

The Mighty 651

Chapter 651 Coma

Liszt signaled the Rainbow Whale Rose to swim in front of the mermaid statue's chest, where he focused on a teardrop-shaped jewel roughly the size of a fist.

For him, this jewel was not small. On the contrary, a fist-sized jewel was definitely considered gigantic.

However, in relation to the mermaid statue, it was like a diamond chip worn on the chest, somewhat disproportionate to the statue's scale. Liszt didn't reach out to directly remove the jewel, which hung like a pendant on the statue's chest, but instead solemnly summoned the Smoke Mission.

"Complete the mission, reward with Mermaid's Tear."

Then came the new mission.

"Mission: The Fish Ugly Temple's mermaid statue, sculpted by an unknown artist, has been submerged in the river of history. It's more important to seize the present. Perhaps giving this Mermaid's Tear to the Sea Sprite Ake will have an unexpected effect on her. Reward: Necrofish Fish Ugly Guard."

"Mermaid's Tear, huh?"

Liszt dispersed the Smoke Mission and then gently removed the pendant, the cord threading through the Mermaid's Tear quickly decayed, leaving only the fist-sized, teardrop-shaped jewel.

Now it indeed looked like a tear.

He had originally planned to keep it for himself to study slowly, as it was a relic left by an ancient race and might possess powerful effects. But since the Smoke Mission provided a hint, it was clear that the Mermaid's Tear would be more suitable for Ake to use. After briefly examining it, he handed the jewel to Ake.

"Ake, I feel this jewel is rich with water-attribute magic power. Given its shape, why not call it the Mermaid's Tear? Here, it's for you. Maybe you can study it," he suggested.

"For me?" Ake was a bit surprised, then smiled happily, "Thank you, brother. Ake will take good care of it!"

"Not just to safeguard, but to use and study. It's filled with water-attribute magic power," he corrected.

"Alright," she acknowledged.

"You study it first. I'm going to dig out the lower half of these statues to see what kind of creatures they represent," Liszt said without further ado, taking out his bone spade and beginning to dig through the silt covering the Fish Ugly Temple.

...

While Liszt was busy excavating the mud,

Ake was already holding the Mermaid's Tear, sitting on a shell and studying it. She was in high spirits, not only because the Mermaid's Tear was beautiful and its azure color suited her temperament but because it was a gift from Liszt—she was always happy with anything given by him.

"Brother has a way with names, Mermaid's Tear... yeah, it does sound nice. It hung on the mermaid statue's chest and with such a design, it really resembles a mermaid's tear," she mused.

Channel magic.

Activate the Mermaid's Tear and prepare to experience the jewel's magic structure in order to learn how to use it. With magic within and serving as a pendant, the Mermaid's Tear must be a piece of magic equipment. Its placement on the statue, with a special temple built for it, clearly indicates it's not ordinary magic equipment.

Although Ake didn't have the Eye of Magic, she could feel the Mermaid's Tear brimming with flowing magic power, resonating harmoniously with her.

She closed her eyes, letting her senses guide the magic, roaming through the magic runes composed of magic power.

Soon, she perceived that the magic composition of the Mermaid's Tear was very regular, which revealed a profound and deep aura, especially since the magic runes seemed not to be artificially inscribed but naturally formed.

"No trace of man-made carving, strange. Could the Mermaid's Tear be a naturally formed piece of magic equipment... or, could it really be a mermaid's tear?" Ake suddenly wondered. It seemed unlikely, yet not impossible—given the mermaid statue's prominence.

With the Yu Chou of a Grand Magician level merely at the end of the temple's statues, followed by six-armed monsters and six-armed women, each looking nobler and stronger than the last.

From this, it could be deduced that the mermaid possessed tremendous strength.

The bodily metabolic products of a powerful creature naturally carried various incredible powers, like a dragon, whose every excretion was a precious treasure.

...

Suddenly.

She keenly perceived that the magic runes inside the Mermaid's Tear were converging in a strange pattern, and there was a noticeable node among them.

The term node was proposed by Liszt to represent the convergence point of magic power.

Initially, it served to explain the concept of the Magic Web. Later, Ake thought that nodes could be integrated into the design of magic arrays. A magic array is composed of many magic runes that form nodes, leading to a complete magic array. By identifying the accurate node, one could easily tear through the magic array.

It was also possible to reassemble a magic array by continuously adjusting nodes—her ability to create many original spells was due to the application of the node concept.

"So, what is this node for?"

Thinking this, she had already used her magic power to activate the node.

The next moment, the Mermaid's Tear erupted in dazzling light, within which twisted strands like a spider's web condensed and spread outward, passing through statues, through the Rainbow Whale Rose, through Liszt who was digging through the mud, and through the Fish Ugly Temple, even reaching beyond the vast sea.

Finally, it dissipated into the distant, unseen seawater.

As she held the Mermaid's Tear, Ake's eyelids trembled, and in less than half a breath's time, she fainted on a seashell.

As she fainted, the light of the Mermaid's Tear instantly extinguished, falling from her hand onto the seashell, and soon after, cracks appeared on the droplet-shaped surface.

On the other side, Liszt, who was digging in the mud, was startled by the sudden blue twisted strands that passed through his body. He thought someone was attacking him.

He quickly turned and dodged, just in time to see Ake faint, and the light of the Mermaid's Tear go out.

Crack!

In the blink of an eye, the Mermaid's Tear shattered, and then it became a pile of powder, drifting away with the current, vanishing from sight.

He could no longer care about how the Mermaid's Tear disappeared.

He swiftly rushed over, picked up the unconscious Ake, and called out loudly, "Ake, Ake!" Ake's importance far surpassed any other.

Ake did not respond, but her chest was still rising and falling.

Liszt restrained himself to calm down and quickly used the Eye of Magic to see that the magic power inside Ake was extremely unstable, in a boiling state. Moreover, some magic power suddenly disappeared while some appeared out of nowhere as if it were continuously exchanging with the free-floating magic power in the environment.

However, the free magic power in the environment could not possibly be so abundant as to maintain non-stop exchange.

"What on earth is going on, why did Ake faint out of nowhere, no, it's the Mermaid's Tear! The Mermaid's Tear stimulated and caused Ake to faint, the anomaly just now was caused by the Mermaid's Tear... the Smoke Mission hinted that I should give the Mermaid's Tear to Ake."

His face darkened as he felt some guilt, realizing he should have eliminated any risk before handing it over to Ake: "I hope this hasn't truly harmed Ake!"

If it weren't for his long-term use of the Smoke Mission, gradually realizing that it was more of a projection of his own will, he would have suspected that the hidden mastermind behind the Smoke Mission was preparing to target him—first by eliminating his important assistant Ake, then dealing with him.

It was like raising gu, where once the gu insects matured, they could be harvested.

"I hope nothing happens to Ake, otherwise..." He didn't finish his sentence because he really didn't know how he could threaten the mastermind behind the Smoke Mission.

But he didn't have to think about how to deal with any possible mastermind behind the Smoke Mission.

Ake slowly awoke, her eyes still confused, but she spoke, "Brother, Ake has touched... the Magic Web..."

After that, she fainted again.

Chapter 652 Touching the Magic Web

"Magic Web?"

Clutching Ach, Liszt's eyes lit up, his prior worries instantly dissipated, leaving only surprise, "Touching the Magic Web, has Ach reached the Magic Web under the stimulation of the Mermaid's Tear? Previously, Jonas Glaux mentioned that for a Grand Magician to advance to an Archmage, one must touch the Magic Web!"

It turned out that there was no hidden hand behind the Smoke Mission, just his own will projection.

Perhaps it was his subconscious hope that Ach could advance to an Archmage that led to the task of the Ruins Map and then obtaining the Mermaid's Tear.

Thinking of this.

He couldn't help but reflect with emotion, "I never expected Ach to advance to an Archmage before I succeeded in dragon riding. Strictly speaking, she is just an underage girl... It must be said, Ach's talent is truly powerful. Iris is a Sea Serpent who has also learned magic, but she only knows a few common spells."

Brushing the scattered azure blue hair from Ach's face behind her ear, Liszt continued to deploy the Eye of Magic to observe the magic power within Ach's body.

The phenomenon of exchanging magic power invisibly seemed as if a cloud had been lifted to reveal clarity—not exchanging with free-floating magic power, but connecting with that unknown Magic Web, continuously engaging in the exchange of magic power within it.

"Looking at it this way, the source of an Archmage's magic power is no longer derived from absorbing free-floating magic in the environment, but directly from the Magic Web. Does this mean that even on the battlefield, an Archmage can still rely on the Magic Web's power to unleash powerful spells?"

If this is truly the case, the status of magicians would instantly elevate to a terrifying extent.

And it is very likely true, as Archmages are reputed to be strong enough to duel dragons, a strength only second to that of Dragon Knights.

Any warrior profession without a dragon would probably be no match for an Archmage.

According to the cultivation system currently seen in the world by Liszt, knights have dominated everything, with the legacy of ancient warriors and ancient magicians in decline. Only magicians, though slightly weakened, have not declined too much and still form a mainstream cultivation system that is indispensable.

Knights have Dragon Knights, magicians have Archmages, both are peak professions that suppress the era.

"Ach is already stepping toward Archmage, touching the Magic Web just once almost means she has connected with it, and I am also about to succeed in dragon riding... I hope the Bewildering Dragon Mind Fruit will be effective, and manage to bewilder Little Fire Dragon Leo in one go!"

"Chirp."

The Rainbow Whale Rose was swimming around, providing Liszt with a spell—the Rainbow Breathing Membrane. Ach did not need this magical aid; even unconscious, she could naturally breathe underwater, a kind of instinct. Seeing that she had not awakened for a long time, Liszt first placed her in a shell.

While waiting for her to wake up, he proceeded to continue the work he had not finished before.

The Bone Spade easily dug through the soil.

The mermaid statue nearest to the main seat, the six-armed woman statue, finally revealed its lower body within Liszt's view—not a human body, but a large, twisted form, somewhat similar to the mermaid's tail and yet also reminiscent of a giant serpent's body.

He continued to excavate the next statue, that of a four-armed woman, and after uncovering its lower body, it was a similar combination of serpent and fishtail. The statues of two-armed women were the same.

Next, he moved on to a six-armed monster statue, whose lower body was also the same but featured fierce fish fins. There was no need to dig out the remaining statues; they all shared the same form. He went straight to excavate a statue of Yu Chou, whose lower body resembled a frog's upright posture.

Looking over these statues, Liszt contemplated for a moment.

Muttering to himself, "These statues somewhat resemble the Naga from games. Might as well call them Naga... Female upper body Nagas will be called Upper Naga, including two-armed, four-armed, six-armed ranks; monster upper body Nagas will be called Lower Naga, also classified as two-armed, four-armed, six-armed ranks."

Thus.

The race represented behind this Fish Ugly Temple became clear.

...

The rulers were Mermaids, the middle power consisted of the Upper Naga and the Lower Naga, and the lowest power was that of the Fish Ugly.

"It's just unclear whether Mermaids, Naga, and Fish Ugly should be considered the same species. Judging from their biological forms, they should have reproductive isolation. Perhaps this is a multi-racial mixed ocean civilization; the Mermaid race are the rulers, the Upper Naga race are the Nobles, the Lower Naga race are the civilians, and the Fish Ugly race are slaves?"

Unfortunately, besides these statues and that shattered Mermaid's Tear, there was nothing else in this Fish Ugly Temple, making it impossible to restore its history and the era in which it was built.

"This civilization will still have to rely on me to complete its entry in 'Dragons Fight in the Wild,'" Liszt shook his head.

The list of works he planned to write was already too long. 'Dragons Fight in the Wild' had been put on hold indefinitely. Perhaps when he became the Dragon Domain Landlord one day and his lifespan substantially increased, he might finish this historical epic in his boredom.

Time flowed by, second by second.

Liszt ate some dry food underwater.

When it had become dark outside the Fish Ugly Temple, indicating the arrival of night, he was about to lose his patience. He was ready to take Ach and the shell with him and leave the place. It was at this moment that Ach, who had been sound asleep, suddenly had her Magic Power calm down, and she herself slowly woke up.

"Brother."

"You're awake. How do you feel, is there anywhere that's uncomfortable?"

Ach's bleary expression quickly returned to normal, her blue eyes becoming even brighter and clearer: "Ach feels very good, brother, I couldn't feel better right now. Was I asleep all this while? It felt like I had a very long dream, where my thoughts became a beam of Light, frolicking in the sea of Magic Power."

Liszt asked anxiously, "Was that when you touched the Magic Web?"

Ach reflected carefully and nodded firmly: "Yes, it was the sensation of touching the Magic Web. Brother, Ach now understands why the Magicians of the Moon Empire era declined... With the help of the Magic Array from the Mermaid's Tear, Ach briefly touched the Magic Web and felt its vastness, but it's contracting, and only Archmages can reach it."

"Tell me more about it!"

"Mhm." Ach began to describe earnestly her experience with the Magic Web.

According to her feelings, the Magic Web was not just a net, indeed it was somewhat like the 'field' Liszt had described before, but it still possessed some of the properties of a 'net'.

This net or field enshrouded the whole world—at least the parts that Ach could sense—it covered every aspect and corner of the world.

"If the Magic Web hadn't contracted, then every Magician would be a node, able to cast Magic freely with the help of the Magic Web. But because of the contraction, ordinary Magicians have lost the ability of the nodes and can only draw on stray Magic Power; whereas Archmages can still cast Magic with the help of the Magic Web.

"No wonder!" Liszt realized.

A Magician aided by the Magic Web obviously wouldn't fear a Knight's charge, but with the Magic Web contracting, ordinary Magicians immediately became useless, and a Knight's charge would create what is called a Magic-free zone."

Ach continued: "In Ach's feelings just now, brother, you were like a mini Magic Web, possessing your own field and net, which is why Knights' cultivation and combat are not bound by the Magic Web. On the contrary, when a large number of Knights gather, their own Magic Webs resonate with each other, thereby expanding the influence of the Magic Web."

"So, is the Magic Web still contracting?"

"Yes."

"Does that mean that Archmages will eventually lose the assistance of the Magic Web?"

"Ach doesn't know, but given the current rate of contraction of the Magic Web, it will probably abandon the Archmages after several thousand or tens of thousands of years."

As Ach kept explaining, Liszt gradually developed an intuitive understanding—perhaps the contraction of the Magic Web was like the arrival of an era of declining Magic.

Chapter 653 Yu Chou's Protection

Regarding the information about the Magic Web, Liszt needed to digest it thoroughly, hoping to draw some parallels for his own knight cultivation—after all, Ach had said that in his sensing, he was like an independent small Magic Web, which probably had some noteworthy differences and similarities with the true Magic Web.

However, what he was most concerned about at the moment was Ach, "Ach, can you still reach the Magic Web?"

"The reason Ach was able to touch the Magic Web just now was with the help of the Magic Array activated by the Mermaid's Tear. I can't enter the Magic Web at the moment. But Ach has remembered the 'entrance' information for the Magic Web, with some preparation, I should be able to reach the Magic Web freely quite soon."

"So, you're going to advance to Archmage soon?"

"Yes!" Ach couldn't hold back his smile and laughed softly, "Brother is a Dragon Knight, and Ach is an Archmage too!"

Liszt, full of vigor, took Ach's hand, "Haha, that's right!"

A Dragon Knight paired with an Archmage, such a swollen strength had nothing to fear, whether it was the Sapphire Duke trying to snatch his "Ghost Swordsman Inheritance" or the dragon-slaying battle that Alonso Xiankelai might initiate, none of it was a big deal to him anymore.

Perhaps Leo was too young, and he was only a newly born Dragon Knight, unable to guarantee that his combat power would be able to resist experienced Dragon Knights. With Ach's assistance, under the Magic Baptism, Dragon Knights would have to carefully weigh whether they would be blasted away—Dragon Dou Qi indeed could destroy magic, but the caliber of Magic Web spellcasting would be different.

"Ach, you need to continue to work hard, advance to Archmage as soon as possible, and I also need to strive to gain Leo's approval as quickly as possible, to become a true Dragon Knight!"

"Yes!"

"We'll rest above the Fish Ugly Temple tonight and see if we can take Isla to settle in Black Horse Island tomorrow... Right, Ach, I feel that although you and Iris are both Sea Serpents, there's no sense of kinship when you meet your own kind, why is that?" Liszt voiced his puzzlement.

"Ach is not sure either, although she is a Sea Serpent, Ach doesn't feel she is of the same kind." Ach thought carefully, "Perhaps it's like elves, who also don't feel each other as their own kind; Sea Serpents are the elves of the sea, perhaps they have the same cognitive thinking."

With this explanation, Liszt expressed his understanding.

Ach was conceived in a scallop shell, while Iris was from a conch shell, they truly were not of the same kind.

The two quickly left the Fish Ugly Temple, and at that moment, Liszt saw the trident planted at the entrance of the temple, and it suddenly occurred to him that the reward for the Smoke Mission was the "Necrofish Ugly Guard."

"Could it be this trident?" He gestured for Ach to wait, then pulled out the very large trident, which was as big as a pillar, with five prongs at the front.

It was about five meters in length.

It wasn't made of metal, but was crafted from some kind of special bones, ground and pieced together.

Under the observation of the Eye of Magic, there was a faint magic radiance glow inside it, a pale blue, which should be the aura of Water Attribute magic power.

Within that pale blue glow, there was also a light, green radiance, somewhat resembling the Magical Radiance of lichens like Curtis Truth.

"The Necrofish Ugly wouldn't be hiding inside this trident, would it?"

He wasn't in a hurry to study it; he first dragged the trident to the surface of the water, released the sampan, and then he could slowly examine the trident and the Necrofish Ugly later.

He also called up the Smoke Mission.

Sure enough, it was completed: "Complete the mission, reward: Necrofish Ugly Guard."

A new mission was quickly issued, and it invigorated him, "Mission: Now that Ach has the ability to advance to Archmage, you, as a Half-Step Dragon Knight, must also work hard. Little Fire Dragon Leo is the first dragon you own, no matter what means, first conquer it before discussing other things. Reward: Perfection of Dou Qi."

"To conquer Leo, it seems the Bewildering Dragon Mind Fruit is to be used as a mesmerizing drug!" Liszt suppressed the excitement in his heart, not letting himself get carried away any further.

Everything else would wait until after conquering Leo.

At that time, he would not only be a Dragon Knight, but also a Completion Level Sky Knight.

Ach sat in the shell, lost in thought. Touching the Magic Web had brought her a huge shock, and she needed time to digest the experience and rediscover the way to touch the Magic Web again, so that she could truly advance to Archmage.

Liszt indulged in a sumptuous meal and began to study the harpoon.

This harpoon was definitely a weapon similar to Magic Equipment, and the Necrofish Ugly named Guardian seemed to be controllable.

Usually, he would delegate such research tasks to Ach or Chris.

However, since Ach was deep in thought, Liszt didn't disturb her and decided to investigate it himself. He moved a bit further away so as not to disturb Ach.

He then infused the weapon with Dou Qi, attempting to activate the harpoon.

Unfortunately, the Fire Attribute Dou Qi he possessed was clearly repelling the harpoon's attributes. The infusion not only failed to activate the harpoon but also caused a tumult of magic power within it, almost leading to a conflict that could have destroyed the weapon.

"Forget it, I'll study it slowly later."

He carefully shifted things around in his Gemstone Space and finally cleared out a five-meter-long space, then wrapped the harpoon with Dou Qi and stored it in the Gemstone Space.

The night passed just like that.

The next morning, the two of them continued on their way, returning to the place where they encountered Iris.

Unfortunately, Iris was no longer there, and Ach couldn't sense Iris's location anymore: "Brother, Iris has already left this reef."

"Is that so." Liszt felt it was a pity. Although Iris was old, she should have no problem living another few decades and could still be valuable.

However, since Iris had already left, it meant that she had no intention of interacting with human life again.

So Liszt didn't insist: "Since she doesn't want to come back with us, let's go then, we don't need to worry about her."

...

Two evenings later.

Liszt and Ach returned to Fresh Flower Town.

However, to their surprise, the Earl had not yet come back. Calculating the time, his trip to excavate the Fish Ugly Temple had taken roughly a week. Considering the voyage from Roaring River Mouth to Coral Island required ten days, if the Earl and his party had not set out ahead of time, of course, they wouldn't have been able to return so quickly.

Nothing significant had happened in the territory, with two main points of interest.

Firstly, Marcus had organized the records of the knights' achievements from their involvement with the Pioneer Mandate, and once the Grand Duke had settled the achievements for the iron ore, the achievements could be distributed according to the proportion agreed upon.

Secondly, after a territory-wide crop inspection, two unusual plants were found. One was an extremely vigorous and large peanut sprout located in the peanut plantation that had been developed in Black Horse Island New Port Town; the other was a noticeably taller and thicker sprout of oats, belonging to the few remaining oat fields in Fresh Flower Town.

Since the territory had no Oat Bugs, and with the presence of the Wheat Sprite and two Little Wheat Bugs, the territory officers had already decided not to plant oats anymore. This was the last batch.

To their surprise, this very batch had given birth to an Oat Bug—Liszt personally visited to inspect and confirm the existence of the Oat Bug.

He instructed the Administrative Officer of Fresh Flower Town, Isaiah, to protect the Cordyceps well. The next day he did not go to Black Horse Island to check whether a peanut bug had been born.

Instead, he and Ach set off directly for Dodo Island. Right now, nothing was more important than Dragon Riding.

Chapter 654 Cutting Off Evil Thoughts

On Dodo Island.

The fruit of the Human Skull Tree was abundant on the branches, unpicked by anyone. Few birds came to peck at them, and many Human Skull Fruits simply rotted on the tree.

Whenever Liszt visited, he would harvest some to take back, mainly to extract the seeds for planting in the Human Skull Tree plantation. However, he couldn't be bothered to spend too much time picking Human Skull Fruits; his time was precious, and it wasn't necessary to toil for a few seeds.

"Ach, wait here for me, I'm going to feed Little Fire Dragon Leo."

"Mm," Ach nodded simply, seeming somewhat preoccupied, still immersed in the extraordinary experience of touching the Magic Web.

Liszt went straight to the volcano crater; after a shout, the starving Leo instantly rushed out.

Liszt and Ach had gone to excavate ruins some time ago, so Leo had to go hungry on the island. Now, having turned into flesh and blood, Leo landed in front of Liszt and conveyed his discontent with a loud roar, "Oh hou!" His eyes were also fiercely aggressive.

As if Liszt was nothing more than his poop-scooper.

Seeing this, Liszt just smiled, not bothering to squabble with him further—it was nothing more than an ungrateful wolf: "Want some beef?"

Leo urged, "Oh hou!"

Liszt slowly pulled out the well-roasted steaks and handed them to Leo to gobble up. When Leo was halfway through, he started to offer steaks laced with Bewildering Dragon Mind Fruit, bringing them to Leo's mouth—knowing dragons were highly intelligent, Liszt was afraid it would become suspicious of the Mind Fruit, so he disguised it.

The excited Leo was utterly unaware of the sinister intentions of the human in front of him, roughly chewing the steak a couple of times before swallowing it down his throat.

After eating his fill, it was time for Leo to reciprocate and aid Liszt with his training.

Just as Leo was about to stand up and spout Dragon Breath, his head suddenly felt heavy, and he staggered, almost falling over. Seeing this, Liszt's eyes lit up, but he made no move, instead continuing to observe—Leo's staggering was just the beginning; soon, he stabilized his body, but his eyelids grew heavier with each moment.

As if he were falling asleep.

At this point, Liszt finally started to act. He quietly reached Leo's back; Leo had no reaction, not even lifting his eyelids.

As he gradually climbed towards the position of the Dragon Tooth Platform, Leo seemed to sense something, his body weakly struggling. But the struggle was too slight; he couldn't even turn his head around. He could only let Liszt help him to the Dragon Tooth Platform, guiding him by his scales.

This was between the shoulder blades and the front limbs, the intersection of the neck and the torso.

There was a basin-sized flat area, with a protruding bone in front, and vortices on both sides of the bone. Such a structure allowed one to ride comfortably.

Looking at the Dragon Tooth Platform before him, Liszt tried to contain his excitement, stepping on the vortices with his feet, and then sitting down on the Dragon Tooth Platform with his pounding heart. The next second, he felt invigorated, and the Dou Qi inside him irresistibly connected with the Magic Power underneath him from Leo.

Boom!

In an instant, the world changed, becoming still as if only he and the dragon existed. This feeling was so strange and indescribable. Then he felt himself floating... more accurately, his soul was floating, as if undergoing an out-of-body experience.

Without any sense of anxiety, only curiosity about the wondrous sensation.

As he flew, the scenery before him suddenly changed into another sight, a doomsday scene of a volcanic eruption. There he stood on the cliff over the volcano crater, opposite to a

giant Fire Dragon bound by Rainbow Chains, its body flickering with flames, staring at him ferociously.

"Leo?"

Liszt was puzzled. The form resembled Little Fire Dragon Leo, but it was more than ten times larger in size, with a dreadfulness surpassing the graceful power of a dragon.

The Fire Dragon gave no response, instead gazing fixedly at Liszt, puffing flames from its nostrils.

It wanted to move, but was pulled back by the Rainbow Chains, rendering it immobile.

Taking advantage of this interlude,

Liszt looked down at himself, dressed in the leather armor he had worn today, without weapons or any other equipment, including the Gemstone Space on his chest: "Am I in a soul state?"

He looked at the Fire Dragon chained in front of him and then at the wisps of smoke swirling around his own body.

It seemed he understood the situation.

"Me... Leo... Is this an illusion that happened after mounting the Dragon Tooth Platform, or a spiritual connection?" Looking again at the colorful chains on the dragon and the smoky wisps on his own body resembling a Smoke Mission, "It should not be an illusion but some kind of psychic communication."

After a pause,

he raised his head, without fear responding to the menacing gaze of the Fire Dragon: "This should be the initial 'contract' contest of the Dragon Tooth Platform? The power of the Bewildering Dragon Mind Fruit should turn into Rainbow Chains that bind Leo's mind, that is, the Evil Fire Dragon in front of me."

And he himself was similarly a projection of the soul.

Only the smoke entwined around him seemed to be from another Smoke Dragon of the Holy Dragon Order. He waved his hand and naturally drew a wisp of smoke into his palm, "Is this what they call the Power of Destiny, that today I'll be able to ride a dragon by crushing Leo's spirit?"

Whoosh!

As if responding to Liszt's thoughts.

Before him, the Leo bound with rainbow chains let out a deep roar.

Liszt smiled lightly, "The power of the Bewildering Dragon Mind Fruit is truly formidable. If it were a normal battle of spirits, I'm afraid I wouldn't be a match for the Evil Dragon. But now, it appears that crushing Leo's spirit is as easy as pie... why not use this chance to test the power of destiny?"

His fingers trembled slightly.

The smoke wrapped around his body instantly gathered into his palm and, after a series of changes, solidified into a deep blue sword, his trusty Ice Soul Dragon-Slaying Sword.

"Not right, not right, I need a Fire Attribute sword!"

His mind shifted at will.

The Ice Soul Dragon-Slaying Sword instantly transformed into the fiery red of flame, with strands of Fire Attribute Mana dissipating and circulating outward.

Holding the hilt with satisfaction.

Liszt stepped toward the restrained Evil Fire Dragon, "Leo, I know you're Leo, an Elemental Dragon with evil thoughts in your heart. That's not good, not at all! I am a

Knight filled with righteousness. As my mount, you must also uphold justice. Today, I shall cut away the evil thoughts from your heart!"

Having said this.

Clang!

The red Ice Soul Dragon-Slaying Sword swung, and a powerful burst of Flame Dou Qi erupted in an instant, striking the head of the Evil Fire Dragon.

"Roar!"

The Fire Dragon screamed in pain, its head now split with a flaming wound.

It opened its huge maw to unleash Dragon Breath, but the glowing rainbow chains suppressed the breath before it could form.

Meanwhile, Liszt had launched a vicious attack, with strands of Flame Dou Qi relentlessly striking the head and body of the Evil Fire Dragon. Wounds split open, sending sparks flying everywhere and falling into the bottomless abyss of the Volcano Crater—both Liszt and the Evil Fire Dragon were standing on a cliff-like platform.

One sword strike.

Another.

And another.

The body of the Evil Fire Dragon gradually fell apart, yet Liszt did not let up the frenzied assault. Not until the Ice Soul Dragon-Slaying Sword, formed by the Power of Destiny, shattered and returned to the ethereal smoke wrapping around Liszt's body. Only then did the Evil Fire Dragon completely collapse.

Boom!

The Volcano Crater shook as if it would erupt at any moment. The cliff disintegrated, flames shooting in all directions. After an indeterminate amount of time, on the brink of eruption, from the crumbling platform and the ruins of the Evil Fire Dragon's body, a newborn Little Fire Dragon slowly congealed.

Upon seeing Liszt, the Little Fire Dragon excitedly pounced towards him, landing at his feet and letting out joyous cries, "Oh hoo, oh hoo, oh hoo!"

And nudged its head against Liszt, signalling him to mount it.

Liszt obligingly mounted the Little Fire Dragon, which spread its wings and soared out of the Volcano Crater. At the same time, the crater collapsed completely, followed by an enormous column of magma bursting forth, accompanied by billowing black smoke shooting up into the sky.

"Oh hoo!"

The Little Fire Dragon cried out loudly.

Liszt turned his head to look at the apocalyptic scene behind him and couldn't help but burst into loud laughter, "Hahaha!"

In the next moment, the view before him twisted like water, and he suddenly realized he had returned from the ephemeral world of the spirit to the real world. He was still astride Leo on the Dragon Tooth Platform, and Leo was, unexpectedly, lying on the ground sound asleep.

Sitting on Leo's body, Liszt felt a sense of destiny melding together, as if the Leo before him shared the same blood as him, resonating with the same frequency of thoughts.

"Is this what it means to be a Dragon Knight?"

Chapter 655 Dragon Knight

Leo lay on the ground, fast asleep.

Liszt couldn't bring himself to move his buttocks away from the Dragon Tooth Platform. With the connection from the platform, the sense of destiny fusion, blood flowing, and thought synchronization was just too amazing.

This was what it meant to be a Dragon Knight.

It wasn't just a person riding a dragon, but a person and a dragon sharing the same breath and destiny.

It was as if he had opened his entire heart to Leo, and Leo had entrusted everything to him without reservations or suspicions, only the harmonious unity of spirits. They were said to be one man and one dragon, but in truth, they were merged into one entity, with Dragon Dou Qi as the cement and their souls as the steel reinforcement.

A bridge flying across from south to north, what was once an impassable gulf now became a thoroughfare.

The great divide between man and dragon completely dissipated in the state of dragon riding.

"Dragon Knight!"

"My life's greatest goal, finally achieved today!"

Suddenly, he remembered "All Men Are Brothers" he had once read, and the verse Lu Zhishen recited at the moment of his enlightenment came to him, and he couldn't help but chant, "All my life I did not pile up good deeds, only delighting in killing and arson. Suddenly the golden ropes are untied, here the jade locks are snapped. Ah! The tide signal comes from the Qiantang River, only today do I realize that I am truly myself."

Of course.

He hadn't come to an instant enlightenment and returned to the Pure Land like Lu Zhishen.

It was just a spontaneous exclamation, for only today, riding the dragon, did he realize the sheer exhilaration of dragon riding. It was just too bad that Leo, because of the effects of

the Bewildering Dragon Mind Fruit, had fainted, and he couldn't immediately take him to soar through the skies. He could only savor the thrill of dragon riding on his own. However, just at this moment, the Dou Qi in his body suddenly surged.

His mind stirred.

He quickly left Leo's Dragon Tooth Platform, flipping off it.

Immediately, a sense of emptiness swept over his entire body. The feeling of spiritual harmony when man and dragon were united faded away in an instant, but he could still feel Leo, a connection of heart and soul that couldn't be severed. Having ridden a dragon once, having connected once, nothing could ever be the same again.

Just like a phone connecting to Wi-Fi and remembering the password, unless the password is changed, it would reconnect whenever near.

Unless Liszt brutally mistreated Leo, the dragon wouldn't change the password, and he certainly wouldn't casually discard Leo, a Fire Dragon with boundless potential.

Once a Dragon Rider, always a Dragon Rider!

He shook his head.

Suppressing the urge to ride again, Liszt then checked the sudden surge of Dou Qi in his body: "It seems that due to the earlier Mind Battle, my Dou Qi has reacted... Is this likely the Complete Advanced Level Dou Qi rewarded from the Smoke Mission?"

He focused his mind and called out, and the Smoke Mission promptly manifested.

"Mission complete, reward Complete Advanced Level Dou Qi."

Indeed, it had been completed, the reward almost received at the same time as the dragon riding, or one could say that Complete Advanced Level Dou Qi was a prerequisite for dragon riding. Under the influence of the Smoke Mission, with the aid of the Bewildering Dragon Mind Fruit, he managed to rid Little Fire Dragon Leo of evil thoughts and successfully ride the dragon while his Dou Qi reached completion.

Just as he was about to look at the new mission, his body's Dou Qi surged once more, shifting his attention, and the smoke quickly dissipated.

He had no choice but to concentrate fully on the changes in his body. The Dou Qi continued to surge, stimulating and enhancing his body's strength, soon making him feel hungry and exhausted. Fortunately, on his return this time, Liszt had prepared plenty of Magic Potions. He grabbed a handful and started crunching them down immediately.

Once the Magic Potion was consumed, it quickly transformed into surging magic power replenishing his dried-up cells and then refined into Dou Qi to continue improving his body.

After that, he began to devour the meat of the Magical Beast in large gulps, adding nutrients to his body.

So it was.

Having consumed a total of fifty Magic Potions and, in combination, five Dragon Kui Auxiliary Medicines, as well as the equivalent in volume to an entire cow's worth of Magical Beast Meat, his body finally met its nutritional demands. His Dou Qi completely returned to a state of calm, but the explosive power hidden within his body seemed as if all his pathways had been thoroughly opened up.

With the Ice Soul Dragon-Slaying Sword drawn, he proceeded to practice the moves from "Rising Sun Blaze", alternating between basic and charged techniques to feel the current state of his body.

When he channelled his Dou Qi and executed his Combat Skills, no longer was there the slightest hint of stagnation.

Every detail of his body was under his complete control.

Sheathing his sword, he stood and gazed at his slender fingers, a fusion of beauty and power, and couldn't help but feel triumphant, "Is this what it truly means to be a Completion Level Sky Knight?"

Perhaps in terms of overall Dou Qi volume and explosive strength, a Completion Level Sky Knight isn't much stronger than a Sky Knight of the Sword Saint Level.

But the control over bodily detail far surpasses the Sword Saint.

One might say that if a Sword Saint can utilize eighty percent of their body's strength, a Completion Level could exert a hundred and twenty percent.

"Next, I must find a way to obtain the Dou Qi Domain Manual to fully complete the knight's cultivation system... After all, the conditions for Dragon Riding as a Dragon Knight are exceedingly strict. I was able to forcefully succeed in Dragon Riding with the help of the Bewildering Dragon Mind Fruit, but my descendants might not be so lucky."

The Duchy of Sapphire didn't have the Dou Qi Domain Manual.

He would have to seize it from one of the Continental Kingdoms, and Liszt particularly had his eye on Marquis Nuta. He had barely managed to rout him in their last encounter without managing to capture him. The next time a Pioneer Mandate was issued, it would be the perfect occasion to capture Marquis Nuta in one fell swoop and then force him to hand over the Dou Qi Domain Manual.

Leo was still in a deep slumber.

Liszt sat cross-legged beside him, once again concentrating to summon the Smoke Mission.

"Mission: Clearly you have successfully ridden a dragon and become a true Dragon Knight, and the vast world is yours to roam. However, it can't be denied that Leo is still young and the next steps in your training remain unclear. Please curb your flaunting demeanor and humbly seek out the next method of cultivation. Reward: An Archmage."

"Hmm?"

He was doubly surprised; he hadn't expected that right after he became a Dragon Knight, Ach would also be on the verge of becoming an Archmage. He had thought that Ach would need at least a year or a half to muster the attempt to advance to the Archmage level

—especially since his previous touch with the Magic Web was assisted by the power of a Mermaid's Tear.

However.

After reading the mission details again, he tempered his excitement, "What does it mean to humbly seek out the next method of cultivation? Does the mission consider itself completed only after I find it? If I can't find the next method of cultivation in a year or a half, wouldn't Ach be unable to advance to Archmage for a long time?"

Regardless, he would wait for Leo to wake up and then try to seek out the method of cultivation—with the dragon already ridden, he felt no fear that he wouldn't be able to find a cultivation method.

He rose to his feet, walked down the mountain, and made his way to the seashore.

He discovered that no matter the distance between them, there was a powerful connection between his heart and Leo's. Although it wasn't as intense as the unity of mind and dragon while riding, it was still much stronger than the bond he had with an Elf. With just a thought, he could feel the beautiful dreams Leo had even while deep in slumber.

In its dreams, the Little Fire Dragon envisioned itself as a mighty Fire Dragon, seizing riches of a city and bringing them back to its lair at the volcano's crater—still harboring evil thoughts.

"It seems I need to frequently cut at its heart to prevent bad thoughts from taking root. After all, I am a knight filled with a sense of justice, and my mount cannot be an Evil Dragon. Filled with love and peace, protecting justice and fairness, that is the true virtue of a knight!"

Feeling euphoric, the scenery at dusk was extraordinarily beautiful.

His steps were light and airy as though he didn't even need to expel Dou Qi to float up into the sky.

Chapter 656 The Fruit's Owner

"Brother, have you and Leo finished your training so soon?" Ach, deep in thought, noticed Liszt had returned earlier than expected and asked curiously.

Liszt replied with a restrained smile, "I didn't train, but I have successfully ridden a dragon and become a true Dragon Knight!" He had planned to express his excitement with loud laughter, but he held it back and shared the news with an air of nonchalance.

"Ah!"

Ach exclaimed with surprise all over his face, "Brother has succeeded in dragon riding, that's wonderful, Brother is a true Dragon Knight, at the top of the world!"

"Keep it down, keep it down. Leo is still young, and the training of a Dragon Knight requires exploration. We must continue to keep a low profile for now," Liszt gestured with his hands.

Then he asked earnestly, "Ach, now that I have succeeded in riding a dragon and become a true Dragon Knight, it is time to separate from the Tulip Family. What do you think would be the best surname to take? Most dragon knight families take dragons as their surname, like the Sapphire Duke who uses Sapphire as his surname."

Ach tilted his head, pondering for a while, "How about calling it Flame?"

"Flame is too vulgar and does not match the dignity of a Dragon Knight."

"What about Blazing Flame?"

"Still doesn't feel prestigious enough, how about Flame Burning Sky, what do you think, Ach?" Liszt suggested his idea, but quickly dismissed it, "Although Flame Burning Sky is sufficiently prestigious, it doesn't quite fit the image as it's a verb."

In this world, the rule for naming surnames primarily involves nouns.

Sapphire, Tulip, Golden Wheat Sheaf, Immortal Arrival, Eagle Sword, Black Knight, and so on, are all nouns used as surnames or represent certain gemstones, plants, and objects.

Considering Liszt had already given his Blood Servant the surname "Dawnbreak," it wouldn't be strange to come up with "Flame Burning Sky." However, he decided to stick to traditional rules and choose a noun for his surname, which would be passed down in the Dragon Knight family.

"Magma? Volcano? Burning? Scorching?"

He tossed and turned over different options but failed to come up with something better, ultimately revisiting Ach's earlier suggestion of "Blazing Flame": "Let's tentatively settle on Blazing Flame for now; the news of the Dragon Knight must be kept under wraps anyway. We can decide on the official surname when we formally separate from the family."

Liszt Blazing Flame thus made the decision.

Afterward, he took out two servings of juice from the Gemstone Space, handed one to Ach, and sipped the other himself, "Ach, join me in a little celebration."

"Mhm."

"Cheers, to my success in dragon riding, and to Ach's advance to Archmage!"

After drinking the juice and briefly discussing his experience with dragon riding, he asked Ach to point out any oversights. It was pretty much certain that the Dragon Knight's dragon "contract" required a Mind Battle. Only by achieving harmony and unity in the Mind Battle, could the knight share breath and fate with the dragon.

The condition to trigger the Mind Battle with the dragon, apart from climbing onto the Dragon Tooth Platform, probably required Complete Advanced Level Dou Qi.

The rest of the details needed to be savored slowly.

So, putting aside their glasses, Ach continued to ponder the Magic Web, while Liszt sat on the rocks reflecting on the dragon riding venture: "Without the Bewildering Dragon Mind Fruit, I don't know how long it will take to resolve Leo's hostility, gain its recognition, mount the Dragon Tooth Platform, and engage in the Mind Battle."

The outcome of the Mind Battle was also an uncertainty.

"The difficulty of the Mind Battle is too high. I have two Bewildering Dragon Mind Fruits left, which means I have two more opportunities to ride dragons. Should I keep one for the Formless Dragon and one for the Smoke Dragon?" Liszt thought for a while; the Formless Dragon, although an acquired taste, held tremendous strategic value.

The value of the Space Gem far exceeded that of any other gemstone, it could be seen as both the Sacred Dragon and the Gemstone Dragon. And with his good relationship with Liszt, it could be considered as good as in his pocket.

"As for the Smoke Dragon... Whether it exists or not, I'm still not sure. Did it infect me with the Power of Destiny, or did its power cling to me after death in hopes of reviving through me? If it's the former, am I something like a Dragon Wraith similar to Paris?"

Not quite.

White Dragon Wraiths are in a state of specter, transforming only after the person's death; while Black Dragon Childe are constantly infected by Dragon Magic Power, their bodies at risk of being eroded at any time.

Though he possessed the Power of Destiny, he showed no sign of being eroded. He could still practice Dou Qi, he could still smoothly ride dragons: "Perhaps the Smoke Dragon wants to use my power to revive. Once it revives, having spent so much time together, I should be able to manage without the aid of Bewildering Dragon Mind Fruit."

Besides, the Bewildering Dragon Mind Fruit is drawn by the Power of Destiny, it wouldn't make sense for the Smoke Dragon to sabotage itself.

"Let's put aside the Smoke Dragon for now. Whether or not it's trying to revive is still uncertain... So, which dragon should receive this third Bewildering Dragon Mind Fruit? Right, I need to contract a dragon to obtain the identity of Dragon Domain LandLord, it should be a young dragon... If I could find the life-representing Immortal Dragon and directly contract it, wouldn't I have hope for eternal life?"

The Immortal Dragon certainly exists.

If the Formless Dragon and the Smoke Dragon exist, it's impossible that it does not. However, finding it would likely be extremely difficult. With the aid of the Power of Destiny, there might be a chance to locate it.

"Therefore, I will allocate this third Bewildering Dragon Mind Fruit to the Immortal Dragon. If I encounter other dragons along the way, I will attempt to ride them using my own strength -- it can't be that all dragons require the Bewildering Dragon Mind Fruit to be ridden, otherwise every kingdom would mass-cultivate Mind Fruit Trees and allow their offspring to ride dragons at will!"

He thought of the Fire Dragon with its Evil Dragon Attribute, proud, brutal, and wicked, which is why the Mind Battle required one to overcome the Evil Dragon.

If it were a Gemstone Dragon, a Metal Dragon, the nature of the Mind Battle would probably be quite different. Perhaps it would be merely an assessment and adjustment of each other's temperaments. The dragons would likely need to select their most suitable knights through the Mind Battle.

"Phew!"

Having allocated the use of the Bewildering Dragon Mind Fruit,

Liszt let out a long breath and dived into the sea for a refreshing swim, washing away the stench of sweat -- his body had gone through an intensification during the recent completion of Advanced Level Dou Qi, expelling a lot of waste. It left his body smelling foul, which was quite uncomfortable for his slight obsession with cleanliness.

"Cheerpi."

Rainbow Whale Rose swam over, ready to be ridden by Liszt.

But Liszt patted its back, indicating it should go play. He planned to dive underwater himself to see just how strong his body had become.

Complete Dou Qi, successful dragon riding.

Although his strength had made a leap, his physique clearly couldn't match that of a dragon's—perhaps one day he could switch between his flesh and Dragon's Intent just as dragons do. Only then would he be able to completely disregard physical strength and roam without constraints.

Practicing swordsmanship in water, quite a struggle.

He succeeded in testing the strength of his physique.

The enhancement was over double. An ordinary Sky Knight's ultimate move would probably only inflict mild damage, and not affect internal organs. Nonetheless, an attack from a Sword Saint would still deal a severe injury. His physique was about equivalent to ordinary steel, and a casual punch without using Dou Qi should be able to kill a Low-Level Magical Beast.

"Rose, take me diving. Let's see how deep I can go now!"

"Cheerpi!"

Chapter 657 Going for a Drive

Ros could dive to a depth of 1,500 meters. Liszt had previously tested his own diving limit to be 400 meters; any deeper was beyond his reach.

He still remembered the whales on Earth. Orcas had a diving limit of 260 meters, blue whales of 500 meters, sperm whales had a record of 2,035 meters, and the champion record was held by Cuvier's beaked whale at 2,992 meters. It had nothing to do with strength but was a matter of body structure, after all, the ocean's overlord, the orca, was limited to only 260 meters.

Similarly,

Ach was an elf of the sea; she had no problem diving into the deep seawater of 1,500 meters, and so could Ros. However, an ordinary great whale might dive two or three thousand meters deep but might not necessarily defeat Ros, who after all was a low-level Gemstone Dragon Seamonster.

At this moment, Ros was taking Liszt deeper and deeper. A bundle of rope used to determine water depth was continuously released, with its top floating on the surface. Keeping it vertical was how they measured their depth.

As the diving depth increased, so did the pressure his body felt.

The depth of 400 meters was comfortably reached.

He patted Ros's dorsal fin, "We can still go further, Ros. Keep going down!"

Ros obediently followed the command and continued to dive deeper. The depth increased bit by bit, and just as they were about to reach 550 meters, he finally couldn't hold his breath any longer and signaled to Ros to quickly stop. He needed to familiarize his body with this depth to determine his diving limit.

"550 meters, this is my new diving limit."

After diving, taking a bath, and having dinner,

Liszt returned to the volcano crater, continuing to wait for the awakening of Little Fire Dragon Leo. Leo, in his sleep, was still having delightful dreams, which seemed rather monotonous: it was about robbing, and then transporting the wealth to its volcano crater lair. Shiny gemstones and gold coins were its favorites.

Night fell, and the moonlight was clear.

Liszt leaned against Leo's thigh, and during a moment of boredom, it suddenly occurred to him that if he could experience Leo's delightful dreams, then Leo, if willing, should also be able to experience his dreams. In fact, if Leo wanted, it could even sense whatever Liszt was up to at night.

"No, absolutely not!"

Everyone needs privacy.

Liszt valued personal privacy, especially at night, "I must block this open heart-to-heart connection at such times... just like how I usually block the emotions shared amongst the elves." He had several dozen elves, and if each one of them opened up their perception, he would be overwhelmed by these emotions.

So, without much need for training, after some exploration, he could automatically block emotional connections.

Now, he was exploring how to block Leo's heart-to-heart connection—it must not affect their Dragon Riding endeavors while ensuring his own privacy remained separate.

The task was difficult, but not impossible to achieve; it just needed time.

...

He spent the first half of the night figuring out how to block the connection, and the latter half, he slept soundly.

The next morning, Liszt woke up routinely before the sun even rose, and upon waking up, he immediately noticed that Little Fire Dragon Leo was twisting its head, looking at him.

Sometime, Leo had already awoken.

Upon seeing Liszt wake up, it immediately let out a cheerful cry, "Oh-ho!"

The heart-to-heart connection flooded Liszt's mind with its emotions too—pure joy. Leo, after getting rid of its malicious thoughts, no longer resisted Liszt at all.

"Just a moment, Leo. Let me brush my teeth and wash my face first."

"Oh-ho."

After Liszt quickly freshened up, he immediately mounted the already waiting Leo, sitting his backside on the Dragon Tooth Platform, instantly feeling as if man and dragon merged

into one again. Their Magic Power connected and circulated through their bodies, their spirits synched at a harmonious frequency, sharing breath and fate.

He took a deep breath, waved his hand, and said aloud, "Let's go!"

"Oh!"

With a powerful kick against the cliff, Leo's body instantly leaped into the air, and his wing-like flaps steadied his flight into the sky. United in spirit, moving with intention without a need for verbal communication, Leo understood what Liszt wanted, and Liszt understood Leo's thoughts.

They were one.

The higher they flew, the higher they soared, surpassing the hundred meters where Sky Knights could reach. Looking down, they could see Ach, deep in thought by the seaside, shrinking to a mere speck.

A thought flashed through the mind, "Let's go down and say hello to Ach."

Leo was already coordinating a descent towards the base of the mountain, his flight speed incredibly fast yet the warmth radiating from him bore no hint of scalding heat. Even the Dragon Tooth Platform beneath Liszt's seat, which sparkled with sparks like the scales on other parts of the dragon, caused no harm to Liszt.

The Fire Dragon had absolute control over its Fire Attribute magic power. Unless it chose to, it would never let the magic inadvertently materialize into real flames.

Whoosh!

Their wings brushed past the forest of Human Skull Fruits, and the man-dragon duo blinked into presence by the seaside.

They landed next to the rock where Ach was sitting, and this impressive entrance sparkled admiration, surprise, and excitement in the little sea monster's beautiful eyes.

"Brother! Leo!"

"Oh!" The Little Fire Dragon greeted with a disdainful grunt.

Toward anyone other than Liszt, it still harbored a prideful and contemptuous attitude, for at its core it was nothing more than an Evil Dragon. If not for Liszt's spiritual guidance, it wouldn't have bothered to glance at Ach at all—it was at the pinnacle of power, not to be concerned with just any Tom, Dick, or Harry.

Liszt patted Leo's head, coaxing him to lie down.

Then he flipped off his back, saying to Ach, "Come on, I'll take you for a ride."

Ach paused, "Ah, but Ach can't leave her shell."

"Then we'll take the shell with us."

With that, Liszt picked up Ach's nearly three-meter-wide giant shell with ease; his current strength was immense, and with the Dragon Dou Qi activated, carrying a thousand catty weight was nothing to him.

"Oh!"

Leo opposed having the seashell placed on his back.

But objections were futile, so he could only turn his head skyward, looking resigned. Liszt used ropes to secure the seashell onto the scales on Leo's back, whose length had grown to over twenty meters, making his back wide enough not only for seating people but also for transporting goods.

The Sapphire Dragon had previously served as a mode of transportation.

After securing the shell, Liszt quickly took his place on the Dragon Tooth Platform and gestured for Ach to sit in his embrace—Ach's face flushed with a hint of shyness, but she happily settled into Liszt's arms.

This intimate gesture had become familiar to her, even though she had learned much and became shy after reading various books. She continued to grow and was no longer the naive Little Sea Monster who knew nothing before, yet she still couldn't resist Liszt's affectionate actions.

A beautiful girl in his arms.

The touch took one's breath away.

Liszt forcibly suppressed his racing heart and urged the slightly annoyed Leo to take off quickly towards the blue sky and white clouds, "Leo, ascend, I want to know how high you can fly!"

The wings flapped.

Answering him was Leo's majestic roar, "Oh!"

Chapter 658 Come Home with Me

The wind was howling, and the clouds were rolling as Leo pushed himself with all his might, soaring straight up to several thousand meters in the sky, reaching the clouds that were usually in sight but out of reach.

Feeling the strange sensation of clouds brushing against his face, Liszt was extremely excited, and Ach in his arms trembled with excitement—and perhaps a little bit of fright. As a sprite of the sea, she had never been so high in the sky before.

"Oh! Ho!"

Leo let out a roar.

He conveyed his thoughts to Liszt—he had climbed to the limit of his current flying capability. As powerful as he was, he was still just a young dragon and hadn't the ability to

roam the ten-thousand-meter-high skies like adult dragons—the rarity of dragons was also largely related to their ability to soar to great heights.

Above the high altitude were clouds, which made it easy to conceal one's figure.

"Since we've reached the limit, let's go back down!" Liszt was merely taking Dragon Riding for a breeze.

It was very cold in high altitude, and although he and Ach had strong physiques and greater resistance to heat and cold, there was no need to suffer like that. Besides, the surroundings were all mist and they couldn't see the scenery clearly; it would be more suitable to fly around Dodo Island and enjoy the beautiful view.

Immediately, Leo folded his wings and began to fall, plummeting like an object in free fall.

Compared to the time it took for flying, free fall was obviously faster. Within a few breaths, they could already see the Human Skull Trees on Dodo Island. Just before crashing to the ground, Leo unfolded his wings alarmingly, halting the plunging momentum of his massive body instantly.

Barely bending a few Human Skull Trees, he then flapped his wings and pulled up his tens of tons of weight, starting to fly smoothly around Dodo Island.

After two circles, they landed by the seaside.

Liszt set Ach down, the Little Sea Monster was so excited that her face was flushed red. She was probably the first Sea Serpent to fly thousands of meters high in the sky.

"How was it, thrilling?" Liszt asked.

"Mm-hmm!"

"Take a good rest to calm down, I'll go ahead with Leo to complete this training." He had only been Dragon Riding and had yet to do Dragon Breath Tempering and Dragon Magic

Refining Qi. