

The Mighty 421

Chapter 421 Earl Suffers a Provocation

Liszt didn't argue when the Earl attributed his success to the noble lineage he and Melissa shared.

One must always give the other party some respect.

He changed the subject, "Father, how do you plan to deal with the sales of rubber?"

"I tested the rubber you provided yesterday. It is indeed an extraordinary item, more impressive and versatile than glutinous rice juice," the Earl said thoughtfully, then continued, "Tulip Castle has acquired quite a bit of supplies in the Iron Hoof Island campaign, so we're not heavily reliant on gold coins. I can purchase a batch of rubber to relieve some of your pressure."

"Rubber is a specialty crop of Black Horse Island, with a low yield. Moreover, harvesting rubber does significant damage to the rubber trees, so it won't be cheap."

"More expensive than glutinous rice?"

Glutinous rice is a type of cereal that can be eaten, but its juice is more useful in the watering of castles. The Marquis of Leather Island, Ramirez White Glutinous Rice, built his family's wealth on glutinous rice.

"I think it would certainly be more expensive than glutinous rice, because rubber can also be used for building. The quality of construction is no worse than that of glutinous rice juice, and in terms of speed, hardness, and adhesiveness, it is even slightly superior. But rubber is not only good for building; it can bond any object, be it for shipbuilding or armor repair, it can be used for everything!"

This kind of treasure, if he weren't in dire need of money, Liszt would never want to part with it.

The Earl looked at Liszt and asked with puzzlement, "Just how many treasures are you hiding on your Black Horse Island?"

"Um, well, there are indeed some special products," Liszt replied indifferently, "The main thing is that the development work has been done well. For example, the rubber from rubber trees might be considered just sap by most people, without exploring its uses."

In his heart, he was very pleased because his domain had too many special products.

In terms of crops—rubber, the infinitely possible adhesive, Thorn Wood of ironwood quality, Fragrant Coconut Fruit that can be consumed directly, Green Tea Trees not yet planted on a large scale, Smoked Grass that can attract Formless Dragons, and Corn Grass which might become corn cobs.

In terms of magic potions—the Black Tulip, a symbol of the domain flag, Flame Mushrooms, and Ice Snow Flame Mushrooms grown from mushroom farming, Magic Medicine Thorns that can grow quickly among thorns, and Dragon Hollyhock, a type of auxiliary medicine recently started being farmed on a large scale.

In the field of animal breeding—Green Caterpillars and Green-headed Ducks would become major specialties, Black Pearl Tridacna is also a fine specialty, Black Blood Treasured Horses need no mention of their value, Dragon Breed Cows are similarly precious, and if the breeding difficulties could be overcome, the Blizzard Beast should be considered a specialty.

In the industrial sector—The Fire Dragon Brick Factory's products are all specialties, including slates, culverts, bricks, and other fired products under development like ceramics, glass, cement, lime, etc.; distilled liquor Fresh Flower Brew, bathing products Fresh Flower Soap, and future white paper as well.

In terms of culinary delights—there's no need to mention much, as Fresh Flower Town has always been known as the source of Coral Island's delicacies, with countless dishes spreading from there.

Where others would kill for just one specialty product, Liszt is troubled by having too many, unable to develop them all, leaving many specialties unattended.

Thus, with so many specialty products in Fresh Flower Town and Black Horse Island, he still finds himself so poor that he can barely afford books.

"To find treasures, one must first have treasures that genuinely exist..." The Earl took a deep breath to suppress his jealousy toward his son, "How many elves do you have now?"

"Um, well," Liszt pondered, considering how to answer.

The Earl, dissatisfied, said, "Do you still need to hide things from me?"

"I have 24 Elf Bugs... and also 2 Little Minor Elves."

"2 Little Minor Elves?"

"One is Jela, whom you've seen; the other is an insignificant Mangrove Minor Elf," he said humbly. Now, Nami is not without use, as her abilities are essential to the breeding of Green-headed Ducks.

The Earl was taken aback for a moment.

Then he sighed, "I remember when I ennobled you, I only gave you four Elf Bugs, and later, when you discovered the Black Tulip, I rewarded you with another Elf Bug, meaning, you've found nineteen Elf Bugs on your own? And two Little Minor Elves?"

"The origins of the Elf Bugs are somewhat complicated. Two Elf Bugs were born from the potted plants my grandmother gave me; I contracted a Barley Bug outside the Nameless Castle in Mane City; Father, you remember the Six-Headed King Serpent, don't you? Following the records in a Magic Book, I cultivated four Serpent Blood Fruit Bugs with its blood."

Liszt calculated, "Leaving those aside, the number of Elf Bugs born in the domain is not many, only thirteen... and Jela was an evolution of the Thorn Bug you gave me."

Which is to say,

the number of elves that were born within the Fresh Flower Town and Black Horse Island itself is thirteen Elf Bugs and one Little Minor Elf.

"Thirteen and you still think that's few? Since I took over Coral Island, in twenty years of cultivation, a total of just over two hundred Elf Bugs have been born, only about ten a year!" The Earl tried to keep his emotions steady, "The key is, I have never discovered any wild Little Minor Elves."

Liszt wanted to say something to lighten the mood.

But the Earl interrupted him directly, "I used to think 'Knight's Glory' was just a slogan to inspire people, but now I believe it truly exists, and it clearly favors you... Go back, do not let down the 'Knight's Glory' that has been bestowed upon you, I look forward to your future!"

He quickly sent Liszt away without even intending to discuss the pricing of rubber.

When the door closed.

The study fell silent.

The Earl leaned fully into the chair and his gaze slowly drifted to a space and time unknown, whispering, "Melissa, the son you were most worried about has grown strong enough to take flight at any moment... it's just that this boy is too cunning. Marquis Merlin wrote to me telling me that he was already promoted to Elite Earth Knight last year..."

The voice faded into obscurity.

After a while, he raised his volume slightly, "From Common Earth Knight to Elite Earth Knight, it only took half a year... His domain has several Magic Medicines, and he even shelters a Magician who specializes in making Magic Medicines... Our son might just outshine me in my youth!"

...

"Actually, I should have been more discreet and not provoked the Earl,"

Riding on the back of the Landwalker Bird Loki and recalling the Earl's near breakdown scene, Liszt shook his head and sighed, "Forget it, tomorrow I'll have Goltai come over and have a good talk with Levis and Frank, aiming to negotiate a fair price to ease the finances of the domain."

The tremendous properties of rubber were plain for all to see, and he was not worried about getting a good price.

Upon returning to his domain, before he had time to inspect the Corn Grass fields, he received a report from the office—Serf Old Bore found that in his field of Corn Grass, there was a patch that was very odd, with huge tassels growing on the top.

Isaiah further explained, "My lord, we are unable to determine whether this patch of Corn Grass is incubating Corn Grass Bugs. They look rather unusual, but their number is too great, a good twenty or so Corn Grass plants, all sprouting huge tassels... It's unlikely that so many are all incubating Elf Bugs at once."

"Tassels growing on top?" Liszt furrowed his brow; this was not quite what he had envisaged for corn cobs.

Chapter 422 Emily's Little Pony

Arriving at the cornfield, Liszt saw the flowering heads of the corn grass, and indeed, there was a large, fluffy tassel at the top of the human-height corn grass.

In the view of the Eye of Magic, there were no signs of magic power, meaning this was either the nurturing of Elf Bugs or simply a mutation of the ordinary corn grass.

"Are the tassels at the top of the corn grass mentioned in the Smoke Mission hint referring to a grain mutation?" he pondered. The mutated state of the corn grass didn't seem to be evolving into the type of corn he had in mind, "It rather seems to be evolving into sorghum, doesn't it?"

It had to be said that this patch of corn grass indeed resembled sorghum.

Only the tassels of the corn grass were yellow.

"Take good care of this patch of corn grass, don't harvest them. Wait for them to mature before assessing what they really are," Liszt instructed before leaving the cornfield.

Whether the corn grass had mutated into corn or sorghum needed more time to confirm, but his mood was somewhat deflated since sorghum wasn't a high-yield crop.

He still held out hope for corn cobs.

However, hope remained, "Once I've planned the industry transfer, there will be new mutated varieties of corn grass waiting, perhaps those will be the real corn cobs."

Back at the castle,

good news came immediately. One-Eyed Barton, responsible for delivering the foals, helped the Fire Dragon Mare give birth to a healthy colt. It was a male foal with a coat that was a combination of black and red, looking very majestic, though still very weak, trembling as it walked.

"Master, this colt has an excellent lineage, it's fantastic. It has inherited its mother's quiet grace and its father's robust physique, and it will surely become an exceptional warhorse when it grows up," Barton said excitedly.

"Very good!"

