

The Mighty 431

Chapter 431 Teasing at the Wedding

The entire day.

Liszt hadn't enjoyed the pleasure of "close contact with beautiful bridesmaids" that Levis had mentioned. He was like a marionette, manipulated by the internal affairs officials.

"I don't like being a groomsman," Rolie, his cousin, complained under his breath, dressed in a light gold suit, with a wreath of colorful flowers on his head and a round, fluffy, ruffled collar around his neck, looking out of place.

"Count me in,"

Liszt echoed.

He, too, was dressed in the tactless groomsman outfit. He had no idea where the custom of wearing such a ridiculous costume had originated.

Even with his outstanding demeanor and handsome appearance, he was defeated by the suit. Among the groomsmen, only his handsome face stood out a bit.

Levis secretly yawned, "I also regret agreeing to be Meioubao's groomsman. It's hot, tiring, and uncomfortable. I'd rather exhaust myself practicing Dou Qi than stand here as a prop... especially in this ugly and silly suit. I'm all sweaty!"

But there was no helping it; it was custom.

The golden suit represented the glory of knights, the puffy round frilled collar signified the nobility's grandeur, and the colorful woven wreath symbolized nature's blessing.

Only such a group of groomsmen could provide the groom with the utmost support and guard his honor.

Liszt glanced at the opposite side of the red carpet, where a group of bridesmaids was draped in white dresses. They weren't wearing wreaths but bird lady hats with feathers, and with gloved hands, they held a bunch of dry flowers. The white symbolized purity, the bird lady hats signified vigorous Dou Qi, and the dry flowers meant restrained beauty.

At first, the group of bridesmaids was indeed so beautiful that it was hard to take one's eyes off them. But now, Liszt had lost count of how many secretive rolled eyes he had caught from the bridesmaids.

Especially after the rehearsal, their postures, both standing and sitting, lost all grace and were quite rough, far from ladylike.

All in all,

The day had passed in painful rehearsal, and the young ladies who had paid attention to Liszt because of the piano piece "With You" worked themselves half to death as bridesmaids without any intention to flirt with him. This allowed Liszt to sleep soundly again, greeting the wedding day with full energy.

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On the morning of August 17th,

The group of groomsmen assembled, and the wedding had already begun.

It was a complicated sequence of events. First, they had to assist the groom, Meioubao, in going to Matsutake Castle to welcome the bride. Galloping on horses, the six groomsmen inside the carriage all stripped down to just their boxer shorts. Upon arriving at Matsutake Castle, they hurriedly dressed in the bizarre light gold suits.

Then, they put on Ruffs and wreaths.

They stepped out of the carriage with bright smiles, following the bridegroom Meioubao, dressed in glittering gold, towards Matsutake Castle under the guidance of the internal affairs official.

In their hands, each bore a strange potted plant.

They were wheat, barley, glutinous rice, corn, peas, and taro. The first five grains symbolized the food of the harvest, and the last taro signified the family's foundation.

Once they entered the castle, these grains and taro were handed over to the bridesmaid group—the male host handed over the management of the family's foundation to the female host.

The male host was responsible for battle; the female host for the castle. This was the common understanding.

Of course, most male nobles were responsible not just for battle but also for the castle.

The women were merely responsible for enjoyment.

Just as Liszt was passing the glutinous rice in his hands to the opposite bridesmaid, Joanna Evening Primrose, he suddenly felt a caress on the back of his hand.

It was Joanna smiling, her fingers tapping against the back of his hand.

And she gave him an amorous look.

She was the daughter of the Count of Moonlight Island and a direct follower of the Grand Duke, her mother being one of the Grand Duke's cousins, bearing the Sapphire Family's bloodline. At nineteen years old, she was the most stunning among the bridesmaids, bearing a resemblance to Angela Sapphire.

The young lady who had hoped Liszt would teach her piano in private was among them.

Having been tired all day, one might have thought she wouldn't be inclined to any fanciful thoughts, yet after a night of restorative rest, this noble young lady still hinted at Liszt — and did so under the broad light of day.

Maintain a smile.

Liszt pretended not to notice her subtle moves, for in the style of the Little Princess, he truly had no interest in her group of close friends.

The ceremony continued.

After blessings infused with symbolism such as the "exchange of grains," "feeding of horses," and "donning armor," it was time for the bride, Angela Sapphire, to finally emerge from the depths of the castle, under the protection of the First Prince. She shone as brilliantly as her gilded groom.

The golden gown she wore hugged her figure, accentuating her curves, and the light veil at her bosom made the profound cleavage teasingly visible.

Atop her styled hair sat a tiara adorned with gemstones and pearls.

The heavy makeup and significant beautification rendered her stunningly beautiful and noble.

She placed her hand in Meioubao's, who, with his arm, helped her onto the carriage, then Meioubao mounted his horse to personally guard by the side of the carriage.

The bridesmaids each went to separate carriages while Liszt and the rest of the groomsmen also mounted their horses.

Following them were the First Prince and others, forming the bride's entourage, with the Blueblood Knight Order occasionally letting out inexplicable roars, amplifying the procession's presence.

Two and a half hours later.

The procession returned to Long Taro Castle as the sunlight began to intensify.

The groom assisted the bride out of the carriage, while the groomsmen aided the bridesmaids. This time, Liszt found himself being teased again — when he assisted Joanna, she cunningly pretended to slip and fell into his arms. As she stood up, she even pinched Liszt's pectoral muscle.

"You have a really strong body," she said on tiptoe, whispering quickly into Liszt's ear.

In such a situation.

Liszt could hardly show discontent and ruin his cousin's wedding, so he simply smiled and pretended nothing had happened, proceeding with the following rituals.

Serving the groom and bride — the cleansing with spring water, the sharing of a cup of wine, a piece of wheat bread, and the bride spinning yarn while the groom practiced archery.

Finally.

They stepped into the well-decorated hall for the final marital approval ceremony.

It was only then that Liszt had a moment to notice that the entire hall was filled with numerous nobles and their spouses, and at the seats of honor sat an middle-aged couple — Grand Duke Andrew Sapphire and his wife Sarette Dahua Huilan.

The Grand Duke looked well, though he no longer radiated Dragon Might.

Surrounding them were Marquis Merlin, The Mesiro Couple, the First Prince and his wife, Glendenton and the Grand Princess with their spouses, as well as Liszt's brother Li Weiliam and his wife, and other nobles whom Liszt had merely greeted. Only Glendenton from the old Marquises was present, being the Grand Princess's husband after all.

The other Marquises had all sent their heirs in their stead.

Regardless, the Grand Duke and Duchess's very presence at the wedding was an honor in itself.

The officiant of the wedding was an elderly noble, an Internal Affairs Official of The Court, who had presided over the First Prince's wedding before.

Now, with his dimming eyesight, he looked at the thick parchment in his hands and, addressing Meioubao with a dry but booming voice, read, "Meioubao Taro, if the master of the sea, the Lord of all islands, the great Sapphire Duke agrees, do you swear to take Angela Sapphire as your wife?"

"I promise," Meioubao solemnly vowed.

The elderly noble then turned to the Little Princess, "Angela Sapphire, if the master of the sea, the Lord of all islands, the great Sapphire Duke agrees, do you swear to take Meioubao Taro as your husband?"

Angela, too, vowed solemnly, "I promise."

Seeing this, the elderly noble continued, "By the power and name bestowed upon me by the master of the sea, the Lord of all islands, the great Sapphire Duke, I witness your marriage... May the glory of the knights shine upon this newlywed couple."

Chapter 432 Come to My Daisy Castle

The wedding was underway.

Liszt removed the sapphire ring from his left middle finger, lifted Angela's right hand, and carefully placed it on her right ring finger, saying, "Friend—with this gemstone ring you shall understand, I am yours—all my love, forever loyal."

Angela did the same, removing the sapphire ring from her right middle finger, and sliding it onto Liszt's left ring finger, she repeated the same words, "Friend—with this gemstone ring you shall understand, I am yours—all my love, forever loyal."

The landlord witnessed, rings exchanged.

The ceremony was now complete, and by law, Meioubao Taro and Angela Sapphire were husband and wife, protected under the kingdom's laws.

Shortly thereafter.

The bride and groom were sent to change clothes, and the bridesmaids and groomsmen were finally liberated, able to shed their peculiar formalwear for more comfortable attire.

Liszt was almost the first one to rush into the bath, taking a quick shower.

He then changed into a well-fitting Flack·Abbieye—though in reality, Flack·Abbieye was also quite elaborate, and it was still suffering to wear it in the heat, but at such formal gatherings, nobles must dress in Flack·Abbieye, which at least was more comfortable than the earlier outfit.

Once dressed, he stood before the crystal mirror, meticulously attending to the details, letting a servant make sure every hair was in place.

Only then did he step out of the room to attend the upcoming noon banquet.

