

The Mighty 1031

Chapter 1031: Father and Son The banquet was filled with toasts and merry laughter, creating a convivial atmosphere.

Liszt sat with Duke Pierrot, surrounded by Li Weiliam Tulip, Dimaria Yuhua Stone, Emily, and other high-ranking officials of the Flame Kingdom.

“I made a promise to my followers that we would establish our nation within three years, and now we’re in the second year. The year 156 of the Sapphire Calendar is about to end, and by the beginning of year 158 of the Sapphire Calendar, the Flame Kingdom will officially declare its establishment. So, for this next year and a half, you need to cultivate on Flame Island.”

“I understand this, Your Majesty. Which city will the Grey Iron Family reside in to help build?” Pierrot asked.

“Go build a new city, located in the middle of Flame Island by the sea on fertile lands. That area of the sea has many shallows, making it an ideal place for the development of aquaculture.”

“Does Your Majesty intend to farm... in the sea?” Pierrot was puzzled.

Liszt smiled enigmatically, “Duke Pierrot, it seems you are still not fully aware of the Flame Kingdom. It is a land blessed by the glory of knights, even the surrounding Shell Sea is under the knights’ glory. I have seven mermaid followers and a large number of Yu Chou serfs.”

“Mermaids?” Pierrot was astounded.

Seeing Pierrot’s expression, Li Weiliam, who was beside them tasting wine, couldn’t help but feel very pleased. He remembered having a similar expression when he first heard the news of Liszt becoming a Sky Knight, Dragon Riding, or an Archmage.

However, upon further thought,

he suddenly became indignant—He enjoyed seeing Pierrot’s expression, but did Liszt at that time also take pleasure in his reaction?

Glancing over at Liszt, who was boasting to Pierrot about how the mermaids followed him, Li Weiliam shook his head in denial, comforting himself that perhaps he was overthinking. After all, that was his own son; why would he entertain the thought of enjoying his father’s blunders?

After consoling himself, Li Weiliam quickly adjusted his mentality and began once again to take pleasure in observing Duke Pierrot’s and the other nobles’ surprised expressions at the banquet.

“Can there really be mermaids that exist, ones that once ruled the seas and lived amicably with humans? To think that they all accepted Your Majesty’s ennoblement, becoming marquises of the sea, is simply astonishing!”

“I really want to go to the seaside right now to see the mermaids!”

“And there’s even a Yu Chou race, what an economical labor force... Your Majesty truly is the born ruler of the sky, land, and sea!”

“This land is indeed full of legends; Your Majesty is a legend destined to amaze the Legendary Continent, and Princess Emily is an inconceivable legend as well!”

The flattery was unceasing.

At this time, a noble from the former Grey Iron Duchy suddenly asked curiously, “Does Princess Emily not have a surname?”

Surnames.

They are a symbol of civilization, and all nobles have their own surnames—the emperors of empires being the exception, as the surnames no longer match the splendor of an emperor.

In many countries, even serfs have their surnames, like in the Sapphire Duchy.

However, it was highly unreasonable for a noble, especially a Nobles, to lack a surname; hence, the Nobles was curious enough to inquire.

Emily's face was still youthful and tender, for she was only fifteen years old, but long-term hardening had already matured her, and she replied lightly, "Emily is a gun and a shield in His Majesty's hands, and she will follow behind Your Majesty for life; what does it matter whether she has a surname or not?"

The topic should have ended there, but this Nobles was somewhat stubborn and asked again, "Does Your Highness really not intend to establish a family?"

"Why should I establish a family? The glory and legacy of nobility, in Emily's view, are no match for the brilliance of Your Majesty's radiance," Emily said earnestly. "Loyalty to Your Majesty is Emily's greatest desire and she will strive for it all her life. You will understand later how fortunate it is to follow Your Majesty!"

Emily's words sounded somewhat blatantly sycophantic, which made Liszt a little embarrassed.

However, he understood that Emily truly thought so, and the more he understood, the more embarrassed he felt. Yet, beyond this embarrassment, he felt an indescribable exhilaration—this was exactly why he liked to cultivate young followers.

"Ahem."

On the surface, he still had to play it down, showing modesty, "Emily is my most outstanding follower and also my most gratifying student... The Flame Kingdom has risen from nothing, and many knights climbed up from the lowest ranks, be they serfs or Nobles, there are channels for advancement here, seen everywhere."

He lifted his wine glass, toasting, "Many people have been saying lately, it's my glory that has blessed the Flame Kingdom with vigorous vitality. And I hope, whether it's my glory or the knights' glory, that it will grace everyone standing on this land."

Everyone raised their glasses in unison, and Goltai, responsible for adjusting the mood, took the opportunity to shout, "A toast to His Majesty's glory!"

“A toast to His Majesty’s glory!”

“A toast to His Majesty’s glory!”

“...”

Whether willingly or out of necessity, everyone followed Goltai’s lead and began chanting the slogan. Liszt wanted to squint and smile, growing ever more satisfied with Goltai. He drained the grape wine from his cup in one gulp, then put down the glass, signaling everyone to settle down.

He made a gesture much beloved by triumphant leaders—a pointed index finger raised and accompanied by a slight shake.

“It’s destiny that has brought us together here; no one needs to be anxious. Sapphire Calendar Year 158 is the Flame Era First Year, and the Flame Kingdom stands with you. Lands, population, resources, Elves, status, power—whatever you desire, I can provide!”

He paused, his voice growing more impassioned, “And now, all you need to do is to offer me your loyalty, your courage, your integrity!”

Again, Goltai.

Always stepping up at just the right moment, “Your Majesty, Goltai Mast pledges to you all my loyalty, courage, and integrity!”

And thus the Nobles who were a beat too slow also stood up one by one, shouting their pledges to offer loyalty, courage, and integrity. The great Nobles like Emily, Pierrot, and Dimaria did the same. Only when Li Weiliam was about to stand up, Liszt pulled him back.

“Father, all you need to do is take pride in your son.”

Li Weiliam was greatly touched, “Of course, I take pride in you, Liszt Flame, my son. The day you were born, the forests of Coral Island were all calling your name... I have watched with pride as you grew up day by day, becoming the embodiment of justice.”

Liszt replied with a smile, “I understand, Father. When I am crowned king, I will rule this nation with wisdom and strength, and I will use my own formidable power with caution. I will inspire the hearts of the people, lead the knights to a true victory.”

Chapter 1032: Alchemy Father and son exchanged a knowing smile, everything understood without a word.

The banquet concluded with all guests and the host thoroughly enjoying themselves.

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The next day.

Liszt had Duke Pierrot join the Development Committee as the third-ranking deputy chairperson and left the rest of the duties to his father. Previously, he had found it hard to let go of power, enjoying the authority that came with his role. However, after getting used to it for a while, the appeal of being entangled in mundane affairs waned.

Fortunately, the identity he assumed upon arriving in this world came with a few blood relatives, especially his father, Li Weiliam, whom he could entrust with responsibilities.

Handing off the reins was quite satisfying.

After discerning the hope for immortality, Liszt’s ambition to establish a family legacy had significantly diminished. Even without mastering the technology of the Dragon Domain LandLord, the acquisition of the Phoenix Incarnation had granted him a lifespan of at least several hundred years.

A kingdom had been established within just a few years.

It was unimaginable what realm it would reach after several hundred years.

“Now I need to apply myself a bit more, collaborate with Ach to understand the cultivation system of the Bastion Knight, and once I become a Bastion Knight, surpassing the realm of a Dragon Knight, I’ll be free to roam the entire Legendary Continent... At least from what Lerald·Truth has told me, the Kushan Imperial doesn’t have forces stronger than a Dragon Knight.”

If the Kushan Imperial lacked Bastion Knights, then it seemed quite unlikely that the Neverfall Empire and the Blue Dragon Empire, both rivals of the Kushan Imperial, would have them either.

Otherwise, their threefold balance of power would have been broken long ago.

However, unraveling the cultivation system of the Bastion Knight was indeed not an easy task. Ach had been working in the Mage Tower for a long time and was still unable to analyze the nature of the “Barrier.”

“Ach,” Liszt consoled, “don’t worry. Observing the Dragon of the Magic Web is a last resort. If we startle the Dragon of the Magic Web, the consequences are hard to imagine. We should only decide to do that if we’re left with no other options... Why not put aside the research on the Barrier for now and go out and enjoy the scenery?”

“Ach isn’t tired at all, I go riding on the beach with Charley every evening.”

“Then consider switching research work to find some inspiration.”

“Mm-hmm, Ach has a lot of research projects on hand, Jade Dragon Leg-Misty Dragon Spirit Fruit, Golden Apple Tree-Bloodline Fruit, Obsidian Ring-Equivalent Alchemy... Recently, Ach has been wanting to study alchemy, and the related data on Equivalent Alchemy has been assigned to Lerald·Truth so he can examine the exchange values among all metals.”

This particular Archmage, who was buried in compiling the “Great Encyclopedia” and summarizing his life’s research into “Lerald·Truth’s Lifetime Research Topics” had his expertise acknowledged by Ach after contributing “Lerald’s Topics” to her. Therefore, she allowed him to participate in some experiments.