Liszt, equally excited, tried to reach out to pet the little colt hiding by the side of the Fire Dragon Mare. Although he no longer needed such a mixed-blood mount, warhorses were undoubtedly a noble's wealth. There were no large horse farms on Coral Island, and a qualified warhorse would cost several Gold Coins.

Nevertheless, it was a celebration that after the Iron Hoof Island campaign, many knights had switched to better mounts—the spoils of war could not be taken away, but no one could stop them from changing their equipment.

It could be said that Liszt's knights, both Earth Knights and Retainer Knights, had amassed a set of Fine Steel armor and robust warhorses from the battlefield.

This equipment was not included in the military exploits and belonged to the knights' private distributable property.

"Barton, take good care of it, and the other mares will also give birth soon. Make sure this batch of foals is well looked after," Liszt ordered.

But Barton said, "Master, you should arrange for knights to come and tame this batch of foals as soon as possible."

"Tame them now? They're too young. Start taming them when they're two or three years old."

"Master, actually the best time to tame a foal is right after it's born... In the first few months of a foal's life, that's when we can most influence its growth. Before I was sold to the Duchy of Sapphire, I began raising horses and saw many knights on the mainland prefer to train newly-born foals."

"Is that so?" Liszt was mildly surprised; he had never heard of this.

For knights who possess Dou Qi, any spirited horse could be tamed, so there was little systematic training of horses. Like how Liszt had tamed the Li Dragon Horse and Lightning, just get on their back, subdue them, and the rest was a slow process of bonding which wasn't considered poor.

However, Barton's opinion also served as a reference.

Training a foal from a young age would make it more accustomed to interacting with humans, so he decided to give this foal to his only female follower, the young girl Emily, for taming.

"My lord, may I have this foal?" Emily, returning from training in the Knight's Square, was called to the castle stables and asked excitedly.

Liszt nodded, "Of course, you can try taming it. By the time it grows up, you will also be of an age to join the charge."

He had been keeping an eye on Emily's training and discovered that she indeed had an extraordinary talent. Compared to Paris's sister Maggie, Emily had made terrifying progress, leaving Maggie far behind—even with Paris desperately helping her sister by providing lots of meat, even some Magical Beast Meat.

Therefore, Liszt's expectations for Emily's future were growing.

Perhaps he really could cultivate a female Sky Knight as his follower. Thinking of this prospect was quite exhilarating.

"Thank you, my lord, Emily swears allegiance to you unto death!" Having received the beloved foal, Emily's youthful face wore a solemn expression.

"I accept your loyalty, Emily," Liszt said with a smile.

So that afternoon, Emily didn't return home and instead stayed at the stables to bond with the pony, giving it a pleasant name—Sara.

There was nothing spectacular about a little girl taming a horse.

Liszt returned to the castle and brewed a cup of tea.

Just as he was preparing to read a book and pass the time, Butler Carter knocked and entered, "My lord, Consultant Goltai, accompanied by the town officials, has come to report on their work."

"Is today the work report day?" Liszt pulled out a schedule from his desk and glanced at it.

The schedule was outlined boldly with ink.

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Morning 6:00 to 6:30—Wake up, wash up.

Morning 6:30 to 7:30—Walk the dog, feed the dog, feed the birds, feed the horses.

Morning 7:30 to 8:00—Have breakfast.

Morning 8:00 to 10:00—Practice combat skills on Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Sunday; practice archery on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday.

Morning 10:00 to 11:30—Train Douson and the Eight Tiny Ones.

Morning 11:30 to 12:30—Have lunch.

Afternoon 12:30 to 1:00—Read, drink tea, digest.

Afternoon 1:00 to 1:30—Nap.

Afternoon 1:30 to 3:30—Read on Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Sunday; patrol the domain on Tuesday and Saturday; listen to officials' work reports on Thursday.

Afternoon 3:30 to 4:00—Play the piano.

Afternoon 4:00 to 6:00—Take medicine, cultivate Dou Qi.

Afternoon 6:00 to 7:30—Free time, occasionally conduct live combat drills.

Evening 7:30 to 8:30—Have dinner.

Evening 8:30 to 9:30—Visit the Sea View Villa to watch the sea.

Evening 9:30 to 10:30—Read, drink tea, summarize the day.

Evening 10:30 to the next morning 6:00—Sleep.

...

He mostly arranged his life according to this schedule. Of course, the timing wasn't always fixed, and the number of times it was interrupted by unexpected events was many. He could count the days he strictly followed the schedule on one hand.

He put the schedule back and said, "Then please show them into the study."

"Yes, my lord."

Footsteps followed, and Goltai along with other officials streamed into the study, each finding a stool to sit on. Half an hour was plenty for them to report on their respective responsibilities—in fact, there were rarely any significant issues, since governance matters were often discussed during the evening banquets.

Afterward, Liszt threw out his topic for discussion, "What are your thoughts on Fresh Flower Town's industry transfer to Black Horse Island?"

Chapter 423 Light System Mage

"Black Horse Island has become my territory, and I can openly carry out development and construction, while Fresh Flower Town is only rented land... Although the Tulip Family will not reclaim it, industries that need to be transferred should still be transferred, to align with future territorial planning," Liszt spoke from a strategic height.

"For now, only one new town is planned on Black Horse Island, Harbor Town, which is designed as a port city and will become the central city of Black Horse Island in the future; of course, if Fresh Flower Town can develop, I don't mind turning it into a city of trade."

"If Fresh Flower Town only undertakes trade business, then there's no need to overly develop the planting industry here," Goltai said, following Liszt's tone.

Isaiah added, "Workshops that produce raw materials should also be relocated to Black Horse Island, and livestock, cattle, and horses should be moved there as well."

Zambrotta then said, "Considering the agricultural planning of Black Horse Island, Fresh Flower Town should still retain some planting and breeding for daily needs, and some basic foreign trade raw material production, keeping it in Fresh Flower Town can save on the cost of shipping." The former Noble, now accustomed to abstract concerns, had become much more practical.

"Then, you all must formulate an industry transfer plan for me as soon as possible; within three days, I need to see it completed," Liszt set a deadline, "Additionally, I will appoint a batch of new officers to take posts in Harbor Town on Black Horse Island... You may choose to stay or go to Harbor Town."

He then added, "The choice is yours, I will not insist."

Although he did not insist, any follower with a bit of sense naturally knew that taking a post in Harbor Town would lead to more important roles.

Therefore, without much hesitation, they were all willing to take up positions in Harbor Town on Black Horse Island.

"Since that is the case, Consultant Goltai, you will leave your position as advisor to Fresh Flower Town and go to Black Horse Island to serve as the advisor for Harbor Town; Finance Officer Blair will be transferred to Harbor Town to serve as Administrative Officer; Isaiah will continue to serve in Fresh Flower Town and take on the responsibilities of an advisor; Zambrotta will also stay in Fresh Flower Town, but also take on the role of a Diplomat on Black Horse Island..."

Landlords usually leave advisory positions to Noble followers.

Apart from Liszt in Fresh Flower Town, only Goltai was an Honored Knight, therefore, by his reassignment as the advisor for Harbor Town, no one could assume the advisory role for Fresh Flower Town.

Administrative Officer Isaiah, at most, could take on the advisory responsibilities but was not able to directly assume the role of an advisor.

However, with hard work, he would eventually be rewarded by Liszt with the title of Honored Knight, achieving a transformation from commoner to Noble—though it may take a very long time; compared to ennoblement through martial achievements, other achievements made ennoblement much more difficult.

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In the evening, during his free time, Liszt intended to look at some Magic Books he hadn't had the chance to examine yet, but Paris sought him out.

"Viscount, I have some issues and would like to ask for your help," she said.

"Please speak," Liszt was sitting by the apple table under the Apple Tree Cordyceps, swaying in his rocking chair, enjoying the evening breeze that dispersed the day's heat.

A clear glass of green tea rested on the table.

"I've failed at practicing Dou Qi and cannot resist the erosion of the Light Dragon Magic Power in my body, so following your suggestion, I began to learn Magic from Chris," Paris said, not without distress.

"I unexpectedly discovered I'm quite successful in meditating on Magic, particularly the Light Attribute Magic Power which has a high affinity for me. But Chris only knows one Light System Magic, Flash Magic, which I've already mastered, and there is nothing else to learn."

"So you plan to have me help you find some Light System Magic?"

"Yes, among the people I know, you are the only one, Viscount, who has the capability to help me," Paris said frankly.

Liszt got up, picked up his teacup, and took a sip of the now-cool tea, saying, "It is indeed very difficult to find Light System Magic, but rest assured, I will help you find some Light System Magic casting plans as soon as possible... Does this mean, you intend to change your path to become a Light System Mage?"