Standing at a height of 188 centimeters, his tall, upright figure, handsome face, and extraordinary demeanor, along with a pair of deep sapphire-blue eyes.

No matter where Liszt went, he was always a sight for sore eyes.

He had already noticed several bold noble ladies sending him the 'spinach of autumn'. Of course, he had no response for them, not even a smile—there was already one bridesmaid watching him like a hawk, and he really didn't want to invite more trouble; indulgence didn't bring too much pleasure.

The banquet didn't adopt a fixed dining format due to the lack of space, instead, a buffet style was chosen.

Only the Grand Duke and those marquises, earls, and other great nobles were privileged to sit in the castle's second-floor dining room, enjoying an undisturbed lunch.

The lesser nobility or noble heirs circulated around the buffet tables in the first-floor hall and the garden.

Liszt, who was already hungry, naturally did not hold back, picking up a plate and casually selecting food. As most of the food in this world did not suit his taste, he would usually only pick the nutritious ones for the banquets, needing a lot of nutrients for practicing Dou Qi.

He had just chosen a few pieces of magical beast meat and placed them on his plate.

A servant holding drinks came by, smiling and offering Liszt a glass, but he simply shook his head. If he had the chance to avoid alcohol, he would never miss it.

"Hi."

A woman's voice greeted him from behind.

Liszt sighed inwardly, sure enough, being handsome was a hassle, always attracting moths to the flame. He turned around to see a woman, around thirty years old, holding a glass of golden champagne. Dignified and of noble demeanor, yet her eyes betrayed an irrepressible slyness.

"You are Liszt, right? The groom's cousin. I saw you as a groomsman, and you looked very cute," the mature woman said. "I'm Martha Yiniang Peng; my husband was the Earl of Diagonal Island before he fell in battle."

"Lady Martha, nice to meet you."

...

"I heard from a few bridesmaids that you played a very moving piano piece at Matsutake Castle, 'With You,'" she began. "I must tell you, I am utterly fascinated by the piano, so I couldn't help but take the liberty of making your acquaintance. I can't afford to miss out on a talented noble pianist like yourself."

Li Si Te replied, "I play the piano merely as a hobby."

"But your talent is exceptional, just as dazzling as your demeanor. I walked into the buffet corridor, and I saw and recognized you at a glance."

Such flattery usually comes with strings attached.

Li Si Te, while enjoying the praise, did not let down his guard: "I am just one among many young nobles."

"But you are the most special one to me," Lady Martha blurted out. "My husband left me with only a three-year-old son. I live alone in Daisy Castle, and the piano is like a spiritual companion to me... I wonder if I might invite you to be my personal piano teacher, just for a while."

"I'm afraid I don't have the time."

"In my castle resides a Little Minor Elf who is just as obsessed with the piano as I am. Perhaps, you should come to the castle and take it away, so it can listen to your wonderful piano playing every day."

The subtext of those words was not lost on Li Si Te—Lady Martha was proposing to keep him as her patron for a while in exchange for a Little Minor Elf.

Any young viscount would find such a temptation hard to resist.

Li Si Te's heart skipped a beat, even with the help of Smoke Mission, he still had only two Little Minor Elves, each one a treasure in its own right, enough to be passed down through generations. Being kept for a while would cost him little to nothing, yet he would acquire a Little Minor Elf—the offer was almost irresistible.

He took a serious look at Martha Yiniang Peng, in her early thirties, not too old. Although she wore a bit too much makeup, the foundation was good, at least a 7 out of 10 by any standard.

Her husband had passed away, leaving her only a three-year-old son.

The castle was hers alone, free from the interference of family relations—she was virtually the ideal lover for most impoverished nobility. He could definitely rely on Lady Martha's finances and resources to acquire a noble foundation and return to the routine life of high society.

Yet Li Si Te declined, "Sorry, Lady Martha, I don't have the time to teach piano lessons."

Lady Martha was not upset but just smiled slightly and left him with a phrase, "The doors of my castle are always open to you. Whenever you wish to become my personal piano teacher, feel free to write to Daisy Castle... I will personally welcome you and let you experience the wonderful life at Daisy Castle."

Having said that, she twisted her perky hips and left without hesitation.

Looking at Lady Martha's receding figure, Li Si Te felt a vain sense of pride swell within him: "With the piano and good looks, I could completely rely on my own face and talent to live a luxurious life in high society... Yet I chose to stay in a remote and barren domain, farming day after day."

Only through continuous struggle and the help of the Smoke Mission did he manage to cultivate Jela, the Little Minor Elf.

But simply by spending a few months entertaining a lady of stature, he could easily obtain another Little Minor Elf. This thought filled him with sudden regret.

"I should have accepted!"

Before he could go after her to seal the deal, a cheer burst out from the buffet at the luncheon. Meioubao and Angela, having changed into their reception attire, had arrived to join the banquet. Arm in arm, each holding a glass of red wine, they accepted the well-wishes and toasts from everyone present.

Li Si Te then remembered he needed to toast the newlyweds, so he took a glass of red wine from a servant's tray and joined the line of well-wishers.

"Cousin, Your Highness..."

"Call me Angela, Li Si Te," the Little Princess said with a smile.

Chapter 433 Displaying One's Talent

The Little Princess wasn't particularly tall, standing around one meter sixty-five. A smile brought out two shallow dimples, truly giving her the appearance of a beauty.

Nobility and temperament coexisted within her, but whenever Liszt looked at her, his mind was flooded with definitions of a socialite, which made it impossible for him to associate her with purity.

Thus, he was unable to link her with innocence.

"Meioubao, Angela, I wish you happiness in your marriage," he lifted his glass, offering his blessing.

Angela's eyes twinkled with a smile, "Thank you."

Meioubao had been in an excited state these past few days and, hearing this, laughed, "I don't have time to talk more with you now. After the lunch banquet ends and the guests have left, we'll have a good chat."

"Alright."

Surrounded by the young nobles, the Meioubao Couple left, and the thought that had surfaced in Liszt's mind about finding Lady Martha for a chat also settled down.

Carrying his plate, he prepared to find a corner dining table to enjoy his lunch alone.

Before he found a seat, a familiar voice came from behind him, "Viscount Liszt, it's been a long time."

He turned his head and found the speaker was a well-known socialite wearing a Bird Lady Hat, and she was also Duniko Hyacinth, with whom he'd had one wild night.

"It's been a long time." Liszt's thoughts suddenly became complex, though he managed a faint smile on his face.

After exchanging greetings, the next few seconds became somewhat awkward for them as they both felt there was nothing more to say. The passion of that day had vanished with the lightest breeze after the cessation of their correspondence. So, Duniko said, "My friend is waiting for me over there."

"It's fine, please go ahead."

A single encounter.

A brief exchange, and they parted ways.

Taking a deep breath as he found a seat, Liszt was struck by some inexplicable emotions—Duniko was the first woman with whom he had left his bachelorhood behind. Even though it had been a night of indulgent passion without any real emotion involved, there were still some unusual thoughts deep in his mind.

But, what's in the past is past.

Upon meeting again, they inevitably fell into the same awkward silence as before.

"Perhaps I'll never learn the carefree indulgence of the nobles here," he mused, eating his Magical Beast Meat, yet feeling a dissonance between his soul and the festivity of the banquet.

For most nobles present, attending a wedding was more of a social event.

But he was genuinely there just to attend the wedding.

He looked around, seeing nobles gathered in groups of two or three, busily networking with wine glasses in hand, too preoccupied even to take a bite of the roasted meat. He also saw his brother Levis laughing and chatting with a wine glass in hand, just like the others. As for his sister Li Vera, she was sitting face to face with a male noble, engaging in conversation.

"Hey, our Master Pianist, hiding here for some peace and quiet?" Joanna Evening Primrose approached, plate in hand.

Liszt wasn't in the mood to engage with this socialite who had made passes at him before, which made his tone somewhat cold, "I just want to have a serious lunch."

Joanna remained oblivious, "Everyone is so keen on networking, and all you think about is having lunch?"

"For a knight, breakfast, lunch, and dinner must all be taken seriously. Especially for a knight like me who is in a period of training and improvement."

"Really, you are different from others. No wonder you could compose 'With You.' Did you know? I admire you very much."

Liszt responded perfunctorily, "I'm honored."

But Joanna leaned in closer, licking her tempting red lips, "Actually, I'd like to admire you from a much closer distance. Very close."

"Sorry, I didn't quite catch that."

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After embracing his Little Princess in the afternoon, the Grand Duke, along with a large group of Nobles, left Red Crab Island without lingering for long. The bustling Long Taro Castle quieted down quickly.

A night went by.

The family of Liszt also declined to stay longer and said their goodbyes to leave.

"We should've stayed a couple more days, tomorrow is my birthday, and I was hoping to invite the Little Princess to my birthday celebration too," Levis expressed regretfully on the road.

"Meioubao just got married; they should be given time to be together, and you, you need to prepare for your marriage to Loria," the Earl said, riding on his horse.

Liszt, too, was riding the Landwalker bird Loki, casually following the group.

Nobles should travel by carriage, but everyone preferred to ride their mounts, relying on the rushing wind to alleviate the heat. Thus, only Lady Marie, Li Vera, and Lidun were inside the carriage.

Before long.

The Earl suddenly looked at Liszt: "Liszt, why are you so quiet?"

"What?" A distracted Liszt came back to his senses, "I was just thinking about some things, Father, Brother, what were you discussing?"

"We were talking about your piano performance, the way you played 'With You' at dinner, even the Princess couldn't stop praising, and her friends had flames in their eyes, they almost wanted to devour you... but what surprises me more is that you didn't respond to Joanna's flirting; she is very beautiful," Levis looked at Liszt with an expression reserved for treating the cognitively challenged.

"I've already said that now is the critical period for training, I must put all my effort into cultivating Dou Qi, and I have a feeling I will become a Sky Knight before you," Liszt stated.

"You've only been using medicine for so long, and you want to surpass me?"

"I've found the most suitable way for me to use medicine, and I have my own unique insights into cultivation. My bodily talents are also gradually showing themselves. Brother, if you continue to indulge in worldly pleasures, you are bound to be unable to catch up with me," Liszt looked up at an angle of forty-five degrees toward the sky.

The light of the Sun draped over him, as if coating him in a layer of rosy glow.

Levis clicked his tongue in disbelief: "Do you truly have confidence that you will become a Sky Knight faster than I will?" His heart was skeptical, but the vibe that Liszt gave off didn't seem like he was boasting, and although Liszt could sometimes be a forced "cold humorist," he usually spoke with substance.

The Earl also looked over.

Liszt did not lower his head, still maintaining the posture of looking up at the sky at a forty-five-degree angle: "Yes, I am very confident, because the glory of the Knight shines upon me, I am the Son of Glory."

His confidence did not come from blindness.

However, in Levis' eyes, this was a sign of arrogance: "You might have some misunderstandings about Sky Knights, maybe Father will tell you the difference between Earth Knights and Sky Knights."

But the Earl said: "Levis, as for the difference between Earth Knights and Sky Knights, I believe Liszt is very clear about it... As to who will become a Sky Knight first, I cannot judge. But your attitude towards cultivation is clearly not as devoted as Liszt's, and excessive indulgence indeed harms the foundation of a Knight."

Levis gave a sheepish laugh: "I haven't indulged excessively..."

Seeing such a scene.

A smile couldn't help but appear on Liszt's face. Calling himself the Son of Glory just now didn't fit his usual low-profile style, but he had a purpose in saying it—he was laying the groundwork for his future advancement, becoming a Sky Knight before the age of twenty would surely be astonishing.

If he didn't lay the groundwork now, it would be troublesome to explain later.

So, displaying his talent appropriately and showing an attitude favored by the Knight's glory would make it easier for others to accept it. At least for now, the Earl already believed his younger son had the talent to challenge becoming a Sky Knight.

"A good change."

Chapter 434 Selling Off Family Assets for Construction

Levis's birthday was celebrated on board the ship. Although there was no lively banquet, the family gathered together, and everyone, except for Lady Penelope, who never went to sea, extended their blessings.

The following afternoon, they returned to Tulip Castle and held a belated celebration. Liszt also rested for one night at the Tulip Castle before returning to Fresh Flower Town.

However, his trip back to Fresh Flower Town was far from leisurely.

Levis's wedding was about to be organized—At Long Taro Castle, Li Weiliam had discussed with Marquis Roderick and his only son, Roger Golden Wheat Sheaf, and the wedding date had been set for September 12th.

The Pioneer Mandate was also fast approaching—Steel Ridge Kingdom would surely send an envoy to Blue Dragon Island to confirm the date of this year's war with Eagle Kingdom—strangely, almost every year around the time of the autumn harvest, the two Kingdoms would erupt into large-scale conflict, a tradition that had lasted for centuries.

Aside from ancient enmities, another reason was likely the knight system—how could one gain honors and wealth without war, how to alleviate the tension between new and old nobles, how to redistribute wealth, and without war, where to channel one's vigorous energy.

To train hard and become an Earth Knight, even a Sky Knight, was to seek glory and establish one's career on the battlefield.

On the way back, Liszt was a bit annoyed, "Levis's birthday gift was easy to choose, but his wedding gift can't be inferior to the one I gave Meioubao... Although the Knight Squad has replenished two Earth Knights, with the territory's construction booming, it is really not suitable to deploy knights for combat now."

Knights were crucial, both mounted in battle and dismounted in governance, the cornerstone of the knight system—because only knights had access to a complete education, especially those of Noble descent.

Without knowledge to expand their thinking, it would be difficult to be competent in management positions.

Now both the port town and Fresh Flower Town were short of officials, especially those capable of leading in "major battles"; Earth Knights could barely maintain the territory's management.

Withdrawing them all would seriously impact construction.

"However, if I plan to go to war, it is impossible not to bring the Knight Squad... For the sake of the serfs, it is necessary to prepare to set out. Fortunately, it is possible to loot resources. My Douson and the eight tiny ones can all be taken to battle. By tearing down a few castles, I should be able to gather enough money to buy serfs."

In the battle for Iron Hoof Island, the Grand Duke prohibited the looting of resources.

But the Pioneer Mandate was about looting resources, with the only requirement being to pay taxes to the Grand Duke, certainly making the Pioneer Mandate more profitable.

On the road.

He called out the Smoke Mission again.

"Mission: Reviving Fire Dragon Bones. Have you forgotten? The dried-out dragon bones need to be nourished with Magic Power, only then can they foster a result that touches your heart. Please organize serfs to mine 10 tons of Volcanic Glass. Reward: the restlessness of the Rubber Bug."

No change.

The ten tons of Volcanic Glass had not yet been mined sufficiently.

When he arrived back at Fresh Flower Town, he found that Goltai was waiting for him.

"My lord, in the process of developing Black Horse Island, there was a problem that was overlooked and needs urgent resolution," he said. "We only have two sailing ships, Fresh Flower Vessel and Thorn Number, but Black Horse Island still cannot produce food. Merely for transporting food, most of the two ships' transport capacity is occupied."

"That is indeed a problem. Has the Fresh Flower Town agency seen any increase in finances recently?" Liszt turned to inquire of Isaiah.

"With Fresh Flower Brew completing distribution in Red Crab Island, profits have increased significantly. However, we are required to make payments to Tulip Castle to settle debts. The scale of Fresh Flower Soap has always been unable to expand further due to insufficient supply of raw materials... So, the agency's current revenue has not seen a significant increase," replied Isaiah.

"I see..." Liszt said.

"My lord, with the increased profits from Fresh Flower Brew, do you think it might be possible to repay part of what we owe, while keeping some funds for the territory's expenses?" Goltai suggested.

Liszt rubbed his forehead, "I would like to do that too, but Tulip Castle is also facing a Gold Coin crisis. My brother is about to get married and needs a considerable amount of Gold Coins for the wedding. My father has already decided to levy an extra tax to tide over this difficulty."

Tulip Castle was his support.

But Tulip Castle couldn't endlessly cater to his demands, especially when faced with Levis's upcoming wedding—a noble's wedding was definitely an event of overwhelming extravagance, requiring a large expenditure of Gold Coins. Therefore, it was customary for kingdoms to impose a special "wedding tax."

The Landlord or the landlord's daughter, son was getting married.

But what to do if there was no money?

Of course, it was to levy taxes, shifting the financial pressure of the landlord's marriage onto the subjects of the land, whether the subjects complained or accepted it with good grace was not important.

Now Tulip Castle had to rely on the wedding tax to raise funds, and Liszt really felt embarrassed to borrow money from Tulip Castle again.

He could only find a way by himself.

"The Thorn Ironwood, though fast-growing, couldn't keep up with the rate of logging; the Rubber Bug, however adept at repairing Rubber Trees, couldn't allow for rubber to be harvested in large quantities; Fresh Flower Soap, though popular, was limited by the supply of ingredients like animal pancreas; Fresh Flower Brew, though it could capture the market, still needed time to be distributed."

Essentially, the products of the land could be quickly converted into cash, yet still couldn't fill the financial void for the development of Black Horse Island.

So, after much distress, Liszt still had to sell his family's assets. He sent away Goltai and Isaiah and hid in the study to take inventory of his assets that could be liquidated.

Mithril, Jade, Crystal, there wasn't much left.

He really didn't want to sell them.

His gaze finally settled on three gemstones, one being the Crimson Blood Sword embedded with a Ruby, another a Sapphire Magic Ring, and the last being a Pink Gemstone seized during the battle at Iron Hoof Island.

"I no longer need to use the Crimson Blood Sword, and Li Vera has long coveted it. She certainly wouldn't be willing to pay one thousand five hundred Gold Coins, so just sell it to her at half price, eight hundred Gold Coins should do, she should be able to afford that; the Sapphire Magic Ring, as Curtis Truth's Life Box, I don't know if it holds any secrets, so let's not sell it for now; the Pink Gemstone can be sold."

But then he had another thought.

He had a new inspiration, "I actually don't need to prepare a pile of gifts for Levis's wedding. I could completely give him the Pink Gemstone as a gift—a gemstone worth a thousand Gold Coins is definitely a powerful gift... The Pink Gemstone as a gift, and money from selling the Crimson Blood Sword could buy two second-hand sailboats to almost make up for the loss of shipping capacity."

The plan was well-conceived.

He immediately went to Tulip Castle to seek out Li Vera—although she had been granted a fief in Falcon Town, she spent eleven months of the year at Tulip Castle, a true case of lingering dependency.

"You want to sell the Crimson Blood Sword to me?" Li Vera looked at the dusty Liszt in surprise.

"Not sell, it's half sale, half gift. I happen to be short of money and I thought of my sister, who lacks a good weapon, so I made this decision."

"Are you really that short of money?"

"As you can imagine, for the fiefdom of Black Horse Island, I almost didn't receive any material rewards from the Iron Hoof Island campaign; the development of Black Horse Island has left me penniless; and with Meioubao and Levis's wedding, my finances are seriously depleted, so I need to find a solution from you."

Facing Levis's predicament, Li Vera thought for a moment and said, "The Crimson Blood Sword was a gift from grandfather, and it means a lot. I wouldn't want to take away his expectations of you, but I can lend you some Gold Coins."

Liszt, of course, didn't want to sell the Crimson Blood Sword if he could borrow money.

This was a very good backup weapon.

"How many Gold Coins can you lend me?"

"Five hundred, is that enough?"

"Make it a thousand, I'm really short on money... If you have more, just lend me two thousand Gold Coins."

Chapter 435 The Future Chief Knight

"Do you think I'm raising a Golden Dragon?"

Li Vera rolled her eyes in frustration and complained, "I've only accumulated a thousand Gold Coins, relying on the Tulip Lesser Spirit and twelve Elf Bugs, in addition to the family savings from my childhood! I can lend you at most eight hundred Gold Coins. My Falcon Town hasn't produced a single Elf Bug in a year!"

Compared to the thriving Fresh Flower Town, Falcon Town, which should have been a prosperous small town, hadn't improved much under her management.

It was only because she had a Tulip Lesser Spirit that she was able to quickly plant over eight hundred acres of Black Tulips in Falcon Town. The crop had just reached a large scale, and she hadn't reaped much profit from it yet.

What frustrated Li Vera was that Fresh Flower Town frequently bred Elf Bugs, but she hadn't found even one in Falcon Town for nearly a year.

Considering her own expenses and her plans to train a squad of female knights, she hadn't managed to accumulate much wealth—if she had been a male Earth Knight, with just one Little Minor Elf, she might have had a chance to aim for the title of Viscount. Unfortunately, she was a woman.

There was no use in going to battlefields or keeping the Gold Coins idle.

Lending out eight hundred Gold Coins was close to Liszt's expectation from selling the Crimson Blood Sword, so he didn't insist any further, "Then I'll borrow eight hundred Gold Coins."

Li Vera said, "You must prepare a grand gift for my birthday next year."

"Of course."

...

Having successfully borrowed eight hundred Gold Coins from Li Vera, Liszt felt somewhat relieved. Sometimes he deliberately tried to avoid the constraints of kinship, but family was still different from strangers. He had inherited the bloodline of this body, and there was no doubt he was a member of the Tulip Family.

Family would be a solid backup for each other.

"Li Vera's eight hundred Gold Coins can wait a year or even longer to be repaid, and if I am still short of money, perhaps... I might borrow some from my grandmother," he thought to himself.

Once, his grandmother had always compared him unfavorably to Melissa because of his personality and appearance, her words tinged with harshness.

However, as he continued to demonstrate exceptional performance, his grandmother's attitude towards him softened considerably.

This was indeed opportunistic.

Yet being born into a Noble family, such things were inevitable.

A waste, even if they are an eldest legitimate son, would be scorned; a talented individual, even if born out of wedlock, would be valued. Strength was the basis of a family's succession, and sitting in the Noble's chair, Liszt saw this very clearly.

He wasn't a young man. With the maturity of an adult, he understood how to let go and be tolerant, just as he knew how life involved a mixture of interest and affection—even the most loving parents would feel disappointed by their children's failures. The difference was in the inability to sever the kinship that blood relations brought, no matter what.

"In my grandmother's eyes, my status must be roughly equal to Levis's by now. She should not refuse a loan. Moreover, she must have accumulated quite a few Gold Coins, which would only molder away in the little Castle; it would be better to lend them to me to make profits... In the future, I will reciprocate with much more."

It felt somewhat like spronging off the elderly.

Liszt felt a tinge of embarrassment in his heart; he had originally wanted to focus on his own territory, to minimize entanglements with his family.

In the end, he still needed his family's help.

"However, having the family as support does feel very good. Building up Black Horse Island from scratch, even with the Smoke Mission, would require a significant amount of time. Now, with Li Vera's Gold Coins and those from my grandmother, I can maintain a state of rapid development."

For some reason, on the way back, he suddenly thought of Martha Yiniang Peng.

This widowed Earl's lady was willing to provide for him for a while in exchange for a Little Minor Elf. If it had been right after he had arrived when his territory was destitute, he might not have been able to resist the temptation and would have gone straight to Daisy Castle to become the lady's petticoat knight.

As for now, his pride and dignity still mattered.

Back to Fresh Flower Town.

"Consultant Goltai, I leave the purchase of the ships to you. With eight hundred Gold Coins, make sure to choose the best old sailing ships—yes, two cargo ships," he handed over the borrowed Gold Coins to Goltai—he was all about efficiency. Since they needed ships, he bought them without hesitation.

This style, of course, was not meticulous enough.

It didn't match the maximization of benefits like those Landlords skilled in planning and management, who could stretch a penny into two. But the simplicity and brutality saved mental and physical energy, time he didn't have to spare.

Practicing Dou Qi and enjoying life was what he should be doing daily.

...

In the following days, his life became more peaceful.

Only outside his regular schedule, he intensified the training of the Eight Tiny Ones. This year's Pioneer Mandate, the Eight Tiny Ones and Douson would be powerful aides in his plundering of resources.

"Storm, Rock Spike!"

"Pff!"

Storm opened its mouth to cast Magic, and a Rock Spike shot up from the ground not far away. The Eight Tiny Ones were still pups, but they were well-fed and fast-developing, with their Magic reserves already considerable. With Douson's command, their discipline and obedience had greatly improved.

The Blizzard Beast Squad had begun to take shape, just waiting to be tested on the battlefield.

Apart from training dogs.

Liszt still persisted in taking potions, practicing Dou Qi, and honing archery skills. Triple Arrow had become second nature, and Multiple Arrow was becoming more proficient.

"Charge!"

The shout of Defense Officer Rom Barrel echoed across Knight's Square. He now mainly handled knight training courses for minors. Most of these hundreds of children would continue as serfs, but a few dozens of them would seize the opportunity and become Retainer Knights for Liszt.

Among them, those with exceptional talent could even reach for Earth Knight status and the chance to earn merits on the battlefield.

However, Liszt's gaze was focused more on another part of Knight's Square where a newly recruited Earth Knight was training Maggie and Emily.

Maggie had average talent at best and would likely max out as an Earth Knight.

But Emily had powerful talent. Her internal Dou Qi was abundant, and Liszt had no doubt that she could become an Earth Knight within half a year.

"This talent, even I'm jealous... The waste that I was before, with all the family resources piled up, didn't become an Earth Knight before reaching adulthood. Emily has only practiced for half a year and is already showing signs of a breakthrough. The future of this female Knight is boundless."

With that thought.

He couldn't help but instruct his personal manservant, "Thomas, remember to tell Mr. Carter and Mrs. Morson to send Emily a piece of Magical Beast Meat and a cup of high-quality milk every day." The high-quality milk referred to Dragon Breed Milk, which was plentiful, and Liszt on his own couldn't finish it all.

"Yes, my lord."

With Magical Beast Meat and Dragon Breed Milk to enhance her nutrition, Emily's training resources would be no less than those of any Noble offspring.

Liszt watched as she meticulously completed various movements. Her small face was sunburned red, sweat continuously dripping down her cheeks, but she did not complain of fatigue nor slack off.

He couldn't help imagining, "Once Emily grows up, perhaps she can replace the aging Marcus and become my 'Chief Knight,' leading the charge for me."

Marcus was approaching forty and after a few more years of campaigns to earn a Noble title, he would likely retire from the front lines to serve as a Territory Officer. Liszt needed new Knights to manage his Knight Order—Black Horse Island would certainly need to maintain its own Knight Order.

