

The Mighty 581

Chapter 581 A Major Blow

Liszt planned to settle all the Abandoned Cordyceps in Mushroom Town where there had already been plans to build mushroom sheds over ten thousand acres. Now it was just the right place to settle the new Abandoned Cordyceps.

Regrettably, there were only ten serfs for each type of Abandoned Cordyceps, and it wouldn't be easy to train other serfs to cultivate them in a short period of time.

After all, each island had different hydrology and climate, which meant the planting techniques had to be adjusted accordingly.

Within about a year, these five types of Abandoned Cordyceps would not be of much use. However, Liszt could afford to wait, as he was still young, just eighteen years old.

For the following period, he supervised the newly arrived fifty serfs in the construction of the Abandoned Cordyceps sheds—yet, after assessing the environment of Mushroom Town, twenty serfs shook their heads, only those who knew how to cultivate Golden Cordyceps, Monkey Head Mushrooms, and Horse Bladder Fungus thought the environment in Mushroom Town was suitable.

The serf who cultivated Blue Pine Mushrooms said, "Lord Landlord, Blue Pine Mushrooms need dark and rotting forest land for cultivation. Mushroom Town lacks trees, making it hard to grow Blue Pine Mushrooms."

The serf who cultivated Black Truffles likewise said, "Lord Landlord, Black Truffles need a large number of dead trees, preferably pine trees, and they should not be too close to the sea, otherwise the quality will be poor."

"Then you survey Black Horse Island and select an appropriate place for planting, ask Consultant Goltai for whatever you lack directly," Liszt replied.

Liszt had always taken a high-level approach, providing direction and leaving the rest to his subordinates to execute.

When dealing with estate matters, it was nothing more than holding a meeting and making decisions that had been repeated time and again—"You must attach great importance to this," "Goltai, I leave this in your hands," "Execute it as soon as possible," "This is a key industry of the estate, not to be overlooked," "There will be rewards for good work."

To put it simply, it was all about saying the right things.

Fortunately, although he liked to replace decision-making with the right things, he never interfered in the specific tasks. For instance, the cultivation of the Abandoned Cordyceps was handed over to Goltai, and he would only inquire about the progress, without strong interference in how to plant them.

However, in recent times,

There were still many problems in the estate, gradually entangling him.

Administrative Officer Isaiah of Fresh Flower Town kept complaining, "My lord, Fresh Flower Town is severely short of serfs; we can no longer draw any more from Black Horse Island."

"Have a cup of tea to cool down," Liszt motioned for the servant to brew a cup of green tea for him, "There will be serfs. I've already had Levis help me look for new ones. A new batch of three thousand serfs is coming soon. Besides, when the Pioneer Mandate commences again this year, I will continue to gather twenty thousand more serfs to bring back."

Isaiah bargained, "Then you must allocate these three thousand serfs to Fresh Flower Town, my lord. Fresh Flower Town can make do with fewer serfs at the end of the year."

"Rest assured, you will not lack serfs; what you need to do now is to soothe the public sentiment in the estate, make the serfs loyal to the estate, and prevent any disturbances when the new serfs arrive," Liszt assured.

"Yes, my lord. Isaiah will definitely tightly control the public opinion and sentiment within the estate, step up the propaganda, and ensure the serfs quickly become loyal, without affecting the integration of the new serfs!" Isaiah responded.

No sooner had Liszt appeased Isaiah,

Administrative Officer Blair of the port town came asking urgently, "My lord, we are short of people. The construction of the town hall has been stalled for a week due to a lack of workers! Consultant Goltai has also reassigned a group of serfs to cultivate Abandoned Cordyceps, and if this continues, there will be no one to maintain the operation of the town!"

"Stay calm and have patience, Blair. Here, have a cup of tea to calm down," Liszt let the servant brew another cup of green tea for Blair.

Serving green tea had become his trademark, gradually guiding the trend of drinking green tea. After a moment, he sent Blair away with the same reasoning he used before.

Finally, Liszt had a moment of peace.

"I didn't expect that nearly twenty thousand serfs transported last year, compounded with an additional purchase of five thousand serfs at intervals, would still fall short of fulfilling the needs of the territory's development," he found himself nearly fuming. The trade in serfs he had been conducting in partnership with Levis had never ceased, and yet there was still a shortage of labor.

During the period of the Pioneer Mandate, the price of serfs was low, and he bought them in large quantities.

In times of peace, not only was the cost of serfs high, but they were often old, weak, sick or disabled, and so he continued to purchase them in smaller batches.

Other territories did not have as many industries and therefore did not require as many serfs; they could develop methodically. On Liszt's territory, industries surged continuously, with each one requiring a large number of serfs to operate. Thus, serfs were always in short supply and he had never had a surplus.

"I hope to quickly develop magic plants to lessen the dependence on serfs... Engaging in serf trade over the long term doesn't feel right," he sighed quietly to himself.

Behind each shipload of serfs lingered the souls of the wronged.

He could easily integrate into the system of the nobility, be corrupted by the luxurious noble life, but the remnants of goodness in his heart still remained. He wanted to convince himself—he was a transmigrator, and the humans here were not his kin but simply beings from a Different World. Yet, facing each living person, how could he remain indifferent?

He drained the cup of green tea in one gulp.

He made a clear decision, "I can't stop developing my territory, the only thing I can do is to ensure the safety of the serf trade and the happiness of the serfs on my lands... Starting tomorrow, I will reduce taxes and raise the basic wage of the territory, from two copper coins a day to three copper coins."

This was the second time he had raised the wage standard; during the festival period, he had increased it from one copper coin to two.

"With so many industries, my businesses can support the territory; there's no need to exploit my people,"

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The distress of being understaffed was difficult to alleviate, and bad news came one after another.

This time, the bad news was related to the research of natural magic by Ach—the systematic verification of the Sun Script by Ach had allowed for the reading of a great deal of Sun Script—translated out by her was a segment in "Druid Essentials - Magic Bean Planting" detailing magic beans.

Essentially, it takes ten years for a magic bean to grow into a large tree. The yield for the first ten years was very low, with a gradual increase over the next ten years, and the peak yield occurring after forty years, when each tree could produce up to fifty thousand jin (25 metric tons) of magic beans per year.

"Each tree yielding fifty thousand jin a year is indeed impressive,"

Liszt clicked his tongue, "But why does it take ten years to bear fruit, and twenty years for the yield to increase? Why only after forty years does it reach an annual yield of fifty thousand jin?"

Forty years later, Liszt would be fifty-eight years old, by which time, by his own estimation, he would have likely unified the continent.

What use would he then have for magic beans?

Ach then deciphered "Advanced Druid Essentials - Transforming Tree Cultivation" which likewise recorded the growth cycle of the Transforming Tree. Surprisingly, it took a hundred years for a tree to grow and mature to the point where it could be used for building something like the Sky Ship Dragon Bone. Even a Transforming Tree as thick as a wrist took twenty years to grow to full size.

"Twenty years, wrist-thickness, barely enough to make a cart... do I need such Transforming Trees?" Liszt was utterly defeated by this news.

For a moment, he lost interest in all magic plants.

However, he still took ten minutes to collect himself, then left the matters of natural magic and magic plants to Ach. Once Ach had results, those would be passed to Chris for implementation—magic plants that mature in ten years and materialize in a hundred years were treasures better left for future generations.

The disheartened Liszt, a few days later, still received some good news.

Working together, Magicians Chris and Granney finally made thorough research of the Golden Pearls produced by the Golden-Lipped Clams. Using the Golden Pearls, they created a piece of Magic Equipment that could "cool,"—Golden-Lipped Clams were Water Attribute Sea Monsters, and their pearls were also of the Water Attribute, but they could generate an ice attribute effect.

Each Golden Pearl was a magical air conditioner, cooling only, without heating capability.

Chapter 582 Winter Warmth and Summer Coolness - The Temperature Calming Pearl

Upon entering the fourth floor of the Mage Tower, a cool breeze hit me in the face.

It was now mid-June, officially entering the scorching summer heat. Although Black Horse Island is at a high latitude with considerable rainfall, and located above the sea, on clear days the heat was still frightening. Outside, it must have been around twenty-seven or twenty-eight degrees, but after entering the room, it felt like it was only in the teens.

The change in temperature was astounding.

"Viscount, this is the magic equipment we made using the Golden Pearl. The outer disc is the controlling magic array, which can be operated to adjust the temperature from high to low," Granney, acting as the guide, detailed the properties of the equipment to Liszt.

It was essentially a disc-shaped piece of equipment with a Golden Pearl embedded in the center.

Liszt touched the disc, finding the disc's temperature to be about the same as the room's, not any cooler: "Is the current temperature set to high or low?"

"It is essentially low energy consumption at a higher temperature."

"Adjust it to the lowest temperature, let's see how much it can drop."

Granney had settled in the Mage Tower, with people delivering food and drink to him, and occasionally, he could go see a play or a comedy show in the port town. He could often consult Grand Magician Chris, and his life was quite pleasant, which improved his temper a lot. He worked very diligently and spoke much more gently.