"I hope I can successfully transition. I vaguely feel that once I'm able to control the Light Dragon Magic Power inside me with Magic, the erosion of my body by the Light Dragon Magic Power will be greatly reduced, and maybe I will be able to live a little longer."

"This is truly exciting news, Paris," Liszt said with a clenched fist and a sincere expression, "No matter what, I will help you transition into a Light System Mage, allow you to overcome the erosion of Light Dragon Magic Power, and have the freedom to enjoy life like a normal person."

"Thank you," she responded.

"Do we need to say thank you to each other?" Liszt smiled.

Paris met Liszt's gaze, then a flush of red swiftly crept up her cheeks, and she awkwardly turned her head away, "Then I'll leave everything in the hands of Viscount, I... have something else, I must take my leave."

The person had already walked away.

Liszt still reminisced about the charming turn of Paris's head.

It was undeniable that this female Black Dragon Childe had a dynamic beauty that was pleasing to the eye. However, his feelings for Paris were limited to admiration, without any deliberate pursuit

of more, respecting each other's spiritual independence. Often like this, there would be a taste of close friendship.

It could perhaps be called a platonic relationship.

As for how future feelings might evolve, he was unclear, with no real direction—indeed, other than the clear goal of Dragon Riding, he was quite muddled about what exactly he wanted for himself.

Especially in matters of the heart, just going with the flow.

He had been moved.

The confession from Asina Salmon left him in turmoil, nearly unable to contain himself; the passionate night with Duniko Hyacinth gave him the impulse to make a lifelong commitment; the warm kiss and late-night invitation from Rona Sally Golden Wheat made him waver between hesitation and regret.

The beauty and flawlessness of Sea Sprite Ake made him harbor endless protective and possessive desires; and Paris's carefree attitude and occasional naivety often led to shared knowing smiles.

But none of this matched the head-over-heels love he imagined.

Not having met the "right person after looking in the eyes," nor experiencing a tumultuous or do-or-die love, sometimes Liszt would ask himself, "Besides myself, can I fall in love with another person?"

No answer.

He had a servant bring paper, pen, and envelope resin, unfolded the paper and wrote a letter that said, "Elkerson, contact your Magician friends, help me acquire Light System casting schemes, ten Gold Coins for a standard Light System Magic, forty Gold Coins for Light System Magic that only a Grand Magician can master."

Except for Flash Magic and Invisibility Technique, Paris had already learned them.

After writing the letter, he melted the resin, poured it onto the envelope's seal, and before it solidified, he pressed his newly carved stamp onto it with force.

The stamp bore the "Liszt" Serpent Script mark.

He called for Retainer Knight Xavier and handed him the envelope, "Go to Coral City and find Elkerson, give him this letter."

Xavier, skilled at flattery and now Liszt's most trusted among the Retainer Knights, immediately replied with respect, "Yes, my lord!"

The Retainer Knight left.

Liszt reclined back into his rocking chair, gazing at the sunset sky, his eyebrows slightly raised, "Water System Mage Ake... Light System Mage Paris... Human Mage Chris... how many more Magicians can I collect?"

Chapter 424 Tri-State Magic Array

Speaking of water mages, Liszt immediately thought that Ach should also be promoted to Grand Magician.

Nevertheless, he waited until the banquet was over before he went to the sea view villa. The crystal lamp light had been burning all night, and tonight, the beautiful shell girl was reading under the light.

"Brother!"

Ach, familiar with Liszt's footsteps, didn't hide in the room but awaited his arrival with reserved excitement, "You're here."

"I haven't seen you in a few days, Ach, and you seem to have changed a bit?" Liszt always felt that Ach now had a different air about her, more so than when he saw her a few days ago.

"Ach really has changed." The sea serpent twirled joyfully, like a fairy under the moon, her curvaceous figure making Liszt's mouth go dry, "Brother, can you guess what changes have happened to Ach, please?"

Has she developed?

Of course, that was unlikely. Liszt's eyes sparkled, "Ach, have you been promoted to a Water System Grand Mage?"

"Mmm!" A touch of pride showed on Ach's little face, and she then extended her hand and slowly conjured a water wave shield to envelop herself, "I just learned it two days ago, and I'm still not very proficient. The casting difficulty is quite high for these advanced spells, requiring prolonged preparation."

"Let me test the defense of the water wave shield." Liszt couldn't wait to draw his Sky-Cleaving Greatsword and aimed a fierce chop at Ach's water wave shield.

There was no Dou Qi attached, it was merely a plain chop.

When the sword blade touched the water wave shield, it felt like chopping into a kind of chopping block, sinking in a little bit before meeting a great resisting force, unable to penetrate any further.

He lifted the sword blade, and the water wave shield was intact.

"I'm going to infuse Dou Qi now, be careful, Ach."

"Mmm."

Fire Attribute Dou Qi surged powerfully within him. Now, Liszt's consumption of magic potions had become smoother, and his Dou Qi naturally more abundant. Flames danced upon the Sky-Cleaving Greatsword as he chopped fiercely at the water wave shield once more, and a dull thud rang out from where the sword blade touched the shining light of the shield.

The water wave shield violently oscillated and flickered but firmly blocked Liszt's close-range hefty strike.

Sheathing the Sky-Cleaving Greatsword, he nodded, "The defense of the water wave shield is quite good. Based on my attack just now, it would probably take dozens of chops to break the water wave

shield. If I were to unleash my strongest attack, it would still require at least five or six hits to break it, very powerful."

Of course, facing the charge of a band of knights, a magician probably couldn't maintain it.

But when it comes to a duel or hunting magical beasts, a magician wrapped in a water wave shield could virtually annihilate the opponent... assuming the magician had time to do it.

Ach canceled the water wave shield and asked eagerly, "Brother, is Ach very powerful now?"

"Of course you're powerful, but you still lack advanced offensive magic. Your next step should be to learn Waterfall," Liszt said as he stroked her azure hair.

"Ach has already started learning Waterfall, but advanced magic is hard to learn. There's too much content to grasp, and I can't perform it instantaneously."

"You're already doing great. Normally, Grand Magicians can't even instantly cast common spells," Liszt consoled her, then asked, "By the way, Ach, after your promotion to Grand Magician, did you notice any changes in your body, in your magic power or spellcasting? Or rather, what's the difference between a Grand Magician and a Magician?"

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The difference between a Grand Magician and a Magician had always been something Liszt was curious about.

Now that Ach had advanced, she could finally give Liszt a glimpse into the qualitative change, and as she continued to share her experiences, it became clearer to him.

Essentially.

Magicians rely on meditation to harness magic power, then use that power to create runes, which form a magic array. Magic is the manifestation of magic power constrained within a magic array.

Magic apprentices only know about meditation, or use magic power to form the simplest of runes, and complete the simplest magic arrays—basic magic. Spells such as the Water Arrow Spell, Flying Rock Technique, Fireball Technique, Wind Blade Spell, Flash Magic, etc., and they may not even realize that the magic they're casting is a magic array.

Magicians have mastered runes well enough to form magic arrays within themselves and release more advanced magic—common magic like Water Arrow Barrage, Rock Spike, Light Body Skill, Great Fireball, et cetera. This represents a solidified understanding of magic.

And Grand Magicians, they've broken through cognitive barriers regarding magic arrays, deeply understanding the relationship between magic runes and the arrays, and extending to the essence of the relationship between magic and magic power.

Once they grasp this layer of relationship, they can manipulate the runes to induce more complex changes in the magic array, evolving to unleash more powerful spells—advanced magic.

"Ach, do you think my understanding is correct?" Liszt summarized the content Ach had mentioned, and reflected, "Basic magic is like an embryonic form of a magic array, common magic is like the static form of a magic array, and advanced magic is the dynamic form of a magic array?"

The embryonic form of a magic array—Magic Apprentice.

The static magic circle—Magician.

The dynamic magic array—Grand Magician.

That is Liszt's understanding of magic, in a nutshell.

Ach pondered for a moment, then nodded, "Brother, your summarization is quite vivid, and it's essentially correct. However, regarding the understanding of dynamic magic arrays, there should be an additional point. Ach is a Water Mage, so when releasing Water System advanced magic, the form of the magic array undulates like flowing water."

"If the dynamic form of advanced Water Magic is like flowing water, does that mean the dynamic form of advanced Fire System magic is like a flame burning?"

"It's highly likely."

After understanding this,

Liszt had a good grasp of the principles of a magician's practice. He patted Ach's hair and said, "It's very hard to find advanced Water Magic spellcasting methods, and you might not have more advanced Water Magic to learn for a while. However, you can start researching practical applications of magic arrays."

"Do you mean making magic equipment and extracting magic potions?"