Chapter 436 The Conch Produces Pearls

...

Black Horse Island.

Liszt was inspecting the mining of volcanic glass ore, which was quite interesting. It was hard on the outside, filled with bubbles on the inside, and had a clear boundary with the surrounding soil and rocks.

As long as one dug deep into the earth, reached the basalt columns, one could follow the cracks to find the volcanic glass.

So, once a thousand serfs mastered the excavation technique, they turned over the land along the low-lying areas. Not only did they unearth a large amount of volcanic glass, they also managed to convert the land into farmland in the process.

"My lord, we have cleared the wilderness and mined to the south with the Red River as our boundary. We have now reached the wasteland between the eastern foothills of Needle Grass Hill and the East Coast. We've scattered soybeans and peas on the reclaimed wild fields. The seed germination rate might not be very high, and I'm afraid the yield will be quite sparse," reported Administrative Officer Blair from the port town.

Mining, reclaiming, sowing—these were the construction plans that Liszt directed.

In choosing crops, he selected soybeans and peas because legume plants can propagate rhizobia in their roots—he had observed that this world's legume plants still grew rhizobia, only not very prominently. Among them, soybeans, peas, and peanuts were not only stable species, but also had a higher count of rhizobia.

Furthermore, the legume alfalfa also contained rhizobia, which might be one of the reasons it became a superior pasture grass.

Hence, he decided to plant a large amount of legumes and alfalfa during the early stage of land reclamation on Black Horse Island to fertilize the fields and provide the soil with organic nitrogen.

"Low germination rates and yield don't matter. As long as the harvest can offset the cost of sowing, that's sufficient. Farmland needs continuous acclimation to mature. The sooner we acclimate it, the sooner it can give back to us," said Liszt with a smile. He alone understood the benefit of rhizobia.

The humans of this world relied too much on elf bugs for farming; they didn't understand fertilization, let alone something like rhizobia.

Under the rule of landlords, the serfs' most common farming method was the fallow system—either the two-field or three-field system. They divided the farmland into long strips, letting each strip rest every two or three years to allow the soil to regain fertility. It was only within the influence of elf bugs that they needn't let the land lie fallow, permitting yearly cultivation.

A small portion of the farmland in Fresh Flower Town had already abandoned the fallow system and adopted artificial fertilization to ensure that planting could occur every year.

Of course.

Due to the lack of serf labor, most wild fields couldn't be intensively farmed and still followed the two-field system. They were cultivated one year and rested the next—after all, there was more land than laborers, and they could plant as they wished. As development progressed, Liszt would gradually guide the serfs on how to farm more precisely.

In conjunction with elf bugs, they would practice scientific farming.

As for the farmlands currently being reclaimed on Black Horse Island, as long as some beans could grow without loss, that would be enough.

After inspecting the work site, he said to Blair, "Organize the serfs to transport all the volcanic glass to the Burial Ground. Place it between those five big bones."

He planned to collect the Fire Dragon Magic Power within it.

This was a massive project and one that only he was capable of undertaking—he planned to hide on Black Horse Island to carry out this task carefully while also enduring a few hard days to save expenditures for the castle in Fresh Flower Town.

Breaking the volcanic glass and releasing the Fire Dragon Magic Power, the magic power was quickly absorbed by the five Fire Dragon Bones. What he needed to do was repeat the action. However, he soon discovered that the magic power from a single piece of volcanic glass was not enough to form a Magic Little Fire Dragon.

That is to say, it couldn't burn people, because the bones would absorb it before the magic power could converge.

"I could completely have Marcus and the others come to work, arranging two or three knights around each Fire Dragon Bone to repeat my task."

With that thought, he immediately arranged for the knights to come and work—Apprentice Knights could complete this task.

He walked with his hands behind his back at the Burial Ground, using his Eye of Magic to watch as red magic power continuously gathered towards the Fire Dragon Bones, lighting up their vein-like lines before settling down peacefully.

The task continued until August 25th.

...

Finally.

The Smoke Mission changed.

"Complete the task, reward the restlessness of the Rubber Bugs."

Mining ten tons of Volcanic Glass wasn't difficult, and half a month was more than enough. The reward for the Smoke Mission was quickly distributed. However, when Liszt took out the Rubber Bug triplets he carried with him, the three little ones seemed to have no reaction.

He stared at them intently for a while.

Still no movement.

This left him a bit embarrassed, "Would you start squirming, please!"

The Rubber Bugs, hearing the call from within Liszt's heart, moved slightly but were far from restless. He had no choice but to put down the triplets and turn his attention to the new Smoke Mission.

"Task: With the ten tons of Volcanic Glass ore mined, the Fire Dragon Magic Power has also emerged from the earth's surface. This is exactly the source that the dried-up Dragon Bones urgently need. Please infuse all the Magic Power into the Fire Dragon Bones, revitalizing the staled Fire Dragon Bones. Reward: Pink pearl-producing conch."

"A Pink pearl-producing conch?"

"A conch can produce pearls?" Liszt was quite surprised. He only knew that shells could produce pearls, whether it was Pearl Oysters or Tridacna, both kinds were types of shells.

But a conch...

"It seems a conch is indeed a kind of shell. It looks like that's the case; otherwise, how could it produce pearls." He set aside his doubts and thought about the appearance of a conch.

On the beaches of Fresh Flower Town, it was common to find conchs.

Serfs from Oyster Village had even offered a few very beautiful conch shells to the Castle as ornaments, "So, the pink pearl-producing conch, does it appear on the beaches of Fresh Flower Town or on Black Horse Island?"

Now in the height of summer, both Fresh Flower Town and the Harbour Town had organized many serfs to dive for seafood by the sea. Oyster Village in Fresh Flower Town had even a group of professional fishermen diving for seafood in the offshore waters, rowing sampans. The fishing industry was booming in Liszt's territory.

He called over Goltai, "Consultant Goltai, inform all the serfs engaged in sea fishing to look out for conchs, especially to check for pearls inside the conchs."

"Pearls?" Goltai, eyes wide, expressed his confusion, "My lord, what does a conch have to do with pearls?"

"I recently read a book that mentioned a Magician finding a miraculous pearl inside a conch picked up by the sea. In short, pay more attention to this matter." Liszt found a casual excuse to dismiss Goltai. The Landlord's authority often meant he didn't have to try too hard to find excuses to justify his actions.

Goltai had grown accustomed to Liszt's style and thus did not ask further, just got on with the job—he understood one thing, that Liszt was favoured by the glory of Swordsmanship. If he said there were pearls in the conchs, then it was very likely there were pearls.

...

In the following two days, Liszt still stayed on Black Horse Island, supervising the release of Fire Dragon Magic Power from the Volcanic Glass.

Only when all ten tons of Volcanic Glass had been completely released did he order the remaining Volcanic Glass to be stored and no more Fire Dragon Magic Power to be released—this Fire Dragon Magic Power was a treasure, enough for the Smoke Mission, and there was no need for wasteful extravagance.

At this moment.

He called out the Smoke Mission.

The content of the Serpent Script had changed, "Complete the task, reward a Pink pearl-producing conch."

Chapter 437 The Rubber Bug's New Cordyceps

The conch that produces pink pearls has not yet been reported by fishermen, so Liszt does not know where to find this kind of conch and can only wait.

Having stayed on Black Horse Island for a week, he was preparing to return to Fresh Flower Town.

By the way, complete a new Smoke Mission.

"Mission: The fishermen of Oyster Village are no longer afraid of the shallow areas near the shore and dare to dive to the seabed to gather seafood, but they do not recognize all the seafood. As a seafood enthusiast, why not guide the fishermen in identifying the delicacies of the sea? Reward: Mutated Rubber Tree."

The carpentry workshop used thorns and rubber to produce many high-quality sampans, arming the fishermen to fish in the near sea.

However, upon encountering numerous marine creatures at the sea floor, they were not easily able to identify which ones were edible, mainly sticking to the few kinds of seafood they could pick up on the beaches.

"I don't seem to know many kinds of seafood, I know how to eat them but not how to catch them." He thought for a moment and decided to take a dumb approach, letting the fishermen bring up everything they could gather from the seabed, and then he would select and test for poison to verify what was edible.

Just as he was preparing to leave Black Horse Island, a sudden urge struck him.

A faint restlessness transmitted to him, causing him to quickly open his eyes wide: "It's the Rubber Bug triplets." He immediately had the manservant bring the three Rubber Bugs to him.

At this moment, one of the triplet Rubber Bugs that normally loved to line up and move in sync, left the formation and scurried around inside the Jade Box.

It was feeling extremely restless, even more so than the other two.

It was a rare situation.

"Little guy, what's wrong with you?" He carefully established a deeper spiritual communication with the Rubber Bug, a capability supported by the contract.

Soon, he discerned a unique emotion from the Rubber Bug's restlessness—it was actually about to spit out its own cordyceps.