"Yes, Viscount."

He quickly activated the magic runes on the disc for adjustment, and after a moment, the temperature inside the room plummeted, growing colder and colder.

When it reached about four or five degrees, it couldn't cool any further.

Feeling the goosebumps on his skin, Liszt frowned and asked, "Is this its lowest cooling capability? Can it not be lowered to a degree that can form ice?"

"I apologize, Viscount. The Grand Magician and I have tried many times but still cannot make the Golden Pearl conjure ice blocks; this is its upper limit of magic power," Granney said regretfully, as the ability to make ice would have doubled the pearl's value.

Chris shook her head as well, "It's a pity the Golden-Lipped Clam is a water attribute sea monster. If it had been an ice attribute sea monster, the Golden Pearl would definitely have been able to create ice." As a Grand Magician, she could produce a small amount of ice herself, but using her personal magic to create and sell ice would be uneconomical.

Although he felt regret, Liszt still encouraged them, "It's quite impressive already. With the Golden Pearl, I believe the hot summer will be much more bearable... Have you named it yet?"

"Please name it, Viscount."

"Hmm," Liszt thought for a moment, then inquired further, "Since it can regulate temperature, can it also raise the temperature during winter?"

After pondering, Chris said, "Although we think it has triggered its ice attribute properties, according to its essence, it's more like a constant temperature control. Since it's the hot summer now, it exhibits a cooling nature, but in winter, it should be able to warm up."

During the previous report, she and Granney had only thought the Golden Pearl could cool. It was only after Liszt's question that they realized this—if it could cool in summer, why couldn't it warm in winter? After all, its range of temperature adjustment was from four or five degrees to the teens—of course, the temperature measurement is just what Liszt felt, as there were no thermometers here.

"This makes it more versatile, being able to cool as well as warm," Liszt was very pleased with this feature, as mere cooling had limited effect, but both cooling and warming made for a good air conditioner, "Since it's a kind of constant temperature regulation, then, let's call it the Temperature Calming Pearl!"

The Black Pearl could be turned into the Calming Wind Pearl.

The Pink Pearl could be turned into the Water Calming Pearl.

The Golden Pearl could be turned into the Temperature Calming Pearl.

All three pearls had powerful effects, which made him quite satisfied. It was the best news he had heard in a while: "The Tranquil Lake on Blue Dragon Island has sea monster pearl oysters that can produce White Pearls, which have only the simple effect of calming the mind, far inferior to the three types of pearls produced in my territory!"

Especially since Black Pearls inherently exude a heart-calming and tranquilizing effect, they are far superior to White Pearls.

Together with Levis and The Loria Couple, he had already sold Black Pearls to many nobles and famous ladies in the Grand Duchy, earning heaps upon heaps of Gold Coins.

Unfortunately, the Black Pearls had sold out, and harvesting more would take at least a year and a half—as for the large Black Pearls, it could take decades, even a hundred years to cultivate. However, the old Tridacna, living in the deep sea, whenever they appeared in Pearl Lake, would allow for a substantial profit.

Techniques for pearl harvesting and culturing had been figured out, which allowed for the extraction without harming the lives of the Tridacna.

This was an industry that could be developed over the long term.

He gathered his thoughts.

He asked Chris and Granney, "How large is the range of the Temperature Calming Pearl?"

"Based on the standard of this Golden Pearl, it's the size of a thirty-square-meter room."

"Hmm, a bit small," Liszt complained, then quickly added, "I will provide you with more Golden Pearls. When you have the time, make them into Temperature Calming Pearls. The Mage Tower will install a batch, and I need the rest for my Thorn Castle."

Granney, the main force in creating Magic Equipment, immediately nodded and said, "Please rest assured, Viscount, I will take care of making the Temperature Calming Pearls."

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The Golden-Lipped Clam is a Sea Monster that can cast the Common Magic - Water Bullet.

The best suited collector for the job was Sea Sprite Ake, but as Ake was recently fully engaged in the study of Natural Magic, Liszt did not disturb her. Instead, he personally rode the Rainbow Whale Rose to the habitat of the Golden-Lipped Clam near Rocky Island. He looked for large Golden-Lipped Clams and lured them with food.

Once a clam opened up its shell, he quickly jammed in a Fire Dragon Bone, blocking the clam's defenses, then held up his shield to block the Water Bullets it released.

Rapidly he sliced open the thin membrane surrounding the Golden Pearl and extracted it.

After inserting a grain of sand, he withdrew the Fire Dragon Bone.

In this way, the Golden-Lipped Clam would be unharmed and could continue to gestate Golden Pearls—the healing power of Sea Monsters is strong as long as they are not excessively tampered with, they rarely die.

Shellfish like the Golden-Lipped Clam and Tridacna could all be processed in this manner. The true challenge was the Fen Hai Luo, from which the Pink Pearls could not be extracted without killing it.

So he repeated the process.

Within an hour, Liszt had acquired fifteen Golden Pearls.

He calculated that this should be sufficient to meet the needs; the Castle required Temperature Calming Pearls in no more than ten rooms, and the Mage Tower would have five more installed, which would just use up the fifteen Pearls. As for the current pearl in hand, he could give it to Ake to play with and study.

The main issue was that the population of Golden-Lipped Clams was not large, and even fewer had the rightly sized Golden Pearls, comparable to a chicken egg.

Otherwise, Liszt would definitely have harvested in large quantities, creating Temperature Calming Pearls for sale, and earning a vast amount of Gold Coins to purchase supplies.

It seemed like his good luck had returned.

No sooner had he digested the good news about the Golden Pearls.

Then another piece of good news arrived—the textile workshop had finally turned the fibers from Green Caterpillars into fabric, which was delivered to the Castle for Liszt's appraisal.

Chapter 583 Cool Summer with Green Silk

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The clothing in this world clearly wasn't as advanced as in the era of Earth, According to the different materials used in making clothes, they are divided into ordinary clothing and magic equipment.

Magic equipment was obviously something only noble knights could afford, like the red-faced, black-bottomed, gold-trimmed cloak of Li Si Te, which was magic equipment. There was also his Six-Headed King Sea Serpent Armor and various other pieces of magic equipment crafted from magical beast materials that could serve as either clothing or equipment.

As for ordinary clothing, the top tier was naturally fur—fur garments made of precious pelts, such as mink and fox, which were exclusive to nobles.

Besides, normal nobles generally wore woolen clothes, which is fabric woven from wool; to keep warm, they usually wore down clothes, such as goose or duck down.

Commoners mostly wore linen and cotton garments.

No one had seen silkworm raising, so naturally, there was no product like silk. However, upon seeing the fabric woven from the Green Caterpillar's fur, Li Si Te immediately thought of silk.

Light, transparent, smooth to the touch—it felt like a layer of gauze.

Although the Green Caterpillar's woven fabric wasn't as comfortable as genuine silk, it was still a superior silk textile. Moreover, after a thorough washing, the color improved significantly, no longer a shiny oily green, but only a faint misty green.

"This is a very good textile, let's call it silk," Li Si Te decided to use a knockoff once again to inhabit the name of the genuine article—of course, this world didn't have silk, so it was no big deal to call the Green Caterpillar's woven fabric silk. A name was just a code, convenient for him to differentiate and remember.

"Yes, my lord."

"Have the textile workshop hurriedly make a few sets of silk clothes for me, summer is obviously a good time to wear silk."

The Green Caterpillars bred very quickly, and the Green-headed Ducks and Flamingos ate them, consuming only the flesh and not the fur. So every time they fed in the Mangrove Forest, they would collect a pile of fur left over by the ducks and birds. Transported to the textile workshop, a large amount of silk was woven.

This would undoubtedly be a special product.

Nobles were believed to have a strong interest in this kind of lightweight, cool, and breathable cloth.

You have to know that even in the heat of summer, nobles have to dress neatly in their Flack·Abbieye, complete with a Ruff collar that envelops the entire neck, for social

gatherings. If clothes were made from silk, the comfort would be at least tripled—perhaps the high nobles had ways to keep cool, but the lesser nobles would surely go crazy for silk.

Li Si Te calculated in his mind, "The price of Green Caterpillar silk should be set higher than down clothing... To meet the demands of more nobles, I should have Nami put more effort into scattering several more patches of Mangrove Forest along the coast of Black Horse Island to feed the Green Caterpillars... It would be best if the Green Caterpillars could be bred artificially."

Like silkworm raising, the efficiency of artificially raising Green Caterpillars should significantly increase.

Then, the Green Caterpillars would only need to eat, drink, sleep, and once they matured, they would be thrown to the Green-headed Ducks and Flamingos to eat, and the leftover fur would be collected for recycling.

"I'll follow this routine; I'll have Gao Ertai arrange for someone to implement it later..." Just as he thought this, he suddenly paused; the shortage of serfs on his land was huge.

Breeding Green Caterpillars would obviously require a large number of serfs, which seemed unfeasible at present.