"Yes."

"Mm-hmm, Ach will study hard to help brother make magic equipment and magic potions!" Ach shook her bracelet on her wrist, a gift from Liszt that could amplify casting range.

Armed with Ach's insights,

Liszt immediately set to work on writing a book about magic. He named the book Three-Phase Magic Array and Reality Interaction Theory.

The title was grand, but the content was straightforward—it simply summarized the three stages of a magician's magic from Ach's perspective, comparing the magic array in magic with that in magic equipment, and ventured into some discussions about the application of magic arrays.

It wasn't filled with detailed theories, just some general talk.

He planned for the book to be thirty thousand words long.

This book wasn't intended for public distribution, just meant to be given to Chris Truth for her to read, and later, when other magicians faced issues with advancing, they could also refer to this book.

"Once I finish writing it, I'll have Ach proofread it for typographical errors... Who would've thought that I, a knight in my own right, would actually write a book on magic."

"Magic's loss is sure, for not having me study it."

Chapter 425 Why Work So Hard

In three days, Liszt was busy writing his book "Three-Phase Magic Array and Reality Interaction Theory". At the same time, the officials in the acting administration had already drafted the industrial transfer plan.

The plan established that within a year, all Elf Cordyceps would gradually be relocated to Black Horse Island for protection. Plants like Tulips, Thorns, Flame Mushrooms, and Dragon Hollyhock, which are ingredients for Magic Potions, will also be progressively moved for cultivation on Black Horse Island. Fresh Flower Town would only retain ordinary crops, relying on compost for irrigation.

As for workshops, the Bone Craftsman Shop, Magic Workshop, Crystal Workshop, Brewing Workshop, and Soap Making Workshop, all would be moved to the Port Town. Most of the craftsmen would also relocate to the Port Town, leaving the shops and workshops of Fresh Flower Town to the apprentices.

The plan was detailed.

Liszt didn't have much to add, obviously agreeing with the plan and delegating its implementation to the officials.

He was more concerned with the Smoke Mission.

"Complete the mission, reward: Oily Mutated Variety Corn Grass."

"Hmm?" Seeing the Serpent Script for "oily", a look of disappointment flashed across Liszt's eyes, "Isn't this just corn cobs? Oily mutated variety, is it going to turn into soybean oil or sesame oil, or will it compete with peanut oil?"

The oil currently consumed in the castle was extracted from soybeans and peanuts, both of which Liszt could accept, and he had no more particular demands in terms of taste.

Therefore.

Oily Corn Grass was not really a reward to get excited about.

He turned to the new Smoke Mission: "Mission: Resurrecting Fire Dragon Bones—have you forgotten that the parched dragon bones need the nourishment of magic power? Only then can they nurture a result that makes your heart flutter. Please organize the serfs to mine 10 tons of volcanic glass. Reward: Agitation of the Rubber Bug."

After reading it, he immediately had an inkling: "Volcanic Glass, Fire Dragon Bones... it seems like something good is about to be born. I must complete this mission quickly, no matter what!"

"Only."

"Why is the reward the agitation of the Rubber Bug, not the agitation of the Corn Grass Bug? I always thought the previous two missions were linked tasks related to the Corn Grass Bug."

Based on his understanding of the Smoke Missions, continuous rewards of the same type indicated the arrival of a chain mission. Therefore, the previous two rewards of mutated Corn Grass had led him to anticipate that perhaps the Corn Grass Bug was about to evolve, much like Jela's evolution before.

But then, suddenly, the reward for the mission became the agitation of the Rubber Bug.

"What exactly are these triplets agitated about? Could they be preparing to evolve? It shouldn't be possible; they've only been born for half a year... So, what are they agitated about?"

He could only wait until the Smoke Mission was completed to observe the Rubber Bug triplets—who at the moment were residing peacefully in the castle, calm in both mind and action, showing no signs of abnormality.

With a trace of disappointment,

Liszt went to check the Corn Grass fields, in search of Oily Corn Grass. However, compared to the previous corn and sorghum, Oily Corn Grass was harder to find.

After setting the serfs from Barley Hamlet to search for two days, they still hadn't found the Oily Corn Grass he was hoping for.

His only choice was to issue an order: "To expand the cultivation area of Corn Grass, harvesting of Corn Grass is prohibited for one month. Wait for the Corn Grass seeds to mature before considering the harvest." Strictly speaking, the administration hadn't immediately planned to expand Corn Grass cultivation, but the officials had grown accustomed to Liszt's occasional arbitrary decisions.

And so, the Corn Grass was protected.

They could slowly search and wait for the appearance of Oily Corn Grass.

...

As time flies, the mares in the stables gave birth one after another. The first batch of mixed-breed foals with Black Blood Treasured Horse lineage was born.

On the other side, the Fig Bug, Blackberry Bug, and Pea Bug had also been born, and news had come from Black Horse Island that the Green Tea Bug had been born as well.

Liszt had made a trip to Black Horse Island. While overseeing the mining of volcanic glass, he also contracted the Green Tea Bug. With that, he officially owned 24 Elf Bugs.

The newly contracted Fig Bug, Blackberry Bug, and Pea Bug had been brought to Black Horse Island and planted in the agricultural area planned by the port town. These areas would gradually be turned into vast farmlands.

Not only these Elf Bugs.

The Alfalfa Cordyceps from the grasslands outside the castle had also been relocated to the expansive grasslands at the center of Black Horse Island; the four Serpent Blood Fruit Bugs and their cordyceps had been planted early in the subsidiary agricultural land of the port town, and a large Serpent Blood Fruit orchard had been planned; the Fragrant Coconut Tree Cordyceps had also been moved to Sandy Beach Island, a subsidiary island of Black Horse Island.

The Fragrant Coconut Trees in Fresh Flower Town were distributed in long strips along the beach, which limited the influence of the cordyceps, so Liszt simply relocated them to Sandy Beach Island.

Sandy Beach Island was full of Fragrant Coconut Trees and was not large in size, fitting perfectly within the area of influence of the Fragrant Coconut Tree Cordyceps.

Most of the other cordyceps would need to wait until the harvest at the end of autumn, or until the farmland on Black Horse Island was ready, to be relocated.

"Sir, we have collected a large number of mangrove saplings from Mangrove Island and are now transporting them to the mouth of the Red River for planting. The breeding of Green-headed Ducklings is also underway with hand-feeding. With Green Caterpillars as feed, the ducklings are growing well," Blair, who had become the Administrative Officer of the port town, respectfully reported.

The Red River was the largest river on Black Horse Island. Its name had no special significance, decided simply because of the planting of mangroves.

It originated from Ice Grass Hill, passed through the Burial Ground, and eventually flowed toward the eastern sea, forming a small delta at the mouth, piled with silt.

Mangroves thrived in the muddy estuary, making it possible to develop a new mangrove forest there.

"Till the land as quickly as possible and then breed the Green Caterpillars. These bugs are treasures," Liszt said.

Blair agreed wholeheartedly: "Yes, the green fur of the Green Caterpillars is more suitable for weaving blankets than the wool of the gazelles from Eagle Perch Mountain. It can be used as food for Magical Beasts and also for making clothing. It's extremely valuable."

The green fur of the Green Caterpillars might not look appealing in color, but it was very suitable for making clothes, warm and comfortable.

Blair continued to report: "However, there is a severe shortage of serfs in the port town. Sir, we need to continue purchasing serfs, preferably five thousand or even ten thousand at a time. The vast land on Black Horse Island can absorb these serfs, and with the Knight Squad formed, the serfs would not be able to resist our rule."

Liszt did not respond to that remark, but instead asked, "How is the sale of rubber going?"

"Currently, we have dealt with Tulip Castle, Shattered Stone Castle, and Beer Castle. The price is double that of glutinous rice, and the response is not bad, barely enough to cover the gold coins needed for the territory... But the production of rubber is still too slow, even with the Rubber Bugs recovering. The stock is shrinking day by day, and soon we won't have enough for ourselves."

When it came to gold coins.

Liszt felt annoyed: "Let's just endure this period for now."

Despite having piles of good things and the tremendous potential of his territory, which promised immeasurable achievements in the future, he still couldn't change the current embattled situation—he was poor!

Every time he came to Black Horse Island and looked at the empty plot for the future castle, he would feel heartbroken—contemplating over five hundred different design schemes, but all could only be drawn on heavyweight paper.

Out from the range of Black Horse Island.

The gloomy mood brought on by poverty hadn't yet recovered when Butler Carter brought another worry: "My lord, you will soon be attending the wedding of Sir Meioubao and the Little Princess. What do we need to select as a gift? Should we prepare the gift according to the standard you set for Young Master Levis's grand wedding?"

