cuisine... Those were the eight major cuisine categories. He also thought about all of the specific renowned dishes that he had sampled in the past.

There were simply too many to choose from, so he was suffering from choice anxiety. He was wondering what those dishes would be like when cooked using the special ingredients supplied by the system in conjunction with his supreme cooking skills.

He thought about it for half a day, and it was close to opening time again, but he still hadn’t made up his mind.

“Father, I’m back!” Amy’s elated voice sounded from outside. Mag’s voice immediately lit up upon hearing that. If he couldn’t decide, then he could just let Amy decide!

Chapter 322: Don’t Run, Ugly Duckling

Mag opened the door, and Amy threw herself at him in her black magician robes. He caught her in a tight hug, and spun her around in a circle, while Amy giggled in his arms. He then looked at her with a warm smile, and asked, “Why is our little Amy so happy?”

“I’m super happy because Father hugs me every day.” Amy looked up at Mag with an affirmative expression.

“What a sweet little girl.” Mag’s smile widened as he looked at Amy’s adorable little face. She was the most precious thing in his life.

“I’m so envious that you have such a cute little daughter!”

“I know, right! I see them showing off their affection every day, and I really want a daughter whenever I see that!”

“You don’t even have a wife yet. I’m just hoping that the baby in my wife’s stomach is a little girl.”

All of the customers lining up outside the restaurant looked on with benevolent smiles. They were greeted by a show of affection between Mag and Amy every day, and they were quite envious of the father-and-daughter duo’s relationship, but their mood was also lifted as a result.

“Amy, I can grant you a wish that’s related to food. What do you want to eat aside from the food from our restaurant? I can cook it for you.” Mamy Restaurant ignored those envious eyes, and carried Amy into the restaurant.

“Really? I can pick anything?” Amy’s eyes lit up with excitement.

“Yes, anything.” Mag nodded with a smile. The system had promised him that all dishes were applicable, so he was confident that he could satisfy Amy’s wish.

“Then...” Amy contemplated momentarily before clenching her little fist, and exclaiming, “I want to eat the Manchu Han Imperial Feast!”

“Er...” Mag’s smile immediately froze on his face. He realized that he had been a little overconfident, but he wasn’t expecting Amy to remember a promise that he had made so long ago.

“Father told me that the Manchu Han Imperial Feast is super delicious; can you cook it for me now?” Amy appeared to be oblivious to the awkward expression on Mag’s face.

“That’s... not something I can make yet, as the Manchu Han Imperial Feast is not just one dish. I haven’t mastered that many dishes, and I don’t have enough ingredients, so...” Mag explained with an apologetic expression.

“So... I still can’t eat the Manchu Han Imperial Feast?” Amy was a little disappointed, but she quickly put on a smile upon seeing Mag’s awkward expression. She shook her head, and said, “That’s alright, don’t be sad, Father. I don’t even want to eat the Manchu Han Imperial Feast. I love everything that Father cooks for me.”

“Good girl.” A rush of warmth flowed through his heart at the sight of Amy’s thoughtful smile. He held her in his arms, and whispered into her ear, “Believe in your father. I’m definitely going to make you a Manchu Han Imperial Feast in the future, the kind that you can’t finish even after eating for three days and three nights.”

“I believe in you, Father. Father has never lied to me.” Amy nodded before asking, “If we can’t finish it, can I invite Jessica, Big Sister Xixi, Big Bear, Master Turtle, and Master Half-beard to eat it with us? It would be a waste if we can’t finish the food.”

“Of course. You can also invite Aisha, Miya, and all of your little friends to the feast as well.” Mag nodded with a smile. His daughter sure was a generous little girl.

“You’re the best, Father.” Amy planted a kiss on Mag’s face with her arms around his neck, and her face was alight with a blissful smile.

Mag gently stroked her hair, and asked, “Then, is there something that you really want to eat now? Like roast beef or roast lamb chops... Any one dish is fine.”

Amy thought about it momentarily before replying, “I... I want to eat fish, the type that swims in water. I heard from Daphne that fish is super delicious and really succulent. But, she warned me that there were many sharp bones to be wary of. She even showed me a fishbone last time; it was transparent and really pretty, like a needle.”

Mag looked at Amy, and felt as if a sharp fishbone had pierced his heart. The best food that Amy had ever had was pancakes, and even at four years of age, she had still never even tasted fish. Fish wasn’t even a noteworthy or expensive ingredient, but in her eyes, it was like some sort of treasure that was completely out of reach.

“Alright, I’ll cook fish for you. I’ll make you the best grilled fish in the world,” Mag promised with an earnest expression on his face. He had already decided what dish he was going to choose: spicy grilled fish.

“Grilled fish? Like cooking fish over a fire? Like grilled beef and grilled lamb chops?” Amy was very curious.

“Mm-hm, it’s similar, but also a little different. You’ll know when you see it.” Mag didn’t provide an in-depth explanation. Sichuan’s spicy grilled fish consisted of grilling fish before braising it, so it really was different from grilling steaks and things like that.

“As long as it’s made by Father, it must be super delicious. That way, I can also eat super delicious fish, and I can show my fishbones to Daphne too.” Amy nodded obediently with expectation shimmering in her eyes.

“What new magic spell did you learn from Master Urien today?” Mag asked.

“Meow~” Ugly Duckling crept over to Mag, and looked up at Amy with a hint of excitement.

“Put me down, Father, and I’ll show you what I’ve learned.” Amy wriggled as Mag set her down on the ground. She extended her left hand, and assumed a very solemn expression.

Both Mag and Ugly Duckling took half a step back. He didn’t doubt Amy’s magic aptitude in the slightest, but she had only just begun to learn magic, so he was still a little concerned about her control. If he were accidentally hurt by his own daughter, that would be a farce.

Sally and Yabemiya also appraised Amy with curiosity. She was learning from two legendary magic casters, and was extremely talented. They were all wondering what she could have learned from Urien in one morning.

“In my name, I summon the flames of extreme frost,” Amy chanted in her mellow voice. A sputtering sound suddenly erupted from her left palm, upon which a small ball of bluish-white fire appeared. Even though it looked like fire, its emergence made the surrounding air’s temperature drop significantly, even to the extent that everyone’s breathing was spreading drops of condensing vapor.

“Flames of extreme frost?” Mag was a little surprised as he looked at the cold bluish-white flames on Amy’s palm. It was like fire that had been carved from ice.

“Mm-hm. It may be small, but it’s super powerful. Let me demonstrate...” Amy looked around before her eyes settled on Ugly Duckling.

Ugly Duckling seemed to have been struck by a perilous premonition, and it immediately arched its back as its fur stood on its ends, preparing to run away at any moment.

“Don’t run, Ugly Duckling,” Amy instructed with a serious expression before tossing the small ball of fire toward it.

Chapter 323: I Think It’s Seriously Going to be Cooked

The bluish-white fire hovered toward Ugly Duckling, which was just about to run away. It appeared to be moving at a leisurely speed, but it was still much faster than Ugly Duckling, so the fire landed upon it, and instantly erupted to encompass Ugly Duckling's entire body.