They would have to wait until after the issuance of the Pioneer Mandate when the lands could welcome a leap in development.

Speaking of the Pioneer Mandate.

Before long, Li Si Te received a message from the knights of Tulip Castle—the Earl had invited him to a family feast at Tulip Castle because the Earl had received a court summons and was about to head to Blue Dragon Island to gather at the Azure Sky Peak Palace for the court assembly. This year's assembly was scheduled much earlier than usual.

Thus, on the same day, Li Si Te mounted his Landwalker Bird Loki and headed quickly towards Tulip Castle.

Loki's speed was becoming faster and its stamina had greatly increased; it was still growing. However, much to Li Si Te's disappointment, it still hadn't learned a third spell.

For an Intermediate Dragon Breed Magical Beast, knowing only two spells was indeed below its status—probably the power of the Bloodline Fruit was insufficient.

Rendering it a half-baked Intermediate Dragon Beast.

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"Li Si Te, you arrived so quickly," his brother Levis greeted at the doorway.

Letting the servant take away the Landwalker Bird, Li Si Te replied, "With the Landwalker Bird Loki, it takes only forty minutes to come from Fresh Flower Town."

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"I envy you so much, having mounts in the water and the sky, and even the Blue Blood Treasure Horse given by the Grand Duke."

"Once you advance to a Sky Knight, brother, you'll have it all. You must be close, aren't you?" Liszt walked side by side with Levis into the castle, asking.

A restrained smile appeared on Levis's face: "Indeed, it's close. I've already touched the bottleneck of restraint, but I'm still brewing a breakthrough. Your 'Earth Notes' have been a huge help to my cultivation. I have to admit, in terms of intuitive understanding of Dou Qi cultivation, you are astonishing."

"Glad I could help."

Just as they sat down in the living room, Loria, who was pregnant, personally brought him a cup of pure milk tea—everyone at Tulip Castle knew Liszt's taste; he preferred either green tea or milk tea without minced meat, eggs, or other ingredients.

With a smile, she said, "Father and Lady Marie are handling this quarter's taxes in Coral City, they should be back soon. Grandmother and Li Vera have sent someone to invite you, and Levis can chat for now. Lidun is also in the castle, I'll call him over too."

Liszt took the milk tea: "Thank you, but with your pregnancy, you should let the servants handle these things. The child in your belly is most important."

Levis added from the side: "It's only because you're here that Loria would do these things; others don't get such a privilege."

Turning to Loria with a gentle expression: "You should rest soon so you don't tire yourself; Liszt won't care for such conventional acts. Sit down and let's chat together. No need to call Lidun. He's just a child, what could he possibly contribute to our conversation?"

After Loria sat down, she still instructed the butler: "Mr. Silva, please bother to call Lidun."

Liszt quietly savored his milk tea.

He had no interest whatsoever in the intrigues of daily life at Tulip Castle.

After the butler had left to summon Lidun, Liszt seemingly remembered something and said: "By the way, my territory has lately produced a very special type of fabric, and I've brought a batch to give to you for making clothes."

A servant quickly brought in a bolt of green silk.

And handed it to Loria to examine.

Being a woman who had studied sewing at Bull Horn Academy, Loria naturally knew the quality of fabrics. After feeling it for a moment, her eyes lit up: "Smooth, lightweight, breathable, and very comfortable to the touch, plus the fabric has a beautiful sheen, shimmering with a faint green hue!"

The personal servant Thomas explained on her behalf: "This is called silk, young mistress."

"Silk... Liszt, how valuable is this fabric?" Loria keenly asked, having sensed the commercial value of green silk.

"I think it won't be cheaper than high-quality down. However, I haven't set a specific price yet since production capacity in my territory isn't high enough, and we can't mass-produce silk at the moment. I've just brought some to have summer clothes made for you."

"Is there anything we can do to help?"

"Not for the time being. Let's talk once the production of green silk stabilizes."

"Okay then." Loria was not disappointed, still saying joyfully, "The silk feels really comfortable. This summer, we won't have to wear those stifling full-length dresses anymore."

Levis also admired the silk, touching it as he exclaimed: "I'm going to use it to tailor-make several sets of Flack Abaie for myself. Woolen Flack Abaie in summer is a disaster, and those damned ugly Ruffs, it's like having a hot water bottle around your neck!"

In the midst of idle chatter.

Lidun quickly arrived and greeted Liszt obediently: "Brother Liszt, you've arrived."

Liszt responded with a grunt, "Hmm," and then used his Eye of Magic to gauge the other's level of Dou Qi—it was fairly dense. Lady Marie must have stacked resources for him over these past few months.

But that was only a glance.

He didn't care beyond that.

As a Dragon Knight, Liszt didn't even consider a Completion Level Sky Knight worthy of his attention, let alone a mere Earth Knight. Within the whole Duchy of Sapphire, the only one he regarded was the Sapphire Duke—Andrew Sapphire—who was not known to be a Dragon Knight or a Dragon Domain LandLord.

Chapter 584 Father and Son Exchange Smiles

This chapter is a special addition rewarded for the "Admiring Flowers and Jewels" contribution.

Despite his disfavor towards Lidun, Liszt did answer his questions about cultivation practices when he asked. The reason for his disfavor was mostly due to the previous occupant of his body's memories—memories where Lidun showed no favor to his predecessor and the predecessor similarly disliked Lidun.

However, as his horizons broadened and he adopted a more detached view of the world, he no longer cared about the petty squabbles between siblings.

In fact, he was quite looking forward to the day Lidun would also become a Sky Knight.

If the Tulip Family could boast four Sky Knights from a single lineage, that would indeed be interesting, especially since if he decided to establish his own nation, his family would be a significant support.

A short while later, Li Vera had already hurried to the Castle accompanying Lady Penelope.

The first thing the elderly lady said to Liszt was, "When you return, remember to pick a potted plant from my Castle to take back with you."

"Grandmother, how many new potted plants have you cultivated?" Liszt asked with a smile.

With the foundation provided by the Dragon Hollyhock Bug, the Fig Bug, and the Green Yuanbao Bug, Lady Penelope had become utterly obsessed with her potted plants, unable to extricate herself. At first, it might have been about saving on gifts with the ruse of potted plants, but now it seemed she was indeed somewhat fanatical.

She truly believed that cultivating potted plants had a high probability of producing Elf Bugs.

When it came to potted plants, she expressed great excitement, "I've recently taken a liking to succulents; I've found they are very easy to keep alive. Each one is healthy, plump, and succulent. My cactus is about to bloom."

"Then I must take one with me," Liszt assured her.

The rest of their conversation was all casual chat.

First, they talked about the green-haired silk, with everyone singing its praises. They believed that inciting nobility to a frenzy was just a matter of time. Then, they spoke about a few new stage plays performed by the Black Horse Island Drama Troupe which had become must-see events for the nobility of Coral City.

Many comedy troupes began to imitate the Black Horse Island Drama Troupe and gradually switched to stage plays.

However, they primarily copied the plays of the Black Horse Island Drama Troupe without the ability to create original work. Adapting a classic play is not an easy task. Only Liszt occasionally had the leisure and interest to pick out suitable Knight's Novels and let Avril Mask adapt them.

There was no helping it.

On the whole of Coral Island, he was probably the one who read the most Knight's Novels.

As for how to adapt a Knight's Novel, he held an authoritative voice, knowing exactly what kind of plots people loved to watch.

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By evening, the Earl and his wife had finally returned from Coral City, and not long after, the dinner began. At the dinner, the Earl spoke about preparations for this year's Pioneer Mandate, according to the messages from the Court Envoy, the Grand Duke might be preparing to launch a longer Pioneer Mandate this year.

"Now that both you and I are Sky Knights, we add the Blizzard Beast Squad for besieging, and I believe the military exploits we can contend for won't be worse than those few Marquises," he said with confidence, "To take the initiative in the competition for noble titles this year, we can't keep a low profile during the Pioneer Mandate anymore."

Last year during the Pioneer Mandate, after capturing an Earl's Castle, the Coral Island Knights ceased their campaign, afraid of attracting too much attention.

If they drew the attack of multiple Sky Knights, just Li Weiliam as the Sea Wave Sword Saint would find it hard to hold on.

But this year was different with Liszt. Others might not know, but Li Weiliam was very aware that Liszt's combat abilities far surpassed his own. Combined, they could handle most situations.

So.

It was time to make a bold show.

Liszt nodded, replying, "I'll do my utmost to help you, Father, compete for military merits. However, I hope that the family fleet can provide more support in transporting serfs. My territory is undergoing major development and requires a large number of serfs. During this year's Pioneer Mandate, I plan to primarily accept serfs."

"How many serfs are you preparing to transport?"

"At least twenty thousand. If we can obtain a considerable amount of food, I hope to bring back thirty thousand serfs."

Black Horse Island has many industries and, given the potential for territorial development, it can easily accommodate one hundred thousand residents. However, the main constraint is food—relying solely on farming and fishing obviously isn't enough to cover the deficit. Now, with a population of over thirty thousand, the territory is just about able to feed its people day to day.