For some detailed and tedious data-intensive research that did not require high levels of secrecy, she delegated it to Lerald, allowing him to lead other Magicians in their studies.

Ach now acted as the head of a laboratory, with the likes of Lerald serving as middle managers, regular Magicians as research dogs, and the Grand Magicians as the lead dogs among them. Clearly delineated levels and explicit division of labor provided for both intellectual and manual contributions.

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By October, the research into alchemy had made rapid breakthroughs.

Referencing the abilities of the Obsidian Ring, under Ach's supervision, the laboratory set up a brand-new Alchemy Magic Circle and successfully transmuted one ton of iron into nearly one jin of Mithril, at a ratio of about 2350 to 1.

"In terms of equivalent exchange, the ratio is 2350 to 1. If we set up a Magic Array to replace the effects of the Obsidian Ring and take into account the labor consumption of magicians, the equivalent ratio might need to be increased to around 2470 to 1," Lerald calculated in his notebook, while drafting out the equivalence chart.

Liszt's eyebrows twitched, "Even if the equivalent value is 2500 to 1, it still belongs to a highly profitable industry. Now that our territory no longer lacks iron, we can definitely transmute part of the iron into Mithril!"

Mithril plays a very important role in knight equipment, especially in predatory wars like the Pioneer Mandate, where lightweight Mithril Armor can make knights swift as the wind.

To rob and then flee has always been the most adept skill of the knights at sea.

"Your Majesty, the equivalent ratio of iron to Mithril is not the most economical. The most economical is from copper to Fine Gold, and after calculating the consumption, the equivalent ratio can reach 2310 to 1."

The smaller the ratio, the larger the amount of common metal that can be transmuted into Magic Metal.

“This also has potential. The importance of Fine Gold is self-evident, and we’re not short of bronze ore; we must vigorously develop this alchemy!” Liszt immediately decided. Both Mithril and Fine Gold are to be dealt with—as for Mountain Copper, there’s no need. Mountain Copper Dragon Mata lies in the Flame King City and can produce Mountain Copper at any moment.

He then asked, “What are the equivalent ratios of common metals to gold and silver?”

Gold and silver are the common currencies of the Legendary Continent. If the equivalent ratios are favorable, a large amount of gold and silver can be transmuted, ensuring that the Flame Kingdom will never be short on money again.

“The equivalent ratio of iron to gold is 1850 to 1, iron to silver is 1430 to 1, copper to gold is 1260 to 1, copper to silver is 870 to 1...”

“The equivalent ratio of silver to that of gold isn’t much different, but gold is far more valuable than silver. It’s not worthwhile to exchange iron and copper for silver. The exchange for gold, however, is decent, but the transmutation process is tedious, and there’s not much profit to be had. It’s more economical to exchange iron and copper for Magic Metals.”

Liszt briefly did the math and figured out the profit.

One Gold Coin is equal to 100 silver coins, which is equal to 10,000 copper coins.

Considering the gold content and other factors, the value of gold to copper is roughly at a ratio of 1 to 2500, while the transmutation effect is at 1 to 1260. The effect of alchemy is approximately turning one Gold Coin into two Gold Coins, which is not as quick as doing business and thus not worth it.

In terms of silver, the exchange ratio is even more exaggerated. Not only would you not profit, but you would also incur a serious loss.

So, in conclusion, it’s still most profitable to transmute iron, copper, and other metals into Magic Metals—a sure way to earn a hefty sum. No wonder alchemy is the favorite subject of all magicians. Almost every magician who achieves some success will choose to master alchemy.

With alchemy, they would never be short on money, allowing them to perform more experiments and explore more truths.

“Alchemy shall be the top secret of the Flame Kingdom. Apart from Ach, the technology of the Alchemy Magic Circle shall only be held by magicians Lerald, Chris, and Kenley. If anyone leaks it, I will hold you responsible,” Liszt solemnly announced after viewing the alchemy results.

Setting the Alchemy Magic Circle as an official technology and prohibiting private use undoubtedly discouraged the three magicians’ enthusiasm.

Therefore, to motivate them to oversee the operation of the Alchemy Magic Circle, he announced, “The work on the Alchemy Magic Circle needs to begin immediately. Whoever among you runs the operation of the Alchemy Magic Circle can take a tenth of the net profits for their private magic experimentation and research.”

With that said.

Chris was fine—she rarely engaged in magic research, preferring administration, and had no use for the money. Lerald and Kenley, on the other hand, lit up; they were true believers in the Truth. With money, they could carry out the experiments they desired without applying for funds from the Magic Guild.

“Your Majesty, rest assured, I would be quite willing to oversee the Alchemy Magic Circle whenever I have the time.”

Chapter 1033: Novel Template

“The reliance on magic has increased more and more, and I can’t tell if this situation is good or bad, with the Magic Web shrinking and the Dragon of the Magic Web sleeping, I always feel that things are not so simple... The reform of magicians needs to be expedited, and the profession of magician should be downplayed as much as possible.”

In the matter of preventing the restoration of magicians, Li Si Te and all the nobles shared the same mentality—they could rely on magicians to create equipment but would never allow them to influence the knight system.

Perhaps in the heart of knights, the ancient Moon Empire really represented the pinnacle of civilization, and people tried to attribute every achievement to it. However, when it concerned themselves, they would never allow a second Moon Empire to emerge. That was a taboo.

The great ones could be enshrined in temples.

Yet they must not truly exist in reality. The slightest hint of emergence had to be quashed!

The introduction of the Alchemy Magic Circle, following the Teleportation Magic Array, was the second piece of magic high technology mastered by the Flame Kingdom. Li Si Te both loved and was wary of this, classifying it as a top-secret national issue, and not allowing even the slightest leak—without an Archmage to guide them, the outside world could not replicate this technology.

“Brother, when Ach studies the alchemy techniques thoroughly, he always gets new inspiration for barriers. He’s going back to ponder this issue now.”

Having thrown the research topic of alchemy out of his hands, Ach was busy pondering barriers again.

“Alas, it’s clearly my cultivation system, and yet it all depends on Ach’s research... It’s hard to imagine how many detours I would have had to take along the way to develop to today’s heights if I hadn’t met Ach,” Li Si Te silently lamented, but there was nothing he could do.

Research was not his forte, and without the favor of the Power of Destiny, he was really just an ordinary person.

If he truly had outstanding talent and remarkable aptitude, he would have been thriving on Earth, and would not have died an overworked death only to transmigrate. Thus, he was very self-aware; he could brag and pretend normally, but at crucial times, he had to be clear about his own strengths and weaknesses.

Play to your strengths and avoid your weaknesses.

Ach was a research-oriented talent, responsible for solving technical problems; he was combat-oriented, in charge of charging into battle and earning merits; they complemented each other.

“My lord, Marquis Dimaria is requesting to report on his duties,” Butler Carter said softly, interrupting Li Si Te who was in deep thought in front of the piano.

“Tell him to wait in the study.”

“Yes, my lord.”

“Oh, and Mr. Carter, tell Mrs. Morson that she can stop the modifications to the Half Slope milk tea, after tasting so many new flavors, I still prefer the original taste from the beginning.”

“As you wish, my lord.” Carter bowed slightly and left the piano room.

Li Si Te’s fingers gently brushed the piano, but he had no interest in playing. It had been a long time since he had touched the piano; there were too many dragons and elves at home, leaving him stretched too thin. Specialization comes from diligence and idleness from playfulness; his piano-playing skills had now become quite rusty, no longer retaining the grace of the Piano King.

But the few piano pieces he had created were becoming increasingly widespread. Not only the noble young ladies of the Flame Kingdom often played pieces such as “For Alice,” “Castle in the Sky,” and “The Swan of Saint-Saens,” fantasizing about Li Si Te like lovelorn young girls.

In the northeastern corner of the Legendary Continent, the noble ladies and young misses of the three great kingdoms also imagined different images of Li Si Te.

Some noble young ladies thought Li Si Te was a romantic and passionate man; otherwise, how could he create such delicate and tender pieces of music?

Some matrons thought Li Si Te was a mighty and powerful man, with impressive stamina, since only such a figure deserved to be a Dragon Knight who had founded the great legacy of the Flame Kingdom.

Others imagined Li Si Te as a beast of slaughter, having killed two Dragon Knights, to say nothing of how many ordinary knights had died at his hands; how could such a person not be a beast... And yet, in the still of the night, the young ladies would often indulge in fanciful dreams of a beauty and the beast.

In the minds of most knights, Li Si Te represented a legend; a knight of an era who could become an idol to all.

Now, almost every Knight's Novel in the three great kingdoms would use Li Si Te as a model for the protagonist, and if a novel's hero rode only one dragon, they would be criticized to the point of doubting their life choices. In the past, encountering an elf was a thrilling point in a novel, but now, meeting a dragon had become the exhilarating moment.