"Mr. Carter, what do you think if I only send a few bars of Fresh Flower Soap and a few bottles of Fresh Flower Brew as gifts, would that be acceptable?"

Carter showed an embarrassed yet polite smile, "That is..."

Chapter 426 The Gift Must Be Given

Fresh Flower Soap and Fresh Flower Brew obviously couldn't be considered the main gifts, as it would greatly diminish Liszt's stature, who was now the Viscount of Black Horse Island, a mid-tier noble.

Moreover, the person getting married was his own cousin with whom he had a good relationship.

Specialties, food, resources, these three things fundamentally make up the gifts exchanged between nobles in this era.

"Aside from gourmet food, the specialties of Fresh Flower Town include Fresh Flower Soap and Fresh Flower Brew, and I'll definitely choose a good amount of these three. As for resources, I can gift a few small Black Pearls, and pick some Jade, Crystal, and Mithril respectively. The total value of the gifts should properly convey my sentiments."

Interactions among nobles, especially big nobles, tend to be quite generous.

Liszt was rather helpless but he had no choice but to give a gift, and it couldn't look shabby either; he could only painfully gather a batch of resources: "If I don't get married soon, it seems unlikely that I'll be able to recover these gifts... With the custom of gift-giving, it doesn't seem like I have many opportunities to receive gifts either."

As a bachelor, he had neither weddings nor funerals to organize, nor occasions to celebrate a longevity, at most he could celebrate a birthday.

After giving it some thought.

He instructed the butler, "Mr. Carter, I'll prepare a batch of precious gifts myself, please help me choose some supplementary gifts, preferably some novel specialties, mainly delicious food."

"Yes, my lord."

And with that, the matter of the gifts was mostly settled. Splurging was inevitable, but Liszt was willing to pay that price. Not to mention that Meioubao had treated him quite well, just the Sword Saint's Notes given to him by Marquis Merlin were worth reciprocating — he often read it and had committed it to heart.

The experiences summarized by the Sword Saint at the Completion Level were invaluable.

He rose to his feet and went out the door, mounting the now fully recovered Fire Dragon Horse, and headed for the Magic Workshop in Little Wheat Village. At the Magic Workshop, Chris was extracting Magic Potions while teaching Paris magic.

"Viscount."

"How is the magic learning progressing?"

"Paris has shown outstanding affinity for Light System Magic; what she lacks are only casting plans. Despite this, she has already started working on the Magic Array... Thanks to you for bringing the 'Three-Phase Magic Array and Reality Interaction Theory', it has opened the door for me to advance to Grand Magician."

"Is that so, you're about to advance?"

Chris Truth said modestly, "I am trying, but I can't guarantee when I will succeed."

"Chris is remarkably skilled in magic, and she is also an excellent teacher," Paris praised without reservation. "I've learned a lot of magic knowledge following her... Viscount, you know I'm not fond of reading, and Chris always explains magical knowledge to me like she's telling a story."

"Hmm, teaching students in accordance with their aptitude, that's indeed a very good method." Liszt suddenly asked, "Chris, which field of Advanced Magic are you focusing on to be your pathway to becoming a Grand Magician?"

Chris shook her head, "I haven't made a choice yet, currently there are casting plans for Water, Fire, Earth, Wind, and Ice High-Level Magics, any of which could be the breakthrough point."

The magics brought by Chris and Elkerson combined, amounted to seven kinds of Advanced Magic—Water System's Water Wave Shield, Waterfall; Earth System's Rock Grenade, Rock Wall; Fire System's Resist Flame Ring; Wind System's Tornado; Ice System's Permafrost.

Actually, Paris' innate abilities obtained through the Light Dragon Magic Power, "Light and Shadow Tug," could be categorized as an Advanced Light System Magic—Invisibility Technique.

However, this was her instinct, lacking a systematic casting plan.

Paris suggested, "I think, Chris, you could learn Permafrost. It's so hot right now, by mastering Permafrost you could place a large block of ice in the Magic Workshop for cooling."

"I can already create Ice Blocks with my regular Ice Freezing Spell, Paris," Chris rejected Paris' suggestion. "I can make ice cream on my own workbench; for a Magic Technician who isn't biased towards any particular system, summer isn't too difficult... Ice System Magic is quite challenging, I should choose a simpler Advanced Magic."

Liszt suggested, "I suggest choosing the Water System or Wind System as the breakthrough point, as the Duchy of Sapphire is an archipelago nation where sailing is an important component. The use of advanced Water System and Wind System magic is significant."

"Then I will choose the Wind System. If Viscount brings me along when sailing, I can help speed up the journey," Chris quickly decided.

And she cast a covert glance at the strikingly handsome Liszt.

As a magician who esteemed the Truth and was prepared to dedicate herself to it, she had no intention of continuing with the secular institution of marriage. Instead, she was prepared to devote her finite life to the infinite study of magic.

However, it didn't prevent her from working for a lord who made her heart flutter, frequently seeing his confident smile was enough to console her during the lonely nights—no matter if it's a man or a woman, as long as one has hands, one could fend for oneself.

Thus.

After a brief chat with the two "Lis", Liszt got down to business, "Chris, how much of this batch of magic potions have you completed? I'm about to leave for Red Crab Island to attend a wedding and need a batch of magic potions as backup."

"I've completed the majority, enough for you, Viscount, to use for a week," she replied.

"I will depart in three days. Can you prepare two weeks' worth for me by then?" he asked.

"Yes," she said.

"Then I'll leave it to you," he said.

Chris smiled, "You're too polite, Chris is always willing to serve the Viscount."

...

Three days later, a well-prepared Liszt set off for Tulip Castle with his Retainer Knights. Riding the landwalker bird Loki, he led the Blizzard Beasts Storm and Flame.

Douson, together with Rock, Surge, Thunder, Light, Ice Snow, and Shadow, stayed in Fresh Flower Town.

He was now consciously training the discipline of the eight tiny ones during outings. As Intermediate Magical Beasts, they must adapt to various environments and maintain absolute obedience to Liszt.

Only in this way could he command the Blizzard Beast Squad at will and sweep through the enemy forces on the battlefield of the knights' charge.

No one yet knew that they were all Intermediate Magical Beasts, but they would learn soon. At that time, the name Liszt would once again astound everyone—with nine Intermediate Magical Beasts as pets, military exploits would be within easy reach, and the title of Earl was almost assured.

As long as his strength could break through to that of a Sky Knight—the Grand Duchy's regulation stated that an Earl must be a Sky Knight and if for three generations none can become Sky Knights, the title would be revoked.

A noble's strength was explicitly linked to their title.

"Liszt, have you prepared my birthday gift?" Levi's asked after a hug at Tulip Castle, "This time I'm afraid I won't be able to celebrate my birthday at Tulip Castle. I'll either celebrate at Long Taro Castle or on the way back."

His birthday was on August 19th.

The wedding date for Meioubao was August 17th, just two days apart.

"Oh, I forgot. Since we can't hold a birthday party, let's just skip it then. You can make up for it with a grand birthday party next year," Liszt suggested somewhat gloomily.

Levis laughed, "The birthday party can be skipped, but I must definitely receive the gift."

Chapter 427 Earl's Quality Green Tea

The entire Tulip Castle household set off, including the Earl, Lady Marie, Levis, Li Vera, Liszt, and Lidun. Only Lady Penelope stayed behind due to ill health.

"Lucky Liszt, take this potted plant with you and tell that handsome young fellow at Meioubao that my plant has given birth to two Elf Bugs."

Lady Penelope earnestly told Liszt before leaving.

She already knew her fig potted plant had bred Fig Bugs, so she was now doubly concerned about her potted plants and truly believed they were treasures.

"Of course, I believe my cousin will be delighted to receive your potted plant; perhaps he too will be blessed with an Elf Bug," Levis had a servant take the potted plant.

He sneakily used the Eye of Magic to check the plant and found no trace of magic power.

Lady Penelope said with an air of expectation, "It depends on his luck. If he is favored by the knight's glory as you are, he is certain to get an Elf Bug. If he doesn't get one, it's not because my potted plant isn't precious enough, but because he isn't favored by the knight's glory."

Liszt offered a faint smile.

At that moment, Li Vera came over, "I just can't help but feel envious of you; why do you always have luck that others don't? I looked through all of grandmother's potted plants and couldn't tell which might give birth to Elf Bugs, yet in your hands, they continually produce them."

"You know, I am blessed by the knight's glory; I am the Son of Glory." He had now learned to shamelessly toot his own horn; being high-profile on Coral Island wasn't a mistake.

After a moment of thought, Li Vera sighed, "I won't be surprised the day you become an Earl."

"Neither will I."