If another twenty thousand serfs are to be transported back, resources must be gathered from all aspects—seafood, for instance, has the potential to be further exploited. Kelp and

giant algae are edible; while giant algae taste poor, they can at least replace fodder for livestock. Additionally, with the mass production of single-masted sailboats, offshore fishing is on the rise.

Eating fish alone is not ideal, but it can be exchanged with Tulip Castle for grains.

In summary, according to the calculations of territory officers, an extra twenty thousand serfs would not result in famine within the territory. But any more than that would be unmanageable without the importation of a substantial amount of food from outside.

The Earl was surprised, "Transport thirty thousand serfs? That's no small number. Jonas and Trick's territories have total populations of sixty thousand and fifty thousand, respectively. Your territory has been developed for less than a year, and its population is set to exceed theirs. Are you certain that your territory can absorb this growth?"

"The current population of our territory is over thirty-five thousand one hundred. Accommodating another twenty thousand won't be an issue. With food, even thirty thousand is a trivial matter."

"As long as you're confident. I will arrange for the family's fleet to prioritize our main transport capacity towards you."

At this point, Levis joined the conversation, "Liszt, your Black Horse Island has also accumulated quite a few double-masted cargo ships, right? They can be combined with the family fleet for a joint expedition."

"My fleet is too small; currently, there are only fifteen ships. I must leave at least seven to meet the needs of the territory's shipping, so only eight can be merged with the family fleet."

"Eight ships are still a significant transport capacity."

"Then it's settled."

And so it was agreed.

The discussion continued until the banquet ended.

The Earl had convened this family dinner mainly to brief Liszt briefly, giving himself a basis for confidence before he went to Azure Sky Peak Palace to discuss how to participate in the Pioneer Mandate.

Come evening.

The father and son spent some time alone in the study again.

The main topic was the Earl's inquiry, "Liszt, how has your strength progressed?"

"I feel I've made significant advancements, reaching new levels every day. My current strength should far surpass that of a Sky Knight at the Completion Level. Hunting the Boot Beak Giant Stork wasn't very difficult."

"You've become this powerful?"

"Yes, Father. Do you need to take that into consideration?"

"Never mind that." The Earl coughed and shifted the topic, "Speaking of this Boot Beak Giant Stork, I think it must have killed the Purple Sand Crocodile on the island. I went to examine the crocodile's habitat and saw signs of a fierce battle... I was planning to wait for the Purple Sand Crocodile to breed, but it was destroyed by this large bird."

Although in the end, Liszt consumed the meat, it was indeed the Boot Beak Giant Stork who killed the Purple Sand Crocodile—Liszt just watched.

He felt slightly uneasy.

After some thought, he said, "If I get the chance, I'll take a stroll through the forests on the mainland. If I encounter any suitable Magical Beasts, I will capture one for you, Father."

The Earl raised an eyebrow, "You would trouble yourself for that?"

"It is what I should do."

The father and son looked at each other and smiled, a warm moment, although what each was thinking in that instant, nobody knew.

Chapter 585 Grandmother is Right

After staying for the night at Tulip Castle, the next day when Liszt left, he went to Lady Penelope's small castle as agreed and chose a potted plant from her balcony to take back with him.

However, after carefully checking with the Eye of Magic, he was disappointed to find that these potted plants showed no signs of magic feedback.

Not a single one was nurturing an Elf Bug.

But he still let the servants casually take away a pot that looked like many small stones.

"This is Lithops, look how pretty they are, each split stone is a plant of Lithops; this pot contains twenty-five of them. May the glory of the knight watch over you, and perhaps, amongst these, one that blooms will nurture a Little Minor Elf, my handsome young man."

Lady Penelope bestowed her affectionate blessing.

In the past, she thought Liszt looked too much like Melissa Taro, a woman she detested, but now the more she looked, the more incomparably handsome Liszt seemed to her.

Taking a pot of Lithops with him,

Liszt said his goodbyes to Lady Penelope. On the way, he briefly examined the Lithops — each plant resembled two split stone halves, with very smooth edges. In the crevice between the two halves, some had a flower blooming, the color of which was different from the stone, making it quite unique.

Upon returning to Fresh Flower Town, he handed the potted plant over to Butler Carter, instructing him to have someone take care of the plant.

He certainly did not intend to expend effort on a potted plant that was of no use.

"Lately there doesn't seem to be anything that requires my concern; I might as well work on "The Conjectures on the Nexus of the Magic Net, Elves, and Dragons" and try to finish this magical theoretical masterpiece, establishing my status as a theoretical Archmage."

Standing in the study equipped with a Temperature Calming Pearl,

he could see the small town in the distance.

The town was bustling with activity; many merchants in disheveled attire moved about freely, hinting at the initial success of the trading town. There were also many serfs pushing wheelbarrows through the streets, transporting goods — the wheelbarrow had been Liszt's secret tool, but its exposure happened quite rapidly.

It was inevitable; the technology behind a wheelbarrow was not complex, and one could figure out the principle behind it with just a glance.

After all, everyone had seen horse carts and flatbed carts; the structure of a pushcart was not unfamiliar.

It was simply a matter of two wheels being replaced with a single one.

As soon as the wheelbarrow began to be widely used on Black Horse Island, woodshops on Coral Island started replicating them, and now wheelbarrows were being used in every city on Coral Island.

Thus, there was no longer any point in keeping the wheelbarrow a secret.

In the castle, a servant carried a bucket to a nearby well to draw water. Since Drillmaster Fred Wells arrived, wells had been gradually drilled in every town, and naturally, one was drilled near the castle of Fresh Flower Town. The servants no longer needed to go to the town to fetch water.

"The once dilapidated, impoverished town is now thriving; it feels quite fulfilling," Liszt felt a surge of excitement in his heart.

But he soon chuckled wryly to himself, "Strictly speaking, the role I personally played seems quite minimal, with most of the success stemming from the Smoke Mission."

He thought this over, touching his conscience.

Although he usually prided himself as a prodigy, Son of Glory, the youngest Sky Knight and the youngest Dragon Knight in the Duchy of Sapphire,

Liszt never really considered himself a genius. Before transmigrating, he was just an ordinary office worker, and he didn't become a strategist or a martial arts prodigy overnight after crossing into a different world. He also didn't aim to arm himself with radical theories to revolutionize the other world.

He simply quietly integrated into the noble class, striving for his dragon-riding ambition while savoring the luxurious life.

Most of the time, he went with the flow, following the Smoke Mission without any long-term plans or well-thought-out development strategies, doing whatever came to mind. Another transmigrator with effective execution might have already started overthrowing the rule of the Sapphire Family.

As for him, he was content with his Viscount title, basking in everyone's flattery.

Of course, everyone has their own way of living, and Liszt didn't see himself as a great man, nor did he believe that the poor masses of the different world needed his salvation. Just like on Earth, when he saw news about China aiding Africa, it would ignite anger within him—his own country still had a multitude of impoverished people, yet it found the time to care for Africa.

Though the country had strategic reasons for aiding African nations in order to obtain resources, as an individual, his scope was limited; he only saw the people of his own country.

After crossing into a different world.

It was hard to establish a sense of belonging, his concern extended only to the precious people around him, truly, no one else—and his care for serfs was mostly out of sympathy. Seeing others in suffering always tugged at his heartstrings.

"Heh."

He shook the cup filled with Banpo milk and dismissed these thoughts: "I didn't expect to become so sentimental... I haven't even ridden the Little Fire Dragon Leo yet, where do I find the time for such emotions."

Thinking about it.

He summoned the Smoke Mission.

The mission was still the same; the Abandoned Cordyceps had not yet been properly settled—Golden Cordyceps, Monkey Head Mushroom, and Horse Bladder Fungus had their greenhouses built and the plantation started; the Black Truffle greenhouse was selected to be in Horse Ranching Town, nestled between two hills with a slightly drier climate, suitable for the growth of Black Truffles.

Only the Blue Pine Mushroom was left without a chosen site to build its greenhouse.

In fact, the serfs planting the Blue Pine Mushroom were very anxious, having searched every corner of Black Horse Island but finding nowhere ideal to cultivate it.

Under Liszt's repeated urging, they reluctantly picked Thorn Town as the planting site.

By late June, when the Blue Pine Mushroom greenhouse was completed, the Smoke Mission finally concluded: "Mission completed, reward one Lithops Elf Bug."

"Huh?"

The surprise hit Liszt hard when he saw the mission's reward: "Seriously? Do I have magic in me or something? Am I possessed by the power of the Smoke Dragon, or is Lady Penelope possessed by the Smoke Mission? Dragon Kui Bug, Fig Bug, Green Yuanbao Bug, and now there's a Lithops Bug!"

Without a doubt, among the twenty-five Lithops in that pot, he found the one that was in bloom and nurturing an Elf Bug.

He shook his head.

He didn't bother to ponder who was truly the Son of Glory, deciding in his heart: "From now on, Lady Penelope's potted plants are under my care, Liszt!"

The Smoke was slowly reforming into a new segment of Serpent Script.

"Mission: The original name of Fresh Flower Town originated from the discovery of a new Tulip variety, but now only a few Red 'Saint Dance' and Yellow 'William I' Tulips remain and are gradually withering. Investigate and resolve the cause of the withering red and yellow Tulips. Reward: Two Elf Bugs."

His eyes gleamed, and Liszt smiled.

It was a familiar formula. Based on his past experiences with the Smoke Mission, the withering red and yellow Tulips were undoubtedly nurturing Elf Bugs.

"Two Tulip Bugs at once, nice!"

Chapter 586 Emily's Perseverance

...

The cultivation of Lithops in pots required delicate care to avoid miscarriage of the incubating Elf Bugs, but Liszt did not pay too much attention to this. The reason was simple, Lithops did not produce Magic Potions or any other yield.

They were simply ornamental plants, at most, complemented by Cordyceps, which could enhance the quality of ordinary Lithops and fetch a slightly higher price when sold as potted plants. Just like the Venus flytraps he raised around the castle to catch flies, they were nice to look at but not practical.

What he now valued more were the two Tulip Bugs awaiting fertilization—the cultivation of the Black Tulip was inseparable from the Tulip Bug.

The Fresh Flower Farm was not large, hosting a little over a hundred acres of Black Tulips, as well as twenty acres of the red St. Dence Tulip, and more than ten acres of the yellow William I Tulip. Both varieties were discovered after he came to Coral Island, one commemorated his ancestor Saint Dance Tile, and the other commemorated Li Weiliam being made an Earl.

As ordinary tulips, their main use was to be made into dried Tulip flowers, relying on their rich fragrance to counteract the stench of urine and feces in the city.

However, under his rule, there were no issues with urine and feces, and therefore there was no need for dried Tulip flowers.

Furthermore, the serfs from Fresh Flower Town had all been reassigned to Black Horse Island, resulting in the serfs of the Fresh Flower Farm being too busy in the fields of Black Tulips to tend to the St. Dence and William I Tulips. By the time Liszt came for an inspection, parts of the red and yellow tulips had withered.

"Lord Landlord, Rayman did not notice the withering of the St. Dence and William I Tulips, please punish me," said the steward of the Fresh Flower Farm, his face filled with regret and fear.

According to the rules of the estate, any anomaly in crops must be reported to the administration at once.

Punishment was definitely in order, but such matters were no longer Liszt's concern; the town officials would punish the stewards' negligence accordingly.

Liszt was only interested in the Elf Bugs. Using the Eye of Magic, he searched around and, after some effort, found two Cordyceps plants with dimly glowing Magic feedback.

These two Cordyceps plants were clearly malnourished, with some yellowing and curling leaves.

"Immediately fertilize and water, provide these two Cordyceps plants with sufficient nutrients!" Liszt ordered on the spot.

Administrative Officer Isaiah, who had come to deal with the situation, asked in surprise, "Sir, have these two tulips already nurtured Elf Bugs?"

"Of course."

Liszt grew frustrated with Isaiah as well. If it weren't for the Smoke Mission alert, it might have been too late to notice the problem until the serfs realized it, and the Elf Bugs would have miscarried by then.

He sternly reprimanded, "Isaiah, as the Town Government Official, I know you're busy. But the anomaly in crops must be taken seriously; it has always been a strict rule I've set. As an administrative officer, you must be vigilant and frequently inspect the crops!"

Isaiah replied ashamedly, "Please punish me, sir."

Liszt was unambiguous, "Deduct half a month's salary. Do not make this mistake again. Although Fresh Flower Town is based on trade, the slightest change in the conditions of the crops is still the most important administrative matter."

"Rest assured, sir, Isaiah will certainly remember this lesson and will never be negligent again!"

...

The cause of the tulips' withering had been thoroughly investigated, and now it was just a matter of waiting for the solution to the problem and for them to recover. Then the task would be completed.

Liszt was not focused on the mission.

He had been gradually getting busier with work recently; the Earl had already gone to Azure Sky Peak Palace to discuss this year's Pioneer Mandate. As a Viscount Lord, he naturally needed to shore up his forces and prepare the Knight Order.

The estate now had a total of seventy-seven Earth Knights,

...

Liszt planned to select sixty knights to form five knight squads, accompanying him to the battlefield, including one squad of Elite Earth Knights. The remaining Earth Knights were entrusted to Captain Paris to lead the patrol unit, maintaining the safety and defense of the territory.

After he announced the list of knights selected for the battlefield, young and tender Emily pleaded with him, "Lord, please allow Emily to follow you into battle and take part in this year's Pioneer Mandate war!"

Twelve-year-old Emily had gradually grown to over 1.6 meters tall.

When they first met last year, she was only 1.5 meters tall, and in just over a year, she had shot up more than ten centimeters; her future height would certainly not be short. Moreover, her exotic features, with deep-set eyes and a high nose bridge, were becoming increasingly striking; she was a beauty in the making. Only, her skin had been tanned dark due to intense training.

"You are only twelve, what battlefield are you going on?" Liszt refused, intending to cultivate Emily into a female Sky Knight, not wanting to lose her on the battlefield.

Emily insisted, "Lord, the battlefield is the best training ground for knights, and Emily already feels her training speed slowing. I need new pressures to stimulate myself!"

"Slowing down is normal; as a twelve-year-old Earth Knight, you already show more talent than many nobles."

"But Emily is a female!"

"What about being a female?"

Emily bit her lip and replied, "Lord, Emily has inquired with Captain Paris that there are very few outstanding female knights in the Duchy of Sapphire. Moreover, once a woman's menstrual cycle begins, it will greatly affect the progress of Dou Qi cultivation. Captain Paris said that the cycle usually starts at 14, and by then Dou Qi cultivation would definitely slow down, so..."

Her implication was clear.

She hoped to solidify her foundation before her menstrual cycle began, so that she could keep pace with the male geniuses in the future—the inevitable monthly cycle of bleeding in females would indeed severely impact the cultivation of Dou Qi.

"The depletion from the menstrual cycle can be replenished with magic potions, don't worry. With such great talent, I will do everything to cultivate you; there's no need to rush for success."

Going into battle at twelve, still a little girl, was indeed too cruel.

Emily knelt on one knee and solemnly said, "Lord, Emily is grateful for your concern; meeting you is the most precious honor in my life. You have spared no expense to help Emily train, and I do not wish to become a waste, unable to repay your kindness!"

Before Liszt could speak to comfort her,

She continued, "Only the battlefield can carve out a strong knight, and you, Lord, shone brilliantly in two wars, becoming the youngest Sky Knight in the grand duchy! Emily too has ambitions and hopes to become the first female Sky Knight in the grand duchy!"

Having said that,

She knelt on both knees and bowed her head, performing the greatest gesture of respect a serf could offer to a landlord: "Please allow Emily to join the battlefield."

She was adamant about her idea, hoping to solidify her foundations in the two years before her menstrual cycle began, which would then give her a chance to advance to a Sky Knight—she had already vaguely felt the tingling in her chest.

This signified the onset of development, and according to Paris's hints to her, about two years after a female's breast development, the menstrual cycle would begin.

She had two more years of rapid cultivation without loss.

The twelve-year-old girl, although still flat-chested, emitted a glow that was so dazzling.

Liszt watched her calmly for a full thirty seconds before speaking indifferently, "The first female Sky Knight of the grand duchy, huh... For the sake of the future, I have no reason to object to your going into battle. However, Emily, my youngest follower, please be prepared to die on the battlefield."

Emily trembled and replied, "Yes, Lord!"

Chapter 587 The Dragon Knight's Training Secret

Emily was assigned to a Knight Squad. As a female knight, especially such a young one, it certainly brought some trouble.

She lacked the independent financial means to buy weapons and hire retainers, so all the arrangements were made by Li Si Te (Liszt).

Had it not been for the hint of genius indicated by the Smoke Mission, merely based on the potential she had shown, it wouldn't have been worth Liszt's trouble—by his current status, he no longer needed to treat his followers with special favor. Instead, it was the followers who had to strive to prove themselves before him.

It was clear to everyone that following Liszt meant a guaranteed share of military exploits.

This was the most promising viscount in the Grand Duchy. Becoming an earl was the minimum expectation, and a marquis was also within the normal realm of possibility.

However, Emily was specifically named by the Smoke Mission. It was believed that the power of destiny wouldn't haphazardly pull strings to have Liszt take notice of a good-for-nothing.

Perhaps, Emily would become the Grand Duchy's first female Sky Knight in the future.

From then on.

Emily and her Knight Squad trained relentlessly at Black Horse Ranch on Black Horse Island. They rehearsed knightly charge formations, ready to confront enemy knights in a charge at any moment. She had to continually improve her combat strength; even on the battlefield where the advantage was great and the protection thorough, there still existed the possibility of death.