Even clever novelists, relying on pure fabrication, had written many books like "The Legendary Adventures of Liszt Flame," "A Detailed Explanation of Liszt Flame's Dragon Riding," "The Unspeakable Stories of Liszt Flame and Acherlodes Truth," and "The Early Life of Liszt Flame."

These books all sold out, with one edition being reprinted after another.

Almost every young knight carried a book about Liszt, constantly inspiring themselves to become the next Liszt Flame.

Liszt's glory had transcended national borders, and the young knights of the Eagle Kingdom worshipped him just the same.

This was indeed touching.

So when he received Dimaria Yuhua Stone in his study, one could see on the bookshelves behind him, a series of knight novels with the words "Liszt Flame"—which were quite entertaining to read during dull moments, especially some of the more risqué scenes.

"Your Majesty, this year's Pioneer Mandate has been fully prepared. The Knight Order of the Sapphire Duchy is assembled, presided over by the Marquis of Golden Island, Roderick Gold Wheat Sheaf, with the Duke Sapphire himself leading the Sapphire Dragon."

“And domestically?”

“It has been determined that I will serve as the supreme commander, with Count Geoffrey Begonia and Count Paris as deputy commanders, assembling ten thousand Earth Knights. This includes one Sky Knight of the Completion Level, eight Sky Knights of the Sword Saint Level, and twenty-one Sky Knights of the common level.”

“Have the specific departure time and location of the attack been decided?”

“The departure is set for October 3rd. There are two options for the attack location: Sardine Bay along the northern coastline of the Eagle Kingdom or Dense Corridor along the southern coastline. The final decision will be made when we set sail from Bull Hoof City on Iron Hoof Island.” This was to prevent intelligence leaks and preemptive defenses by the Eagle Kingdom.

The Sapphire Duchy always decided the precise attack location after setting sail for the Pioneer Mandate.

Liszt nodded, “Proceed as planned, I will secretly protect the Knight Order from Dragon Knight attacks with Marquis Emily.”

“Then I shall go and oversee the Pioneer Mandate.”

“Go ahead.”

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As the Flame Kingdom was assembling its Knight Order, the vast coastlines of the Eagle Kingdom were swept by autumn winds and falling leaves, with all the nobles starting to feel the tension.

“It’s the season for the Sapphire Fly’s Pioneer Mandate again,” a noble sighed suddenly at a banquet, “One wonders which egg the Sapphire Fly will bite this year.”

“Given the appetite of last year’s Sapphire Fly, if it really comes here, I’m afraid all of us present will suffer.”

“What’s there to fear? If the Sapphire Fly comes, we just leave the castle and hide in the countryside... Let them plunder the castle if they want, I don’t make my living from farming anyway.”

“Hmph, as if we didn’t know that the Wild Dog Mercenary Group is your business. They plundered a town in my territory last time without following rules, capturing serfs—at which we haven’t settled the score!”

“Do you have evidence that it was the Wild Dog Mercenary Group who looted?”

“Of course, I have rats infiltrating the Wild Dog Mercenary Group!”

“Then you should interrogate this rat to see if they are worthy.”

“Enough, stop arguing. We should think about how to get through this year’s Pioneer Mandate. Unlike before, that Legendary Dragon Knight is now the true master behind the Mandate.”

Mention of the Legendary Dragon Knight suddenly quieted the nobles present.

After a long silence, a slightly drunk noble broke the quiet atmosphere: “If the Pioneer Mandate comes to us this year, we might as well not resist and just submit to the Flame Kingdom! Those smugglers always preach about the welfare and treatment in the Flame Kingdom, right? If we go there, we might even earn a share of glory!”

Chapter 1034: Warmth Under Cruelty

War is cruel, yet this year’s Pioneer Mandate War seemed unnaturally smooth.

When the Knight Order attacked the Dense Corridor, most of the Eagle Kingdom’s landlords either preemptively shut their castle gates and hid in the countryside or opened their gates to welcome the royal troops, switching sides to join the invaders.

Some landlords had even packed up all the resources in their castles, just waiting for the Knight Order to arrive before boarding ships bound for the Flame Kingdom. Some

landlords, unwilling to abandon too much property, had even arranged for their serfs to be taken away by the Knight Squad.

There weren't many true battles requiring a charge.

Li Si Te hid at the material border, witnessing such scenes, he couldn't help but reflect, "Looking at the Eagle Kingdom like this, they've basically given up on the coastal hinterlands; these landlords have given up on themselves... Since the Eagle Kingdom is so generous, I'll have the knights step it up a bit, plunder through the Dense Corridor, then make a trip to Aden Bay."

Adonis Moonlight Silver and his knights were unable to defend this land or protect their own subjects, resulting in Mercenary Corps rampaging and serfs being sold at will, with civilians living lives of constant uncertainty.

Li Si Te would replace him, moving all the civilians here to Flame Island.

There on Flame Island, they could start anew, no longer fearing mercenaries nor worrying about their livelihoods being insecure—as a landlord, Li Si Te might not uphold noble ideals such as universal equality or self-governance, but he always adhered to one principle.

That was to ensure his subjects were well-fed, clothed, and not arbitrarily slain.

Even the subjects of his followers were under his protection, ensuring their basic safety.

This was one of his bottom lines, the goodness he steadfastly honored in his heart.

"Emily, what do you think of this Pioneer Mandate?" He found Emily, the Light Green Gemstone Dragon Knight, resting on a hilltop. Li Si Te rode Bard down to her and asked.

"Your Majesty."

Emily saluted and then responded, "There's almost no resistance, it's light shining by Your Majesty's glory. All the landlords of the Dense Corridor could be plundered and taken

away. There is no need to be gentle like it was initially with the Duchy of Sapphire for the sake of Flame Kingdom's development."

"If we plunder too harshly, this fertile land may lack nobles to cultivate it."

"The Eagle Kingdom has four prosperous coastlines: Sardine Bay, Yellow Mud Coast, Roaring River Mouth, Dense Corridor; plundering each once a year means we could plunder for four years. After four years, the Flame Kingdom will be strong enough, having cultivated its land, and completely self-sufficient."

"You make a valid point, but this year I plan to thoroughly plunder both the Dense Corridor and Sardine Bay," Li Si Te always hated slow construction, always wanting to bite off more than he could chew.

"Plundering two locations in one year could support two years, and together with other coastal landlord territories, sustaining three Pioneer Mandates shouldn't be a problem. Even if the coastal areas of the Eagle Kingdom are unassailable by then, with Lord Acherlroides in control of the Teleportation Magic Array, we could plunder from the heartland of the Eagle Kingdom."

Directly opening a teleportation array deep into the Eagle Kingdom was an idea Li Si Te hadn't considered before: "The construction cost of a teleportation array is too great."

"I've heard that Lord Acherlroides is improving the teleportation array. With his great genius and magical prowess, it should take three years to build a standard array, he might even design a magic gate that can be temporarily opened," Emily held Acherlroides in high respect.

And believed he was nearly omnipotent.

"Perhaps."

Li Si Te clasped his hands behind his back, and watched the migration of the knight squad from afar, his voice calm yet firm: "I don't enjoy war, even though I am always its victor."

Emily looked at his silhouette, her eyes sparkling.

Formless Dragon Bard appeared out of nowhere with a bundle of smoked grass, chewing leisurely; Light Green Gem Dragon Ethan disdainfully twisted its dragon head.

“Mama, where are we going?” On a simple wooden cart, a young boy of only a few years old huddled tightly against his mother and asked softly.

His mother, sitting at the edge of the cart, gripped the handrail tightly, guarding herself and her son, “We are going to a faraway place, Lord Landlord will lead us to a better place to live.”

The little boy did not understand what a better place meant, but he did not continue to ask questions. Instead, he peeked out through a small gap beneath his mother’s arm, looking outside the cart.

It was a miles-long caravan of carts.

Traveling on the dirt road, one could see groups of knights patrolling around the caravan, preventing it from being attacked by mercenary groups along the way.

Several brash mercenary groups had already attempted to raid the caravan and kidnap the serfs during the journey.

Especially when the caravan stopped to light fires and cook meals, one could always see the knight squad nervously searching every patch of the forest for possibly lurking mercenaries.

The little boy secretly watched the knights riding on their tall horses; whenever a knight’s gaze swept toward the cart, he immediately buried his head into his mother’s bosom. After waiting a while, he would cautiously raise his head again and steal glances at the knights from the gap. Their silver-white armors and the gleaming knight’s spears were deeply imprinted in his young mind.

And left him with a rudimentary impression—knights, protect him and his mother.

After a month-long trek, the caravan finally reached the seaside, where the little boy and his mother saw a multitude of ships docked at the harbor.

These were ships like they had never seen before, each one looking like a floating castle on the sea.

Flying high on the ship's masts were black flags, embroidered with a burning flame forming a giant Fire Dragon pattern—Fire Dragon merchant ships, Flame Kingdom's brand-new cargo ships with a blend of square and fore-and-aft sails, characterized by one word, big!

To transport these knights and serfs, Liszt had no choice but to expose the fleet of huge ships that Flame Kingdom had feverishly built over the years.

