

The Mighty 601

Chapter 601

"Ah!"

The Sky-Cleaving Greatsword pierced into the heart, and Tuobert let out a sharp, agonizing scream.

His body exploded instantly, and though many blood-colored lights were burned by the flames created from his Dragon Dou Qi, preventing him from transforming into a bat, many still turned into bats and flew away in all directions. However, in the next instant, Liszt already had the Bloodlight Web out.

He cast it over his head.

It almost captured all the bats in one sweep. When the blood-red web touched the bats, it sizzled, scorching them while they shrieked and thrashed about, desperately trying to escape but failing, only to be left burning in the lingering flames.

The duration of the Dragon Dou Qi was becoming increasingly longer.

"Viscount, three bats have escaped!" Elizabeth cried out from the ground, pointing and shouting loudly in three directions.

Liszt had already noticed without her reminders.

He stood still, and at some point, the Swift Shadow Bow had found its way into his hands. Three arrows were swiftly nocked and shot out. They circled in a triangular formation, flashed by, and struck one of the bats, causing a tremendous explosion. The bat was obliterated into nothingness.

He turned and shot out three more arrows, causing another bat to burst.

The last bat had already flown far away, but Liszt quickly shot three arrows, then rapidly drew three more arrows and continued to shoot. The second set of arrows quickly caught

up with the first under the guidance of Dou Qi and collided with each other, tracing a peculiar arc and instantly catching up to the bat.

Boom!

The arrows hit and exploded, sending a firework slowly drifting down from the sky —"Multi-Arrow," the Ultimate Mystery Technique - Multiple Phantom Arrow, a failproof skill.

Less than five seconds had passed since Elizabeth had called out the warning.

Watching the three fleeing bats being successively shot down, the female vampire swallowed hard, shaken, and at the same time, immensely relieved she had made the right choice. The young Sky Knight before her was no ordinary Sky Knight; his strength was unbelievable.

"With such power, at such a young age, if he were in the Eagle Kingdom, he would definitely qualify to be selected by the Royal Family as a candidate for Dragon Knight, and eventually, like Prince Alonso Xenkelai, become a serving Dragon Knight!"

The Royal Family didn't always produce offspring with natural talent.

To demonstrate their combat capabilities, the Kingdom's dragons needed Dragon Knights. Thus, being a candidate for Dragon Knight became a contest for the talented.

Whoever emerged victorious among the candidates would become a true Dragon Knight and serve the Kingdom.

It would be easy to earn military honors and be knighted.

In fact, as long as one successfully rode a dragon, they'd be knighted as an Earl; with sufficient military achievements, one would quickly be promoted to Marquis, and with continual accumulation of combat achievements, it would be easy to eventually become a Duke. Although one would retire due to age and the dragon would be taken back by the Kingdom, and the title of Duke would be revoked, the descendants could inherit the title of Marquis, continuing the lineage unbroken.

The Duke's title was reserved for the sovereign, and the regulations of the Kingdoms didn't allow for it to be conferred lightly. Only those Dragon Knights who raised their own dragons could create a Grand Duchy with the title of Grand Duke—if the descendants fell into decline for a long time, they might be reduced to a mere Duchy, or even demoted to ordinary Nobility.

The idea of becoming a Dragon Knight echoed in Elizabeth's mind.

She even suddenly felt a tinge of pity for Liszt—pity that Liszt didn't live in the Eagle Kingdom or the Steel Ridge Kingdom; his astonishing talent was destined to be unconnected with the Dragon Knights.

...

Of course, Liszt wasn't aware of Elizabeth pitying him for not having the chance to ride dragons.

After he had shot down the three fleeing bats, he had painstakingly squeezed and burst each bat captured by the Bloodlight Web. Ultimately, these bats reverted back to their original form, the blood-red Magic Power coalesced, and Tuobert Black Knight, a Pureblood Vampire, emerged, bleeding from all seven orifices.

"Er, er, er..."

Tuobert was immobilized, his bones seemed to have been crushed to dust, or perhaps it was the suppressive effect of the Dragon Dou Qi that caused a problem with his physical restoration, leaving him limp like a pile of mud.

...

Muffled, indecipherable sounds came from the throat, yet not a complete sentence or even a full word could be uttered.

The gaze was also somewhat scattered, unable to focus.

"What's wrong with him?" Liszt turned his head and asked Elizabeth, who was still in a daze, "I've hardly made a move, why does he look like he's about to die?"

"Ah," Elizabeth came to her senses and stammered, "Maybe, maybe Viscount, you struck too hard. Looking at his condition, it's very likely that the Blood Magic - Bat Incarnation was forcibly broken, causing a backlash of magic power, unable to maintain the normal functioning of his body."

A vampire's body can switch freely between bat and human form, relying on Blood Magic - Bat Incarnation.

If the spell is forcibly broken, it can easily cause a backlash—though unless it's an attack powerful enough to kill in one blow, even killing many bats won't break the Blood Magic. Tuobert just needed to escape as an incarnated bat, and he could revert to his human form while only losing a bit of blood magic power.

Those crushed incarnated bats would revert back to blood magic power and return to his body through some unknown means—Liszt guessed it was an application of the Magic Web.

The transmission of magic power regardless of distance.

Anyway.

Tuobert had fallen, and it seemed he wouldn't live much longer.

Elizabeth approached excitedly, with a not-so-obvious slap mark on her face, her eyes unable to suppress the longing as she stared at Tuobert: "My lord, extract it before his heart stops beating, and the blood magic power can be collected without losses. And his personal belongings, there's a blood casket inside, containing my heart!"

However, she was still rational enough to know to ask for Liszt's permission: "Please allow me to retrieve it for my lord!"

Liszt nodded, signaling Elizabeth to proceed.

Next.

Elizabeth crouched down, cast a spell with both hands, and a cluster of blood-red light emerged, enveloping Tuobert, who was not yet dead. The blood magic power made contact, causing Tuobert's blood to flow backward surprisingly quickly back into his body, gradually converging toward the heart.

"Er, er, er..."

Tuobert, like a stuck tape, repeated a syllable that he tried to emit.

Amid his stuck syllables, Elizabeth violently tore open his chest with her hand, reached in, and brutally extracted a heart no longer beating, glowing red.

This heart wasn't like flesh and blood; it was as crystalline as blood jade, semi-translucent, with veins clearly visible, slowly bleeding out.

As soon as this heart of blood jade was extracted, Tuobert's unfocused eyes suddenly flashed, and his mud-like body muscles twitched, slowly lifting an arm as if trying to stop Elizabeth from taking his heart.

But this was merely a fleeting revival.

It had barely lifted halfway when the muscles relaxed, the arm fell down instantly, and he was dead for good.

Immediately after the heart was extracted, Elizabeth's actions didn't slow down for a moment. While the corpse was still warm, and blood magic power lingered in Tuobert's body, she continued using blood magic. From the pocket inside Tuobert's coat, she miraculously produced several personal items.

Finally, she slowly pulled out a long, box-shaped object.

She opened the box eagerly, and instantly, blood-red light flickered. Five hearts like blood jade were arranged inside the box.

Just as she was about to reach in for her own heart.

A slight cough sounded from behind.

Elizabeth froze in place, turned her head, and with a sheepish smile said, "My lord, this is... my heart."

Liszt nodded, "I know, hand it over."

...

Chapter 602 The Vampire Who Doesn't Drink Blood

The heart of a vampire probably resembles the Life Box of a lich, except that a lich's Life Box seems to be just a coordinate pointing to the real world, while the heart of a vampire is the core of life itself.

Within the long box, Liszt stored away five hearts, including that of Tuobert.

He would not trust vampires.

However, he tossed the clump of blood back to Elizabeth, "Tuobert is dead, unexpectedly. I originally planned to ask him some questions. Now that the pureblood is dead, how do I contact the other four mixed-blood vampires?"

"As long as you squeeze the heart, they will sense it and come to see you. Having the heart, we all become your vampire servants," Elizabeth quickly changed her attitude, showing full gentleness and obedience, after Liszt took possession of the hearts.

It was clear to her that Liszt had become her master.

"Bring all of Tuobert's personal belongings, and let's go back, otherwise my father will probably go find the First Prince for a chat," Liszt whistled, summoning the landwalker bird Loki.

Elizabeth had already integrated the blood into her body and smiled coquettishly, "My body is still quite weak, sir, do you mind if I ride your mount?"

"I'll just say it, Elizabeth, your tricks are useless on me, understand. There are many noble ladies in the Grand Duchy who wish to share the night with me, but few have caught my eye... So, being a tame vampire servant is the most sensible choice."

After speaking, Liszt climbed onto the bird and headed straight to the port of Iron Hoof City.

Elizabeth stamped her foot on the spot, feeling frustrated and annoyed, but she was helpless. She could only transform into a bat and chase after the departing landwalker bird.

...

Upon returning to the Sunset, Liszt first went to the Tulip to see the Earl.

"Is the matter resolved?"