Its body instantly stiffened, while the bluish-white flames spread, creating a large cube of ice. Ugly Duckling was frozen with its hackles raised and a horrified expression on its face.

"This..." Mag had wanted to rush over to protect Ugly Duckling, but he wasn't as fast as the fireball, either. He wasn't expecting Amy to use Ugly Duckling as her experimental subject. The little guy was less than a month old, so it could die quite easily.

"Such pure ice flames." Sally was quite surprised as she looked at Amy. She had only been under Urien's tutelage for one morning, and she had already mastered such pure ice flames. She was really stunned by Amy's exceptional aptitude.

"Ugly Duckling won't freeze to death, will it?" Yabemiya was still a little concerned. Even though Ugly Duckling wasn't that close with her, she still really liked to play with it when Amy was away on her lessons.

"Father, that's the new flames of extreme frost spell that I learned this morning. Isn't it super awesome?" Amy withdrew her hand with a triumphant expression.

"Yes, it is indeed super awesome, but Ugly Duckling..." Mag nodded with approval. It was naturally amazing that Amy could master such a powerful spell in one morning, but he was still quite concerned about Ugly Duckling.

Amy seemed to be able to sense Mag's concern, and assured, "Ugly Duckling will be fine. Master Ugly Duckling told me that even after being frozen by the flames of extreme frost, there's a chance that the target would be able to survive."

"There's a chance...?" Mag's expression became even more strained. What an irresponsible little girl. It would be an absolute joke if Ugly Duckling were to die from this ordeal.

"Yes, a very high chance..." Amy nodded earnestly.

"Then let's thaw it out first." Mag heaved a resigned sigh as he turned to the kitchen to find his knife. The block of ice wasn't a small one, so it was probably going to take a long time to melt.

"This will do it." Mag had only just turned around when a small ball of bluish violet flames appeared in Amy's hand, and she tossed it at the frozen Ugly Duckling.

"I think it's seriously going to be cooked if you do that." Mag was once again too late to stop Amy, and could only look on as the fireball flew toward Ugly Duckling.

It was a fireball that could blast 3rd-tier swordsmen and magic casters flying. If it were to land on Ugly Duckling, the latter would probably be reduced to a pile of ashes.

To his surprise, the small fireball didn't immediately explode upon making contact with the block of ice. Instead, it enveloped the block, and the ice was instantly melted before being vaporized. The bluish-white and bluish violet flames nullified one another, snuffing out in unison. At the same time, the ice and fire around Ugly Duckling's body completely disappeared.

Ugly Duckling's hackles were still raised, and it remained completely stationary for a full second after the ice block disappeared before shuddering violently. It leaped straight onto the counter, and stared at Amy and Mag with a dumbstruck expression as if it had no idea what had just happened.

"It's completely fine?" Aside from receiving a fright, Ugly Duckling was completely fine, and Mag was quite surprised to see that. Both Amy's snap freezing and defrosting skills were top-notch.

"Wow, Ugly Duckling, you jumped onto the counter all by yourself. Looks like I won't have to carry you up there anymore, seeing as you can do it yourself." Amy was also quite surprised as she looked at Ugly Duckling.

"Meow~" Ugly Duckling retreated a couple of steps in a timid manner upon hearing that, and it shook its head at Amy with a pitiable expression.

"I don't care. The fact of the matter is, you got onto the counter by yourself." Amy shook her head, and refused to listen to Ugly Duckling's pleas.

Mag looked into Amy's eyes, and adopted a serious expression as he said, "Amy, even though Ugly Duckling is fine, please don't use living creatures as experimental subjects for your spells. If something were to go awry, then we wouldn't be able to rectify our mistakes."

"But I already made sure that it wouldn't harm Ugly Duckling before casting the spells." Amy pouted with an indignant expression.

"Oh, then I'm sorry for wrongly accusing you." Mag immediately gave in at the sight of Amy's pitiable display. She was so kind, so there was no way she would put Ugly Duckling at risk. Urien had surely told her that those spells wouldn't be harmful to living creatures.

"I tried it on Black Coal many times, and it's still completely fine." Amy nodded with a smug expression.

"..." Mag was suddenly feeling a little sympathetic toward that annoying crow. Who would have thought that the "honorable Fama Odin Ben" would be reduced to Amy's test subject? Furthermore, Urien had to have given her permission to conduct those experiments, so he couldn't really say anything about that. Perhaps it was part of a practical learning component of the lesson.

"Alright, come and have some food. Make sure to study hard today as well. You don't have any lessons the day after tomorrow, so let's go fly a kite together." Mag patted Amy's head with a smile before picking her up, and placing her on a chair.

"Really? Father is going to fly a kite with me? The type that can fly super super high in the sky?" Amy was overjoyed.

"That's right, our kite will fly higher than everyone else's." Mag nodded with a smile. It was getting close to fall, and the winds were quite strong. As such, many people took their kids to the Aden Square and flew kites together. The day after the next was a holiday for the restaurant and for Amy as well, so it would be a perfect opportunity to do some kite-flying with her.

Amy waved her little fists around, elated, and yelled, "Yay! Father, you're the best!"

"Aisha, Miya, you two should come and have a seat as well. We'll open for business after having some food," Mag said with a smile. Amy was always so easy to satisfy. He turned toward the kitchen, and

asked internally, "System, can you change the wheel reward to the spicy grilled fish recipe? I don't want the other things; all I want now is a recipe for spicy grilled fish."

"No! The God of Cookery upgrade wheel is a revolutionary creation of the system, and it cannot be exchanged for anything! You can make the spicy grilled fish recipe one of the possible prizes, so after you complete the mission, you'll have a one in seven chance of securing the recipe as your prize." The system's voice was very stern, leaving no room for negotiation.

Chapter 324: Find Him And Kill Him

In a simple yet still luxurious study, a green letter was reduced to ashes between a set of long slim fingers. Josh sat on a redwood chair, and swirled the amber wine in the crystal goblet in his hand. His handsome face normally wore a benevolent and refined expression, but it was currently as cold as ice.

"So you really survived, Alex. But where could you be hiding now? The dragon island? No, those idiots all want to kill you. Twilight Forest? No, countless orcs died by your hands in the battle on the border. There's no way you'd be at the Wind Forest, either. You have enough confidence and insanity, but appearing in the Wind Forest with that half-elf daughter of yours is pretty much asking for death..." His low voice sounded in the room as he fiddled absentmindedly with the papers on his desk.

"If you're not in the Roth Empire, then you're most likely in Chaos City. All races and species live there, so no matter what kind of person appears there, they won't attract too much attention. Alex isn't very bright, but he's very alert. He knows which places are dangerous and which places are safe. However, trying to find someone in Chaos City isn't going to be easy." Josh slowly raised his goblet to his lips, but he suddenly stopped before taking a sip, and smashed the goblet violently into the ground.

Amber wine and glittering crystal shards flew in all directions. Josh's face was twisted with a sinister expression as he clenched his fists, and snarled, "Alex, you'd better not let me find you. Even after so many years, Irina still hasn't forgotten about you. I have to kill you, and that little half-breed too. I was still too naive back then."

"Are you alright, Your Highness?" The butler's anxious voice sounded from outside the door.