"The cordyceps of the Rubber Bug has been planted in the rubber garden since the contract, and it hasn't been moved since then; what does this Rubber Bug mean?" Liszt suddenly raised an eyebrow, "Could it be that it has been brewing a new cordyceps inside its body?"

The more he thought about it, the more plausible it seemed.

Perhaps this was the reward from the Smoke Mission—the restlessness of the Rubber Bug.

Since the Rubber Bug was about to spit out cordyceps, Liszt certainly would not refuse. He quickly mounted the Landwalker Bird Loki and rushed to the rubber garden. The temporary plan for the rubber garden was a thousand acres, aiming in the end for ten thousand acres, or even a hundred thousand acres—the more of this miraculous crop, the better.

But the rubber garden at the moment didn't have many Rubber Trees, only a sparse few in number.

The original Rubber Tree cordyceps still stood in the center of the garden. Liszt roughly estimated its radiation range and then went further out to find a flat terrain suitable for planting more Rubber Trees. He held the very restless Rubber Bug in his hand: "Little guy, spit it out."

The Rubber Bug crawled on Liszt's palm, raised its head, and opened its mouth.

It spat out a faint green light that contained a small seed. Once the seed hit the ground, it quickly germinated and grew.

In three minutes, visible to the naked eye, it grew into a Rubber Tree as tall as the previous Rubber Tree cordyceps.

However, the difference was quite conspicuous. This Rubber Tree cordyceps was laden with dense white spherical fruits. Ordinary Rubber Trees, including the first Rubber Tree cordyceps, showed no signs of bearing fruit. Moreover, the propagation of Rubber Trees relied on adventitious bud reproduction from their roots.

It was common to find new seedlings growing around Rubber Trees—all originated from the roots of the Trees.

Liszt ordered the serfs to dig out these seedlings and to cultivate them in rows in the rubber garden, constantly expanding the scale of the Rubber Trees.

Therefore.

This was a plant that reproduced asexually.

Thus, Liszt was now surprised to find the rubber tree cordyceps, which had neither flowers nor fruits, had actually borne fruit. He pondered for a moment and, risking damage to the cordyceps, plucked one fruit—once the fruit or leaves of the cordyceps were picked, they would quickly lose their magic power and become ordinary plants, at most superior ones.

Plucking just one fruit from a tree full of rubber fruits was not a big problem.

Turning the magic power-draining rubber fruit in his hand, Liszt couldn't help but reflect, "Elf Bugs really are full of wonders, a cordyceps which has borne three elf bugs, and now, the three elf bugs have given birth to a new cordyceps... Does this mean that the next time the Rubber Bugs become restless, they will give birth to a new cordyceps? Or a mutated cordyceps?"

Problem solved.

He returned to the port town and boarded the Fresh Flower Vessel, already laden with cargo, set off towards Fresh Flower Town—The Fresh Flower Vessel was fast, his own designated ship.

During the dull moments of sea travel, aside from teasing the Blizzard Beasts,

He spent most of his time studying the rubber fruit. When he drilled a hole through the hard-shelled rubber fruit, he found that it was filled with rubber.

"So, the new variety of rubber trees concentrates the rubber into its own fruit?" he exclaimed with joy, "Does this mean that rubber can be easily collected from the new varietal rubber trees without harming the trees themselves? As soon as the new seedlings emerge, I'll have the serfs try to grow them immediately!"

Rubber collection was cumbersome and harmful to the trees, but if the rubber was concentrated in the fruit, it would not only be convenient to harvest but also easier to store.

Such a rubber fruit could be preserved just like Fragrant Coconut Fruit for several years without spoiling.

The value was higher.

...

After arriving at Fresh Flower Port,

Liszt's anticipation for the rubber fruit was already under control.

He headed straight for the office to meet with Administrative Officer Isaiah, "The sampan fleet of Oyster Village is now familiar with shallow-water fishing. However, their knowledge of seafood is still too limited. Isaiah, you must immediately issue an order to the oyster sampan fleet to search the seabed for all kinds of creatures."

"My lord, what do you mean?"

"We need to develop new seafood to recapture the market on Coral Island, and not just rely on oysters and minor oily captures. I need to restore a seafood market even more booming than last year."

"Yes, my lord. I will immediately give the orders to Oyster Village to dredge up every creature they can find."

"Additionally, you need to send someone to purchase a batch of ship nets and fine nets in Coral City. There should be schools of fish near Fresh Flower Town, and we can try to fish for them."

So far, the seafood harvested by Fresh Flower Town consisted mostly of shellfish, mollusks, and crustaceans. Seldom were fishes caught.

But the most abundant creatures in the sea were surely the many kinds of fish, a resource that Liszt would not overlook. If this year's Pioneer Mandate goes according to plan, he would definitely bring back tens of thousands of serfs, and the grains alone would not be enough. He would need to mix sea fish with their grains to fill the serfs' stomachs.

"I understand," replied Isaiah and added, "My lord, concerning the Corn Grass fields you instructed me to pay attention to, there has been a new discovery."

"Oh? What kind of discovery?"

"We've found a patch of mutated Corn Grass, with thick stems and leaves as well as large ears of grain that could be pinched to release a thick oil with a delicious fragrance, very much like the butter we eat."

Liszt's eyebrows twitched.

Without a doubt.

The oily mutated variety of Corn Grass, a reward from the Smoke Mission, had been discovered.

Chapter 438: Pinch and It's All Oil

Corn Grass Field.

The grain mutated variety of corn grass, which originally had large bunches of flower spikes, had now produced plump grains that looked like rather rounded triangles, all clustered together on a single spike.

They did not bear much resemblance to the corn kernels in his memory, but they were about the same size.

This bunch of fruit spikes weighed at least half a pound, and once mature, they would definitely yield a far greater harvest than wheat or millet. It was unknown how they tasted, whether they would be similar to corn cobs or other grains... And it was also uncertain whether they could be eaten like rice or ground into flour.

Not far from the grain mutant corn grass, Liszt saw the oil-rich variant of corn grass.

The fatty stems and leaves were mixed in with the regular corn grass and weren't very conspicuous, but its fruit spikes were very noticeable. While the regular corn grass had thin and shriveled spikes, the spikes of this variant were unusually plump, with a tender green husk that seemed almost transparent, clearly indicating the abundance of oil within.

When he pinched it, indeed, oil came out onto his hand.

These were unripe fruit spikes; it was unknown what the oil content would be like once they matured.

"These are very valuable mutations," he said, appreciating the grain and oil-rich mutated corn grass, slowly diminishing his craving for corn cobs.

He then conveyed to Isaiah, "This kind of corn grass with grain on top will be called 'grain corn,' and this kind that yields oil when pinched will be called 'oil corn.' Take good care of them, and when they mature, we'll research their utilitarian value and prepare for large-scale cultivation."

"Yes, sir."

After identifying grain corn and oil corn, Liszt used his Eye of Magic to circle the corn field, but he found no trace of magic.

He returned to the castle, where he enjoyed a sumptuous feast.

Ach, now a Water System Grand Mage, was more cheerful and lively than when she was engrossed in studying magic before.

22:38

After dinner, he went to the Sea View Villa to chat with Ach for a while. During the week's visit to Black Horse Island, he had met Ach by the sea twice, primarily to have her command Magic Mangrove Elves to aid in the stabilization and rooting of the Mangrove Forest at the Red River Mouth—the Little Minor Elves' magic was quite strong.

Ach, now a Water System Grand Mage, was more cheerful and lively than when she was engrossed in studying magic before.

Upon blowing her horn, she swam quickly from the ocean, flinging back her deep blue hair as though a waterfall cascaded before his eyes, "Brother, Ach scared away a sea monster today!"

"What?"

"A sea monster, a really big conch that can create water whirlpools, it attacked Ach but couldn't defeat me!"

A conch?

A sea monster?

Liszt's inspiration bloomed on the spot, but he still chose to be cautious, "You weren't hurt, were you?"

"I'm fine, Ach is a Water System Grand Mage now, and it's just a low-level sea monster; it definitely couldn't beat me. I made it hide in the rock crevices and not come out," Ach replied with a smile, quite pleased with having defeated a low-level sea monster.

Actually, with her current strength, she could now barely contend against a Dulu Miqita that had already turned into organic fertilizer.

Afterwards, Liszt began to inquire about the low-level sea monster conch.

According to Ach's description, it was a large conch big enough to be the size of a basin, with a yellow-white shell, fond of crawling on the seabed rocks, capable of releasing Common Magic water whirlpools to catch small fish and shrimp—it turned out to be a carnivorous predator.

Combining this information, Liszt roughly understood that this was a conch capable of producing pink pearls.

He couldn't help but ask, "Ach, can you capture it for me?"

"You want this big conch, brother?"

"Yes."

"There's no need to hurry, let's catch them tomorrow. It's already night, and the sea must be very dark now."