"It was much easier than I thought. It was just a bat that can't stand the light; pity I acted too forcefully, directly slapping Tuobert Black Knight to death. He also had five mixed-blood subordinates, who now basically belong to my vampire servants. Maybe I can get some secrets out of them."

Liszt simplified the course of events. The arrival of the vampires was not an isolated incident; it had already implicated the internal stability of the Grand Duchy.

"Never would have thought that vampires really exist and are hiding right among us," the Earl pondered for a moment, then said, "Let's act like this never happened. You need to keep those five vampires under control, don't expose them rashly... And let's not worry about the Grand Duke's affairs."

"I understand."

"By the way, why didn't you bring Elizabeth over? I want to see what a vampire looks like, especially one that can turn into a bat," Li Weiliam was also curious.

"After we set sail, I will bring her to you so you can see. A vampire turning into a bat is indeed quite magical."

After not chatting for very long, and taking the Earl's advice to downplay the matter, he went straight back to the Sunset. Elizabeth Black Knight was in his room, playing with the personal items seized from Tuobert.

There were five items in total.

A dagger shimmering with silver light. Elizabeth was familiar with it, "Sir, this dagger is called 'Silver Oath,' one of the magic equipment inherited by the Black Knight family. It enhances the power of blood magic and is the top equipment for a vampire's nighttime assassination."

A set of clothing, including a cape with black surface and red lining, and a tuxedo similar to the one Flack Abaie wore. This suit was similar to Elizabeth's tight leather top and pants, simply a piece of standard magic equipment that could transform, offering only a slight defensive property.

An item that looked like a book.

Elizabeth equally knew of it, "This book is called 'Reincarnation Ritual,' It has but one purpose. Activated by blood magic power, it can boil a person's blood and gradually transform it into the cold blood of a vampire. It is part of a set with the Blood Extractor Needle you seized... I was transformed from magician to vampire using this Reincarnation Ritual."

She caressed the cover, lost in a brief reverie.

Then she snapped back to reality and took up the fourth item, "I have not seen this mirror before, but I feel it must be a protective item, probably able to resist sunlight and the light system magic that restrains blood magic."

At last.

She picked up the fifth item.

This item was a red mask, "I often use this mask, it's called the 'Blood Mask.'" Every time I briefly take back my heart and start training under Tuobert's supervision, I wear it. It can calm the heated components in vampire blood and keep the blood cool at all times."

Vampire blood is cold.

Daylight or light system magic makes it warm and boil, thereby consuming and disrupting Blood Magic Power, significantly reducing their strength.

After knowing the functions of each item, Liszt took them away one by one from in front of Elizabeth, completely ignoring her resentful gaze.

"I heard Tuobert call you Mary, is that your original name?"

"After I became a vampire, Tuobert gave me the name Elizabeth Black Knight, it's been twenty years... Mary Truth was my name when I was a magician, and later, it became a code name for me within the Black Knight family... Bloody Mary."

"Hmm," Liszt narrowed his eyes.

The Smoke Mission just happened to float in front of his eyes, "Mission completed, reward: Bloody Mary – Elizabeth Black Knight."

Before Liszt could contemplate the dominance of the alias Bloody Mary.

Elizabeth quickly said, "We mixed-blood vampires like me all have a code name; purebloods don't like to call us by our names. Oh, I forgot to mention, the other four vampires brought by Tuobert are called Crimson Peggy, Blood Hamill, Night Demon Wimbledon, and One-Eyed Uso."

They all sounded quite domineering.

Among them, One-Eyed Uso made Liszt's brow raise—his coachman's name was One-Eyed Barton.

Because of this digression, the smoke had already dissipated, and Liszt hadn't had the chance to see the new mission content. But he wasn't in a hurry; instead, he asked, "Do vampires live by drinking blood?"

"Sir, vampires do not drink blood. Purebloods like to call themselves blood clan. Authors of knight novels always portray us as bloodsucking monsters. In fact, we are just magicians who study Blood Magic, only our bodies underwent some unusual changes."

"So you also eat food?"

"Of course, we eat, sir. Whatever common people eat, we eat the same."

Since Tuobert had died and his heart was in the hands of Liszt, Elizabeth answered his inquiries extensively and exhaustively, displaying the behavior of a loyal subordinate.

Liszt gradually understood more about these vampire casters who were neither human nor ghost. Aside from having a more secretive heritage, preferring to stay hidden by day and come out by night, transforming into bats to cause mischief, and having an unsavory reputation, they didn't have too many unique characteristics. They were scattered across the continent but were quite rare in numbers.

One reason was that their birth rate was very low, and it was exceedingly difficult for the original purebloods to procreate. The second reason was that transforming mixed-bloods consumed a vast amount of resources, and those with poor talent had no chance to be promoted to external mixed-bloods.

A vampire family with fifty members was considered a large family.

As they talked, they came to the cause of the current incident.

Bloody Mary explained, "Originally, Tuobert did not plan to transform you, sir. Even the Black Knight family would be unwilling to waste resources to transform mixed-bloods. Later, when he found out that you, sir, were the youngest Sky Knight of the Sapphire, Tuobert changed his mind and wanted to transform you."

Liszt showed no particular reaction.

However, he understood in his heart that this must have been the backlash from the Power of Destiny due to the failure of the previous mission, drawing Tuobert's malice toward him.

But this malice seemed more like a boon, bestowing upon him five vampire servants.

Chapter 603 Memories of a Terrifying Posture

Magicians, Druids, Vampires, Wizards.

Liszt had already encountered four kinds of special Casters.

In the leftover notes from Curtis Truth, there was an illustration of the Eye of Truth, in which the three corners of the triangle represented matter, Magic Power, and spirit, each one listing out the relevant Caster professions.

In the material branch, there were Alchemists, Vampires, and Necromancers.

In the Magic Power branch, there were Magicians and Druids.

In the spiritual branch, there were Wizards, Sorcerers, Prophets, Succubi, and Shamans, among which ancient Wizards mostly transformed themselves into Liches, which is to say, Curtis Truth and Andy Sapphire of the Marquis of Bull, belonged to the category of Wizards.

It was unknown if these Casters really existed.

But at least it could be inferred that they more or less had existed on this continent. The Duchy of Sapphire was located in a remote area and its history only spanned just over one hundred and fifty years, so it was relatively "clean." Those special Casters, even if they existed, were probably scattered across the various nations of the continent.

"This black cloak with a red interior from Tuobert, take it as a reward for pledging allegiance to me, you wear it. I'll have Thomas arrange a cabin for you on the ship, where

you'll live from now on, focused solely on serving as my Vampire Servant. Perform well and I will consider whether to return your heart to you," he said.

After chatting for a while and being unable to extract more information from Elizabeth,

Liszt began arranging her new identity, "You are no longer a Vampire from the Black Knight Family, so don't use the name Elizabeth Black Knight any longer, revert to your original name Mary... Bloody Mary, that sounds pretty good."

Bloody Mary unwillingly, and in a fawning manner, said, "My lord, how about you give me Tuobert's heart to absorb? Once I ascend to a Pureblood Vampire, I can serve you better."

"When you have made enough contributions, everything is negotiable, without contributions, don't mention anything," Liszt calmly stated a fact, "According to my past standard, you dared to harbor ill intent towards me, I would never have left you alive, now I don't kill you, you should be grateful."

That was a bluff.

Back when Paris had also infiltrated the Castle, intending to harm him, he did not kill Paris — or to put it another way, his thoughts were actually deeply influenced by the Smoke Mission, the power of destiny represented by the smoke, and his own spiritual power, might have already merged.

Indistinguishable from each other.

Paris and Bloody Mary were both rewards from the Smoke Mission, naturally he was reluctant to kill them casually. Paris had her sister to restrain her, now Bloody Mary was also restrained by her heart. With a means of control, it was naturally best to maximize benefits and reap more advantages.

When Paris came to Fresh Flower Town, Liszt was still weak, chiefly playing the emotional card.

Bloody Mary had already missed the opportunity, by the time she arrived, Liszt had already become a Half-Step Dragon Knight, no longer needing to exhaust himself playing

the emotional card. Holding her heart, no matter how much Bloody Mary struggled, she couldn't escape his palm—placing the heart into the Gemstone Space, it couldn't even be stolen.

"I'm going to take a bath now, those four Vampires might soon arrive, you'll entertain them and make them understand their current situation."

"Understood, my lord," Bloody Mary solemnly replied.

She finally realized that this young Sky Knight was not a naive youth who could be confused by beauty. Moreover, she wasn't much to look at, not young, nearing forty years old—she was transformed into a Vampire at the age of seventeen, and had since spent twenty years.

Although because of Blood Magic, she didn't show signs of aging, and her body remained tender.

But she was no longer young.

And she clearly felt that, when she revealed her age, Liszt's enthusiasm quickly dropped by a third, "Heh, men..."

Knock, knock, knock.

The sound of knocking pulled Bloody Mary back to reality, and she responded in clumsy Serpent Script, "Please enter."