Josh's expression immediately smoothed out as he replied, "I'm fine. Tell Seuss to come and see me."

"Yes," the butler replied. The sound of footsteps hurrying away immediately followed.

Josh pulled out a map from the top shelf of his bookshelf, and spread it open on his table. His brown eyes slowly scanned across the map, and his brows furrowed as if he were thinking about something.

"Your Highness, Seuss is here." After a short while, the butler's voice sounded again.

"Tell him to come in," Josh instructed without even raising his head.

The heavy wooden door opened, and a thin and tall young man with cropped golden hair and wearing a set of black magician robes walked in. There was a red reaper scythe emblazoned on the chest of his robes.

The magic caster appeared to be about 30 years of age, and his face carried a sickly pallor. There was a scar extending from his left eye to his glabella, while his pupils were a rare gray color, making them appear a little like dead fish eyes. His entire body was enveloped in those black magician robes, giving him a cold and sinister aura.

He stepped onto the crystal shards on the ground with his black leather boots, creating a crackling sound, but his expression didn't change in the slightest. His fervent gaze was fixed on Josh, and he said respectfully, "Seuss pays his respects, Your Highness."

"I want you Asuras to find someone, then kill him." Josh shifted his gaze away from the map on the table.

"Please specify our target, Your Highness." Seuss bowed his head in a respectful manner.

"Mag Alex," Josh replied in a calm voice.

"Alex!" Seuss immediately raised his head, and stared at Josh with shock and incredulity etched on his face. He hesitated momentarily before asking, "Your Highness, isn't Alex already dead? We've been searching for evidence to confirm his death during these past few years, and nothing indicates that he's still alive."

Josh shook his head, and looked at Seuss with a serious expression as he said, "No, he's still alive; someone has already proven that to me. So, you must find him before anyone else does, and kill him. Return to me with his head."

"If Alex is still alive, then I'll be sure to kill him in revenge for what happened last time!" Josh's expression suddenly turned sinister again; the scar on his glabella was like a hideous centipede now.

"Remember, I don't care what happened between the two of you in the past, just find him and kill him. If you fail, then you can put an end to your own life," Josh said in a cold voice.

"Yes!" Seuss hurriedly bowed his head respectfully. Even though he was the youngest 9th-tier magic caster in the kingdom and the leader of the Asuras, he was still struck by a sense of fear and awe when interacting with Josh.

That was not just because he was one of the people in line to the throne. He was more frightened by the fact that Josh was able to bring down Alex when he was at the height of his powers. That man was an extraordinary talent who had once stomped him into the ground.

Back then, they had both advanced to the 9th-tier at the same time, and theirs should've been an evenly matched battle, but it became the biggest disgrace of his life.

One strike—Alex only used one sword strike to defeat him.

If it weren't for the unavoidable sense of impending doom that he was struck by when the sword pierced his glabella, he would have never believed that he couldn't even take a single sword strike from Alex.

From that day, he fell from grace, and became a laughingstock.

After that, Alex continued to rise higher and higher, defeating 10th-tier powerhouses and slaying giant dragons. His rate of progression and overwhelming power placed him well and truly at the pinnacle of the younger generation. Even a supreme prodigy like him could only look on in despair.

Thus, a magic caster that had never skipped lessons went missing at the Magus Tower. At the same time, a new leader was instated among the Asuras, and his reaper scythe harvested one life after another.

“Even though I know he’s not dead, I still can’t ascertain his location. The likeliest place is Chaos City.” Josh pointed at a certain spot on the map on his desk, and said in a dark voice, “Remember, this must remain strictly confidential. No one aside from the Asuras is to hear about this.”

Seuss packed up the map on the table, and said respectfully, “Yes, I’ll send scouts to Chaos City right away.”

Josh was momentarily silent before continuing, “Also, kill all of his friends and family as well, no matter who they are.”

“Yes.” A hint of surprise flashed through Seuss’ eyes, but he didn’t say anything.

“You can go now.” Josh sat back down in his chair and closed his eyes.

Seuss lowered his head, and took a couple of steps backward before turning to leave, closing the door to the study behind him.

“Mag Alex, many people will be unable to sleep at night if you’re still alive, so you should go and die...” Josh’s voice reverberated within the study.

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On the outskirts of Rodu, there was a black horse-drawn carriage situated outside a large estate.

“Your Highness, this is Simon’s estate,” Quine said in a low voice.

Chapter 325: Everyone Dies Eventually

“Let’s go in. I’m sure Simon will still be happy to see an old friend like me.” The tall and broad Sean emerged from within the carriage. Even though he wasn’t wearing any armor, his ramrod straight back and the killing intent emanating from his body made it quite apparent that he was a veteran general on the battlefield.

The gates of the estate were tightly shut, and Sean only had Quine accompanying him. Everyone probably thought that the prince was still on the southwestern border thousands of kilometers away, directing his troops in battle. No one knew when he had returned to Rodu.

The gate was opened after some knocking, and an old servant emerged with a cautious expression on his face. He didn’t recognize Sean, but he could see that he was definitely no ordinary person. He asked, “Whom are you looking for?”

Quine was about to say something, but Sean raised a hand to cut him off, and smiled as he said to the old servant, "This is General Simon's estate, right? Please inform him that Sean has come to visit him."

"Alright, please wait for a moment, I'll go and report to my master." The old servant nodded before closing the gate. He felt as if the name Sean was a little familiar, but he couldn't quite put his finger on it, not sure where he had heard it before. However, he was most likely a friend of his master's, so he didn't dare to delay.

The old servant made his way to the backyard, where a brawny heavily bearded man was swinging a pickaxe repeatedly into the soil. The servant informed, "Master, there's a guest by the name of Sean who is here to see you."

"Sean?" Simon immediately stopped what he was doing. A hint of surprise appeared on his face as sweat flowed down his tanned muscular chest.

The servant was a little confused by Simon's expression, and asked, "Is he not a friend of yours?"

"No, no, no, I'm not worthy to be a friend of his. Clinton, get everyone in the estate into the backyard. No one is allowed to go anywhere without my permission." Simon strode out of his garden, and casually put the pickaxe leaning against a tree. He picked up the towel that was hanging from a nearby tree branch, and wiped away the sweat on his face. He then dusted himself off, and strode toward the front of the estate.

"Yes. Master, should I brew some tea?" the servant asked.

"They're too good to drink our tea." Simon chuckled with a hint of mockery in his voice.

The gate opened again when Sean was in the process of examining a griffin that had been carved onto the gate. He turned to Simon with a smile, and said, "I didn't think that you would have such skill. This carving is not bad at all."

Simon looked at Sean with a calm expression, and said, "You're far too kind, Your Highness. I'm just a useless retired soldier with nothing to do, so I'm merely entertaining myself in my spare time."

Sean looked into Simon's eyes, and said, "It looks like you're still holding a grudge against me, Simon."

Simon's expression remained unchanged as he said, "I wouldn't dare. I am just an ordinary person, so how would I dare to hold a grudge against you, Your Highness."