She wasn't like Liszt at the beginning, who had the Black Dragon Childe Paris secretly protecting him. Once on the battlefield, Liszt would not go out of his way to protect her.

Surviving meant growth.

Dying only signified Liszt's failed investment, nothing more.

"Charge!"

Ma Ku Si (Marcus), riding his warhorse, commanded half of the Knight Order to a thundering impact across the field, their Dou Qi forming an unbroken front. Had Liszt used the Eye of Magic to observe, he would have seen a colorful mist of magic power enveloping the knights. This surging Dou Qi disturbed all the stray magic power in the air.

Making magicians seem redundant.

The powerful elite Knight Orders, when bursting with waves of Dou Qi, could drown even a Sky Knight in a continuous sea of energy, leaving them to be tragically trampled to death under the horse hooves.

Of course, a Sky Knight would not be foolish enough to confront a charging Knight Order head-on.

Sky Knights have their own way of combat—Sword Fight.

"Ha!"

"Ah!"

Emily, amidst the squad with her armor soaked by sweat underneath, maintained an utterly focused expression. When she practiced Dou Qi alone, she felt her training was stalling without the previous exhilaration. But charging with the knights, in addition to the exhilarating feeling,

she also felt new Dou Qi continuously emerging in her body. That was the nourishment provided by Lord Landlord through the food he supplied incessantly.

"For Lord Landlord's cultivation!"

"Charge!"

With a surge of high spirits, Emily suddenly lunged forward with her spear, her Thunder Attribute Dou Qi becoming even sharper under the enhancement of the battle formation, piercing the air and producing a cracking sonic boom.

This charge let her distinctly feel her power increase by another half again.

"This is progress. Even the charges on the training ground can give me such great improvement. When issued with a Pioneer Mandate, on the real battlefield, what kind of force will that pressure give me?"

She was not sure at the moment.

But she looked forward to it.

...

Dodo Island, Volcano Crater.

Liszt was also cultivating. The Little Fire Dragon Leo transformed into a mass of magic power, condensing at its chest area.

One magic potion after another was popped into Liszt's stomach, then absorbed by Leo, transforming into impure magic power, enhancing the quality of his Dragon Dou Qi—Liszt thought, although the magic power lifting his own Dou Qi was considered impurity after Leo's absorption, it was far more condensed in quality than the magic of the magic potions.

As long as he kept transforming and enhancing it steadily, sooner or later, his Dragon Dou Qi would synchronize with Fire Dragon Magic Power, reaching the same limit quality.

At that time, perhaps one of his attacks would last for thousands of years without fading: "Just like in some novels, where the sword intent of an unparalleled expert remains in the air, and even after tens of thousands of years, can still kill. Perhaps sooner or later, I will become an expert who comprehends the 'sword intent' of the Fire Attribute," he speculated.

Of course.

To unleash "sword intent," which is the magic of ultimate quality, there might be many restrictions.

Based on the magic that Leo was currently releasing, every time it exhaled flames or flapped them, it was just turning ordinary levels of magic into reality, only slightly stronger than the Fire System magic of a magician. That real Fire Dragon Magic Power was all stored within its body, not casually leaked out.

Even its body was made up of the ultimate quality Fire Dragon Magic Power—that's why it could switch between a corporeal body and a magical form at will.

Therefore.

Dragons usually hunt and fight.

They likely use ordinary attacks, and only in a life-or-death battle would they release "sword intent."

For example, in the Neverfall Empire, there is a Windhowl Valley, where the magic power of a Wind Dragon had been permanently inscribed. It was the remnant of a life-or-death battle between a Wind Dragon and an Archmage, and even after thousands of years had passed, it could still stir up ferocious winds. An ordinary Wind Dragon roaming freely certainly would not leave magic behind at will.

Otherwise, wherever it went, there would certainly be storms non-stop.

Sooner or later, the entire continent would be contaminated by these Elemental Dragons, Metal Dragons, Gemstone Dragons, and even Sacred Dragons. Yet, traces of their existence are rare, and most people would die for the metals and gemstones formed by their magic power.

...

Dragon Magic Refining Qi.

Continuously ongoing.

Liszt could feel his Dragon Dou Qi growing stronger unceasingly.

As his emotions surged, his thoughts flew: "If the ultimate quality Dragon Magic Power is the key for dragons to freely switch between magic form and a corporeal body, then once I cultivate to where my body also fills with ultimate quality Dragon Dou Qi, might I be able to transform as well?"

In a vague sense, he felt he had stumbled upon much content regarding the cultivation of Dragon Knights.

The cultivation continued, as did his thinking: "Can all dragons freely switch forms, or is the Little Fire Dragon Leo just an exception?"

Unfortunately, without a benchmark, Liszt was uncertain.

But as far as he could tell, Leo hasn't shown too many abnormalities and seems to be rather like the proud dragons described in knight novels—resistant to being ridden, except by those with a protagonist's halo; many knight novels depict dragons proactively sticking to the protagonist to be ridden.

By that standard, Liszt did not have a protagonist's halo.

"Without more evidence to prove that Leo is a mutation, I should treat it as a normal Fire Dragon... According to the theory I just finished writing in 'The Conjectures on the Nexus of the Magic Net, Elves, and Dragons,' within the Magic Net system, dragons are a crossroads between magic rules and physical rules."

Freely switching between magic form and corporeal body.

That obviously represents the transformation between magic and matter, fitting with his theory.

Thus he pondered further: "Perhaps the path of a Dragon Knight's cultivation is to turn oneself into a node within the Magic Web? Mastering both physical rules and magic rules?"

It was a bold conjecture.

He needed more clues to verify it, for now he could only come up with a name for this form of Dragon Magic Power: "Dragon's Intent?"

Chapter 588 Breaking Ground at Thorn Castle

To demonstrate Dragon's Intent, more time is needed to explore.

Now, Liszt wanted to develop a new training method beyond Dragon Magic Refining Qi and Dragon Breath Tempering to rapidly enhance his strength.

The delightful feeling that comes from improving one's strength can be intoxicating.

After each training session with Little Fire Dragon Leo, he always felt a dual refreshment of soul and body, sensing that he had greatly improved compared to before the training. Unfortunately, there was no one to test his strength, leaving him somewhat unclear about how much he had improved.

As to whether he was stronger or weaker than the former Lich, Marquis of the Bull, there was no conclusion.

"This Pioneer Mandate is my opportunity to test my strength, as long as the Eagle Kingdom does not deploy a Dragon Knight, I have nothing to fear!"

Leo had already burst out of his body, turning into a ball of flames, then solidifying back into form from the fire.

He slowly landed next to Liszt.

He let out an increasingly majestic roar of "Oh-ho!"

"Stop roaring, here's your beef." Liszt took out the prepared secret recipe steak, allowing Leo to enjoy it voraciously, along with plenty of Magical Beast Meat to replenish his nourishment.

Then he proceeded to handle it up and down, brainwashing it through constant murmuring while caressing it.

How other Dragon Knights formed partnerships with dragons to ride them, he didn't know. He could only rely on his own methods, depending on brainwashing over time, to completely subdue Leo—now that Leo was still young, it was the perfect opportunity to shape the Dragon's correct worldview. Once it grew up, these ideas would become unshakable.

The previous few trainings,

Leo was quite annoyed by his constant murmurs, but now it had grown accustomed to them, occasionally lifting its head to reply with an "Oh-ho!" When it stopped resisting, that was the moment its brain was "twisted". His ideas would slowly fill its heart and mind.

"Oh-ho!"

After devouring a large chunk of steak and drinking a can of Banpo Milk, Leo contentedly rubbed against Liszt's hand.

Little did it know that as Liszt muttered away, his mind was on something else: "Certainly, Leo can help me practice Dragon Dou Qi, vastly surpassing Sky Knights. But in the end, I'm not a true Dragon Knight, and it is still very young, with a hundred-year juvenile period."

He couldn't wait for Leo to grow up slowly; if he started to ride the dragon when his hair was white with age, by then he feared he would be so old he couldn't even fart, let alone release Dou Qi with Unity of Man and Dragon.

Thus, the plan for becoming a Dragon Domain Landlord was an absolute must.

"Should I share my lifespan with Leo to become a Fire Dragon's Dragon Domain Landlord, or should I find another dragon? Aside from Leo, there's probably just the Formless Dragon with some clues... The Formless Dragon is likely also a young dragon, with an ample lifespan." Compared to a powerful Fire Dragon, he would rather contract with a production-type dragon as a Dragon Domain Landlord.

Using Leo for riding and fighting was the best choice.

Soon he shook his head: "Am I worrying too soon? I don't even have the technology for becoming a Dragon Domain Landlord yet, so how can I make a pact? I truly regret having killed Curtis Truth; she had the technology for Dragon Domain Landlords, and she probably provided the Lich Technique as well."

This genius from the Magic Goat Family, a young Grand Magician named Curtis Truth, was indeed very powerful – both the Dragon Domain Landlord pact and the Lich transformation technique were mastered by her.