In addition to the Fire Dragon merchant ships.

There were also slightly slender ships, with masts that also carried black flags. However, the embroidery on these flags was no longer a burning flame but white metal shards forming a giant Iron Dragon pattern—Iron Dragon warships, three-masted ships paralleling the Fire Dragon cargo ships, primarily for transporting knights on expeditions, with exceptional maneuverability.

By the seaside.

Under the organization of the knights, the serfs lined up to board one Fire Dragon merchant ship after another. Upon boarding, sailors distributed a small pill to each serf—seasickness pills.

This was a new medicine developed by the Magic Guild.

Not just seasickness pills, but other medicines as well, which Liszt generously funded the research for. These were drugs the knight class hardly needed, but which the civilian class heavily depended on. Another landlord would never invest in medicine for treating serfs' illnesses, but Liszt persisted.

"Mama, where are we going?" The little boy asked his mother again quietly, arriving at the seaside and boarding the big ship, everything piqued his curiosity yet frightened him.

Before his mother could answer, a young man who looked like a magician or a noble walked by.

Smiling, the young man spoke in Wind Language, “Little guy, the place we are heading to is called the Flame Kingdom. Starting today, you and your mother will become the subjects of the great King Liszt Flame... In that place, there are no wars, no harm, and as long as you work hard, you will have enough to eat.”

After saying that,

The young man loudly addressed the curious serfs around him, “I am Donnie Truth, the healing arcanist on this ship. If you feel unwell, I will help you heal to ensure everyone arrives healthy in the Flame Kingdom.”

Chapter 1035: A Letter from His Majesty the King The current maritime technology was no longer the same as when Liszt first arrived in this world. With his rise to wealth, he substantially developed shipbuilding technology, and under the guidance of the creative magician Inuit Truth, hybrid sailboats had successfully replaced square-rigged sailboats.

Therefore, what originally required a seven to eight-day voyage to reach Mind Island, now only took five days to safely arrive.

With specially developed seasickness pills and accompanying Healing Arcanists—who were magicians specializing in medical care—hardly any of the migrating serfs lost their lives due to the voyage.

They had experienced a novel sea journey.

From afar, they could see the Fortress of the Mind towering on Mind Island, a tall castle dominated by white colors, with the Flame Banner fluttering in the wind.

The castle had not many distinguishing features; because Mind Island was very small, the castle appeared even taller and slender, resembling a Mage Tower. Of course, it indeed also served the purpose of a tower—this Fortress of the Mind was also the sole lighthouse of Mind Island, with its crystal lamps atop the tower brightly shining day and night.

It guided all ships.

“All hands, line up! Women and children debark first, follow the lead knight, and don’t get separated! Mind Island is strictly guarded; anyone wandering will be shot on sight by patrol members!” A knight aboard shouted loudly, directing a slowly and orderly disembarkation of thousands aboard the ship.

“You snagged my bag!”

“My shoe fell off.”

“Don’t push me.”

“What a bustling place.”

“Is this where we’re going to live?”

“It’s the Magic Gate, over there is the Magic Gate, I heard the captain say, Mind Island Magic Gate!”

“I’ve also heard, through the Magic Gate is the Flame Kingdom, a great kingdom with no hunger or mercenaries.”

The little boy clutched his mother’s hand tightly, squeezed in a nearly body-to-body queue, amid the noisy chatter of serfs and the knights’ loud reprimands. After navigating through the long line, they arrived in front of the Magic Gate of Mind Island, where the black silhouette slowly rotated with a dark blue vortex.

It resembled a giant beast choosing its prey.

Many groups could be seen lining up to enter the maw of the beast, then disappearing.

“I will not go in, I will not go in...” Even the cries of serfs, too terrified to enter the Magic Gate but still being dragged in by knights, could be heard.

Liszt had hoped the knights would treat the serfs kindly, but it was impossible for the knights to be gentle with them; rudeness was the norm.

“Mom, I’m scared.” The little boy shook his mother’s hand.

“Don’t be scared, that’s the Magic Gate.”

“What is the Magic Gate?”

“It’s just the Magic Gate, magical magic. Hold on to my hand tightly and don’t let go, when we walk through, we will be at our new home.” The mother didn’t know what the Magic Gate was either, although the knights had briefed them on the ship, but the serfs’ limited understanding couldn’t grasp what crossing space meant.

Of course, they didn’t need to know the specific principles; knowing it was magic was sufficient—ordinary people always held magic in awe, believing it to be all-powerful.

As the line reached the Magic Gate, they could hear a knight continuously reading out notices.

This included instructions on crossing the Magic Gate, prohibitions in the Flame Kingdom, and more. However, facing the mysterious and terrifying Magic Gate, very few serfs listened attentively, some eager, some trepidatious, either stepping forward or being shoved into the giant beast-like dark blue vortex.

Boom!

“Jim, close your eyes, hold tight to mom’s hand.”

“Um!” the little boy Jim closed his eyes, grasping his mother’s hands as the crowd pushed him into the Magic Gate. The next moment, a strange sensation of weightlessness came over him, almost making him cry out in fear.

Fortunately, his mother’s hand was always there, giving him a bit of security.

At that time, his thoughts grew active, recalling the boastful Magician named Donnie Truth, who always touted how magical and magnificent the Magic Gate was, built jointly

by the great His Majesty the King, Liszt Flame, and Her Excellency Archmage Acherloides Truth.

It was the most miraculous manifestation of magic in the mundane world, a symbol of Truth conquered by humanity.

Of course, the little boy Jim didn't understand the meaning of those boasts; he simply remembered that the Magic Gate was magnificent and wanted to sneak a peek.

So, he cautiously opened his eyes, only to see pitch blackness, with flashes of lightning-like light sporadically streaking past.

Before he could see more clearly, his body swayed, and he had already walked out of the Magic Teleportation Array and fell to the ground, tumbling into a heap with his mother and the other serfs.

When his mother helped him up, his view suddenly cleared.

He saw a city, its sprawling architecture stretching endlessly with tall castles surrounding it and beautiful interconnected roads. There was also a Mage Tower towering into the clouds, as if bridging heaven and earth. And there were enormous birds taking flight in the sky, with knights faintly visible on their backs.

"Don't space out, everyone, move along with the group, don't block the entrance of the Magic Gate!"

"Hurry and catch up, come this way!"

"Keep up, keep up, don't go back to pick up your shoes, you'll get new supplies later!"

"Gather around, quiet down, gather!"

"Stand close together, don't block the road, gather on this open space over here!"

Before the serfs had time to marvel at the bustling world they saw, they were herded by Apprentice Knights on horseback to assemble on a space near the road. Almost all gathered into small groups of three to five hundred, then were strictly restricted from moving freely or speaking privately, only waiting anxiously.

A moment later.

A middle-aged man dressed like an official, riding a horse with an assistant, hurried over.

He had an impatient smile on his face and spoke in broken Wind Language, “Hello, people who have come from afar, I am Omba, an officer of the Reed City Serf Reception Committee. You can call me Sir Omba, and I will be arranging your necessities such as food, clothing, and shelter for the next few days.”

Sir Omba paused, then continued, “Now, I will read to you a letter written by the master of the seas, the landlord of all islands, the great Sacred Dragon-Invisible Dragon Knight, Fire Dragon Knight, Mountain Copper Dragon Knight, Grey Iron Dragon Knight, Bone Dragon Knight, Aluminum Dragon Knight, and His Majesty the King of the Flame Kingdom, Liszt Flame.”

“The King wrote us a letter?”

“Wow, so many Dragon Knights!”

“There’s only one Dragon Knight; His Majesty the King rides many dragons!”

“Really? A letter written by the King?”

“That’s magnificent!”

Hearing that string of grand titles, the serfs were so astonished that their jaws dropped.

“Silence, shut your mouths!” Sir Omba’s assistant immediately lashed out with a whip in hand, cracking it against the ground, producing a sharp snap.

The crowd quickly fell silent.

Then Sir Omba pretended to pull out a letter, and began to read word by word.

“To my subjects who have come from afar: You are unfortunate, for you have lost your lands, homes, and even family members. Yet, you are also fortunate, for in the Flame Kingdom you will start a new life. I, by the name of the King, promise you—everyone will have a job, everyone will have enough food, everyone will marry and have children without the disturbance of war. Your children shall cultivate Dou Qi, acquire knowledge, and enjoy the care of knightly honor and the King’s protection.”

Chapter 1036: Too Great In China, there exists a type of city known as ghost cities, where towering buildings abound, yet they remain eerily uninhabited. Consequently, many foreign journalists have reported on the supposed collapse of China’s economy.

However, once shops start to move in and facilities begin to operate, these places quickly become populated by Chinese people and turn into new bustling districts.

Liszt greatly admired this model.

He requested to construct many such ghost cities within his own territory—houses empty, streets empty, roads empty, even the farmlands outside the city bare without crops. Essentially, along major transportation routes and flat arable lands, ghost cities were everywhere.

These were not just small-town-level ghost cities but also included small-city-level ghost cities.