"Just because you wouldn't dare doesn't mean you don't actually hate me. I know that all of the soldiers who left the army with you harbor animosity toward me. You all hate me for not saving Alex, and for not avenging him." Sean shook his head, and a guilty expression appeared on his face. He sighed, and continued, "To this day, I'm still unable to forgive myself. If only I could have received the news a little earlier... If only I could have been a bit more alert to the potential dangers, Alex would have never been plunged into that dire situation."

"Everyone dies eventually." Simon's expression didn't change at all in response to Sean's words. He had heard the same things said on more than one occasion.

"Indeed, everyone dies eventually, even you and I will die someday." Sean nodded with a wistful look. He turned to Simon with a smile, and asked, "Are you not going to invite me to come in?"

"If Your Highness would like to come in, who am I to say no?" Simon opened the gate wider, and ducked off to the side to allow the prince passage.

"Even though I was reluctant to part with you veterans, I have to say that all of you made a smart choice. Only after leaving the border can you live such a leisurely and carefree life. Even I am feeling a little envious." Sean chuckled at the sight of the flora that Simon had planted in the yard.

"Perhaps," Simon replied ambiguously.

Sean looked around at his surroundings before his gaze settled on Simon. "Looks like we're the only ones here. I've come here today for a very simple reason: I wanted to ask you something."

"Please state any questions that you may have. I would be more than happy to answer them, Your Highness." Simon met Sean's gaze with a steady one of his own.

Sean looked into Simon's eyes, and asked, "On the night when the event took place, where were you?"

Meanwhile, Quine had crept around behind Simon. A metallic light gleamed in hand, and his eyes narrowed as his eyes focused on the spot where Simon's heart was located.

"I had gone home to visit my mother's grave. That day was her death anniversary." Simon's reply was very placid, but there was a hint of rage in his eyes.

Sean looked deep into Simon's eyes as if he were trying to see something different in them.

Simon's hands balled up into tight fists, and a pained expression appeared on his face as he roared, "If I had been with him, I would've at least been able to act as a meat shield for him. Those shameless bastards, all of them deserve to die!"

His fists were trembling slightly as if he were repressing his violent emotions with all his might.

"Indeed. All of them deserve to die, and they're all dead." Sean nodded as he took his eyes off Simon. He strode toward another room, and opened the door, upon which he was greeted by the sight of a series of completed and half-completed wooden statues as well as a pile of untouched wood in the corner.

Among the statues, there were knights, magic casters, orcs, demons, elves... There were all types of different races, and all of them were battling with one another. The statues were all very life-like.

Sean glanced at all of the statues, and walked all the way to the end, where the largest statue lay. It was a statue of a griffin, and he smiled as he said, "Simon, if the third prince were to hear about your talents, he would surely be very fond of you."

Simon shook his head, and said, "His Highness is a true master in wood-carving. I am just a hobbyist, and I cannot compare to him."

"How interesting." Sean chuckled as he strode out the door. As he did so, he said, "Simon, I've always thought that you were an interesting person, but it appears that you're even more interesting than I had imagined. However, I have to tell you something: hiding a person is different from hiding an object. If you don't hide a person well, and they end up being found, someone will die."

“I don’t understand what you’re trying to say, Your Highness.” A peculiar look flashed through Simon’s eyes, but his expression remained unchanged.

“Looks like you’re not even going to offer me any tea. Farewell, then.” Sean didn’t provide any explanation. He made his way out of the room, and strode toward the gate. Upon reaching the gate, he paused, and looked at the griffin carved upon it. A smile appeared on his face as he said, “There seems to be someone missing.”

“Farewell, Your Highness.” Simon didn’t say anything in response. He merely bade the prince farewell, and looked on as his black horse-drawn carriage departed. He slowly closed the gate, and clenched his fists as he murmured to himself, “Everyone dies eventually, but they can’t die for no reason...”

“Your Highness, are we just going to go back now?” Quine was a little perplexed.

“Simon’s reactions have told me everything I need to know. Three years ago, he was a man that couldn’t hide anything, so now that he’s trying to hide something, it’s quite easy to see through him. There were all types of statues in that room, but none of Alex. If he really were dead, then his statue would be the only one in the room.” Sean smiled as he continued, “All you have to do is keep an eye on him from here onward. He will be the key to finding Alex.”

Chapter 326: Round Table Conference

To the west of the mighty Rodu imperial palace, there stood a nine-storied Magus Tower.

The entire building seemed to have been constructed from a single structure, and sat upon the earth like a gigantic beast. Only at night would silver light emanate from the tower, highlighting its status as the tallest tower in Rodu, as well as accentuating its status of the holy land for all magic casters on the Norland Continent.

At this moment, at the top level of the Magus Tower, there were 10 elderly magic casters sitting around a redwood table within a circular conference chamber. They were gathered for the Magus Tower’s monthly round table conference.

Only the elders of the Magus Tower could participate in that conference. There was an empty chair in the corner, presenting a slightly disconcerting sight.

An elderly man with white hair and a black beard sat at the head of the table. “So that’s about it for what happened this month. The battle on the southwestern front has eased slightly, and they do not require our Magus Tower’s assistance for now. There has also been less activity from the wicked dragons recently, so the civilians have been quite safe, and there’s no immediate need to cull these wicked dragons,” he said in a slightly jaded voice.

As the great elder of the Magus Tower, Richard had been presiding over the round table conferences for over four decades.

All of the elders nodded with relieved expressions. This meant that they wouldn’t have to rush about dealing with wicked dragons in the immediate future. At their age, no one wanted to travel—even if they did so on griffins.

There was a magic caster with a portly figure, and his magician robes seemed to be on the verge of bursting at the seams. His name was Brent, and he put on a mocking smile as he said, "I heard that Krassu took in a disciple recently in Chaos City, and she's supposed to be a half-elf girl? That old fart has been selecting a disciple for himself for several decades; has he finally given up and just settled for whomever?"

"That's not necessarily the case. Hasn't Urien appeared as well? On top of that, I heard the two of them fought in Chaos City over this disciple, and in the end, both of them took her under their wings together."

"Oh? Did that really happen? Those two old farts have been fighting for close to 100 years. Neither of them is willing to concede, but they're willing to accept the same disciple at such an old age? And it's a half-elf girl?"

"Don't all half-breeds have very mediocre aptitude? Besides, their magic spells lay on either extreme of melee and long-range combat. If someone were to learn from both of them at the same time, they would be driven insane!"

Everyone began to discuss spiritedly among themselves upon hearing that. The fact that they were able to sit at the round table indicated that all of them stood at the pinnacle of the magic world in the Roth Empire. Even if they weren't 10th-tier magic casters, they were at least the most exceptional 9th-tier magic casters out there.

It was exactly because of this that all of them had extensive knowledge of Krassu and Urien as well as the renowned rivalry between fire and ice. As such, they knew that it was almost impossible for both of them to accept the same disciple.

If there were someone that could possibly apprentice themselves to both mages, it would have to be the elven princess that had stunned the entire Norland Continent about a decade ago. Exceptionally talented was an understatement when it came to her. Only someone like her would be able to master extreme fire and ice magic as well as both melee and long-range spells.

It was just a pity that she refused both Krassu's and Urien's invitation to take her under their wing. She chose to focus on life magic instead, and became the youngest 10th-tier magic caster on the continent at an astonishing rate, completely crushing all of the other prodigies on the continent.