Regrettably, to eliminate future troubles, Liszt directly killed her while she was in her Lich state.

The Ghost Ship fell apart, and even the remaining Soul Submerged Wood, Goat Head Flag, and Figurehead were used as kindling to revive Little Fire Dragon Leo.

Practically destroying the evidence.

"However, it's fortunate that the Grand Duke definitely has the method for a Dragon Domain Landlord pact. When the Magic Goat Family was eradicated by the Sapphire Family, all their technologies were seized by the Sapphire Family... When the time comes for me to found a nation, I could exchange with them or even directly overthrow the Sapphire Family?"

If the Sapphire Family didn't try to snatch Liszt's dragon, he planned to find another place to found a nation; if the Sapphire Family coveted his dragon, a battle would surely ensue, and he might as well overthrow the Sapphire Family.

...

The future was still very distant.

After the training ended, the mind-washing also came to an end.

Liszt returned to the wooden house at the foot of the mountain, where he spent the night making repairs. Early the next morning, he picked many seeds of the Human Skull Fruit and seeds of the Hemp Rope Vine, then he rode back to Black Horse Island on the back of Rainbow Whale Rose.

It was at this moment.

The Smoke Mission had already been completed.

"For completing the mission, you are rewarded with two Tulip Spirit Bugs."

"Task: The final blueprints for Thorn Castle have been completed, and the groundbreaking construction is about to begin. Before building the main body of the castle, why not first construct the auxiliary facilities step by step? Please excavate the Tonghai Canal for the castle. Reward: A fish spring that gushes throughout the year."

With the task completed, the wilted Tulips recovered, and the two spirit bugs grew robustly.

The new task also followed, requiring Liszt to start building the castle: "The territory is in dire need of serfs right now. I did not plan to build the castle so soon, but it seems it was still from my subconscious... The Smoke Mission is a projection of the Power of Destiny combined with my subconscious, reflecting my true desire to build a castle."

Black Horse Island was far from the mainland.

Besides pirates, there was no danger of being invaded.

With Coral Island for support, it usually wouldn't suffer from pirates—behind the pirates are the great nobles of the country. Should their identities be leaked, it would start an outright war with Li Weiliam. No great noble would be foolish enough to oppose Li Weiliam and his son Liszt, both of whom had boundless potential.

Therefore, it was not a problem to build the castle later.

Despite this reasoning, Liszt was impatient to build the castle deep inside—enjoyment that, in his heart, was even more important than development.

"Since the Smoke Mission has been issued, let's build it!"

He immediately summoned architects, including Jomaya Bangtu, as well as officials like Goltai, to discuss the details of castle construction.

In the meeting room of the harbor town.

Jomaya stood in front of a wall, drawing the structure of the castle and explained in detail: "The main body of Thorn Castle consists of a five-story building, divided into the main tower, the left wing guard tower, and the right wing guard tower. The main tower has a floor height of six meters, with a total height of thirty meters, plus a ten-meter-tall watchtower, which amounts to forty meters."

The style of Thorn Castle was similar to the neoclassical style of The White House in the US.

But the actual model they would follow was similar to the Capitol Hill Building.

Besides the main building, left wing, and right wing structures, at the castle's main gate, there would be a huge Tonghai Canal connected to the sea, which would allow his sea elves and Ach to come and go freely in and out of the castle. Even a single-masted sailing ship could directly transport goods to Thorn Castle through this canal.

At the end of the canal, they planned to build a huge arch to protect the safety of the Tonghai Canal. Additionally, there would be a new lighthouse constructed next to it, taller even than that of Black Horse Port Lighthouse, to show the way for nearby ships.

Other than that, there would be stables, pastures, carriage houses, wells, hedge estates, greenhouses, and other subsidiary buildings.

Of course, surrounding Thorn Castle, they would have to build a moat and castle walls—not really to defend against enemies, but to keep people on the island from sneaking into the castle.

Thus.

The sheer volume of work for Thorn Castle was so vast that it might take more than a year or two to complete, even with the outstanding building efficiency of rubber water and brick mixtures. It would not be an easy task.

"Jomaya, postpone the construction of the main body of Thorn Castle, and first excavate the Tonghai Canal," he finally decided.

Chapter 589 The Collapse of Natural Magic

Excavating a canal was not an easy task.

However, the distance from Thorn Castle to the sea was less than a kilometer, which made this stretch of the Tonghai Canal relatively easier to dig. For this pure manual labor, Liszt once again raised the basic wages, with each serf receiving an additional copper coin per day on top of their original pay.

As the Tonghai Canal was slowly being excavated, Drillmaster Fred Wells led the drilling team, having completed the second well in Mushroom Town,

and was then called over to dig a well for Thorn Castle.

There was no water source near Thorn Castle, and water had to be fetched from the port town. But as the castle was put into use, the water needs of so many people could not be met solely by fetching water from the port town.

A few days before starting work,

Liszt often visited the construction site to check on the progress, full of anticipation for his own named castle. Of course, for now, only the castle's outer facilities were being built; it would probably take another half a year until the main tower of Thorn Castle was completed.

At least, it would be a matter for next year.

So after touring the site several times and seeing no new developments, he gave up this tedious inspection and focused on busying himself with other matters.

Ach was decoding Natural Magic at an increasingly fast pace, and most of the planting magic for those Magic Plant seeds had been deciphered. But many details in the Sun Script within the planting magic had no corresponding references, making accurate descriptions difficult and stumping Ach.

She has now switched topics and begun researching Druid Magic concerning animals' combat spells.

The latest progress involved deciphering a book titled "Guide to Constructing the Sun Tower in Bathed Light City," which primarily discusses a structure associated with the Children of the Sun—the Sun Tower. According to the book, the Sun Tower was designed to harness the power from the Sun to foster growth throughout the entire city; a city possessing a Sun Tower would be known as Bathed Light City.

"Brother, the Sun Tower seems to function on a different system than Druid Magic; Druid Magic originates from Chaotic Magic Power, while the Sun Tower harnesses the power of the Sun... Brother, you've told Ach that the Sun is a star, constantly emitting strong light and heat," she said.

"That's right," Liszt nodded.

He felt that this Bathed Light City and the Sun Tower sounded like they were harnessing solar power. It made perfect sense for the Children of the Sun to use solar power, but the mention of solar power left him with some doubts, "Ach, do you think there's a link between solar power and Light Attribute Magic Power?"

"Light Attribute Magic Power and solar power?" Ach pondered seriously for a moment before responding, "Ach believes they have similarities, but they are not the same force. Light Attribute Magic Power is just a type of Magic Power with the qualities of sunlight, still fundamentally Magic Power, not sunlight itself."

"That's true; Light Attribute Magic Power is just Magic Power after all," Liszt agreed.

If sunlight were Magic Power, then using the Eye of Magic would mean seeing Magic Radiance everywhere, so sunlight is merely light on the physical spectrum. It's highly likely that the Children of the Sun harnessed solar power—using it to accelerate the growth of plants.

He continued to ask, "Ach, are you able to decipher how the Sun Tower is constructed?"

"Brother, there are many proprietary terms and no corresponding Sun Script to refer to, making it hard to decipher," Ach said with frustration, alluding to the difficulty of cooking without rice.

With just so few Sun Scriptures and no "dictionary," and the Sun Script being extraordinarily complicated,

it's indeed challenging.

Liszt then inquired, "How about the Druid combat magic regarding animals that you're decoding? Those spells are essentially various Druid Transformation Magics, transforming into bears, eagles, panthers, and the like, to then use these animal forms for combat."

Ach shook her head, "Brother, Ach feels it's quite difficult. In these transformation spells, there's always mention of something related to the bloodline of the Children of the Sun, which Ach can't find the right words for... Without this essence, it's not possible to perform the Druid's shapeshifting magic."

After Ach's explanation,

Liszt understood that the bloodline of the Child of the Sun held a vast secret, like some kind of specific genetic code—no wonder only old tanner Phil, the Sun Descendant, could open those chests and drift bottles with his blood.

Realizing this,

Liszt completely gave up on paying attention to natural magic. Being able to see it but unable to use it was useless. He couldn't help but say, "Ach, when you have time, continue researching natural magic, then compile it into a book, and take it to the few magicians in the magic tower, let's study it together and see if there can be any new advancements."

"Mm," Ach was still enthusiastic. She wasn't sure about its usefulness, but the wonders of natural magic gave her a lot of inspiration.

...

The hopes for the viscounty to get rich quickly from natural magic were dashed.

Liszt adjusted his attitude and continued the methodical development of the territory. The earnings of the territory this month were not bad; not to mention the Gold Coin income from white spirits and glass, the production of magic potions had also started booming with the addition of the Giant Algae Magic Potion. Especially since the growth rate of giant algae was very fast, you could say it could be harvested every twenty days.

Essentially, as long as the main root of the giant algae wasn't harmed, the algae could continue growing, about ten centimeters a day.

Plus, with some extra purchases from outside, having enough potions was pretty much guaranteed.