Even more so, Liszt planned to build several large-city-level ghost cities in the key areas of Flame Island.

He was not at all worried about the cities being empty. As long as he kept waging wars and pillaging, the captured population would automatically fill these ghost cities, which would then swiftly become operational.

Now in Reed City, new batches of serfs, continuously arriving, were being assigned to various ghost cities—many nobles who had surrendered voluntarily had their serfs taken in by Liszt, and these serfed classes would gradually be freed and fill the freeman class.

Serving as the breeding ground for the future knight class.

In fact, as the Flame Kingdom continued to develop technology, integrating magic with farming and industry, the serfdom system was increasingly falling behind the times. The power brought by Fire Dragon Overmagic directly propelled traditional workshops toward factory phases.

Brick factories, glass factories, paper mills, cement factories, textile factories, and many other factories emerged, freeing countless serfs from the fields to become professional workers.

Of course,

Transitioning from a serfdom system to an industrial society still had a long way to go. But with the thriving development of the Magic Guild and the continuous improvement of magic technology, one day the Flame Kingdom would fully realize a new civilization—Liszt was not opposed to this progress for a simple reason.

If similar industrial revolution changes occurred on Earth, society would be unstable, and the rulers might end up prisoners.

However, in this world, power ultimately reigned supreme, and holding dragons was the foundation of rule. The status of the Dragon Rearing Family would essentially remain unchanged with social transformations, holding dragons through generations, and always representing the noblest of nobility.

What he needed to guard against was merely a restoration by magicians.

Having experienced the power of magic, this wariness not only persisted but grew even stronger—only magic could rival dragons.

In any case,

The serfs who had migrated to Flame Island had all listened to a letter read by a receptionist.

In this era, the credibility of kings was still very strong. Even a mere public letter managed to soothe all the anxious serfs, who followed the officials to their arranged residences in the ghost cities.

Little boy Jim and his mother also settled in a small city under the jurisdiction of Flame City. While his mother's job was not yet finalized, Jim, having registered his personal household, was sent to school where he joined many other children of his age from the Moon Slayer and Flame People communities in knight classes.

The first lesson at school was called Loyalty Class.

Three teachers elaborately used Serpent Script, Wind Language, and Moon Language to narrate the origins of the Flame Kingdom, speaking of the great King, the ruler of all.

"Liszt Flame..." Young Jim, in just over a month, had heard this name countless times and deeply engraved it in his mind.

And it brought about some reflexive associations.

Liszt Flame was greatness, glory, a Dragon Knight, a king, a ruler, the most prestigious person in this world. Such beliefs were like seeds buried in every child's heart, growing with them.

Meanwhile,

The master served by all measures of brainwashing, Liszt had ridden the Formless Dragon Bard to Aden Bay, continuing to covertly protect the Knight Order as they plundered the coastline.

Many Noble Landlords were defeated, prisoners captured, and those who surrendered, surrendered. From top to bottom, everything plunderable was plundered. Unaware, the Knight Order under the banner of the Pioneer Mandate might make a sudden counterattack from the Dense Corridor to Aden Bay.

Many Noble Landlords had no time to hide and were overwhelmed by the Knight Order.

“The gains are substantial, with a large influx of knights and civilians again, and the population of the Flame Kingdom has surged,” he was very satisfied with these gains.

Yet, amidst his satisfaction, there was a hint of regret, “It’s a pity the Eagle Royal Family has adopted a defensive stance, ignoring the warfare here under the Pioneer Mandate... Otherwise, I’d truly love to have another dragon-slaying battle. As of today, I am even stronger than before, and my dragons are more numerous and powerful!”

“I would also love to participate in a dragon-slaying battle, fighting alongside Your Majesty,” Emily responded.

“There will be opportunities. The Eagle Kingdom might be waiting for the right moment. According to my investigations, the Eagle Royal Family has sent envoys to Steel Ridge and Blast Furnace Fortress several times, trying to form an alliance against us. Although currently, Steel Ridge and Blast Furnace Fortress have no intentions of allying, it might happen sooner or later.”

Liszt’s infiltration of the three great kingdoms had never ceased.

His Blood Servants had grown strong, and with his permission, Mary Dawnbreak transformed a large number of new vampires—he even had Chris manipulate the Magic Guild behind the scenes to foster the vampires’ development and transition into scouts.

The new vampires’ combat capabilities were negligible, but their magic to transform into bats had greatly improved, making it easier to hide their presence, undetectable even to Sky Knights.

With these new vampires, most of the news from the three great kingdoms could be gleaned, and with the Magic Platform’s long-distance communication, the vampires could relay information back to the nation at any moment. The efficiency was beyond what the three great kingdoms could imagine—after all, the Flame Kingdom had entered the information age ahead of time.

In terms of intelligence gathering, the Flame Kingdom was far ahead.

Moreover, the Magic Guild was also studying the Shadow Incarnation system of Xisile Ying and four others, aiming to decode this cultivation system. Once successful, it would enrich the means of reconnaissance. Regrettably, the King of Shadows, Louis Shadow,

would rather die than yield, revealing no information about the Shadow Incarnation, thus increasing the difficulty of decoding.

“Now is the best time to stifle the nascent Flame Kingdom through an alliance; the longer it is delayed, the less chance they will have,” Emily pondered aloud.

“Why do you say that?”

“Because, with His Majesty’s speed of acquiring dragons, it won’t take long to exceed the eight dragons of the Eagle Kingdom, and even adding its vassals, there are only twelve dragons in total.”

Liszt smiled slightly, “Actually, I have already caught up with the Eagle Kingdom in terms of the number of dragons, as I have a Little Water Dragon being nurtured in the ocean.”

Fire Dragon Leo, Light Green Gem Dragon Ethan, Formless Dragon Bard, Grey Iron Dragon Ornn, Mountain Copper Dragon Mata, Bone Dragon Vinnie, Aluminum Dragon Connor, and Water Dragon Walter.

Exactly eight dragons, matching the number held by the Eagle Royal Family.

Emily opened her mouth, perfectly surprised, “Your Majesty, have you acquired a new dragon? That’s truly great!”

Chapter 1037: New Expectations Emily’s praise was sincere, and even Liszt himself felt a sense of greatness.

He had already ridden eight dragons, and besides, he had Ach, the Archmage mounted on a Unicorn, and Lerald·Truth, the new Archmage who had pledged allegiance to him.

Effectively, ten beings at the pinnacle of power had gathered, representing immense combat strength.

From the perspective of the dragon slaying battle, it was enough to overturn the rule of the Eagle Kingdom with a single fight. However, from a foundational standpoint, the Knight Class of the Flame Kingdom was still too scant to replace the Eagle Kingdom’s rule over

such an expansive territory. Moreover, the Eagle Kingdom wouldn't want to face the dragon slaying battle themselves.

Adonis Moonlight Silver's strategy was straightforward: avoid fighting, accumulate strength, then desperately seek allies and contain Liszt's expansion.

He had already revealed news of the Sacred Dragon to the Kushan Imperial, and it was evident that both the Neverfall Empire and the Blue Dragon Empire had likely received the message as well. It was just that these two empires were too remote to easily vie for the Formless Dragon, unless they were plotting something sinister from the shadows.

This was precisely what Liszt was most cautious of. He dared not recklessly initiate the dragon slaying battle, fearing that the two great empires might take advantage of the situation to strike at him from the darkness.

It was hard to say whether the trump card of the Phoenix Incarnation had been exposed.

Who knew what unimaginable means an empire with thousands of years of heritage might possess.

"Moreover, even winning the dragon slaying battle against the Eagle Kingdom wouldn't allow us to seize so many dragons; Mind Branding is a massive complication," he sighed inwardly.

The Mind Branding offered great reinforcement to a dragon's mental world; the challenge was not just the dragons, but facing a Completion-term Dragon Knight as well.

One would have to use the Bewildering Dragon Mind Fruit to lock down the dragon itself, then wear it down over time, eventually erasing the Mind Branding.

He now possessed only two Bewildering Dragon Mind Fruits, and it was not cost-effective to use them on the dragons of the Eagle Kingdom—even with the Jade Dragon's Hind Leg, cultivating a Mind Fruit Tree and bearing new Bewildering Dragon Mind Fruits would undoubtedly require a significant sacrifice, possibly even relying on a dragon's carcass to nourish the tree.

Originally, the Mind Fruit Tree on Mind Island was able to bear fruit only with the nourishment from Light Green Gem Dragon Ethan.

This meant that one dragon as nourishment might yield two to three Bewildering Dragon Mind Fruits. It sounded profitable, but the execution of slaying dragons for fruit was exceedingly difficult. After all, the resources spent on raising an adult dragon were astronomical.

While the Kushan Imperial had remnants of the Jade Dragon to cultivate the Bewildering Dragon Mind Fruits, their number of dragons hadn't increased wildly, indicating the complexities involved in using them.