"Then Ach will go now and catch it, and bring it to brother... Oh yes, brother said that human knights need Magical Beast Meat to practice, so Ach will often look for sea monsters, catch them and bring the meat to brother, so brother can become a Sky Knight sooner!"

Such a considerate little sprite!

Liszt ruffled her deep blue hair vigorously, "Ach, you understand me!"

"Hehe, then I'll go catch the giant conches."

"There's no need to hurry, let's catch them tomorrow. It's already night, and the sea must be very dark now."

"Ach can see, and Ach swims very fast. Brother, you wait for Ach, Ach will be back soon. Hmm, let Nami keep you company," Ach said as she placed Nami on the table, then turned and left the Sea View Villa to catch the low-level Sea Monsters, the giant conches.

All Liszt could do was shake his head helplessly and then start playing with Nami.

He took out a candy wrapped in hemp leaves, unwrapped it, and held it out to the Little Minor Elf, "Peanut nougat, Fresh Flower Town's new product, want to try?"

"Chirp," Nami cocked her head to look at the peanut nougat.

She then approached the nougat, sniffed its aroma, and wrapped her hands around it, taking a bite. Despite being just a palm-sized little thing, she had strong teeth and crisply bit off a chunk of nougat, chewing vigorously in her mouth.

Then she excitedly chirped, "Chirp! Chirp! Chirp!"

"Is it good?"

"Chirp!" Nami hugged the nougat and munched away happily.

Liszt watched the beautiful little creature and said softly, "Eat and drink well, but don't forget to work for me. The Mangrove Forest in Mangrove Island is growing well, it no longer needs the influence of Cordyceps. Once the Mangrove Forest at the Red River Mouth grows, move the Cordyceps there to help me develop the Red River Mouth Mangrove Forest."

Without a contract, his communication with Nami was hindered.

So Nami didn't understand a word he said. She just hugged the nougat and relished it, looking up at Liszt from time to time to call out, "Chirp."

After one nougat was finished, Liszt pulled out another.

Instead of immediately eating it, Nami rewrapped it with the hemp leaves and stashed the nougat in a drawer of the cabinet.

Then she flew up to Liszt's shoulder and landed, beginning to groom Liszt— or what could also be called picking lice.

She meticulously combed through his hair, checking his scalp. She might have learned this trick while raising Green-headed Ducks, but unfortunately for her, Liszt washed his hair daily, so there was no dirt to be found.

"Such a gentle Little Minor Elf. Compared with Nami, Jela is simply a hooligan," he thought of Jela who liked to cry and shout.

He could not help but sigh.

Just at that moment, the sound of waves came from outside, and then he saw Ach swimming into the bottom floor of the Sea View Villa. She used Water to bind a huge conch, transporting it to the second floor: "Brother, Ach has stunned the giant conch, it can't release Water Whirlpools anymore."

His eyes shining, Liszt took the giant conch and said, "Well done, my Ach."

"Hehe."

"It's late, you should rest too. I'll deal with this giant conch first."

"Okay."

Holding the giant conch, Liszt quickly returned to the Castle and began dissecting the giant conch on the open ground of the apple orchard. Taking advantage of its unconsciousness, he promptly pulled out the Sky-Cleaving Greatsword and channeled Dou Qi to kill it. Then he extracted the conch meat, which was only a small lump considering the basin-sized conch.

He carefully peeled, and soon found a hard object wrapped in a membrane.

Gently peeling off the outer membrane, he revealed a pink, oval-shaped pearl inside—the Pink Pearl.

Chapter 439 Snails Competing, Fisherman Gains

The pink pearl, roughly the size of an egg, revealed flame-like patterns on its surface after being cleaned. At first, Liszt thought it was a pearl imbued with Fire Attribute Mana, but the Eye of Magic observed that the magic power it radiated was a pale blue color. Like the giant conch, it belonged to the Water Attribute.

The Black Pearl also contained Water Attribute magic power, but its effect was to disperse Wind System magic power.

At the moment, the egg-sized Pink Pearl's effect was unknown, but its magic power concentration was even denser than the largest Black Pearl in Liszt's collection.

"I probably won't be able to figure anything out, better to hand it over to Chris for research." Now that he was sponsoring the Magician Chris Truth, in addition to making Magic Potions, he could assign her any work related to magicians.

Inside the Magic Workshop.

Chris looked at the Pink Pearl and nodded solemnly, "Viscount, this is an object brimming with magic power. I need to thoroughly research its effects before I can analyze the results for you."

"I appreciate it."

"I'm pleased to serve you."

Liszt suddenly asked, "Chris, are you confident about advancing to Grand Magician?"

After thinking it over, Chris replied, "I've made some headway, but I still need more time to mull it over. If everything goes smoothly, I might be able to attempt advancing to Grand Magician within a year. If not, it could take several years before I can make the attempt."

"Ask for anything you need, and I wish you an early promotion to Grand Magician. When that time comes, I will build a Mage Tower for you on Black Horse Island for your quest for Truth."

Chris was truly elated, "Thank you, Viscount."

Unlike second-rate peddlers like Elkerson, she genuinely enjoyed delving into magic and researching Truth. Having her own Mage Tower would be a great honor and benefit.

After a brief chat.

Liszt left the Pink Pearl behind and took his leave.

Upon returning to the castle, Mrs. Abbie had already cleaned the meat from the Sea Monster, the Giant Conch—this Magical Beast Meat naturally belonged to Liszt.

"It would be great if low-level Sea Monsters like the Giant Conch could be farmed... Unfortunately, there's no knowledge on farming Sea Monsters. The pearl had to be harvested by killing the creature... Still, not only did it yield a Pink Pearl, but it also contributed a large heap of conch meat and a beautiful conch shell."

He cleaned the conch shell and drilled a hole at the tip.

He blew into it.

A deep, resonant horn sound boomed out, carrying far and wide, more powerful than a loudspeaker. Using the Eye of Magic, he could see magical light flickering on the shell when blowing the conch, indicating that the amplification effect was related to magic power, barely qualifying as a type of magic.

"I should also give this to Chris to research, she might come up with a horn that works like a large loudspeaker. With such a Magic Horn, it could serve as an 'air-raid siren'; in times of crisis, its blast could probably wake even those in deep sleep."

Even if they couldn't create a very powerful loudspeaker.

As a decorative piece placed on the curio shelf in the study, it would be a delightful sight to behold.

"It's just a shame there's only one Giant Conch," he thought.

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However.

Just as he felt the reward from a solitary Giant Conch wasn't very valuable, Ach brought new information: "Brother, Black Pearl Lake has been invaded by many Giant Conchs, and they are fighting with the Tridacnas. Loads of huge Tridacnas have also arrived at the bottom of the lake, resisting the invasion of the Giant Conchs."

"A battle between the Giant Conchs and Tridacnas?"

"Yes, brother. You told Ach to look for very large Tridacnas, and Ach hadn't found any until now. But many Tridacnas larger than two meters in diameter have appeared in Black Pearl Lake. The biggest one is twice the size of Ach's shell!"

Ach's shell was three meters in diameter; a Tridacna shell even larger than Ach's would be at least four to five meters in diameter, truly colossal and much larger than the one they had salvaged before.

What kind of Black Pearl could be inside, one can only look forward to finding out.

Moreover, there was a large batch of low-level Sea Monsters and giant tridacnas. Whether it was for the pink pearls or the meat of the tridacnas, Liszt would not give up on this opportunity, "Ach, pay attention to coordination, and join me in sweeping up all the tridacnas and giant tridacnas causing havoc in the Black Pearl Lake in one fell swoop!"

"Hmm!"

Ach nodded excitedly.

The once delicate, innocent, and loving little sea monster had now been influenced by darker company, becoming a Grand Magician who favored fighting and hunting sea monsters without a moment's hesitation.

Liszt couldn't help but feel sentimental—how girls change as they grow up.

The Fresh Flower Vessel was immediately summoned by him, heading towards the Coral Reef—the Coral Reef had no clear owner, but now it belonged to Liszt. Several flags bearing the emblem of the Black Tulip were planted on the rocks.

Upon reaching the Coral Reef.

The tide had just receded, leaving vast stretches of snow-white, fine sand exposed on the sea surface. The Fresh Flower Vessel slowly entered Black Pearl Lake, while Liszt used the Eye of Magic to guide the vessel on how to salvage the tridacnas and giant tridacnas—Ach was at the bottom of the lake pointing to the locations of the carcasses of both Sea Monsters (tridacnas were barely considered Sea Monsters).

This was a brutal slaughter.

As the divers continuously tied the ropes, more and more tridacnas and conches were hauled up, and Liszt's mood grew more and more excited.

He had just opened a tridacna with a diameter of about 1.8 meters, finding a Black Pearl the size of a sea bowl inside, along with several fist-sized Black Pearls.

These were treasures.

On the other hand, a basin-sized giant conch did not yield any pink pearls. After dissecting five of the giant conches, no pink pearls were found.

It wasn't until the sixth giant conch, the largest one, that new pink pearls were discovered.

A pink pearl the size of a goose egg.

"The probability of giant conches yielding pink pearls is a bit low, while tridacnas have a high probability of producing Black Pearls, but the larger Black Pearls have a lower probability." He silently estimated the pearl yield rates for the tridacnas and conches.

The hunt continued for two hours.

Ach tracked the tridacnas and giant conches with great effort. Finally, the largest tridacna was killed in the center of Black Pearl Lake, along with it were three basin-sized giant conches. When the four large creatures were hauled up, the sailors on the ship cheered loudly.

Captain Kostor was so excited that he said, "Sir, such wonderful shells and conches, it's simply unbelievable! The glory of the Knight has blessed us, under your guidance, we were able to reap such a bountiful harvest."

"Remember to keep this a secret, Black Pearl Lake will be the brightest ocean jewel in my territory, anyone who dares to leak it will receive a bloody retribution!"

After finishing his fierce words, Liszt patted Kostor on the shoulder and said with a pleasant smile, "I will grant you the status of Freeman soon, and from then on, you can claim rewards based on your service as an official. Follow me, and one day, you will become a Noble."

Today, he had completely revealed his "talent"—wherever he pointed, there would be prey.

Although Kostor and others dared not inquire into Liszt's gifts, it was inevitable that someone with a big mouth might spill the events of today.

Therefore, he had wielded both the carrot and the stick.

To preemptively mitigate any potential risk.

Half an hour later.

Seeing the signals made by Ach underwater, Liszt understood that the territorial struggle between the tridacnas and the giant conches was probably over. He blew the horn in response to Ach.

He then gave the order, "End the salvage, we're heading back!"

Chapter 440 Warehouses Full of Big and Small Pearls

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The Fresh Flower Vessel returned to Fresh Flower Port, laden with the weighty Tridacna and conches.

It was time to tally the harvest, and watching the workers on the dock carry off one enormous seashell after another stirred Liszt's emotions.

He had always wished to manage Coral Reef and Black Pearl Lake, but due to insufficient manpower, he had struggled to even develop Black Horse Island, let alone Black Pearl Lake. However, with the Sea Sprite Ake, a single voyage yielded so many shells, those which could produce Black Pearls and Pink Pearls.

"Two or three trips a year should be essentially sufficient!"

The growth of Tridacna and conches was very slow. There was no way to over-harvest them, and it seemed that the larger specimens all hid in the waters around Black Pearl Lake. It was rare to see them engage in fierce battles over territory in Black Pearl Lake, allowing Ake the pleasure of reaping the benefits.

"My lord, how should we deal with these marine products?" asked a Knight who served as a dock official, coming over to inquire. He was a former classmate of Liszt's, born to a minor noble family's second son.

Liszt said directly, "Hand over the large conches to the castle for processing... Harvest the Black Pearls from the Tridacna and give them to the castle, as for the meat, release it into the seafood market, half to be sold by Thorn Caravan and the other half to be sold cheaply for consumption by the residents of Fresh Flower Town and the port town."

Whether it was Fresh Flower Town or the port town, except for grain such as wheat which had to be purchased from elsewhere, other items like seafood were very cheap.

Even serfs could afford it and could enjoy seafood feasts every day.

The reason was simple: the sea area had never been overfished, and the fishery resources were abundant. Unfortunately, these methods did not involve much technical skill, and the lords of the small seaside towns of Coral Island indulged in private fishing. They either consumed the seafood themselves or secretly sold it to surrounding towns.

The seafood business of Fresh Flower Town, impacted by such conditions, found that the seafood from the beaches had become worthless.

That was why he now asked the residents of Oyster Village to advance to the near sea and dive for other seafood to replace the beach seafood.

Ultimately realizing a fishing industry scale that developed deep-sea seafood, shallow water seafood, and beach seafood simultaneously.

"Sir, there's too much meat from the large conches, and I fear it can't all be consumed, nor is it easy to store... There's not much ice left in the ice cellar, and we're unable to continue keeping the seafood fresh," Mrs. Abbie said worriedly upon seeing another big batch of large conches being brought back to the castle.

"Just turn them into food and hand them over to me; I'll distribute them among the knights of the territory for all of us to enjoy the nourishment of the Magical Beast," Liszt said casually.

He had already eaten all the meat of the Six-Headed King Serpent and turned the snake skin into snake skin armor, handing over the snake bone and other parts to Chris Truth to be processed into magical materials. Now, his Gemstone Space had very few items stored—the wealthier Liszt no longer stored low-value items like Fine Steel Armor there.

Currently, in the Gemstone Space, there was only the Crimson Blood Sword, Drift Bottle, Soul Storage Vessel, a set of spare Mithril Armor, two telescopes, Sapphire Magic Ring, Goat Head Flag, Sapphire Dragon Ship Figurehead, Soul Submerged Wood, and a batch of poison-coated Thorn Wood Arrows.

And five books—"Philip, Descendant of the Sun's Diary" used for learning the Sun Script; "To His Highness Annette—Curtis the Truth" detailing how to make Liches and Ghost Ships; the Sword Saint's Notes gifted by Marquis Merlin; a nameless Dragon Rearing Manual, and the Advanced Dou Qi Manual "Rising Sun Blaze".

The Mithril Mine, Jade, Crystal, and Black Pearls, he had sealed in the storerooms of the castle.

Therefore.

He had freed up quite a bit of space in his Gemstone Space, to store Magical Beast Meat, Sea Monster Meat, Dragon Breed Milk, Magic Potions, ensuring that no matter where he went, he could enjoy the same nutrition. This batch of large conches' meat could be perfectly stored in the Gemstone Space, to be savored slowly.

Of course, he was not so stingy as to enjoy all the Sea Monster meat by himself.

The Earth Knights of the territory could get a share, and the officials of the territory could have a bit, too. This was a fair distribution of benefits.

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After the inventory was completed.

The number of pink pearls was not large, totaling seven including the one Chris was studying.

Two ordinary bowl-sized pink pearls came from those bathtub-sized sea snails, one of which had no pink pearl; two goose egg-sized pink pearls, and three chicken egg-sized pink pearls. These seven pink pearls were all irregularly shaped ovals with flame-patterned textures.

The quantity of black pearls was considerable, a total of one hundred thirty-six. The largest Tridacna alone contributed twenty-nine black pearls.

Adding to Liszt's existing stock of black pearls.

There were a total of three basketball-sized black pearls, eleven sea basin-sized black pearls, forty-eight fist-sized black pearls, and many smaller ones.

There were also two basin-sized black pearls, one from the stock and one from the largest Tridacna caught today.

Additionally, there was an even larger black pearl, nearly the size of a bathtub. Without a doubt, it came from the largest Tridacna.

"Hmm, so many pearls, am I rich again?" Liszt grinned as he gazed at the pile of black pearls, already envisioning future maritime domination.

Previously two basin-sized black pearls had been made into Calming Sea Pearls, mounted on the Fresh Flower Vessel and Thorn Number.

Although there were no severe storms between Black Horse Island and Coral Island, engaging the Calming Sea Pearls during the occasional convection weather could greatly reduce the rocking of the vessels, allowing safe passage through the storm.

"This bathtub-sized one must be used on my future flagship. Once I get the shipbuilding technology and study the technology of square rigging, as well as the Dragonbone Stabilizer Technique, relying on rubber and Thorn Wood, I will surely create a super luxurious multi-mast ship... Right, maybe I can study magic-driven technology too!"

Black pearls can disperse wind attribute magic power and even ordinary wind, so, by reverse engineering, could a magic array be developed that stimulates wind power?

Maybe delve deeper and design a magic array that controls wind attribute magic power, turning storms into a driving force for the vessels.

Thinking about it is exciting.

However, to achieve all these, without substantial financial, material, and human resources, it's simply unattainable: "I still need to continue biding my time on Black Horse Island, developing the land slowly... Who knows, maybe I'll become successful at dragon riding and become a Dragon Knight soaring through the sky before the land is developed."

By then, there might be no need to study magic-powered vessels.

Regardless, he immediately placed the bathtub-sized black pearl into the Gemstone Space, its value undoubtedly immense.

The rest of the black pearls were simply stored in the warehouse.

Gazing at the gleaming black pearls, inspiration suddenly struck him: "I was originally planning to give Levis a pink gemstone as a wedding gift, but now it seems unnecessary. The pink gemstone can go to Ake or Chris, as they are magicians and need a boost to their spirits."

Not to give Levis the pink gemstone.

The alternative gift became clear: "Gift a black pearl instead, one basketball-sized. Solely based on appearance, it's definitely more shocking than a single gemstone."

Initially, even a fist-sized black pearl sold to Levis fetched hundreds of Gold Coins; now giving him a basketball-sized black pearl would surely make him ecstatic.