The income from Elf Bugs was also good.

The Alfalfa Elf Bug had already been contracted, the Lithops Elf Bug was yet to be born, and the two Tulip Spirit Bugs were healthy in gestation, equating to four Elf Bugs harvested.

Four Elf Bugs a month was definitely a high yield for a viscounty.

Especially when two of them were Tulip Bugs, representing a large output of magic potions once again.

So it was.

Time passed day by day, and before long July had arrived.

After a week of busy combat in the making, the Tonghai Canal was thoroughly excavated, and Liszt personally participated in the reinforcement of the canal embankments. The Blizzard Beast Squad made a dramatic appearance, conjuring Rock Spikes one after another along both sides of the embankment, to secure the sides of the bank.

Even the bottom of the canal had Rock Spikes rooted out one by one, after which the serfs would break the Rock Spikes into pieces, to be spread out over the bottom of the canal.

Basically, this navigable canal couldn't be destroyed even by a tsunami.

Now, what remained to be done was the construction of railings along the banks, greenery, and footpaths, but this was no longer within the scope of the Smoke Mission.

"Mission completed, reward: a perpetually sprouting fish spring."

"A sprouting fish spring, what does that mean?" Liszt was a bit puzzled; taking "fish spring" literally, it naturally implied a spring that spouted fish.

But why would fish spout from a spring?

This question did not puzzle Liszt for long, as he was quickly overtaken by the surprise brought by the new mission.

"Mission: Two new Tulip Bugs are about to arrive, creating a sense of immense crisis for another Tulip Bug whose lifespan is mostly behind it. It probably already senses that it will soon be overwhelmed by mediocrity, although it was never outstanding, it still hopes to give it one last shot, please inspire courage in it. Reward: a Little Minor Elf."

He couldn't help but reveal a smile that curved upwards: "Another Little Minor Elf!"

Chapter 590 Fish Spring out of the Well

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In the Worm Room of the Nameless Castle.

Liszt stood in front of the box covered in Jade Powder, watching the Tulip Bug lying lazily and feeling the little guy's inner anxiety, doing his best to encourage it with his own emotions.

Beyond that, there were no more effective ways.

It was just an Elf Bug after all, possessing simple emotions and not any real intelligence or comprehension. Communication was limited to the instructions Liszt could deliver through emotions.

Otherwise, it was simply patting it, expressing care.

"Wuwah." On the edge of the box, Thorn Minor Elf Jela yawned out of boredom and made a sound; it ruled the Worm Room.

In the box to the right of Liszt, Mickey was counting its collection of corn kernels.

It didn't like Jela, nor did it like clinging to Liszt—perhaps not as irritable as Jela was, but relatively more independent, immersed in its own little world.

Jela, Nami, Mickey, and also Fizz, Tam, Eddie, these Lesser Elves were all adorable, embodying the essence of heaven and earth. They were each an independent entity, with their own personalities and thoughts. In fact, they had no concept of "kin," even elves of the same type didn't see each other as kin.

Like the Giant Algae Greater Elf Pike, who had a probably "blood" connection with the three Giant Algae Lesser Elves—Fizz, Tam, and Eddie—it was highly likely they all had sprouted from Pike's cordyceps, which gave birth to the Lesser Elves.

Yet Pike was just as ferocious to the three Giant Algae Lesser Elves, showing absolutely no elder's affection toward the younger generation.

In Liszt's view,

Elves inherited the "individuality" of plants, growing independently and quietly, unlike humans and animals that have companions, family, and other emotional bonds. Take Nami, for example, a Lesser Elf with an outgoing personality; it certainly loved making friends, but its approach to making friends was the same whether with humans, elves, Rainbow Whales, or little ducks.

It wouldn't befriend someone just because they were an elf and, therefore, think that they should be closer friends because they were the same kind.

"Wuwah!"

Jela called out again, it was terribly bored and wanted Liszt to play with it. But Liszt simply waved his hand, indicating it should play by itself.

He was implementing the "stimulate Jela" plan, deliberately being cold to Jela.

To evoke anger in it and then unleash its potential for evolution—although being cold one moment and warm the next was cruel to Jela, Liszt believed this was the best way to help it evolve.

The pheromones from new plant species greatly aided the evolution of elves. He was also using trade caravans to continuously collect plants of the same kind as different Elf Cordyceps, trying to help elves obtain more pheromones. But that alone was not enough; often, the elves needed to strive on their own.

Like this Tulip Bug, born in Tulip Castle, it could be said to have all the pheromones that other Tulip Elves possessed.

But whether it could evolve still required its own effort.

If it lacked sufficient will to advance, it might not even enter the Fat Pupa Stage by the end of its ten-year life span.

Jela, seeing that Liszt always paid attention to the Tulip Bug, gradually grew discontent and loudly called out, "Wuwah!"

"Go away!"

"Wuwah!"

Liszt ignored it again.

After calling out a few times and receiving no response, Jela flew around the Worm Room in anger. At this point, Mickey, who was counting corn kernels, probably felt annoyed and yelled at Jela, "Jiggle!"

This immediately ruffled Jela's feathers.

It flew right up to Mickey's face, fists clenched, and shouted, "Wuwah!"

"Jiggle!"

"Wuwah!"

...

"Chirp!"

"Wah!"

The two Little Minor Elves didn't lay hands on each other, but the argument was quite fierce, with saliva spraying out.

"Both of you, shut up, get back into your boxes, and don't make a sound!" Liszt glared and commanded the two Little Minor Elves loudly.

They dared not defy the command.

Minor Elf Jela flew back to her box with a pout and even covered it, sulking inside. But it wasn't long before she fell asleep--Minor Elves indeed have abundant emotions but are also simple-minded little creatures. On the other side, Mickey went back to counting his corn kernels as if nothing had happened.

Each time he returned from an outing, Liszt would bring him a corn kernel, which Mickey loved to study as if he had a collecting habit.

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Whenever he was free,

Liszt would enter the Worm Room to encourage the Tulip Bug, inspiring it to bravely evolve.

During this period, the rewards from the previous Smoke Mission soon appeared, with news coming from the construction site of Thorn Castle.

Consultant Gao Ertai sent someone to report to him, "Lord Landlord, Mr. Fred the Driller led the drilling team to drill for the castle, and after breaking a rock piece, water began to spout from the ground. Along with the water, plenty of small fish surged out of the spout, with thousands of pounds being caught and still more fish coming out."

"Are there really fish coming out?"

Liszt, even though he knew about the reward, was still somewhat surprised.

Drilling a well had actually yielded a fish spring, with fish spouting out like a fountain--this was indeed an unusual event. Therefore, he immediately rode on Rainbow Whale Rose to head for Black Horse Island.

Upon arriving at the construction site, Gao Ertai quickly took him to the well that had already been fenced off.

"My lord, this well is truly miraculous. I sent people to fish continuously for over three thousand pounds, and the number of small fish inside has not decreased at all." Gao Ertai took over a fishing net handed to him by a Clerk, filled with several lively little fish, "These are the small fish that spouted out of the well, previously unseen by anyone."

The little fish resembled the carp but were a bit more slender and their color was a pale golden yellow, which made them look quite pretty. Their sizes ranged from about 15 centimeters to 25 centimeters, with the longest not exceeding 30 centimeters, and the average weight of each fish was around four or five liang.

"Are they sea fish?"

Liszt looked at the small fish and asked. He suspected that a passage in the well's spring might connect to the ocean, bringing the small fish up.

Otherwise, he couldn't explain the appearance of the fish spring.

Gao Ertai replied, "They should be freshwater fish. The well water is drinkable, and the small fish are well adapted to it. Chefs from the town's tavern have taken some samples,

and after cooking these small fish, they're not toxic and actually have a very nice taste—delicate flesh and more delicious than sea fish by a lot."

"Freshwater fish, you say. This suggests there might be an underground river beneath the Basalt Columns of Black Horse Island, where these small fish dwell," Liszt speculated. If it wasn't a passageway connected to the ocean, it could only be an underground river—likely formed by rainwater erosion.

However, Black Horse Island is a volcanic island, its main structure composed of Basalt Columns. The formation of an underground river beneath Basalt Columns is indeed extraordinary.

It prompted him to consider the plan to delve into the underground river and explore its secrets.

"Consultant Gao Ertai, let's not use this well for water. Instead, dig a sloping tunnel directly and guard the fish spring for fishing. Also, dispatch knights with strong diving abilities to follow the spring down and explore, to see if this spring is connected to an underground river."

"An underground river?" Gao Ertai was puzzled.

"Some land has cavities underneath with flowing water that come together to form an underground river. Just send someone to investigate and report the findings to me."

Gao Ertai suppressed his curiosity and accepted the order.

Afterwards, Liszt went to the tavern and tasted several dishes made from the little fish from the fish spring. The taste was indeed much fresher and more delicate than fish caught in the ocean. He immediately declared this kind of small fish a staple on his daily menu and bestowed the name "Well Fish" upon them.