If it weren't for the fact that Mag Alex was too dazzling of an existence, that era was one that should have belonged to her. She had set so many records in the magic world that would most likely never be broken, thereby immortalizing her name in history.

"It's true. Krassu has already sent Arthur back, and is going to move all of his possessions to Chaos City, including his rooms full of gold coins. Looks like he's preparing to live the rest of his life there." The thin and gangly Elliot smiled, and said, "Deputy President Krassu has always been quite free-spirited. Even if he were to accept a half-orc as his disciple, it wouldn't really be all that strange, would it?"

Everyone burst into laughter upon hearing that, but their laughter was tinged with a hint of mockery.

"He's never held our Magus Tower in any serious regard." In contrast, Richard's expression was quite dark, and his voice was also rather gloomy.

Countless prodigies had been sent to Krassu so he could choose a disciple from them. However, none of them caught his eye, and he ended up moving to Chaos City to find a half-elf girl. Now, he couldn't even be bothered coming back to the Magus Tower, and had sent a servant to pack up all his stuff.

Everyone's smiles faded, and different expressions appeared on their faces, but none of them said anything.

All of the older generation magic casters in the Magus Tower were aware of the conflict between Richard and Krassu.

It could be said that both of them were imperative to the Magus Tower's current status.

50 years ago, Krassu had made sure that the Roth Empire's royal family gave the Magus Tower the attention it deserved, thereby laying down the foundation for this nine-storied Magus Tower. After that, Krassu resigned from his role as president, and Richard spent several decades to make the Magus Tower an indispensable pillar to the empire.

As such, the positions of the two of them in the Magus Tower had always been quite a contentious topic. Even though Richard was the one who had selected the current panel of elders, Krassu's position in everyone's hearts was not inferior to that of Richard. All of the elderly magic casters sitting at the round table were well aware of that.

"As old friends of his, we should send Krassu a present to congratulate him on finally finding a disciple." Richard smiled as he glanced at everyone around him. His wrinkled fingers tapped gently on the table, and he continued, "Most of our disciples are middle-aged already, and most of their disciples have also become adults. I'll get George to deliver a present to express congratulations on behalf of our Magus Tower."

"That's a good idea. He can take all of our presents as well." Everyone smiled in response, but there was a peculiar look in their eyes.

George Dobson was the prized disciple of Richard's eldest disciple. He was a 3rd-tier magic caster at just 12 years of age, and it was said that he was already close to the 4th-tier. Even though there was still a substantial disparity between himself and Princess Irina from back in the day, he was still one of the top prodigies among the younger generation.

Richard was also quite fond of him, and would often give him some instruction, which was one of the reasons for his rapid progress.

For Richard to send a child like George as the present-bearer was a little bit insulting. Furthermore, he was clearly intentionally trying to provoke Krassu. He was implying that the disciple of his disciple was superior to Krassu's disciple. That was quite a scathing point to make.

"Alright, then get Krassu's servant to accompany George to Chaos City." A cold smile appeared on Richard's face as he got up to leave...

Chapter 327: The Rankings' Effect

Mag scooped some rice as he asked internally, "Just tell me: how much will that grilled fish recipe cost? I'm a man with a yearly income of over a hundred million now."

"100,000 gold coins," the system replied calmly.

Mag's hands immediately stiffened, and he asked, "What did you say?"

"100,000 gold coins," the system repeated.

"Holy f*ck!!! Are you trying to rob me? You're selling me a grilled fish recipe for 10,000,000¹? Does eating the grilled fish grant godly powers?" Mag roared internally. *What kind of bullsh*t price is this? It's unacceptable!*

"The recipe is a prize item, and under normal circumstances, it cannot be sold. If you would like to forcibly purchase it, then the price will naturally be a bit higher," the system explained, as calm as ever.

"A bit higher? You f*cking call that a bit higher? I work my a*s off, and I can only earn about 500,000 a day. Aren't you going too far with that price?" Mag wore a sour expression as he tried to negotiate.

"50,000 gold coins, that's the most I'm willing to pay."

"100,000 gold coins, non-negotiable." The system remained unmoved.

Mag began to calculate in his mind. He definitely wouldn't be able to round up 100,000 gold coins, and it would take him close to 20 days to earn even 50,000 gold coins.

Furthermore, it really wasn't worth it just to purchase a recipe. If he continued to save up for a bit, he would even be able to purchase a strength point.

Mag soon calmed down, and responded nonchalantly, "Alright, I'm not buying it, then. Put the spicy grilled fish on the wheel, and perhaps I'll get it with my fantastic luck."

"Put in some extra effort to complete the mission; there are more fabulous prizes waiting for you!" the system said in a tempting voice.

At the dining table, Mag turned to Amy with a hint of curiosity in his eyes, and asked, "Amy learned the flames of extreme frost today; what magic spell are you going to learn next?"

In comparison to Krassu's melee magic, Urien's magic seemed to be more interesting.

Amy shook her head as she replied, "Master Turtle said that I only have to master this spell in the next two days. With this spell as a foundation, I'll be able to cast many more spells, so this one is the most important."

"I see." Mag nodded in response. He didn't really understand what Amy was saying, but if that was what Urien was telling her, then he had to have his reasons. After all, no one on the entire Norland Continent was a match for him when it came to ice-type magic.

Ugly Duckling had already jumped down from the counter, and even though it had received quite a fright, it didn't appear to have sustained any actual injuries. At this moment, it was snuggling up against Amy's leg, attempting to curry favor with her.

“Ugly Duckling, you have to become braver. If you don’t even dare to climb onto the counter, then that simply won’t do. Look at Big Sister Xixi; she can even run around on walls. You’re still too weak.” Amy looked down at Ugly Duckling with an urgent expression.

“Meow~” Ugly Duckling looked up at Amy with a pitiable expression as if to tell her that it was only a baby.

“Hmph, who isn’t a baby? I’m not scared of heights in the slightest.” Amy was unconvinced as she pursed her lips.

Ugly Duckling looked at Amy, then at the counter, and it hesitated momentarily before rushing toward the counter.

“Splat~”

Even with a run-up, Ugly Duckling only managed to jump up less than half a meter, upon which its head crashed into the counter. It slowly slid down the counter, and lay down on its back, looking up at the sky with a suicidal expression.

“Sigh, so be it. Looks like you’ll never become a swan in this lifetime.” Amy sighed before continuing to enjoy her meal.

Mag couldn’t help but smile, and shook his head upon seeing that. It really would be quite difficult for Ugly Duckling to become a swan.

Outside the restaurant, the sweet and savory factions were co-existing a lot more harmoniously ever since Ricky’s actions had united them.

Furthermore, due to the rankings’ effect, there were many new faces who had come to the restaurant. They were initially quite surprised by the long line gathered outside, but that was an indication that the food here really was exquisite, so they began to look forward to dining there.

Many people were reluctant to come to the restaurant due to the expensive prices, but there was still a lot of customers who simply couldn’t resist, and so they ordered the relatively cheaper roujiamo and tofu pudding.

It was exactly because of this that many old customers missed out on the limited supply of tofu pudding, and howls of anguish erupted as they heard the news.

Mag couldn’t do anything about that. 800 tofu puddings a day was already his limit. If he wanted to supply more, he would have to upgrade his body in order to improve his cooking efficiency.

Following the busy noon service, Mag went to the magic screens, and purchased 10,000 tickets from the Catering Association workers. Even though it was quite a heavy price to pay, it was a necessary sacrifice to ensure that at least one of his dishes remained in the top 30.

...

On the second day that the rankings were released, the braised chicken and rice and roujiamo still occupied the 29th and 30th spot, respectively. However, following the alliance forged by the sweet and

savory factions, the 99th and 100th place sweet and savory tofu pudding had staged a resurgence, and were ranked 50th and 47th, respectively.

One restaurant with four dishes in the top 50 naturally garnered a lot of attention. It had been a very long time since such an impressive restaurant had appeared.

“Dammit... It’s still 31! Ow... That b*stard... I... I have to avenge myself!” Ricky held his swollen face, and glowered at the rankings board while his other hand was clenched into a tight fist.

His employee had two black eyes, and he said in a faint voice, “B... Boss, we should go back; there are a lot of Mamy Restaurant customers here.”

His knees were already trembling at the sight of the hostile glances being directed toward them.

“Let’s go.” Ricky’s expression also changed slightly upon hearing that. He was truly afraid after the brutal beating that he had suffered the day prior. Those people didn’t hold back in the slightest, and if there were to be a repeat of that beating, he would most likely be bedridden for a long time.

The employee only dared to speak at a normal volume after getting far away from the crowd. He asked, “Boss, are we going back?”

“No, we’re going to the Chamber of Commerce.” Ricky shook his head as he got onto a horse-drawn carriage, and said resentfully, “I’m going to make them pay for hurting me. I already reported what happened yesterday to the Chamber of Commerce; let’s see what their response is.”

...

“Boss Ricky, we’re already aware of this matter. We are currently in the process of formulating a plan as well. Just like you said, you were the one who was trying to smash the restaurant, only for the boss to send you flying as he opened the door, and you were then abused by his customers. As such, Mamy Restaurant is not at fault here. Besides, you don’t even know the identities of the customers who had assaulted you, so it would be completely unrealistic to expect the Gray Temple or the city lord’s castle to do something about this.” Within a guest all, Mars appraised the enraged Ricky with a resigned expression.

Ricky clenched his fists, and asked, “So I copped a beating for nothing? I paid for a guaranteed spot in the top 30, but my restaurant is at 31 because of that restaurant. Is the Chamber of Commerce not going to give me an explanation?”

“I suggest you don’t bring up the assault case again. As for the rankings problem, we’ve taken your money, so we’ll try to work out a plan that will satisfy you. We’ll clear away the obstacles for you so that your restaurant can enter the top 30,” Mars replied with a smile.

Chapter 328: Who is It?

Cyril was still playing with the same colorful snake as he sat on the leather sofa. He turned to Mars, and asked, “What’s the Catering Association’s response?”

“Board Member Stanley says he’s still verifying the events, and that he’ll notify us once a conclusion is reached,” Mars’s replied with his head bowed.

“Verification? What kind of verification is required? Looks like that Stanley is trying to extort us for more money again. Give him 10 dragon coins, and tell him to resolve this matter as quickly as possible.” Cyril pursed his lips with a dark expression, and said, “That Mamy Restaurant is a thorn in my side. It’s only been two days, and they’ve already got four dishes in the top 50, two of which are in the top 30. If things continue like this, there will be more and more people filing reports, which will be very annoying.”

“Yes.” Mars nodded. He then hesitated momentarily before continuing, “But, Young Master, what if they secured those rankings with actual skill? If we remove them from the rankings board, it could result in some negative repercussions.”

“Actual skill? Heh, how much money is that worth? Are you telling me that a mere restaurant can stand against our Chamber of Commerce?” Cyril pursed his lips with a disdainful expression. He tapped his finger on the snake’s head before grabbing it by the head, and commanded, “Prepare 100 dragon coins. If Stanley can’t resolve this issue, then give it to Warren. That old fart has been taking a lot of money from us these past few years; it’s becoming more and more difficult to satisfy him.”

“100 dragon coins? Should I consult with the president?” Mars didn’t immediately nod and agree as he usually did.

“Why would you consult the president over 100 dragon coins? It’s just an insignificant sum. The money we’ve used to bribe the Catering Association in the past few years is no less than 10,000 dragon coins, right?” Cyril looked at Mars with narrowed eyes, and said coldly, “You have to remember whom you’re serving. The president is already an old man; I will be the future president.”

Mars bowed his head, and replied respectfully, “Yes, Young Master.”

“How could this be... Does that mean the Chamber of Commerce has been fixing the Aden Square food competition for all these years? How can they do that?” Gloria was standing outside the door with a black silk hat on her head, and she took a couple of steps backward as she stared at the president’s chamber in disbelief.

She had come to find Jeffree as she had come up with a few ideas regarding what they had discussed over the dining table, and she wanted to tell him about those ideas in person.

However, she had just overheard that conversation between Mars and Cyril, and it had tipped her world over on its head.

Even though she didn’t like her sexist grandfather, she had to admit that Jeffree was truly a legendary man. He had started with nothing, but created an enormous estate for himself in Chaos City in a short few decades.

The Buffett Family’s banks were quite powerful, but the Chamber of Commerce was just as, if not more, powerful.

As such, there was reverence and respect for Jeffree in Gloria's heart. However, the conversation between Mars and Cyril had revealed the dark underbelly of the glorious Chamber of Commerce to her, and the stark contrast was quite a jarring blow to her.

Cyril suddenly turned toward the door, and exclaimed, "Who's there?"

A panicked expression appeared on Gloria's face, and she hurriedly picked up the hem of her dress before scurrying away.

Mars opened the door just in time to see Gloria disappear around the corner. A hint of surprise appeared in his eyes, but his expression remained unchanged.

Cyril put down the colorful snake in his hand, and asked, "Who was it?"

"Young Master, there's no one out there. Perhaps it's that fat cat coming to steal food again." Mars closed the door, and shook his head.

"I have to tell Mag about this. Mamy Restaurant's food is so delicious, and has such miraculous effects; it wouldn't be strange at all even if they could dominate the top five on the rankings. If the Chamber of Commerce removed them from the rankings board, then that would be way too unfair. This is not what the Chamber of Commerce should be about." Gloria shook her head, and looked back at the mighty Chamber of Commerce building before slowly clenching her fists. A determined expression appeared on her face, and she murmured to herself, "This is not what the Chamber of Commerce should be. If this is the direction that Cyril is going to take it, then let me pick up everything that Father has put down. Who says women can't do as good of a job as men?!"

...

Mag wasn't that surprised about his sweet and savory tofu pudding breaking into the top 50. His target was only for one dish to enter the top 30 as that would satisfy the mission's condition.

After a brief rest, Mag visited Mobai's new forge. It was about the same scale as the old forge, but the display hall up front was a little smaller, while the working area at the rear had been expanded. At the same time, a new smelting furnace had been added, as well as a larger anvil.

Lulu had stripped off his shirt, and was swinging a large iron hammer under Mobai's instructions. The red-hot piece of metal on the anvil was shrinking at a rate that was discernible to the naked eye, and a dull thump that caused his eardrums to tremor erupted with each and every hammer blow.

"Not bad. Your task today is to hammer this piece of metal into a thin sheet." Mobai nodded with satisfaction, and he also began to swing his hammer to strike a half-complete longsword laid out in front of him.

He'd had no intention to hire an apprentice, but Lulu won him over. He appeared to be a little dumb and clumsy, but he took his work very seriously, and was surprisingly quite clever with his hands. As such, Mobai was quite satisfied with his decision. There was a good chance that the cannon Mag had suggested to him was practically viable, but he would require a lot of time to craft a satisfactory prototype. If he could hire a helper in his forge, production would undoubtedly become a lot faster, thereby giving him time to work on the stability of his explosives.

“Boss Mobai, are you starting work already today?” Mag stood at the entrance, and was a little surprised as waves of heat surged toward him.

The fact that those dwarven craftsmen had rebuilt the forge in a day and night was already very shocking to him, and he was also quite surprised to find that Mobai and Lulu had already started working.

“Hey there, Mag. We have a few urgent orders, so there’s no reason not to get started on those.” Mobai put down his hammer, and smiled as he said, “Also, I didn’t ask them to excavate an underground tunnel this time. I’ll go to the outskirts of the city after I finish this batch, then do some experiments in a secluded area.”

“That sounds like a good idea.” Mobai nodded with a smile. He looked around at the forge with an expectant gaze. With Mobai’s skills, in conjunction with the magic flames of this world, it would be quite possible to refine steel to a satisfactory degree. When that time came, he could also discuss building a steam engine with him.

“Alright, then I’ll leave you two to it,” Mag said before leaving. He had actually visited to see if Mobai intended to continue his explosives experiments in the forge. As such, he was very relieved with the answer that Mobai had given him. At the very least, he wouldn’t have to be worried about getting blasted to death in his sleep.

The sun is really nice today. The autumn sun shone down upon him, making him feel languorous. He looked at the tofu pudding mission counter in his mind, which showed: 6/10. The highly anticipated wheel was about to arrive soon

Chapter 329: Add A Bit More?

That night, Amy had just taken a bath, and was sitting obediently while Mag dried her hair. She looked up with an expectant gaze, and asked, “Father, are we really going kite-flying tomorrow?”

“We sure are. We’re not open for business tomorrow, and you don’t have lessons, either, so I’ll take you kite-flying.” Mag nodded with a smile as he ran his fingers slowly through Amy’s soft hair, and only shut off the blow-dryer after making sure that her locks were completely dry.

“Yay! I love kites! I’m super excited!” Amy leaned back, and rolled over on the bed before getting to her feet and jumping up and down with excitement. However, she quickly stopped, and a concerned look appeared on her face as she asked, “But... we don’t have a kite. How are we going to fly a kite tomorrow?”

“Don’t you worry about that. When you wake up tomorrow morning, you’ll be able to see a kite. What kind of kite do you want?” Mag sat on the bed and stroked Amy’s head with a dotting smile.

“I want a... super, super, super big kite, and it has to be a purple bird, a super beautiful one.” Amy contemplated the question carefully before giving a response. Her smile widened a fraction as she stated each requirement, and it was as if she could already see a massive purple kite flying in the sky.

“Alright, then we’ll have a kite just like that tomorrow.” Mag nodded with a smile. She had quite a few requirements, but with the system’s help, satisfying them wouldn’t be a problem.

“Really? You’re the best, Father!” Amy planted an elated kiss on Mag’s cheek. She then continued to jump around on her bed, and hummed tunelessly to herself, “Big kite, flying high in the sky, big kite, my big kite...”

“Meow!~” Ugly Duckling also began to jump around, but the bed was too tall for it to reach, so it could only jump around at the foot of the bed.

Mag wore a wide smile on his face at the sight of his elated daughter, and he said internally, “System—”

“Not selling!” The system’s resolute voice sounded before he had even finished his sentence.

“...” Mag’s brows furrowed slightly. The system was growing more and more annoying.

“I haven’t even said anything yet, and you’re already refusing to sell? Why can’t you sell yourself?” Mag grumbled.

“Please watch yourself! The system sells things, but that’s different from selling oneself. From my studies, I have determined that the term ‘selling oneself’ has very negative connotations,” the system replied in a serious voice.

“Oh? So what were your findings?” Mag raised an eyebrow. The system was becoming more and more intelligent.

“From your expression and tone, the system can tell that you’re discriminating against females,” the system analyzed in a serious manner.

“Who said I’m discriminating against females? They’re earning money by selling their ‘resources’, and it’s a mutually consensual business model, so why would I discriminate against them? No matter what they do, it’s still better than those people who clearly have arms and legs, but still choose to go begging on the streets,” Mag also replied in a serious manner.

“That’s not the point. From your response, I can determine that you’re putting the system in the same category as those people,” the system argued.

“That’s just your opinion; I refuse to comment on that,” Mag responded with a calm expression before pursing his lips, and continuing, “Alright, that’s enough chit-chat. Tell me how much money it’ll take to buy a kite from you? Business has been booming the past couple of days, so I have a ton of money.”

The system fell silent.

“100 copper coins?”

Still no response...

“200?”

...

“300? That’s the most I’m willing to pay. At this price, I can get a high-quality custom-made kite.” Mag remained unperturbed.

“Could you add a bit more?” The system finally broke its silence.

Mag contemplated that momentarily before conceding. “310 copper coins.”

“The kites crafted by the system are all made with a super light yet rigid carbon fiber frames, with high-quality sandalwood line reels and super strong lines that can withstand 10th-tier gale-force winds. The kites are a must-have for holidays, and all of them custom-made, so you can state any conditions, and the system will design it until you are completely satisfied!” The system’s voice suddenly became quite vehement.

“So?” Mag asked with a smile.

“310 copper coins aren’t even enough to cover material costs. Don’t you want your kite to beat others from the starting line? Don’t you want your kite to fly far higher than all of the other kites in the square? Don’t you want to bask in the envious and admiring gazes from your daughter and countless other onlookers? If those things sound good to you, then for a limited time, we are slashing our prices—not to 998, not to 888, but a super low 598 for a supreme quality super kite!” The system’s voice became even more animated.

“Show me what you got first,” Mag said in a calm voice. In all honesty, he was a little tempted by the system’s advertising. In particular, when he heard the part about the admiring gaze from his daughter, he was struck by the impulsive urge to place an order right away.

“No problem!” the system responded. A series of kite images immediately appeared in Mag’s mind. There were ordinary kites as well as kites of all types of different shapes and styles, even humanoid ones including Nami and Boa Hancock from One Piece, Kallen from Code Geass...

“System, otakus wouldn’t go out to fly kites, so why are you showing me all this random crap?” Mag pursed his lips. He was finding it difficult to keep up with the system’s shenanigans.

“You’re an otaku, but you want to fly a kite, don’t you?” the system retorted.

“Hey, I’ve never been an otaku in this life nor my previous one, alright? Have you ever seen an otaku constantly on the hunt for delicious cuisine?” Mag asked in a disdainful voice.

“But on the ‘Settings’ tab of your Weibo account, you ticked the otaku option. From that, I can deduce that you identify with being an otaku in your heart,” the system retorted.

“I ticked that one for the laughs.” Mag didn’t even recall ticking that option himself, but that wasn’t important. He browsed through the entire catalogue, and still couldn’t find a kite that satisfied Amy’s conditions. Thus, he said, “System, make me a kite according to Amy’s conditions. Make it a badass one that can put all other kites to shame.”

“Ding! The system is designing your kite, the concept art will be ready in one minute!” The system’s voice sounded.

Mag was already used to the system’s super high efficiency. After all, how else would he have been able to farm in the Wind Forest?

After jumping around for a bit, Amy tired herself out, and fell asleep.

Mag picked her up, placed her on the bed, then placed Ugly Duckling beside her, and tucked them both in. There was still a smile lingering on Amy's face even during sleep, indicating that she was very much looking forward to flying a kite.

"Ding! Ten concept designs have been created; please pick one!" The system's voice sounded again.

"Holy f*ck! Isn't that a purple-striped griffin???" Mag's expression became quite peculiar after taking a glance.

Chapter 330: Shameless Bastard

The first concept design that appeared in Mag's mind was a golden purple-striped griffin. Furthermore, it was extremely familiar: it was the very same one as Mag Alex's steed back when he reigned supreme over the Norland Continent.

There were three vertical purple stripes on the griffin's golden lion head, making it appear extremely intimidating. There were also a few purple stripes on its powerful wings, perfectly complementing the golden hue and giving it a more regal air.

According to Mag Alex's memories, he had encountered the griffin back when he was only five. Back then, it was only a tiny little thing, and even after the two of them separated for several years, the purple-striped griffin was still able to recognize him. He was 15 years old during their second encounter, and the griffin was willing to become his steed.

It was the final purple-striped griffin on the continent, and it was a super powerful 9th-tier magic beast. In the countless battles of Mag Alex that had been recorded in the history books, the purple-striped griffin was a constant feature.

He sighed internally with emotion at the sight of that kite. After inheriting Mag Alex's memories, he had also inherited some of his emotions, and he recalled that the purple-striped griffin had been severely wounded during the battle three years ago. He wondered if it had managed to escape from those two 9th-tier magic casters.

"I'll go with the third one: the purple phoenix." Mag's eyes lingered on the purple-striped griffin for a long time. His impulses told him to choose it, but his logic won the battle in the end, and he chose the beautiful purple phoenix.

The purple-striped griffin was far too sensitive a symbol. It would definitely attract attention from many people, and even though his appearance had already been altered significantly, it would still be very dangerous if someone were to draw a connection between him and Mag Alex as Amy was a fatal chink in his armor.

Of course, Mag also picked the purple phoenix as he felt that Amy would like it the best. It had a long and colorful three-pronged tail, so it would look very beautiful in flight.

"Ding! 598 copper coins have been successfully deducted, now crafting the kite. Delivery can take place in five minutes. Please specify the location and time for delivery!" The system's voice sounded.

“Just deliver it in five minutes onto the counter downstairs. I’ll have a look at it when I get up tomorrow.” Mag changed into some loose-fitting clothes from his wardrobe, and set off to do his hourly pre-bedtime sword training. During the past few days, his swordsmanship had gradually improved.

He had also been experimenting during cooking, and that had allowed him to chop up ingredients more quickly as well as helped devise a style of swordsmanship that was unique to himself.

Of course, that was simply built on making very minor adjustments to the Thirteen Swordplay Forms. The good thing was that he was able to constantly drill those motions during his cooking, and integrating all that would help him when performing other sword techniques as well.

In any case, all he was doing at the moment was to recover and grow accustomed to his body.

“Father, let’s go fly our kite!”

Mag was roused the following morning, and he was immediately greeted by Amy’s beaming face when he opened his bleary eyes. His displeasure with being woken up abruptly disappeared at the sight of her adorable face, and he smoothed down her hair with a smile as he replied, “Sure, I’ll cook some breakfast, and then we can go fly our kite.”

“Yay!” Amy rubbed her head against Mag’s palm, and nodded obediently. She then looked at Mag with a curious expression, and asked, “But Father, where is our kite? Did you really make a super beautiful kite for me?”

“Of course, I’ve already put it downstairs. You’ll see it when you go down there.” Mag nodded, and sat up on his bed. He looked at his alarm clock, only to find that it was almost 8am. It had been a rare sleep-in for him.

“Then let’s go downstairs!” Amy was overjoyed as she tried to tug Mag out of bed.

“Don’t be in such a hurry. Let’s get you looking nice and pretty first.” Mag smiled as he got out of bed. He dressed her in a pure yet refreshing purple dress with a floral pattern, and braided a pair of intricate little ponytails for her. He then tied up the braids with a pair of purple floral hair ties, and a gorgeous little girl appeared before him.

“I’m going to see the kite Father made for me now.” Amy hurried downstairs with Ugly Duckling in her arms, her eyes filled with anticipation.

She should like it, right? Mag also slowly descended on the staircase, and a hint of nervousness welled up in his heart.

After going downstairs, Amy fell completely silent. Mag thought that she was displeased with the kite, and he immediately quickened his footsteps. It would only take the system five minutes to make another one anyway, so if Amy didn’t like it, he could just get another.

However, after arriving downstairs, he was greeted by the sight of Amy staring up at the purple phoenix kite with Ugly Duckling in her arms. Her mouth was open, and her bright blue eyes were wide with astonishment as if she were looking at something incredible.

Mag strode over to her, and patted her on the head before asking, “Do you like it?”

“Yes, I love it!” Amy nodded vehemently. She looked up at Mag with elation, and said, “Father is so awesome! This kite is more beautiful than any other kite I’ve ever seen. The other kids will be very envious of me.”

“Of course, your father can do everything.” Mag nodded with a content smile at the sight of Amy’s beaming little face.

“Shameless bastard...” A string of words hovered in Mag’s mind, but he ignored it.

“But what is this bird? It’s so beautiful. It’s got purple feathers and a long rainbow tail.” Amy was very curious as she caressed its long tail. Ugly Duckling also emulated her by extending a curious paw toward the kite.

“This is a phoenix. It’s a mythological beast that most likely doesn’t exist in this world,” Mag explained with a smile. According to his memories, there were similar magic beasts in this world, but none were exactly like the phoenix.

“A phoenix? A purple phoenix; it’s so beautiful. If only I could keep one as a pet. That way, I would be able to fly in the sky on its back.” Amy’s eyes were glittering as she envisioned riding a phoenix steed.

“Meow~” Ugly Duckling looked up at Amy with an urgent expression, and waved its little paws in the air as if to emulate flight, reminding Amy of its existence.

“Ugly Duckling, you’re too scared to even get onto the counter; you wouldn’t dare to fly in the sky. Besides, you don’t have any wings, so there’s no way that you can take flight.” Amy took a glance at Ugly Duckling, and shook her head with a hint of disdain.

Ugly Duckling looked at the counter, and then down at the ground before burying its head into Amy’s chest cowardly. It was too high up, so it was feeling a little scared.