The door was pushed open, and a maid who already knew about the existence of Bloody Mary brought in a glass of juice and set it on the table, "Lady, please enjoy the juice."

"Thank you."

Bloody Mary was very friendly toward the servants of Liszt.

She was a clever woman and knew that her looks would not help her anymore; she needed to use her real skills to win Liszt's appreciation and rewards in order to regain her heart and freedom.

And possibly obtain Tuobert's heart to advance to a Pureblood Vampire.

So she could not afford to offend the servants around Liszt carelessly—a casual word from a servant might ruin her image in Liszt's eyes.

The maid responded with a smile, but when she saw Bloody Mary's red eyes and pale complexion, she couldn't help but open her mouth in surprise.

Immediately realizing her reaction, she said, "I'm sorry, I didn't mean to."

"It's alright, I am not one of the Sapphire People; my eyes are a little different from yours."

"Ah, yes, my lady, but your eyes are very beautiful."

"Thank you."

"If there is nothing else, I will take my leave now."

"You may go."

As soon as the maid left the room, Bloody Mary suddenly called out to the window, "Peggy, come in now!"

Flap, flap.

A bat fluttered its wings and flew in. As the bat landed, it quickly transformed into a tall woman with golden hair, having the same pale complexion and blood-red eyes, "Mary, Lord Tuobert summoned me here, what's the matter? The aura here is not friendly to us."

"There is no longer any Lord Tuobert. Now, your master is Viscount Black Horse Island, Lord Liszt Tulip."

Crimson Peggy, who had an ordinary appearance and a shrill voice, exclaimed, "What kind of joke is this?"

"I am not joking. Tuobert was killed by Lord Liszt with a single sword strike, and even his bat forms were crushed one by one—he could not be deader. Now, our hearts are in Lord Liszt's hands, and he has summoned you here, apparently, to incorporate you into his service."

Crimson Peggy still did not believe it.

Bloody Mary picked up a cloak from the table, "See for yourself, Tuobert's clothes, which have been awarded to me by Lord Liszt. So, Crimson Peggy, accept your new identity and serve Lord Liszt well. As long as you perform excellently, freedom is not out of reach."

Crimson Peggy's eyes flickered, "Then, this Lord Liszt?"

"The lord has matters to attend to and will return later. I am waiting here for you, as well as Hamil, Wimbleton, and Uso who are on their way, to make you understand the facts—Tuobert's demise is no joke."

"Mary, tell me about Lord Liszt. It seems I have heard this name before, isn't he the youngest Sky Knight of Sapphire?"

"You heard correctly, but I need to clarify one thing—Lord Liszt's strength is terrifying, terrifying to the extent that he could kill Tuobert in an instant. As for how terrifying exactly, only those who have personally witnessed him kill Tuobert in an instant can truly understand that indomitable and violent nature!"

Bloody Mary spoke slowly, her mind racing back to that previous battle. She was still shaken to the core—Liszt's transformation into flames and his stance while firing arrows, scenes she would never forget for the rest of her life.

Chapter 604 The Grand Magician's Baptism

Bloody Mary was singing Liszt's terrifying praises to Crimson Peggy, while Liszt watched the Smoke Mission in the bathhouse. Bathing only took five minutes; he was mostly thinking.

Thinking about the Vampire incident, thinking about the Pioneer Mandate war.

Also thinking about the new mission.

"Mission: Not only bats emerge in the Dark Night, but also a considerable number of rats. They mingle within the departing Knight Order, and perhaps the battle intentions at Roaring River Mouth will soon be revealed by them. Please crush the Grand Magician's port baptism. Reward: a hand-drawn Ruins Map."

This was the content of the new mission. He set aside the reward of the hand-drawn Ruins Map for now and considered the information revealed by the mission content.

"Rats?"

"So, does this mean that the Duchy of Sapphire's plan to attack Roaring River Mouth will be uncovered?" he frowned. "The plan was just confirmed in the daytime meeting. Even if the rats knew the direction of the attack, it would be difficult to deliver the information in time... unless they took a fast sailing ship that could arrive at Roaring River Mouth one day ahead of the regular fleet."

The Duchy of Sapphire would not reveal the direction of the attack in advance for each Pioneer Mandate war.

Rather, the Grand Duke himself would issue the order on the eve of the attack.

This was a good way to avoid the Eagle Kingdom's rats and the possibility of obtaining the battle intentions. After all, sea invasions differ from land attacks; rats can run fast but still need ships. And naturally, the Court Fleet of the Grand Duke is the fastest, capable of launching an attack before the rats spill the secrets.

By the time the attack starts, it's too late for the rats to pass on the information.

So, espionage and the like hardly have any advantage— even if there are rats with flying mounts, they cannot fly continuously over the sea without stopping to dock.

"Unless the rats took a ship first, and then released homing pigeons or something while onboard... No, that can't be right, pigeons have fixed flying ranges, how can the rats ensure that the pigeons' destination is the direction of the fleet's attack?"

Setting sail from Port of Bull Hoof City on Iron Hoof Island.

It's a six- to seven-day voyage to the coast of the Eagle Kingdom, spanning over a thousand kilometers. This distance ensures the suddenness of the fleet's attack cannot be anticipated. Unless a Dragon Knight flew tirelessly on a dragon, perhaps they could traverse the sea without stopping.

Other flying Magical Beasts simply cannot go a thousand kilometers without resting.

"There's another possibility, to take a ship first, enter the range of a flying magical beast, and then fly to deliver the message. This way, the information may indeed arrive one or two days in advance... However, even if the information is sent three days ahead, what kind of defense can be organized?"

Every year at a fixed time, the Duchy of Sapphire launches an attack; it's a tradition.

Yet the Eagle Kingdom can never block it—without the King's coordination and command, the landlords from various territories cannot unite to organize a defensive system. Mixed with various interest entanglements, the Pioneer Mandate is like a gluttonous feast between enemies and allies happening in the hinterlands along the coast.

"The key point is, there are several coastal cities at Roaring River Mouth, all of which are possible locations to launch an attack. The Bull Hoof City meeting only determined the general direction of the attack, without a specific target. The detailed attack plan would be discussed again during the voyage."

Therefore.

The possibility of the Duchy of Sapphire being ambushed is very small.

"If my guess is not wrong, this mission is more likely to be the ill fate of a mission failure, leading to an accident where the rats accidentally deliver the message to the port city I'm about to attack, and then face the port baptism by the Grand Magician—undoubtedly, powerful magic awaits."

He stood up and wiped the water off himself, "Tomorrow morning, I'll communicate with the Earl, and then send out a vampire squad to scout the port cities before the attack. I believe this mission won't be hard."

When he walked out of the bathhouse, he already had a complete plan in mind.

Even if a Grand Magician did cast spells, with his Dragon Dou Qi, crushing the Grand Magician's magic was effortless—back in his territory, he had once shattered Ach's release of the exceptionally strong Water Magic - Whirlpool Convergence with a single sword strike, and that was on the high seas.

After all, a Half-Step Dragon Knight!

...

It was nearly dawn at this time.

The noisy port was very quiet. By the time Liszt returned to his room, there were already five vampires sitting there. Seeing him arrive, Bloody Mary was the first to stand up, and the other four vampires were not slow to react, following her lead and standing up, their gazes all converging at the doorway.

Standing at one meter and eighty-nine centimeters, Liszt wore a well-tailored, appropriate lounging attire, though slightly different from the usual noble attire.

But it undoubtedly highlighted his tall and slender figure, exuding an imposing nobility.

"You've all already come?" He walked to the table and sat down directly, not inviting the five vampires to sit. His gaze slowly surveyed the new vampires, "Bloody Mary, introduce these four vampires to me."

Bloody Mary quickly said, "My lord, this is One-Eyed Uso..."

There wasn't much to introduce. They were all mixed-blood vampires, roughly the same strength as Bloody Mary—Grand Magician level at night, falling to Magician level during the day. They had the ability to transform into bats, making them suitable for the role of "scout," but their "assassin" abilities were not outstanding.

Unless someone was acting drunk like Liszt.

Otherwise, even a Sky Knight asleep would maintain some alertness; Advanced Dou Qi would run slowly and naturally, any disturbance capable of waking them.

Should the vampire assassination fail, they might even be counter-killed. After all, they were only casters; transforming into a bat was suitable for escaping, but the sweeping moves of a Knight's attacks were still very dangerous—close-quarter combat between a caster and a knight was simply foolish.

The five vampires, three males and two females.

After the introductions.

It was the turn of the four new vampires to report their own situations, especially the results of their search for the Goat Assembly's Grand Magician on Iron Hoof Island—their intelligence was much the same as Bloody Mary's, with none of them able to find those Grand Magicians. Also being mixed-blood, they had no contact with the core of the Black Knight Family.

The information they could reveal was limited.

"Very well, I've now met all of you, and you should also recognize me," Liszt said without any superfluous words, "Your hearts are in my hands; from now on, follow my orders and serve me... I do not care about your loyalty, as long as you show your value. Even if you want your hearts back, it's not a problem."

The five vampires' eyes swiveled rapidly.

Liszt smiled faintly, "Your hearts have been placed by me in a very secret location. You may try to steal them from me, but let me remind you, you only have one chance, because failure will result in being erased by me. Also, I must point out that I like to dream of killing people while I sleep, don't say I haven't warned you."

Having said that.

He shook the bell on the table.

Servant Thomas pushed the door open and entered, "My lord."

"Arrange rooms for these five magicians, they are my new followers."

"Yes, my lord," Thomas elegantly gestured with his hand, "Magicians, please follow me."

As they were about to leave the room, Liszt added, "Thomas, remember to prepare a few robes for the magicians, ones with large hoods." The large-hooded robes could very well conceal the pale complexion and blood-red eyes of the vampires.

Chapter 605 The Earl Wants to Come Mooch the AC

The vampire's task had come to an end.

As the sky began to lighten, a fleet of ships anchored at Port of Bull Hoof City left one after another, and Sunset followed the Tulip Fleet, leaving the port.

They sailed towards the azure sea.

The vampires on board Sunset had a new mission.

This was the first task that Liszt had assigned to them: "Compile the blood magic you are familiar with into a book, detailing the casting methods of each spell, as well as comprehensive information on reincarnation rituals and other full-spectrum knowledge. Include also the member composition of the Black Knight Family, and what you know about other vampire families."

A few vampires were somewhat taken aback.

They did not understand the purpose of this mission.

Only Bloody Mary, thinking herself clever, asked with shining eyes, "Do you wish to establish a new vampire family, my lord?"

Liszt nodded noncommittally.

Blood magic was very eerie.

The blood of vampires was cold, and during the day they needed to hide in dark places to keep their body temperature cool. "Cold-blooded" often implies treachery and betrayal; whether this is true or not, the impression that Bloody Mary and these vampires gave him was just that.

Therefore, he did not actually wish to establish any new vampire families. However, using the guise of forming a new family did not stop him from motivating the five vampires to work.

His true intention was to compile blood magic into a tome of magic books.

To hand it over to Ach, Chris, and others for research, to glean meaningful insights from it, and to lay the foundation for their pursuit of becoming archmages – Chris's talents might not be sufficient, but Ach was extremely likely to ascend to the rank of archmage.

In the days that followed,

The five vampires hid in the cabin's bottom, toiling over the book that Liszt had named "The Nature and Development of Blood Magic."

By the time they were about to reach Roaring River Mouth, the new battle plans had been distributed to all the Follower Lords of the Sapphire Duke. Li Weiliam quickly gathered his followers to meet on the Tulip, then assigned the tasks of the Coral Island Knights.

"We will cooperate with the First Prince and focus our attack on the coastal areas around Roaring River Mouth. Among all the coastal cities, I have chosen Ice Pear City. It is the territory of a Viscount, and to my knowledge, this Viscount was only assigned Ice Pear City in the past two years. His castle is Snow Pear Castle, and he himself is known as the Clear Water Sword Saint," he said.

Known as the Clear Water Sword Saint, he naturally was a Sky Knight of the Sword Saint Level, probably a Water Attribute Sword Saint.

"A Sword Saint who is only a Viscount?" Jonas Shattered Stone asked curiously.

"Perhaps he offended the Nobles and was demoted to Viscount."

"Quite possible."

Liszt was not curious about this; as a Dragon Knight himself, he was still only a Viscount. So he directly said, "Even if the opponent is a Sword Saint, a Viscount's castle won't hold against the dismantling prowess of the Blizzard Beast. Let's capture Ice Pear City first as a statement!"

Li Weiliang understood Liszt's strength and therefore easily concurred, "Taking on a Sword Saint at the beginning of the battle couldn't be better!"

The meeting ended promptly.

Upon returning to Sunset, Liszt gathered the five vampires who were earnestly writing: "Set aside the task of writing for now, as it's a long-term project and not urgent. We are now not far from the coastline, and I need you to infiltrate Ice Pear City, gather information, especially regarding magicians."

"Ice Pear City? The domain of Clear Water Sword Saint Yevich Waterflower?" Night Demon Wimbleton couldn't help blurting out,

"You know of this person?"

"Yes, my lord, I have heard of the Clear Water Sword Saint. He was once a candidate for Dragon Knight of the Eagle Kingdom, but as he grew older, he indulged too much and squandered his talents. Moreover, he had character issues, having followed three Marquises in succession, all ending in disputes. That's how he ended up in Roar City, following Marquis Nuta Dimaria Yuhua Stone and received his title as Viscount."

The Eagle Kingdom had many Marquises.

It's possible that many Nobles of Eagle Kingdom didn't even know the exact number of Marquises.

Just the Roaring River Mouth area alone encompassed the territories of five Marquises, including Marquis Nuta as one of them. His territory, named Impact River Plain, extended from the mouth of the Roaring River all the way up to the tributary Three Dragon River, with Roar City as the central city.

The name of Roaring River Mouth came from the Roaring River, a river much greater than Earth's Yangtze, Nile, and Amazon rivers.

The downstream Impact Plain was also immensely vast,

and Ice Pear City was one of the mid-sized cities on the Impact Plain.

...

"Night Demon Wimbleton continued, "The Clear Water Sword Saint is very powerful, having been a potential Dragon Knight candidate. It's unlikely we can infiltrate his presence undetected.""

"We don't need to confront him directly, just find out if there is any Grand Magician within the city."

"Yes, my lord."

...

The vampires left the Sunset at dusk and flew toward Ice Pear City.

Liszt stood at the bow of the ship, not resting. They were now only about ten kilometers away from land, ready to land and engage in battle at any moment.

It was August 1st, and the weather at night was still somewhat muggy.

Suddenly, a figure dashed across the sky, engulfed in the mighty Water-Attribute Dou Qi, it was none other than the Sea Wave Sword Saint Li Weiliam.

Liszt turned around and greeted, "Father, what brings you here?"

Li Weiliam gestured for the servants and others on the ship to leave, leaving only the two of them at the bow, "Have the vampires been dispatched?"

"Yes."

"Liszt, what are you worried about? According to past practices, we should directly attack. It's just a small city. What about the Clear Water Sword Saint is worth our caution?"

"Father, what's wrong with being cautious? The other party was a potential Dragon Knight in the past."

"A potential Dragon Knight?"

"I've asked the vampires. Clear Water Sword Saint Yevich Waterflower had strong talent in his youth and was one of the candidates for the Dragon Knights. However, as he grew older, his talent was squandered, his character was poor, and he only managed to scrape together a viscount title in his middle years."

"It seems that despite his plight, his strength is still formidable. We should indeed proceed with caution," Li Weiliam nodded and then with a hint of emotion said, "The First Prince should have already conquered several other small cities and begun to rest on land. Life aboard the ship, even after decades, is still uncomfortable."

"We just have to wait one more night."

Li Weiliam boarded the ship with no intention to leave soon, but turned to look at the small tower castle at the stern, "Your ship is very peculiar, is that where you reside?"

"Yes."

"You are a noble who enjoys comfort. Let me visit your room."

Upon entering the small tower castle, Li Weiliam, who was prepared, was still stunned by the room's conditions. A full set of Thorn furniture, exquisite glassware, curtains woven from green silk, carpets laid with magical beast fur... and most crucially, the master bedroom was cool.

It was only August, and the climate was still hot.

Yet, Liszt's dwelling was pleasantly cool, without a hint of heat.

"What is this? A magic array?" Li Weiliam stood in the room, feeling the temperature cool to the point of being slightly cold, and asked in surprise.

"A piece of magic equipment."

Liszt smiled awkwardly, like someone caught sneaking a chicken leg, "In the seas of my territory, there is a production of Golden-Lipped Clams that produce Golden Pearls, which can be fashioned into magic equipment for controlling temperature. I call it the Temperature Calming Pearl. The output is very low right now; I've only brought one with me."

"How's the production of the Golden Pearls? Liszt, I need it!" Li Weiliam exerted a father's authority, "Of course, I won't take your things for free; sell them to me at market price."

"There's no need to spend money. I had planned to give out two Temperature Calming Pearls as birthday gifts to you and grandmother."

"You are thoughtful, but are there only two? I would hope to use Temperature Calming Pearls in my bedroom, study, dining room, and ideally the living room."

The Earl's appetite was indeed large.

Liszt flat out interrupted, "I'm sorry, Father, but the Golden Pearls are scarce, and even my Thorn Castle cannot meet the supply... However, I will prioritize selling any new Golden Pearls to Tulip Castle." The Golden Pearls would definitely be for sale in the future, but he first had to ensure his own enjoyment.

The Earl could not push further, and seeing that Liszt had no intention of giving him the Temperature Calming Pearl on the ship as a gift, he said, "In that case, I'll squeeze in with you on the Sunset; you don't mind, do you?"

Mind!

But it wouldn't be polite to say so, and he could only reply, "Of course not, I will have the servants arrange a room for you, and I'll place the Temperature Calming Pearl between the two rooms."

Chapter 606 The Sword Saint is Not an Opponent for Even a Single Arrow

Liszt did not have to wait long.

Five vampires had already flown back from Ice Pear City, bringing with them the results of their investigation.

Bloody Mary, who faintly took the lead among the vampire servants, reported, "My lord, Earl, we did not dare approach the Clear Water Sword Saint, but we unexpectedly discovered him in the castle's sitting room, where he was receiving three individuals dressed like magicians. Judging by the Clear Water Sword Saint's demeanor, they seemed to be equals."

"Equals?" Liszt's eyebrows rose, if these magicians were equals to a Sword Saint, it was very likely they were Grand Magicians. "Is there any other information?"

"From what we have gathered, what's interesting is that the Clear Water Sword Saint did not know about your plan to launch an attack earlier, thus the defense at Snow Pear Castle was quite lax."

Before Bloody Mary could finish, Peggy suddenly cut in front of her, "However, along the way, a shifty-looking person entered the sitting room and said something to the Clear Water Sword Saint. He then quickly commanded the castle into a state of alert, and many supplies from Ice Pear City were moved into Snow Pear Castle."

Liszt understood, "It seems a rat has divulged our plans, Snow Pear Castle is already prepared."

Li Weiliam furrowed his brows, "With three Grand Magicians and the Clear Water Sword Saint on guard, Liszt, what do you make of this battle?"

A faint smile.

Liszt said calmly, "Father, there is nothing to be surprised about, we will assemble and besiege them at dawn! Snow Pear Castle may have a Sword Saint and three Grand Magicians, but with Father and I working together, plus the Blizzard Beast Squad, they are no match for us!"

Seizing the opportunity, Bloody Mary said, "My lord, do not forget your vampire servants, by dawn, we should still be able to display the capabilities of a Grand Magician... Although blood magic does not contain any powerful area-of-effect spells, killing one or two Grand Magicians for you should not be difficult."

She had confidence in Liszt's strength, so she always expressed her loyalty.

The other four vampires were somewhat reluctant, but under Bloody Mary's pressure, they had no choice but to echo, "The vampire servants are willing to serve the lord."

Liszt gave the five vampires a look, "Your willingness shows that you have accepted your situation, which is good. However, I do not want you to reveal yourselves, you can follow the Knight Order, watch this battle, consider it as rearguard."

Before he finished speaking, he thought of something else, "Additionally, the name 'vampire servants' does not sound pleasant, from now on, you will be called 'Blood Servants'."

The five vampires looked at each other.

What was the essential difference between vampire servants and Blood Servants? They could not follow Liszt's train of thought.

...

The dawn was silent.

The Tulip Fleet swiftly landed, the knights got equipped and mounted their steeds, assembling in formation near the shore. Riding atop the Landwalker bird Loki, Liszt followed along with the Knight Order, charging towards Snow Pear Castle.

There was no attempt to hide their tracks.

They charged directly towards Snow Pear Castle without any subterfuge—Liszt no longer deigned to use strategies, he was like a max-level account leading a low-level one, to whom the boss that seemed formidable to the low-level account was no different from a minor mob to him. The low-level needs to figure out positioning and kiting and so on.

For a max-level account fighting a boss, it's just a matter of straightforward attacks.

The patrolling knights of Snow Pear Castle quickly noticed the dust-kicking Knight Order and fled back to the castle like the wind to report to the Clear Water Sword Saint.

Therefore, when the Knight Order approached Snow Pear Castle, they were met by a figure in silver armor standing on the castle's top balcony.

It was unmistakably Clear Water Sword Saint Yevich·Shuisheng.

The former candidate for Dragon Knight.

As he watched the Coral Island Knights charge without stopping, a cold light shone in his eyes, "Truly an unpleasant experience. Less than two years of peace in Ice Pear City and here come the flies from the Duchy of Sapphire fighting over food! However, you've picked the wrong opponent this time; let me, Yevich, show you what agony means!"

He stamped his foot.

A voice immediately arose from below the balcony, "Viscount Yevich, rest assured, we are ready to join forces and unleash magic. If the Sapphire Knight Order dares to charge and lay siege, we guarantee to leave them trembling amidst the fireworks of magic! However, after one round of magic, the residual magic power on the battlefield will be disrupted, and henceforth, it will be up to Viscount Yevich to handle things."

The display of magicians on the battlefield.

Equivalent to a one-time "Magic Scroll," it would extinguish after a single volley—such was the Knights Order's joined Dou Qi, that the interference with the surrounding magic power was too intense, effectively countering magicians who need to sense and draw upon free-floating magic power to cast their spells.

In this continent dominated by knights, the decline of casters was no accident.

Yevich knew this.

But he also believed that the Coral City Knights of the Duchy of Sapphire were unaware that three Grand Magicians had arrived at Snow Pear Castle. As long as they launched an attack, a volley of magic from the Grand Magicians would be decisive.

However.

He soon discovered that the Coral Island Knights had stopped at the outskirts of the castle, with the leader in silver armor and a red cloak, mounted on a large long-legged bird, holding a cylindrical object up to his eye.

After a brief pause, the leading knight lowered the cylinder, and the Knights Order charged once again towards Snow Pear Castle.

A cloud of dust rose into the sky, and just as the charge was within the range of magic, Yevich stomped his foot. Without needing his prompt, the three Grand Magicians hiding below the balcony raised their hands, beginning to gather magic power. A prepared baptism of magic was about to brew and unleash.

A mocking smile played on Yevich's lips.

The Water-Attribute Dou Qi churned within him, roaring and surging, waiting for the moment to strike. Inside the castle, the knights also gripped their weapons, ready to beat the drowning dog.

...

Opposite them.

Liszt was in charge of commanding the entire battle for the Coral City Knights.

His Eye of Magic never ceased, and through the telescope, he had already pinpointed the position of the three Grand Magicians and the show-off Clear Water Sword Saint.

Under his command, the Knights Order began their charge.

Meanwhile, he kept a close watch on the Grand Magicians' movements. When he saw them raise their hands to gather magic, Liszt suddenly grabbed the Swift Shadow Bow and aimed at the window, releasing three arrows.

Arrows imbued with Dragon Dou Qi.

They whistled through the air.

Seeing this, Yevich reacted hastily, charging toward the three arrows—he could no longer afford to be surprised at how Liszt had discovered the Grand Magicians inside the castle and had accurately shot arrows aimed at killing the spellcasting Grand Magicians.

Boom!

Water-Attribute Dou Qi collided with Fire Attribute Dou Qi.

The three arrows exploded violently, and the Dragon Dou Qi released in a flash turned into three balls of flame that shattered Yevich's Water-Attribute Dou Qi and struck him, sending him screaming through the air to crash against the castle's wall.

A triumphant smile was on Liszt's face, proud within—so much for a Sword Saint, not even able to block his casual arrow!

He put away the Swift Shadow Bow and took out a whistle.

"Whew!"

The shrill whistle reached the ears of the charging knights.

The next moment, the knights, who were charging ferociously, collectively wheeled their mounts, moving to either side in an orderly fashion at a speed even greater than their charge. It was as if Snow Pear Castle was a rock in the water that split the knightly torrent apart... only the split was a bit too far off.

Just then, the three Grand Magicians had already unleashed a mighty spell in the path of the charging knights.

But to the Grand Magicians' horror—the charging Knights Order had unexpectedly veered off to escape midway, meaning their predicted error had caused the long-brewing collective spell to be a complete misfire.

What was worse, the Clear Water Sword Saint had just been launched away with an arrow, hanging on the castle wall.

And the knight on the giant bird, he lifted his bow and arrow again, aiming at their window.

Chapter 607 Effortlessly Pacifying Snow Pear Castle

Boom!

Thunder roared and lightning streaked across the sky, accompanied by howling winds and flying rocks.

It was the combined magic released by three Grand Magicians, which could be considered a group spell. In an instant, the open ground in front of the castle descended into an apocalyptic scene.

What a pity.

Such formidable magic could only ravage the ground at will. The intended targets, the Coral City Knights, had already run out of the magic's range, hiding in the distance. Pointing and marvelling at the unmatched power of the magic, they commented.

"What a beautiful sight."

"If time could stand still, I'd really like to preserve this scene as a fond memory."

"Magicians are still very powerful."

"Thank goodness Lord Liszt was prepared, otherwise we'd be the ones taking a bath."

"No matter how powerful, it's useless if it doesn't hit the target."

In the logistical team of the Retainer Knights at the rear of the Knight Order, five vampires watched the magical cataclysm from afar without surprise. In the cover of night, they had the caliber of a Grand Magician. What truly astonished them was the image of Liszt shooting the Clear Water Sword Saint with a single arrow previously.

No matter how much Bloody Mary had hyped up the terror of Liszt, or his instant killing of the Pureblood Vampire Tuobert Black Knight.

These vampires, more in fear of having their hearts crushed by Liszt, were not convinced of his strength and even harbored thoughts of assassinating him stealthily in the dark night.

However, at that moment, many thoughts crumbled in an instant.

One-Eyed Uso murmured to himself, "That was a Sword Saint, a former candidate for Dragon Knight, how could he not block a single arrow? Just how powerful is this Lord, could it be true that Mary said he killed Tuobert in an instant? How is that possible, he's only eighteen years old and has just been promoted to a Completion Level Sky Knight!"

The Night Demon Wimbledon was completely confused, "Has Yevich's strength declined? It must be that Yevich's strength has declined, yes, definitely Yevich's strength has declined... But even if his strength has declined, he is still a Sky Knight, why couldn't he even block one arrow?"

Crimson Peggy and Blood Hamil were too shocked to speak.

Only Bloody Mary giggled, "Peggy, Hamil, Wimbledon, Uso, I didn't lie to you, did I? The Lord's strength is indeed unfathomable."

Soon after, she licked her alluring red lips enticingly, "Compared to Tuobert's perverted Pureblood nature, a Lord like this is worth following... I, Bloody Mary, must build a vampire clan for the Lord, to be his eyes and ears in the dark of night!"

How ancient vampires survived is no longer known; in the current world ruled by knights, vampire clans exist as dependents of the Nobles, self-proclaimed as "Vampire Servants."

As vampires, allegiance to the strong has become instinct.

...

Behind Liszt.

The Earl was also riding a horse, detached from the Knight Order, ready to face a sword challenge at any moment. He looked at the tall figure of his second son, once again having his views dramatically challenged.

He was already defenseless during practical combat exercises.

Now, it seems Liszt's strength had surged once again, reaching a level where even a Sword Saint could not withstand a single arrow. If even a Sword Saint could not withstand one arrow, how many could a Completion Level Sky Knight withstand? If similarly, the Completion Level Sky Knights could not withstand one, what level of existence does that make Liszt now?

A tumultuous speculation surged in his heart, with countless thoughts tumbling in his mind.

But in the end, all the thoughts were compressed into a sigh, burying all speculations deep in his heart—no matter the future, the present is what mattered most. Earning military merits to advance in noble rank and expanding the Tulip Family was his life's ambition. Liszt, who was already enfeoffed, was destined to part ways with the Tulip Family.

As for how to develop, the Earl felt there was no need for his own intervention.

Disaster may lurk within fortune and fortune within disaster; who can clear say what the future holds?

It was just a few breaths of absent-mindedness.

The apocalyptic magic had slowly faded away, and Liszt's second volley of arrows, transformed into three streams of flame, assailed the castle's windows. However, the magicians who had been hiding in the rooms had hurriedly scurried deeper into the castle, not daring to show themselves and cast spells again.

Boom!

The arrows burst upon hitting the window, blasting a large gap open.

The Clear Water Sword Saint, who had been hanging on the wall, took advantage of the Grand Magician's spell-casting interval to rush into the castle and hid inside, not daring to show himself.

"Huff!"

The whistle sounded, signaling the charge.

The Coral City Knights regrouped and launched a real charge at Snow Pear Castle, with countless Divine Archers surrounding the castle and shooting arrows madly. The continuous Dou Qi tore through the air around the castle, creating an anti-magic space. The castle could only respond with a few sporadic arrows.

"Douson, it's your turn to shine!"

With Liszt's call, the long-awaited blizzard beasts finally made their grand entrance. Nine huge black dogs, escorted by the knight order, arrived in front of Snow Pear Castle and wildly spewed Rock Spikes and Rock Grenades. Each rock, when it slammed into the castle walls, shattered large chunks of stone.

The walls crumbled like sand, layer by layer.

In no time, one side of the wall collapsed, and the howling knights from Coral Island swarmed toward the breach like a hive of bees. Liszt and William Lee were no exceptions, charging into the breach side by side.

The Sky-Cleaving Greatsword in hand.

The surging Dragon Dou Qi enveloped his entire body, cloaked in a flame battle suit.

The knights blocking the breach stood no chance at all. The blade sliced through them as easily as it would cut tofu, and instantly seven or eight Earth Knights were cleaved in two. Their bisected bodies lay separated, the visual of their split forms bizarrely satisfying to behold.

Earl William Lee would not be content with his son stealing all the limelight.

The Water-Attribute Dou Qi gushed forth like it cost nothing, his sword sending several knights in his way spinning, instantly twisting their bodies and ruthlessly crushing them with the sheer force of the Dou Qi.

Two Completion Level Sky Knights led the way.

Following suit, countless Elite Earth Knights cleaned up and cleared the way, and the resistance forces of Snow Pear Castle collapsed in a single encounter.

In such a one-sided slaughter,

A knight's eyes bulged, nearly popping out in terror, as he hastily dropped his weapon and knelt to beg for mercy.

With one leading the way, the rest of the knights one by one collapsed to their knees, surrendering to be bound and captured by the Coral Island Knights.

"Where is Yevich!" Liszt grabbed the armor of a knight and demanded.

Enveloped by the Dragon Dou Qi, the knight felt a tremendous force binding him tightly as though nailed to the ground, unable to move or even breathe.

Overwhelmed with fear, he didn't dare to hide anything.

He struggled to reply, "My lord... no, Yevich has gone to the castle's back garden, he... may be trying to break out."

Letting go of the knight, Liszt dropped a line: "Father, leave this to you, I'm going after Yevich!"

"Don't forget there are three Grand Magicians!"

"The Grand Magicians can't escape." Although Liszt didn't know where the Grand Magicians were hiding, the knight's Dou Qi had completely suppressed magic within Snow Pear Castle, rendering the Grand Magicians ineffective. It was only a matter of time until they were found.

Capturing Yevich was now the urgent priority.

He had not yet captured a Sword Saint thus far, and capturing one could at least squeeze out a few Little Minor Elves! Once a Sky Knight was taken captive, ransom wouldn't be solved with just a couple of Gold Coins.

Without trading for elves, there would be no going home!

Chapter 608 Catching Demons Underground

Charging headlong, Liszt dashed directly from the breach in the castle, all the way to the back garden of the castle, where he deployed the Eye of Magic but did not find the figure of Yevich Waterflower.

However, beneath a patch of grapevines, he saw several servants hiding something.

He sharply sensed a problem and rushed over, grabbing a servant to demand, "Where's Yevich!" Without waiting for the servant's response, he had already kicked away the water tank used for storing water, suddenly revealing a square basement hatch.

"I, I don't know..."

"Fool!" Liszt casually tossed the uncooperative servant towards a stone table to the side. The servant smashed onto it and rolled off to the ground, unable to get up for the moment.

Under normal circumstances, he had no desire to kill those outside knights and magicians.

War is a game among nobles, and commoners usually constitute part of the wealth; it is morally unacceptable for knights to kill commoners — unless the commoners dare to resist, in which case they must be put to death without question. Even with moral constraints, there are knights who get carried away, slaughtering civilians indiscriminately.

There would be no punishments afterward.

For example, if Liszt slaughtered all the civilians of Snow Pear Castle now, who would speak ill of him — he simply was not a cruel person and had a touch of compassion for the commoners.

Whether knights adhere to morals.

Depends on self-discipline and the whole honor discourse favored by knightly glory.

Fortunately, Liszt did not need the servant's answer; he directly kicked open the basement hatch and quickly jumped down. It was clear that this basement was a castle's escape route. With Dragon Dou Qi in operation and a crystal lamp in hand, he quickly found the entrance to the passage.

With Dragon Dou Qi shielding his body, he had no fear of traps within the passage, as the world had not yet developed the art of traps.

Even if there were traps in the escape tunnel, they would be straightforward and simple means of harm. Had there been magic equipment applied to the escape passage, his Eye of Magic would observe and solve it.

The passage was somewhat narrow.

With the illumination of his crystal lamp, Liszt's vision was unobstructed, so he swiftly charged along the passage. It was twisting and turning, with plenty of standing water, and he could clearly see fresh, still-damp footprints.

"Not just one person's footprints, they are a bit messy; they should be the footprints of Yevich and those three grand magicians!"

With clarity in his heart, his pursuit quickened even more.

Just then, a loud rumble suddenly came from ahead.

Followed by very faint voices.

They seemed to be shouts and curses.

He continued to charge forward.

Soon, at the end of the passage, he saw three faint figures outlined by magic radiance; they were indeed the three grand magicians who had previously cast the combination magic. Their cursing was also clearly audible, quickly informing Liszt of the reason — Yevich had collapsed the gate at the end of the passage.

That is to say.

To escape, Yevich had left the three grand magicians behind as bait.

"Stop the nonsense, Lars, let's join forces and cast magic to blast the top of the tunnel, creating a way out!"

"Cyrille, put up the Firmstone Armor for me, Dulac, put up the Water Wave Shield, I'm afraid if the tunnel collapses again, it'll bury me!"

"Don't worry, you won't die!"

The three grand magicians were trapped in the passage, attempting to save themselves.

Unfortunately, before they could cast their magic, Liszt had already caught up along the passage: "Gentlemen, why the hurry to leave? Come continue your visit to Snow Pear Castle with me."

"It's you!"

"One arrow sent Yevich's knight flying!"

"They really have caught up already, heh."

Liszt's Eye of Magic focused on the three Grand Magicians as he slowly approached, "Since you're already aware of me, let's dispense with formalities. Continue back down the corridor and return to Snow Pear Castle where we can have a good talk... The magician on the left, stop secretly gathering magic power, you can't escape my perception."

The discovered Grand Magician gave a sheepish smile and dissolved the magic power he had been condensing in his palm.

When a magician is approached by a knight, or even more so, a powerful Sky Knight, it's almost as if there's no difference between them and lambs waiting for slaughter. The era of the caster has declined—apparently during the Moon Empire era, magicians were very powerful, dominating the continent and ruling over everything, but unfortunately now it's the era where knights dominate the continent.

Sometimes Liszt doubts those legends, where archmages were said to duel with dragons and, although they couldn't defeat a Dragon Knight in single combat, were still considered representatives of the peak powers in the world.

Why are Grand Magicians and magicians so weak?

Although they can release powerful spells, their true combat ability can't be demonstrated. Especially due to the constraints on casting speed, allowing knights to attack magicians without any scruples. No matter how strong the magic power is, it's useless if it can't hit the knight. Even solid defensive spells like the Water Wave Shield or Firmstone Armor will eventually be hacked apart by knights given enough time.

Not to mention when knights form a team, their Dou Qi merges to shred any stray magic power, creating an anti-magic zone, effectively nullifying a magician's casting abilities.

Watching the three Grand Magicians dejectedly walk back along the corridor,

Liszt couldn't help but be reflective, "When I was compiling "Dragons Fight in the Wild", I read a lot of magic books and knight's novels, all mentioning the glory days of magicians during the Moon Empire. There are even legends that the Moon Empire's magicians built a Magic Array atop Mount Mulagao Ding that reached the moon."

If that era was really as recorded in history, it would have been a truly magnificent and splendid civilization.

The magicians who founded the Moon Empire certainly wouldn't have been as weak as today's magicians.

"So what led to the decline of the magician's era? What differences exist between the magicians of the Moon Empire era and those of today? What happened after the Moon Empire fell apart that allowed knights to rise?" Sadly, history hasn't been recorded.

The fragments of oral history have long since strayed from the truth.

The mystery remains unsolved.

...

Liszt did not continue to pursue Clear Water Sword Saint.

Since the passage was blocked, there was basically no hope of catching up, which was a pity as the reward for capturing the Sword Saint just flew away. However, having three Grand Magicians as prisoners could make up for the loss somewhat, as he believed they would pay a sufficient ransom for their freedom.

When he returned to Snow Pear Castle, the Earl had already sent people to start cleaning up the castle, which wall had collapsed.

"Yevich didn't catch up?"

"He escaped through the tunnel, even collapsing the exit behind him, but he left us three interesting guests," Liszt pointed at the three Grand Magicians clad in Magic Cloaks.

Though they were captured,

they still maintained a proud demeanor, calmly awaiting the trial that was to come.

Liszt handed over the task of judging to the Earl and prepared to search Snow Pear Castle personally, to see if Yevich left anything valuable behind.

According to the previously agreed upon method—battle honors to Li Weiliang, resources to Liszt.

Therefore, all the resources of Snow Pear Castle belonged to Liszt. Captain Marcus had already sorted through the resources once and immediately came to report when he saw Liszt return, "My lord, the castle's reserves of food and other resources have been inventoried, aside from what is needed to replenish the Knight Order, the rest is sealed and ready for transport by wagons."

"What about the elves?"

"We have searched the Worm Room, there are no elves left, they must have been taken away by Yevich."

With Yevich himself gone and the elves taken as well, Liszt felt frustrated, "I really want to chop down all the Cordyceps outside the castle. Isn't this guy supposed to be a potential Dragon Knight? How can he escape so quickly!"

Chapter 609 Hand-drawn Map

The castle inspection didn't yield any special findings.

The assets of Clear Water Sword Saint Yevich Shuisheng were embarrassingly meager, not befitting a Sword Saint. The supplies in the storeroom of Snow Pear Castle were even less than those of Shattered Stone Castle and Beer Castle, which Liszt found quite contemptible.

Of course.

He wasn't angry enough to actually destroy the Elf Cordyceps; knightly wars are part of the noble game, and although there are no explicit rules that war must follow, it is akin to how countries on Earth signed the Geneva Convention to protect civilians and those suffering in war.

Under the knightly system, there is also a set of rules pertaining to the knightly spirit and character.

The knightly spirit and character are varied in the propaganda of different countries, but overall, they include slogans of loyalty, fearlessness, bravery, honesty, fairness, protection of territories, and pursuit of glory.

Some unwritten but firmly established rules include prohibiting the killing of prisoners, the redemption of knights with gold coins, forbidding harm to Elves, not slaughtering civilians, treating betrayers with disdain, and ensuring that the lineage of a noble's wife is pure.

There was a time when the King of the Steel Ridge Kingdom deployed the army to the court of a certain duke from a grand duchy because he was notorious for killing civilians. Ultimately, the duke was stripped of his title, yet the kingdom didn't abolish the grand duchy; instead, they supported the duke's brother to inherit the title.

Of course, the real reasons for the action might relate more to a conflict between that duke and the kingdom rather than his tendency to kill civilians.

But killing civilians provided an excellent excuse to dispatch troops against the duke.

Liszt likewise followed these rules.

He had no intention of destruction.

After all, if Elf Cordyceps were cut down, it would greatly harm the elves and affect the final yield. Even if transplantation was attempted, it wouldn't work, as the Cordyceps would wither over time if elves were away for too long. Although elves could cultivate new Cordyceps, they too would suffer greatly and likely die prematurely.

The wool has to come from the sheep, and if the Duchy of Sapphire wished to plunder sufficient resources from each Pioneer Mandate, it couldn't recklessly consume resources like the elves.

Otherwise, after several mandates, the coastal hinterlands would probably lack nobles willing to cultivate the land.

In fact, as the Pioneer Mandates continually invaded, many coastal hinterland regions in the Eagle Kingdom that were frequently raided had given rise to nobles who did not engage in

production. These nobles supported Mercenary Corps in secret, involved in serf trading and various smuggling activities, to avoid open moral condemnation.

For instance, town civilians are usually spared the ravages of war; sadly, if the knights don't plunder them, the mercenaries still will.

It is easy to imagine, without the protection of Snow Pear Castle, Ice Pear City would soon face attacks from Mercenary Corps.

But these were not issues Liszt cared to concern himself with.

Standing on the second floor of the castle, he looked at the grapevines in the backyard and still regretted Yevich's escape, "It seems many castles have tunnels; I should also construct tunnels in Thorn Castle... build one leading to the sea, that would not only be convenient for meeting Ach, but also for escaping into the sea if necessary."

If he fled into the sea, he had the Rainbow Whale Rose to provide him with the ability to breathe; even Dragon Knights would not be able to reach him—except for Water Dragon Knights, as Water Dragons are Elemental Dragons, and perhaps their riders could breathe underwater.

Amid these reflections,

a distorted wisp of smoke once again drifted before his eyes.

"Task completion reward: a hand-drawn Ruins Map."

With Yevich having fled and three Grand Magicians turned into prisoners, the task's completion was a matter of course. Moreover, Liszt believed that the Ruins Map was bound to be in the possession of these three Grand Magicians, and he could take it whenever he wished—the Earl would claim the military achievements, and he would take the supplies, so naturally, the Ruins Map was also his.

He turned his attention to his next task.

By his count, this was the one hundred and twenty-sixth task, "Task: The fleeing Yevich Water Peanut, reluctant to concede, may be waiting for you in the next city, hoping to plunder the resources of the Impact River Plain. A major battle is impending, please capture or kill Yevich. Reward: One Iron Knight."

There was nothing particularly out of the ordinary about the task—it was just a typical development of taking advantage of the situation.

What surprised him was the reward for the task, "An Iron Knight? That means the city Yevich has fled to must be Steel Dyke City, and there are Iron Knights in Steel Dyke City?"

Steel Ridge City was the next target for the Coral Island Knights.

An Iron Knight is a type of knight that cultivates special Dou Qi manuscripts to forge various divine weapons.

The Crimson Blood Sword, Sky-Cleaving Greatsword, Swift Shadow Bow — these weapons were all forged by Iron Knights — whereas magicians make magic equipment, such as sapphire pendants, amplification bracelets, and calming wind pearls; Iron Knights forge all sorts of gemstone weapons, mithril armor, elf weapons, and dragon bone weapons.

The magic equipment made by magicians activates the inherent magic power of the materials through magic arrays, to produce special effects and power.

The weapons forged by Iron Knights, on the other hand, integrate materials with the weapons, which after special processing, are suitable for knights to infuse Dou Qi into, triggering the resonance of the material's own magic power to bring out great strength.

As long as one possesses magic power, they can activate magic equipment, whether it's Dou Qi or magic; gemstone weapons, elf weapons, and the like, however, require Dou Qi to bring out their power.

Cultivating an Iron Knight consumes a tremendous amount of resources.

Typically, only great nobles would select talented young knights from their territories to cultivate into Iron Knights, and many Iron Knights are the progeny of these great nobles. The grandson of the Marquis of the Bull was also a young Iron Knight, which led Liszt to surmise his extraordinary talent.

"I hope this Iron Knight can bring me the methods to train Iron Knights. The Iron Knight himself isn't all that significant; it's the systematic training methods he possesses that are truly valuable."

...

Back in the castle,

The Earl had already finished interrogating the three Grand Magicians.

Lars·Truth, Cyrille·Truth, and Dulac·Truth were the names of these three Grand Magicians. Although they were all magicians from the Eagle Kingdom, they came from different regions and had come together at the same stall during a magician's gathering six months earlier.

A regular magician there had offered a decaying, incomplete ruins map for sale.

Lars explained with an expressionless face, "It was a Map of Moon Language. After our assessment, we realized it was a map left by the Moon Empire, leading to a lost civilization. All three of us were interested in this map, and none of us wanted to give it up, so we finally decided to study it together..."

Cyrille added, "The map was incomplete, and that magician told us it was excavated from the ruins of an ancient Mage Tower, so we spent all our savings to excavate the Mage Tower ruins..."

From the Mage Tower ruins, they did not find the missing parts of the incomplete map.

However, based on the clues left in the ruins of the Mage Tower, they successfully completed the incomplete map and hand-drew a not-so-accurate map, which pointed to the Roaring River Mouth.

"Based on our research, during the era of the Moon Empire, most of the area around the Roaring River Mouth was actually the sea, and the lost civilization that the map guides to was a strange race living in the sea. The Moon Empire engaged in trade with this peculiar race, and so we came here, hoping to find that race."

"A race from the sea?"

Liszt's eyebrows rose slightly, and a flicker of realization shot through his mind, "Could it be that they're referring to the Sea Monster Tribe?"

Chapter 610 Splendid Night Journey

Liszt pressed his thoughts and asked, "Have you found the lost civilization in the map?"

Lars·Truth expressed his regret, "We can roughly determine that the lost civilization should be somewhere near the Roaring River Mouth, but it's really difficult to locate it."

Dulac·Truth followed with a sigh, "The Moon Empire was a great civilization from thousands of years ago, and even it has disappeared. The lost civilization must have been destroyed in the ocean long ago. Over the years, other than Sapphire's people, there hasn't been much activity at sea. The difficulty of finding it in the vast ocean is indeed very great."

Without money, progress was hard to come by, so they thought of approaching the coastal nobles for investment into their research and excavation work.

Clear Water Sword Saint Yevich·Shuisheng, agreed to fund them.

"Who would have known that Sapphire would issue a Pioneer Mandate? If we had known, we wouldn't have rushed over so hastily."

"But you still came."

"Yes, our desire for knowledge drove us to come here at an inopportune time, and we received a treatment we shouldn't have," Cyrille·Truth complained.

He harbored a grudge for becoming a prisoner at the feet of his captors.

Liszt did not care about the attitudes of the three Grand Magicians; he put away the hand-drawn map of the ruins as well as the map research notes they carried with them.

At his leisure, he said, "I have taken receipt of the ruins map. Now, let's talk about the ransom for the three of you."

"We apologize, my lord, but the only possessions we have are the map in your hands. We not only have no spare money but also owe a considerable sum to several magicians. I'm afraid you won't be able to get the ransom you're hoping for from us. We should not have been involved in a knight's war."

As Charles spoke, the other two Grand Magicians nodded, indicating agreement.

"Hmm, can't afford the ransom?" he mused. "Normally, as magicians, if you had not taken part in the knights' war, I would not have made things difficult for you. But since you have exercised magic and joined in this war of the Pioneer Mandate, rules are rules, and you can't escape just because you are not knights."

"But we truly can't pay the ransom."

"Ransom doesn't only come in the form of gold coins," Liszt said indifferently. From the moment he learned that these three were penniless, he had thought about how to deal with them. "There can be other forms, such as knowledge, which in my eyes is wealth. You can exchange your knowledge for freedom; if knowledge is insufficient, working for me is another way to gain freedom."

"Could you specify what kind of knowledge can buy our freedom?"

"All the knowledge in your heads, such as the development of Eagle Kingdom's magicians, the casting plans you hold, and the magical experiments you research all year round... However, knowledge is not highly valued, so your best choice is to work for me."

"Does your lordship wish to take us into his patronage?"

"Not patronage, but rather to work for me without compensation. You should be well aware, knights who cannot pay ransom are thrown into mines for mining, or into workshops for menial labor... What I need is for you to manufacture magic equipment, refine magic potions, and teach magic apprentices."

Without waiting for the three Grand Magicians to respond, he added, "Let's put the specific ransom plan aside for now. We'll discuss it in detail after the Pioneer Mandate is over. You will need to spend a few days confined on the ship... Think carefully about what knowledge you can provide. The more knowledge, the shorter your subsequent work years will be."

Having said this,

Liszt no longer paid attention to the three men and had his subordinate knights take them away—naturally, the ship was equipped with tools to bind magicians.

He wanted these Grand Magicians to cool down a bit, to grind away their arrogance and understand how precious freedom was. After all, in his eyes, magicians were all psychologically unsound perverts who needed effort and time to be reformed. Otherwise, employing them would sooner or later lead to rebellion incidents such as dragon slaying.

The matter with the magicians was settled.

There were no current plans to explore the Ruins Map; the Pioneer Mandate was the only task at hand.

"Father, the knights we dispatched should have already uprooted all the noble castles under the jurisdiction of Ice Pear City. We will be able to complete the purge by tomorrow. Based on my guess, Yevich has probably fled to Steel Dyke City, and we should strike first, capturing several castles outright before Marquis Nuta can react!"

He could hardly wait to capture or kill Yevich.

However, the Earl hesitated, "The Knight Order of Marquis Nuta holds the choke points across the Impact Plains. If we act too rashly, we may easily become his target. Should we perhaps slow down and let other nobles take the lead as a cover for us?"

The Coral Island Knights only had a little over a thousand knights and were finding it difficult to contend with the Marquis's power.

"Speed is of the essence in warfare. Only by continually plundering can we achieve enough military exploits to gain the upper hand for you, Father, in your promotion to Marquis," Liszt urged expansively, "I have Blood Servants to scout the enemy forces, Blizzard Beasts to attack and capture strongholds, and my own formidable strength. Who could possibly stop us!"

"Just how powerful have you become?" The Earl inquired, seemingly offhand.

Liszt pondered before answering, "I may still fall short of the Marquis of Bull who went on a rampage back in the day, but the gap is not big anymore."

Only the Earl and Liszt were present in the room.

After a moment of silence, the Earl once again asked, "The Marquis of Bull stole the power of the Sapphire Dragon and transformed into the legendary Lich to gain his formidable strength. So, tell me, son, how have you become so powerful as well? Especially considering that only half a year ago, you were just an Earth Knight."

He had not planned to voice this question, but he could not hold it back. The shock of that morning's arrow shooting the Sword Saint into the air still hadn't settled down.

Faced with this question.

Liszt was momentarily silent. After all, acquiring a Fire Dragon and becoming a Quasi-Dragon Knight, he should have kept a low profile and worked on his development, that was the proper way.

However, thanks to the continuous manipulation of the Threads of Destiny in his Smoke Mission, his domain was thriving, his personal cultivation growing stronger each day, and he had acquired various treasures. In particular, Rainbow Whale Rose and Sea Sprite Ake allowed him to confidently retreat into the ocean to escape, avoiding desperate crises.

This bred a restless presence in his heart, feeling uncomfortable if he didn't show off for a day.

He was like a nouveau riche who wanted to flaunt his wealth every day by wearing watches, rings, and thick gold chains everywhere. The ancient overlord Xiang Yu once said, "Riches not returned to one's hometown is like traveling by night in brocade—no one knows of it"; this vividly described Liszt's mentality.

Dressed in fancy clothes, yet choosing to walk at night, who would notice the elegance of your attire!

Of course, Liszt could disguise himself as an average Sky Knight and methodically tend to his island farm until he was ready to soar into the sky. But that wasn't his style. Everyone's pursuit of life was different; he reveled in the shocked expressions of others.

After a long while.

Just when the Earl thought Liszt was not going to answer.

He slowly started speaking, with a hint of a smile, "My strength is far greater than what I have shown, and it is still increasing. Father, I have had my own extraordinary encounters, and I will openly tell you when the time is right... As for now, isn't seizing glory the most important thing?"