"You've really grown up; I can't find a trace of your childhood self anymore."

"It's still there; after all, I've always been this handsome since I was young."

"Heh."

...

The ship sailed across the vast ocean.

Liszt spent his idle time at the bow of the ship, setting up a deck chair, a parasol, brewing a cup of green tea, and arranging a plate of fruit.

Enjoying the cool breeze on his face.

"You really know how to enjoy yourself," said the Earl, emerging from the ship's cabin to the deck, where he found Liszt lounging in his chair.

He couldn't help feeling a pang of jealousy, thinking that his son's life seemed different from his own.

"It's too hot and the cabin is too stuffy. Better to come out and enjoy the sea breeze," Liszt stood up and instructed his personal manservant, "Thomas, bring over a chair."

"Yes, my lord."

"Tom, brew a cup of green tea for the Earl."

"Yes, my lord."

Thomas quickly brought over a chair for the Earl to sit in, and Tom prepared a cup of green tea, placing it on a side table. Both the table and the chair were products of the woodworking workshop that Liszt had brought specially.

The Earl's gaze fell upon the scene behind Liszt.

Storm and Flame were fast asleep, snoring heavily.

"Are they descendants of Douson?"

"Yes, one is named Storm and the other Flame."

"Do they take after Douson or the Fierce Earth Dog?" the Earl asked casually.

Liszt casually replied, "They're probably more like Douson."

"It's not bad to keep a few low-level magical beasts... Wait, what did you just say? Their lineage is closer to Douson's?" The Earl immediately stood up, walked over to the sleeping Blizzard Beasts, and reached out to pet one of them, Storm.

Storm's alertness was commendable, as it immediately opened its eyes and, seeing the unfamiliar Earl, made to rise and bite.

But Liszt promptly commanded, "Storm, lie down and don't move!"

A moment later.

The Earl's astonishment had not lessened: "This truly is the behavior of an Intermediate Magical Beast. Its magic power dissipates very quickly, surpassing the scope of Low-Level Magical Beasts... If this is the case, with Douson having eight offspring, doesn't that mean there are eight more Intermediate Magical Beasts?"

"It's almost safe to say that, but neither Douson nor the Eight Tiny Ones are powerful Intermediate Magical Beasts. However, tearing down a castle should not be difficult for them."

After a good while.

The Earl returned to his own chair and slowly began, "Liszt, do you realize what this means?"

"It means that once they grow, even Sky Knights could be besieged to death; or during a Knight Order charge, they could hold off several knights... Does it also mean that, perhaps even before my promotion to Sky Knight, I could achieve glorious military exploits and even satisfy the military exploits required to be granted the title of Earl?"

"Under ideal conditions, indeed it could be so. Maybe by that time I'd still be an Earl, and you would already have the chance to start a new family line."

"I've never thought about starting a new family."

"Starting a new family is nothing special, it's just a change of surname, a part of Noble honor. Both the Golden Wheat Sheaf and Golden Wheat Grain families, despite being offshoots, are as close as ever," the Earl said. "If you become the new Earl, I would be very pleased to see you start a new family."

Liszt still couldn't quite understand this world's perception of honor, hence he uttered a meaningless, "Hm."

The Earl didn't know how to continue.

Nine Intermediate Magical Beasts, a force like this, so long as no accidents occur, challenging for the title of Earl would definitely not be difficult, and charging for the title of Marquis would just be a matter of time.

He prided himself on his strong talent, having fought his way from Viscount to Earl, and he even harbored hopes of charging towards the rank of Marquis, always full of pride.

Though he was looking forward to each of his offspring achieving greater things, he knew deep down that of his daughters and three sons, the one with the most hope to surpass him was Lidun.

This was also the reason he wasn't fully committed to piling resources onto Levis for the Sky Knight challenge.

He had placed the hopes of "hoping for his son to become a Dragon" on his youngest son. Hence, for a small mistake in the past, he directly stripped Lidun's family tutor, the Honored Knight Zambrotta, of his title—he was very expectant of Lidun's future development, if indeed Lidun's talents were extraordinary.

If father and son joined hands in their efforts, the charge toward the rank of Marquis would be stable.

If Lidun's performance upon maturing was unlike his childhood, it wouldn't be too late then to fully support Levis, stacking Magic Potions and advancing to Sky Knight.

So his consistent belief was—Levis could maintain what has been achieved, while Lidun represented hope.

As for Liszt, the more he grew, the less promising he became, from a beacon of hope to a disappointment, and eventually, when he was indifferently granted his own fief, he became the most failed creation in the Earl's heart.

Yet, it was this overlooked son who was now showing momentum that surpassed his own.

A seventeen-year-old Elite Earth Knight was not particularly outstanding—but Liszt had become an Earth Knight only after reaching adulthood and had been promoted to elite status in just over half a year; this talent was terrifying enough.

His strength was already formidable.

Even more incredible was his luck.

The Earl didn't want to list examples to prove how greatly Liszt was favored by knightly glory, he breathed deeply, lifted the teacup on the table, and took a sip of green tea.

Upon tasting, he immediately frowned: "What is this tea? Why is it so bitter?"

Liszt explained, "This green tea is brewed from the leaves of the Green Tea Tree, which indeed tastes bitter at first, but after lingering for a moment, you can taste the freshness and fragrance on your lips and teeth."

"Is that so." The Earl savored carefully, indeed sensing the taste of green tea, which was not just bitter, but behind the bitterness was a very novel flavor.

Just like his current mood—initially shocked by Liszt, feeling the bitterness, but after accepting it, filled with a sense of achievement of surpassing the blues.

Chapter 428

"The green tea is quite nice, the more I drink, the more flavorful it becomes. Is this also a specialty product from your territory?" the Earl asked after finishing a cup and having it refilled.

Liszt replied, "I discovered three green tea trees on Black Horse Island, and I'm thinking of ways to expand the planting scale. Fortunately, a green tea bug emerged among them, which greatly reduced the difficulty of cultivating green tea trees."

"Can you just pick the leaves of the green tea tree and brew them in water?"

"They need to be roasted to remove the raw taste and to allow more nutrients from the tea leaves to infuse into the water, which makes the tea especially tasty."

"It does have a rich flavor; I like this taste." The Earl looked at Liszt with a knowing expression, "A cup of green tea after a nap seems to greatly relieve the heat."

"When I return, I'll send a batch of tea leaves for you to brew, Father."

"How many cups will it make?" asked the Earl with a smile.

Liszt, without any embarrassment, answered seriously, "Morning tea, afternoon tea, evening tea—three cups a day, and each cup can be brewed three times. However, drinking that often seems excessive; too much green tea isn't good. So brewing two cups, six times a day, is more appropriate."

He continued, "If we calculate 5 grams per cup, that's 10 grams a day, 300 grams a month. Father, leave the provision of tea leaves for your consumption to me. Once I develop the green tea planting industry, everyone in Tulip Castle will be able to enjoy green tea." Of course, by that time, he would charge for the tea leaves.

While they were chatting,

Levis also stepped out of the cabin and joined the tea tasting—a good thing Liszt brought plenty of tea leaves.

However, unlike the Earl, Levis didn't have the same earnest approach to tea tasting. After a few sips, he still couldn't get used to it: "What's so good about such a bitter drink?"

"Bitter first and sweet later; Brother, you need to taste it carefully."

"I have tasted it, but it's bitter indeed. You should add some milk, sugar cubes, or maybe a bit of minced meat or egg to balance the taste," Levis suggested.

"Its flavor should be appreciated as is, to fully experience the character of green tea. Brother, your life is too impetuous. Drinking tea requires patience. If you don't take the time to experience it, you'll never discover the sweetness behind the bitterness. It's like life itself—you attend too many parties and social events and often overlook the essence of life."

"Oh heavens, Liszt, have you become a minstrel now? Advising me on how to live my life? Sorry, but my life is much more exciting than you imagine. And, I don't like drinking this... green tea," Levis shook his head.

Liszt wasn't annoyed.

It was like playing the lute to a cow.

"Actually, I'm relieved to hear that. The green tea trees have a low yield of tea leaves right now; supplying them for my and Father's consumption is already difficult. If you also liked tea, Brother, I really wouldn't know what to do," he said.

After a while,

Liszt shifted the topic: "Cousin is already married, so when is Brother's wedding with Loria Gold Wheat Ear going to take place?"

"It will be set at the beginning of September, before the Pioneer Mandate begins. Levis will marry Loria," the Earl stated.

With two wedding ceremonies coming up, Liszt was rather helpless at the thought of the expenses: "It's as if it's been agreed upon—Meioubao in August, Levis in September... Father, when will you start worrying about Li Vera?" he asked, showing rare concern for his sister.

"Li Vera is too picky, I don't know what kind of noble she wants to marry. I'll see if she makes a suitable choice; if not, in a couple of years, I'll choose a partner for her," he responded.

As nobility with a title, Li Vera actually wasn't worried about finding a match.

So Liszt just asked casually, his interest lying more in this year's Pioneer Mandate: "Is the Grand Duke still waiting for the Steel Ridge Kingdom and the Eagle Kingdom to go to war? He has not asked about the dragon-slaying incident in our country, what impact does it have on the outside world?"

The battle for Iron Hoof Island had been concluded for a month.

The feedback from foreign countries should have reached the Grand Duchy by now.

The Earl said, "The specifics are not very clear, but probing is inevitable. Steel Ridge Kingdom will likely send an envoy to visit Blue Dragon Island to communicate with the Sapphire Family... The Pioneer Mandate this year will reflect the will of the Grand Duke as well as the positions of the various kingdoms."

"When do you think the Pioneer Mandate will be issued?"

"No later than October."

"Hmm."

"What's the matter, do you plan on participating in the Pioneer Mandate again?"

"Yes, I hope to continue participating. Although the strength of my territory is still rather weak, my personal strength is not. I also have Douson, and at the very least, I can take over the logistics... Most importantly, my territory is in dire need of serfs, and I hope to purchase more from the Eagle Kingdom."

The Earl nodded, "That's fine, you can join me this year, and have Levis stay in Tulip Castle."

Levis interjected eagerly, "I look forward to going into battle as well, father."

"You need to stay with Loria, and, it would be best if you can produce the fourth generation of the Tulip Family as soon as possible, to ensure the continuity of the family's property."

Lady Penelope was the first generation, the Earl was the second, Levis was the third, and his son would naturally be the fourth.

Such matters did not require shyness, so Levis nodded and replied, "I will work hard with Loria to try to have an heir as soon as possible."

"In addition, you need to properly manage your mistresses and illegitimate children, understand?" said the Earl suddenly.

"Oh heavens, father, are you perhaps mistaken? I do indeed know several women, but I definitely do not have any illegitimate children."

"There's no need to explain to me. You must understand Loria's status as a Marquis's daughter; she will not tolerate your mistresses and illegitimate children taking even half a step into Tulip Castle."

"I understand."

The private lives of the Nobles often involve various mistresses and illegitimate children.

However, when the Great Nobles intermarry, it is difficult to tolerate the involvement of illegitimate children in the family, especially within families where the bride's side is a strong Noble house. Illegitimate children can only end up outcast, struggling against the injustices of the world on their own.

Drifting at sea for one day and one night.

Finally reaching Red Crab Island.

The Deputy Butler Ranieri of Long Taro Castle had been waiting early at the port of Sea Crab City to receive the Tulip Family's delegation. By the time they reached Long Taro Castle, it was the afternoon of August 15th, with only a day and a half left before the wedding at Meioubao.

"Li Weiliam!"

"Mesiro!"

On the road outside Long Taro Castle, Mesiro personally greeted the Earl and his group, expressing great enthusiasm. Clearly, the Tulip Family, with its burgeoning growth, was a powerful ally of the Long Taro Family.

The two Earls who were followers of Marquis Merlin were also in the welcoming party—Sharke Cauliflower and Durant Hyacinth.

After a warm and boisterous round of pleasantries.

Liszt was just another inconspicuous person within the crowd exchanging courtesies; he demonstrated his grace by greeting everyone, then stood to one side.

Glancing at Durant Hyacinth, he was Duniko Hyacinth's father. Clearly, Duniko's excellent genes were inherited from her father, a handsome, middle-aged man who also possessed a refined and elegant demeanor. His style was quite different from that of the more domineering Earl Sharke standing beside him.

Mesiro, Li Weiliam, Sharke, Durant.

The four Sky Knights standing together made Liszt very pleased to find that although his father had the most ordinary appearance, his presence was the most dazzling. It stemmed from his Advanced Dou Qi that was harmonious inside and out, constantly radiating a robust aura that influenced the senses of those around him.

Chapter 429 Better to see once than hear a hundred times

The grey-white walls of Long Taro Castle were adorned with an abundance of flowers, branches, and ribbons, making the majestic castle look especially sacred.

Two huge banners fluttered high on the castle's highest spire.

One was the abstract "Chang Yu" banner of the Long Taro Family, and the other was the Sapphire Family's Sapphire Dragon Banner, rustling in the wind.

These temporarily hung massive banners represented the family marriage alliance.

In the vast area before the castle gate, countless servants were busy arranging the wedding site, with squads of knights interspersed among them, and even officials-looking figures were participating and gesturing orders.

"These are professional servants from the Court and Internal Affairs officials, as well as knights from the Blueblood Knight Order. They are not only taking over the wedding process but also responsible for the defense, as the Grand Duke will personally attend the Little Princess's wedding with Meioubao," Mesiro Taro explained.

Upon hearing this, Earl Li Weiliam's brows furrowed slightly, and his expression quickly turned cold, "It's understandable that the Blueblood Knight Order is taking over the defense, but why isn't the wedding process conducted according to the traditions of Long Taro Castle? This is Long Taro Castle's ceremony of welcoming its mistress, even if she is the Grand Duke's daughter."

Durant and Sharke did not join the conversation.

Mesiro also felt somewhat embarrassed, "It's my father's wish, hoping to show more respect to the Little Princess."

"The Long Taro Family's contribution of more knights' glory is the respect for the Grand Duke and the Little Princess, not this way," Earl Li Weiliam was very dissatisfied with the Court interfering with Long Taro Castle's etiquette, "I need to talk with Marquis Merlin. Mesiro, is your father in the castle?"

"I will take you to find my father, Durant and Sharke, please entertain the guests for me."

With that, the two hurried into the castle to find Marquis Merlin. Lady Marie and Lidun followed the deputy butler to the guest lounge. These two had rather special identities; they were considered relatives of Long Taro Castle by status, but they had no blood connection, and it was even a bit awkward.

Levis, Li Vera, and Liszt, the three siblings, didn't treat Long Taro Castle like someone else's home.

They found a butler and inquired, "Where is Cousin Meioubao?"

"Master Meioubao has gone to Matsutake Castle. The First Prince has already escorted the Little Princess to reside in Matsutake Castle, waiting for the wedding to come," said the butler. "Miss Melinda's family has also gone with the young master to Matsutake Castle to take care of the Little Princess's daily life."

Matsutake Castle is another castle of the Long Taro Family.

"Should we rush over there or stay in Long Taro Castle?" Liszt asked.

"It's just a two-hour ride on horseback from Long Taro Castle to Matsutake Castle; we might as well hurry over. I haven't seen what the Little Princess looks like yet," Li Vera said excitedly.

Levis shook his head, "I need to stay here. Father is very unhappy with the Court arranging the wedding process for the Long Taro Family. I might be needed to lend a hand later. You go ahead and send my regards to the First Prince."

Afterward.

Liszt and Li Vera set off for Matsutake Castle together.

When they arrived at Matsutake Castle, the sun was about to set, and the entire castle was guarded by knights of the Blueblood Knight Order, barring outsiders from entering.

The siblings waited outside for nearly ten minutes.

Only then did they see Meioubao hastily coming to greet them, "Li Vera, Liszt, you've arrived? Didn't you rest at Long Taro Castle, how come you came to Juniper Castle?"

"We heard that Aunt Melinda's family and Cousin You are all here, and that the First Prince and Little Princess have already moved into Matsutake Castle, so we came over," Li Vera said eagerly. "Where is the Little Princess, cousin? Hurry, take me to visit the Little Princess. I can't wait to meet my future sister-in-law."

Meioubao smiled, "Follow me."

Upon entering the Matsutake Castle, it was necessary to first pay a visit to the First Prince—even though Liszt and Li Vera were not vassals of the Sapphire Family, they only needed to be loyal to their father, Earl Li Weiliam.

"Your Highness the First Prince, I am pleased to see you again," Liszt bowed and paid his respects, neither pretending to be aloof nor deliberately lowering his stance.

The First Prince clearly remembered Liszt, "The only knight promoted during the Battle of Iron Hoof Island, Liszt, I'm also glad to see you."

After a few simple courtesies, Liszt and Li Vera took their leave.

Given the great difference in status and the absence of a vassal relationship between them, indeed, there wasn't much they could talk about. Following Cousin Meioubao, they proceeded to the second floor of the castle, and in the piano room on the second floor, they met Aunt Melinda and Cousin Russell's wife, Cassie Broccoli.

Of course, there were also several other young, eye-catching, lavishly dressed noble debutantes.

"Everyone is here, so please wait a moment to chat," Meioubao said loudly.

Drawing everyone's attention, "Please allow me to introduce... This is my cousin, the daughter of Earl Li Weiliam, Li Vera Tulip, Baroness of Falcon Town; and my cousin, the second son of Earl Li Weiliam, Viscount Liszt Tulip of Black Horse Island, and incidentally, his viscounty is a reward for his military service."

Family shadow and merit-based enfeoffment are two different concepts.

One represents identity, the other represents potential.

While being a second son might be somewhat awkward, gaining recognition through one's own efforts is more noteworthy—who doesn't favor a stronger knight?

Upon entering the room, Liszt felt the gaze of these noble debutantes brighten when they looked at him.

When Meioubao introduced him as a knight ennobled for his military service, their eyes brightened yet again.

"I've heard of you, Liszt, the new Viscount who was promoted during the Battle of Iron Hoof Island and has tamed an Intermediate Magical Beast," a noble debutante said quickly, her eyes roaming over Liszt.

Even though he wasn't dressed in flamboyant Flack Abbieye attire, wearing only a simple suit of leather armor, he still had an outstanding presence.

Seeing that the debutante had already spoken, Meioubao proceeded to introduce her to Li Vera and Liszt, "This is Miss Grasutti Red Maple Leaf, the sister of the Red Maple City Marquis."

Red Maple City Marquis Glendonton Red Maple Leaf was precisely Liszt's immediate superior during the Battle of Iron Hoof Island.

As Marquis Glendonton was the husband of Grand Princess Annie Sapphire, it was natural for his sister Grasutti to become best friends with the Little Princess.

"Pleased to meet you, the lovely Miss Grasutti," Liszt said with a smile and a bow, though against his better judgment, as Grasutti was not particularly beautiful in his eyes.

In Liszt's opinion, she would be considered quite ordinary.

Meioubao continued, "This is Salando Dahlia Hui Lan, the daughter of the Quicksand City Marquis, and she is already spoken for... This is Joanna..."

He introduced several noble debutantes in succession, all offspring of Nobles.

Birds of a feather flock together, and it was only the offspring of Nobles who could be companions to the Little Princess.

Finally, Meioubao approached a beautiful woman sitting at the piano, took her hand, and introduced her with emphasis, "Li Vera, Liszt, need I continue... Angela Sapphire, my fiancée, the future Lady of Long Taro Castle, and your future sister-in-law."

"Pleased to meet you, Your Highness," the siblings said, smiling and paying their respects.

The Grand Duchy's most famous socialite, finally met in person, and soon to become family as well.

Chapter 430 Escape from Matsutake Castle

"Li Vera, Liszt, greetings."

Angela Sapphire exhibited a noble-like smile, brimming with the grace of a lady. She appeared to be about twenty-one, fair-skinned, attractive, and well-rounded—not the epitome of beauty, but she certainly conformed to Liszt's aesthetic preferences.

Moreover, her tone and demeanor were the epitome of elegance.

It was hard to believe that this was the same person alleged to be the infamous socialite known for her openness, or rather, licentiousness. Of course, judging by appearances is wrong, and Liszt didn't let any of his thoughts show.

After exchanging greetings with the myriad of noble young women, he sat next to Aunt Melinda, not wishing to become the center of attention. He spoke little, allowing his sister, Li Vera, to quickly engage with the ladies. He simply exchanged pleasantries with Meioubao.

The cousin was in a state of excitement, constantly glancing over at Angela while talking.

Eager to join in the conversation.

Before long, several noble young women broached the subject of the piano—a common topic amongst them.

Meioubao declared his favorite piece to be "Yuri Ely by the River".

That didn't resonate with anyone, but Salando Dahlia Hui Lan countered, "My favorite is "For Alice". It's simple, pure, like the first time one meets someone they like—the subtle joy and impulse."

"Do you know, it was I who popularized that piano piece," Meioubao chimed in smoothly, "I sent it to Master Hannibal, and later his apprentice performed it all over the country, making "For Alice" renowned nationwide. But guess, where did the piece originate from?"

"Where did it come from?" Salando asked eagerly.

"There is a heartbreaking love story behind it, but let's have Liszt tell everyone. Both the original and the revised versions stemmed from him!"

All eyes turned to Liszt in an instant.

This left Liszt quite speechless, as he had no desire to stand out. He did not wish to develop any memories with a particular young woman on this outing.

"It was merely in memory of a pair of siblings in love who were forced to part. I happened to hear it and transcribed it," he answered, glossing over the details.

However, Li Vera interjected, "Liszt has an exceptional piano talent. I've heard him play a piece he composed himself about Castle in the Sky... Liszt, why not play that piece for us again?" While speaking, she even winked purposefully.

A puzzled look came his way, suggesting, "With so many noble ladies here, you'd better take one home. That's all the help I can offer, brother."

That made Liszt want to laugh and cry at the same time.

Then Meioubao, Grasutti, and Salando started egging him on to play the piano piece he composed. Liszt intended to refuse, but even the Little Princess spoke up, "Liszt, may I have the honor of hearing you play this piece?"

Without any other choice, he walked to the piano and sat down.

His fingers gently brushed the keys as he briefly narrated a story, "I've heard of a city above the sky, affluent, peaceful, and happy. There was a child named Xida who descended from the sky holding a flying stone, and a serf named Bas who wished to prove the existence of Castle in the Sky..."

While getting to grips with the new piano, he finished the story, "To prevent Castle in the Sky from falling into the hands of the Evil Magician, Xida and Bas chanted a spell that made the castle disintegrate and crumble... Though Castle in the Sky was ultimately destroyed, the pursuit, a brave heart, and the beautiful journey was enough."

"This piece is called "With You"."

After finishing the story, Liszt's hands pressed the piano keys, starting to play the piano piece he knew all too well.

...

The piece concluded.

Noble young ladies almost clapped their hands raw.

"It's so exquisite, I feel as though I am in the sky, soaring among the clouds."

"It made me feel a tranquility in my heart that I have never known, an emptiness."

"Ah, I have fallen in love with this piano piece, just as I fell for "For Alice"!"

Even Meioubao couldn't help but clap and exclaim, "Li Si Te, if you switched to being a pianist, you would surely achieve the accomplishments of Master Czerny!"

"It's only a momentary feeling, which I composed into a piano piece."

But no matter how modest he was, at Matsutake Castle's dinner, he had already become the center of attention. Noble young ladies always managed to casually inquire about his various details while pretending to chat with him, and there were even those who made suggestive remarks—like three young ladies who bluntly invited him to teach them how to play "With You".

Private lessons.

What would happen behind closed doors was anybody's guess.

Li Si Te eloquently refused such invitations on the grounds of not having the time.

"I must admit I'm jealous of your talent, Li Si Te. If I could compose something as moving as "With You" or "For Alice", I wouldn't need to go through so much trouble pursuing Angela; she would take the initiative and throw herself into my arms," Meioubao kept talking non-stop as they walked.

They left after the dinner, with only one day left before the wedding. It was not appropriate to stay overnight at Matsutake Castle, so they had to return to Long Taro Castle.

To escape this one night.

"You could have easily chosen one of the noble young ladies to return with you to Long Taro Castle; I believe she would not have refused," Li Vera said.

"Sorry, sister, I'm currently in a critical phase of my practice and I don't want to be disturbed by these messy things," Li Si Te replied as he undid the button at his collar. "You, on the other hand, should be more mindful of seizing your own opportunities. Surely many noble young talents have come this time."

"You needn't worry about me; I have my own standards for choosing," she replied.

Li Si Te shrugged noncommittally, which was just as well—he didn't fancy playing matchmaker.

During his walk around Long Taro Castle, he found it bustling with countless servants scurrying back and forth, busily setting up for the wedding ceremony the day after tomorrow, a stark contrast to the quiet he'd encountered on previous visits.

He didn't find the Earl, but he did find Levis.

"Brother, father went to see Grandfather; do you know what they talked about? I saw that The Court's servants and the Internal Affairs Officials haven't left," he said.

"It's actually a misunderstanding. These servants and Internal Affairs Officials are a wedding gift from the Grand Duke to the Little Princess. They will join Long Taro Castle to take care of the Little Princess's daily life and will be under the jurisdiction of Long Taro Castle's butler," Levis shook his head. "The Grand Duke really is too indulgent with the Little Princess."

"Perhaps," was the reply.

"You should also get ready. You, me, Rolie, and three other young nobles will form Meioubao's groomsmen. We'll need to participate in the rehearsal for the wedding tomorrow, so better rest early tonight."

"Do I need to wear some strange clothes?"

"A formal suit is necessary, and you'll even need to wear a floral garland, did you know? But there's a part worth looking forward to— we'll have more interactions with a group of beautiful bridesmaids."