"However, I wonder if it would be feasible to try and form an alliance with the Steel Ridge Kingdom or even unite with the Blast Furnace Fortress Kingdom to divide the Eagle Kingdom?" he pondered another approach, "The Flame Kingdom is destined to rise. With the Formless Dragon on my side, not even the Kushan Imperial could assassinate me, and neither Steel Ridge nor Blast Furnace Fortress have the means to destroy me."

Since the Flame Kingdom couldn't be overthrown, the choice facing both Steel Ridge and Blast Furnace Fortress was either passive resistance or active cooperation.

Passive resistance was no different than a slow death, which the two royal families should recognise through their years of political maneuvering.

Thus, active cooperation seemed like the better option: join forces to carve up the Eagle Kingdom and then grow together. With increased strength, they would be more confident in facing the rise of the Flame Kingdom.

"Actually, no matter the choice, it seems impossible to halt my rise. With the speed of my strength's growth, I'll soon become an overwhelming force... However, I could try to convince Steel Ridge and Blast Furnace Fortress to believe that I'm only coveting the mainland territory of the Eagle Kingdom, and after swallowing part of it, I'd be satisfied and remain their equal."

He didn't want to bother with this headache-inducing diplomatic strategy.

Better to return and toss the matter to the Development Committee to worry about.

...

Sapphire Calendar Year 156, the autumnal Pioneer Mandate war began in October, ravaging the rich coastlines of the Dense Corridor and Aden Bay and ended by the end of December.

The charging knights returned to their domains, embracing their wives and children while also bringing back countless spoils of war.

This time, tens of thousands of Earth Knights, hundreds of thousands of Apprentice Knights, as well as several hundred thousand serfs, were forced to migrate to the Flame Kingdom. Among them, numerous Noble Landlords were included; however, a significant portion of these Noble Landlords surrendered immediately and were not treated as captives.

Liszt didn't have the heart to forcefully take away their wealth.

Very few actual captives were taken, and even fewer were willing to pay a ransom for their freedom—because there was no point in returning, as the entire Dense Corridor and Aden Bay had been picked clean of people, resources, Elves, and more.

Fire Dragon cargo ships and Iron Dragon warships shuttled back and forth between Mind Island and the coastline like public buses.

The Eagle Royal Family received reports passed on by rats, and although Liszt didn't know what Adonis Moonlight Silver thought about it, he himself was undoubtedly very comfortable. With the departure of the last fleet from the continental coastline, he also left immediately, returning to Flame Island to quietly tally the gains of this year's Pioneer Mandate war.

Compared to last year's rushed Pioneer Mandate, this year's was thoroughly prepared and on a larger scale, thus the population and resource gains were well over four times that of the previous year.

Unfortunately, too many Nobles surrendered, resulting in Liszt not receiving much in terms of Elf reinforcements.

Only a few Little Minor Elves and a batch of Elf Bugs were added to the mix, which was insignificant compared to the Elves bred on Flame Island.

“Father, the knights who joined the Pioneer Mandate this time must be carefully arranged and strictly supervised. Many of them have covertly operated Mercenary Corps in the past, engaging in shady deals. I do not wish for them to bring such practices to the Flame Kingdom,” Liszt remarked.

“Rest assured, I will manage these knights meticulously,” replied Li Weiliam.

“Any noble who violates the laws, no matter how high their rank, must be dealt with seriously... It seems somewhat unkind to punish without teaching first, Father, so why don’t you draft a ‘Flame Kingdom Knight Management Code’ in my name, specifying which behaviors should be encouraged and which must be strictly prohibited?”

“The Development Committee has been compiling the future Flame Kingdom’s laws recently, and the main body is already complete. Plucking a few provisions from there will be enough to compile the ‘Flame Kingdom Knight Management Code’,” Li Weiliam explained, his primary task as the leader of the Development Committee was to prepare for the formation of the Kingdom.

A country, especially a Kingdom.

Once established, all aspects such as laws and regulations, social systems, production and construction, foreign strategies, internal framework, and feudal knight assignments had to be perfected as soon as possible, or the country would sooner or later fall into chaos. In fact, if not for Liszt’s overwhelming deterrent power, the Flame Kingdom would already be in disarray.

The personnel makeup is far too imbalanced.

The Moon Slayers are currently the largest group, but most belong to the lowest stratum. Initially, they might have rejoiced over leaving the forest and having full bellies, but as time goes by, envy is inevitable when they see others living better lives. Fortunately, the Ancient Mages among the Moon Slayers have been properly settled, so the grievances of the lower-class serfs are not a significant issue.

The next largest group is the Eagle People, who have migrated in batches, some as captives who surrendered, and others traded as serfs. Language, culture, and customs cause the Eagle People to inevitably stick together, creating a significant barrier. Even if they are forcefully dispersed and settled in different cities, there will still be cliques forming.

Then there are those called Flame People, the veterans most loyal to Liszt, but their numbers are far too few.

In short.

The Flame Kingdom is like a pile of sand forcibly held together by Liszt, governed by his powerful hand and sustained by the strict social hierarchy of nobles, commoners, and serfs under the knightly system.

It will take a great deal of time to solidify fully and convert everyone to citizens of the Flame Kingdom.

Liszt isn't worried about this—at as long as he exists, the Flame Kingdom will not fall into chaos.

He now has a new anticipation, “The year-end festival is approaching, and the Red and White Rose Family’s Envoy Group should be arriving soon. I wonder what kind of gifts my old friend will bring this year.”

Chapter 1038: A Marvel Misleads the Nation The gift from the Red and White Rose Family was the same as always, Platinum Magic Potion and Red Dragon Water, apparently sending other gifts would not showcase the depth of the Red and White Rose Family’s heritage.

However, this year Mathew of the Red and White Roses did not come himself, only sending a letter personally penned by his sister, Marilyn Rose of Red and White.

The letter primarily contained greetings to Li Si Te and to Ach, casually revealing her admiration for Li Si Te, her coming of age, her graduation from the noble girls’ school of the Steel Ridge Kingdom, her return to the life in the Rose Duchy, and her hope to still receive Li Si Te’s blessings for her birthday next year.

In short.

This was a signal for a marriage alliance, as long as Li Si Te agreed, the Red and White Rose Family would immediately send Marilyn over to become the Queen of the Flame Kingdom. However, having absorbed the Phoenix Incarnation to extend his life span to hundreds of years, his desire for taking a wife and having children had greatly diminished.

In fact, even if he had a strong desire, he would not marry a woman he had never met.

“Paper, glass products in exchange for Platinum Magic Potion and Red Dragon Water, this friendship can continue, but next year when the Flame Kingdom is established, I’m afraid the friendship will have to break... I really am a terrifying person, sacrificing my own hues for the sake of my dragon.”

“Tsk, tsk.”

With such self-reflection in his mind, he penned a formulaic reply, revealing no warmth—perhaps out of a guilty conscience, he even hoped the Red and White Rose Family would sense his indifference and abandon the thought of this marriage alliance. In any case, he did not wish to see an innocent girl entangled in adults’ politics.

After writing the reply, he dispatched a messenger to send it.

The time had come to the last day of December, the day before the festival, and for several days, he had been holding banquets with his followers and conferring new noble titles. In this relaxed environment for advancement, a large number of knights had become nobles, and minor nobles had easily become major nobles.

Only at the stage of Earl and above, where the nobles held large titles, did the promotions become very strict.

To date, aside from the nobles who already had the title of Duke or Marquis, which they reclaimed through their battle achievements with relative ease, only Emily had been granted the title of Marquis for her success in dragon riding. As for Dukes, there was still only Piero·Grey Iron, the noble who brought his own title—although Li Si Te intended for his own father to be promoted to Duke.

But the promotion ceremony would take place after the founding of the nation, and for now, Li Weiliam remained a Marquis.

There were also seven powerful mermaids who had helped him govern the seas; in the future, they too would gradually be granted the title of Duke.

They were originally kings of the great seas, and on land, their status was at least equivalent to that of a Grand Duke. However, the kingdoms in the sea had long crumbled, and the task of purifying the Devil's Sea fell solely to Ach. Therefore, the title of Duke was the highest Li Si Te was willing to give to the mermaids.

"In the future, I can set a precedent in the Flame Kingdom, the limit for Sky Knights is Marquis, but as soon as they break through the ultimate shackles and become Domain Knights, they can continue to be promoted to Duke... That way, followers like Dimaria Yuhua Stone will have even more incentive to work hard."

For most nobles, becoming a Marquis is the greatest goal in life, as very few non-Dragon Rearing Families can be promoted to Duke. Once they become Marquises, these major nobles lose their drive.

"As for Dragon Knights, it would be difficult for new Dragon Rearing Families to emerge under my rule," Li Si Te, riding the Formless Dragon Bard, flew slowly through the sky, "because all dragons that can be discovered will ultimately become my dragons, refusing anyone else's touch."

He still remembered the scenes he witnessed when he activated the Time Scepter, although that was only a possible future. However, what the future Ach had said, he remembered deeply—Ach told him it was best to ride all dragons, and also told him about the Immortal Dragon in the Exiled Lands.

"Elves are shared among all, but dragons must belong to me."

...

At this moment,

Liszt stood atop the peak of Moon Slayer Sacred Mountain, gazing at the ongoing vigorous construction of what would become the future Royal Palace, his heart swelled with pride—this was the realm he had fought to establish.

“After consulting Ach, Emily, my father, and others, the once sacred mountain of the Moon Slayers finally had a new name. The range of mountains on the left was called Moon Mountain, the range on the right Sun Mountain, and the valley between them was named Sun Moon Valley. As for the palace that stood between Moon Mountain and Sun Mountain, it was named the Sun Moon Star Palace.”

Heaven and earth vast and vague, the universe so ancient and primeval.

Sun and moon full and bright, stars and constellations all arrayed.

The name of the Sun Moon Star Palace meant to encompass the universe, while Sun Mountain and Moon Mountain were meant to “inherit” the glory of the ancient Moon Empire and Sun Empire—every nation liked to claim they were the direct successors, flaunting their inheritance from ancient civilizations.

Liszt simply swept them all into the net, inheriting not only the Moon Empire but also the Sun Empire!

Furthermore, many nations enjoyed naming their king’s castles, palaces, and surnames after dragons—Steel Ridge Kingdom’s palace was called the White Gold Tooth Palace, inspired by the Platinum Dragon; Eagle Kingdom’s palace was named Iron Dragon Chain Palace, from the White Maw Iron Dragon; Blast Furnace Fortress Kingdom’s palace was called the Golden Supreme Palace, after the Golden Dragon.

The founders of these royal families were likely the Platinum Dragon Knights, White Maw Iron Dragon Knights, Golden Dragon Knights; thus, the palaces commemorated this.

But Liszt had too many dragons, and he was a Dragon Knight to each one; using any single dragon as a namesake felt too narrow, incapable of being evenly distributed.

He had adopted Flame as his surname, nation’s name, and king’s castle, vowing the status of Fire Dragon Leo—this could still be explained by the first Dragon Riding experience. If he continued to name anything after any other dragon, it would cause dissatisfaction among the rest—being a Dragon Knight to many dragons, he had to balance it well.

His heart was weary, almost longing to quickly train a group of Dragon Knights to share the burden.

“The construction of the Sun Moon Star Palace is one-third complete, and in another half year, the main structure should be finished, and then it will be ready to inhabit. After the main body is done, what remains will be composed of wonders, which will require the cooperation of Archmages, and there’s no rush for now; it’s best left to Ach to handle.”

Women, they all like to design their own house’s decorating style—Liszt decisively left the palace’s wonder style for Ach to play with.

Not to mention, Ach truly had a keen interest in this area and had already been taking the time to design various styles of wonders.

Some ideas even astonished Liszt, such as the Flying Moat, Vertical Lift, Miniature Magic Gate, Aerial Floating Park, Man-made Sun, Moon and Stars, Crystal Rainbow Canopy, Proportional Dragon Sculpture, Eternal Torch, Endless Rain Cloud... She intended to turn the Sun Moon Star Palace into a dwelling fit for gods.

“Don’t make things too luxurious, Ach, we should save where we can, after all, we have a large family business and many dragons to feed.”

Ach playfully stuck out her little tongue, “Don’t worry, brother, Ach is just using the Sun Moon Star Palace as a laboratory to test some of the more challenging magic technology problems, heehee.”

Liszt was left with only a smile.

Then, he vigorously tousled Ach’s blue tresses—whatever it was, he had it wrapped around his finger!

Chapter 1039: Moth to a Flame Dong, dong, dong, dong, dong, dong!

When the clock atop Flame City’s administrative building struck six times, it signaled the arrival of the New Year festival, and thus the year 156 of the Sapphire Calendar became the past as 157 officially commenced.

Having returned from an inspection of the Sun Moon Star Palace, Li Si Te stood on the balcony of Flame Castle, gazing at the starry night sky. Soon after, countless magical fireworks shot into the sky from Flame City, from surrounding towns, and even from the castle itself, the magic power transforming into fireworks gleaming in myriad hues.

Blossoms of light unfurled in the night sky, bringing the atmosphere of the festival to a crescendo.

“It’s a pity that this year there are no unknown rewards provided by the Smoke Mission. I always feel like something is missing and it’s quite unsettling,” he shook his head.

He called forth the Smoke Mission.

The content of the mission remained the same: “Mission: The two hundred and second time of destiny’s choice, guiding and predicting over and over, you have grown from a minor rural landlord to a sovereign of a nation. As the Flame Kingdom is on the brink of establishment, perhaps it’s time to consider some deeper questions. Please touch the barrier. Reward: The favor of destiny.”

Touching the barrier.

That was a formidable dilemma.

He had been pondering this matter for nearly half a year, continuously refining his cultivation methods with the Fire Dragon Leo, who had already received the Mind Branding, trying out various beneficial Dou Qi and magic power circulation systems. He was still unable to touch the barrier, not even grasping the slightest clue.

Among the other dragons, the Mind Branding within the Formless Dragon Bard’s consciousness was already becoming clearer and would soon be fully branded.

The Grey Iron Dragon Ornn and the Mountain Copper Dragon Mata had also begun to show a vague shadow of the brand, but these two dragons offered him only a mediocre sensation, and their cultivation speed was considerably slow.

The Aluminum Dragon Connor and Water Dragon Walter had yet to show signs of branding.

As for the Bone Dragon Vinnie, it was not a complete dragon and thus did not possess a Mind Branding.

As for the Light Green Gem Dragon Ethan, which had been previously branded with the Mind Branding, it had become Emily's mount, and Li Si Te had not continued to cultivate with it. His relationship with Ethan was strange; essentially, Ethan was his dragon, yet the knight was Emily, equivalent to a dragon with feet in two boats.

As long as Li Si Te wished, he could take over Ethan at any time by relying on the Mind Branding, but normally he actively blocked the Mind Connection with Ethan.

Just like the First Dragon Knight had died long ago, merely relying on the Mind Branding to suppress the dragon's will, leaving everything else to be handled by Emily.

"I've been cultivating with Leo for a long time without any clue about the barrier, and I suppose this isn't something that can be discovered by just biding time... Otherwise, since the establishment of the knight system, many astonishing Dragon Knights would surely have broken the barrier and achieved greatness."

In fact, Completion-term Dragon Knights represented the peak; there was no existence beyond Dragon Knights.

The situation in the Neverfall Empire and Blue Dragon Empire was unknown, but for the Dragon Knights of the Kushan Empire, Li Si Te had already learned through Lerald·Truth that there was nobody stronger than a Dragon Knight. Even Emperor Jupiter, as a Dark Dragon Knight, was the strongest Dragon Knight of the Kushan Empire.

"Now all that's left is to wait for Ach to catch an inspiration, to decipher the information of the barrier."

"If Ach also fails to decipher it, the only thing I could look forward to is Bard, to take another look at that Dragon of the Magic Web which has broken through the barrier."

As his thoughts drifted, he heard someone calling him, “Your Majesty, what are you contemplating?”

Li Si Te came back to his senses and saw that it was Paris who had followed him to the balcony. During the festival season, he had become accustomed to inviting some close followers who were single and without families to join him at Flame Castle to celebrate. It wasn’t restricted to men or women, but the closer male followers all had their own families.

Paris, Emily, Chris Truth, Kenley Truth, Mary Dawnbreak, and a few other women were still single and without relatives—Paris had a sister named Maggie, who had been adopted back in Fresh Flower Town.

So Paris was still spending the New Year at Flame Castle.

The former Black Dragon Childe had now become a Great Light Magic Swordsman with the title of Earl.

Her cultivation system was quite interesting, most of it brand new, derived by the “Light Magic Swordsman” project team specially established by the Magic Guild. The Light Magic Swordsman project team was part of the “Dragon Magic Warrior Laboratory,” which spearheaded the development of cultivation systems such as Light Magic Swordsman, Fire Paladin, and Shadow Incarnation.

The development for Shadow Incarnation only began after the capture of the King of Shadows, Louis Shadow, with the intention of using Louis as a breakthrough, though it all ended up for naught.

Therefore, the Dragon Magic Warrior Laboratory still had to refer to the path Paris had taken in her cultivation in order to establish subsequent training systems.

“Thinking about the future,” Liszt said with his hands behind his back, looking up at the sky.

The magic fireworks in the sky had thinned out now, only the magicians from the Mage Tower in the distance were still tirelessly playing with their magic fireworks.

“The future, huh...” Paris gathered a stray lock of hair that had fallen by her ear and sighed deeply.

Today, she had not worn her favorite leather armor or the Flack·Abbieye that represented her noble title. Instead, she put on a lady’s dress that noble ladies favored, with a loose skirt, slender waist, and pleated neckline that perfectly exposed her beautiful collarbone.

Her originally valiant and heroic style was replaced by the delicacy and sensuality of a woman, every move filled with alluring temptation.

“Why the sigh?” Liszt asked.

Paris smiled faintly, “Perhaps it’s because I’m getting older. The festival has just passed, and I’m already twenty-four years old. I’ve been following Your Majesty for five years now.”

“Five years, huh, well, I turned twenty-two this year.”

He had come to this world at the age of sixteen after his coming-of-age ceremony which happened in March of the Sapphire Calendar Year 151. Then in December, he met Paris. Indeed, it had been five full years since he got to know Paris, and in three more months, it would be six years since his arrival. Indeed, so much had changed in these six years.

“Many twenty-two-year-old Knights might be just an Earth Knight, yet Your Majesty has become the king of a nation, a great Dragon Knight from scratch. The greatest fortune in Paris’s life is to have followed Your Majesty,” she did not hide the admiration and love in her eyes.

Such a heroic figure, it would be hard for any woman to conceal such feelings.

Liszt enjoyed the admiration in those eyes and warmly responded, “Meeting you was my fortune as well, Paris. The memories of Fresh Flower Town often resurface in my mind.”

“Do you really feel fortunate to have met Paris?”

“Of course.”

Paris's breathing became somewhat labored, and her eyes, brimming with intense emotions, seemed as though they might start dripping water. It took her a while to calm down slightly, "I truly wish you did not feel fortunate, for your fortune makes it hard for me to restrain myself."

Liszt raised an eyebrow, "Why do you say that?"

Paris looked up and met Liszt's gaze, "I once hid my affection for Your Majesty deep in my heart, but it still jumps out from time to time. My reason tells me I shouldn't have any hopes, but my emotions are like a moth that, even knowing the flame, still desperately throws itself into it."

This was a daring confession, and the first time she had voiced her feelings.

Liszt was somewhat taken aback, but after all his years in high society, he simply extended his hand to lift Paris's chin. Her height of 175 centimeters was rather outstanding among women, but it was nothing in front of his 190 centimeters, "Are you ready to be the moth to a flame?"

Chapter 1040: Reef City Moths to the flame, an indescribable delight.

Good news came just after the New Year, this time from Formless Dragon Bard. While Liszt had been busy with social engagements over the New Year, Bard aimlessly wandered the world beyond matter—ever since the Magic Teleportation Array was established, it no longer feared getting lost.

Unexpectedly, it discovered a natural node, and upon opening it, found itself on the west coast of Flame Island, an area filled with reefs.

It remembered that Liszt had always wanted to open more teleportation arrays on Flame Island to turn it into a widely accessible transportation network. Without a doubt, this was a natural node of great developmental value; it could connect the west coast of Flame Island to the transportation network.

Therefore, Liszt rushed over with Bard to survey the environment.

The waves of the sea continuously beat against the reefs, and the scene of the azure sea and blue sky inspired a surge of high spirits in him, “Such a scene, I feel compelled to compose a poem... Facing the stone tablet in the east to view the vast sea. How tranquil is the water, how towering are the mountainous islands. The trees thrive, the herbs flourish...”

This poem did not match the scenery here.

There were no trees in the reef area, and it was not on the East Coast but the West, about a hundred meters offshore. Standing on the reefs, one could gaze far at the coastline, where there was a seemingly endless stretch of white, clean sand with just the occasional tree resembling a Fragrant Coconut Tree.

Further in the distance, there were sparse shrubs, and the land was mostly sandstone, unsuitable for farming.

The water and soil on the northwest half of Flame Island were not as good as on the southeast half, bearing less of the dense primeval forests and more resembling grasslands and deserts. The magicians from the Magic Guild had conducted long-term research here, finding that the rainfall was significantly less than in the southeast, especially dry in winter.

“Although the northwest half is not generally suitable for living, it doesn’t mean there’s no land suitable for farming. There are several river basins that could develop into rich agricultural lands. Moreover, the terrain here is relatively flat, suitable for grazing, and could become a large ranch for the Flame Kingdom in the future.”

Therefore, building a large city on the East Coast was very necessary.

In the future, constructing a Magic Teleportation Array to connect with other areas of Flame Island was undoubtedly most suitable here.

“Bard, fly freely around here for a while. I’m going down to the sea to inspect the underwater environment of the reef area and see what special features are here that could create a natural node,” Liszt said as he summoned Little Water Dragon Walter, who had long been attached to his kidneys.

Walter did not have an appropriate Dragon Nest and thus could not absorb Water Attribute Super Magic daily, resulting in his very slow physical development with no visible growth.

Unlike Leo, who had grown rapidly each day by leveraging the Super Magic fermented by a volcano.

“Yo ho!” As soon as Walter flew out, he landed on the water surface, curiously looking around.

Then, ridden by Liszt who connected mentally with him, they plunged beneath the sea surface, searching for any trace of specialness that might indicate the presence of a natural node.

Natural nodes might be related to Super Magic.

Or more directly related to dragons—Dragons are the source of most Super Magic.

Eye of Magic cast.

Synchronizing with Walter, Liszt’s perspective soon shifted to that of the Water Dragon, and each current in the vast sea was clearly visible, enhancing the simple Eye of Magic several times over. This shared the same principle as Fire Dragon Leo’s Dragon Eye Trajectory, and Liszt, not wanting to rename it, still called it Dragon Eye Trajectory.

Elemental Dragons could mostly synchronize with the Eye of Magic, as could the Formless Dragon, but the Metal Dragon, Gemstone Dragon, and Bone Dragon could not be compatible with the Eye of Magic.

Dragon Eye Trajectory continually scanned.

It swept over every underwater reef without detecting any signs of magic power, not even a single Sea Monster was found. “The natural node is between the reef areas, not beneath the sea surface, making it difficult to judge what exactly happened when the Superior Magic formed the natural node in the past.”

He searched back and forth carefully but still could not find any clues related to magic power, and he ultimately had to declare the search a failure—this natural node contained no Dragon relics.

Perhaps it was just an ancient period when Dragons fought fiercely, causing the Superior Magic fluctuation that triggered the natural node.

Previously, several natural nodes also yielded nothing.

“Let’s call it the Reef Natural Node, and plan to build Reef City here...” Liszt decided on the name of Reef City and then withdrew Little Water Dragon Walter.

He mounted Formless Dragon Bard and left this place, heading straight for Mermaid City.

He wanted to instruct the Mermaids to mobilize a group of Fish Ugly Race to build Reef City. The seawater aquaculture was not yet flourishing, and many from the Fish Ugly Race had nothing to do, so he decided to let them participate in city building to use their unchanneled energy, rather than letting it go to waste.

“Your Majesty, the water quality here is very good, and the fish are abundant, making it a natural fishing ground,” said Marquis Lost – Coquelix.

“Have you discovered fish?”

“Yes, I have sensed a huge school of fish hovering around, near this marine area.”

“That is good news. It is even more suitable to build Reef City here. Now that Salty Sea Marquis – Blue Posey is in charge of Mermaid City, you will manage Reef City here; build the city half in the water, half on land. In the future, this will be the central city of the East Coast.”

“As you wish, Your Majesty,” Coquelix nodded in agreement.

Although the age of Mermaids had passed, their greatest desire as the seven remaining ones was to purify the ocean. However, this did not mean they had no desires, especially

as the Magic Guild was helping them develop the Source of Vitality Potion that could stimulate reproduction.

This gave them the possibility to reproduce, and with it, desires for power and status emerged, and there was even quiet competition among the Mermaids.

Currently, Marquis Fugitive – Viswinti had already made a Heart of the Mermaid contract with Ach, becoming the chief steward of Overmarine Laboratory on Anchor Island, taking charge of marine experimental content and starting to pursue a route in magic research.

Marquis Great West – Eternia, being the oldest among the Mermaids, primarily served as Liszt's underwater assistant, responsible for protecting him during his sea travels.

Salty Sea Marquis – Blue Posey now managed Mermaid City. Liszt had already consulted with her to transfer the Heart of the Mermaid to Emily—being a Dragon Knight of the seas, it was a pity not to be able to swim, hence Liszt made Emily contract the Heart of the Mermaid for an additional life-saving skill.

Marquis Fisher – Gulvig was an external agent with a temporary duty. Liszt specifically ordered her to travel by sea, migrating the Dragon Turtles from Dragon Turtle Island and the Lightning Dragon Turtles from Black Horse Island to the Flame Islands. The Lightning Dragon Turtle was a Super Dragon Beast, and ordinary Dragon Turtles were also Advanced Magical Beasts, holding great value.

Marquis Lost – Coquelix was about to oversee Reef City.

The remaining Marquis Aquamarch – Tibidais and Marquis Sea Trench – Sharivara, Liszt planned to dispatch to Mind Island to ensure its security. As one of the only two gateways connecting Flame Kingdom with the outside world, the importance of Mind Island was self-evident.

“By the way, Coquelix, about your planned circumnavigation of the waters near Legendary Continent, when are you preparing to set out?” Liszt inquired.

“Marquis Eternia thinks this spring is a very suitable season, one year is enough for us to tour the entire coastal waters of Legendary Continent. To see if there are still Mermaids, Naga, or Fish Ugly and other subordinate races existing... how bustling the old ocean was, and how lonely the ocean is now.”

Coquelix spoke with a tone full of melancholy.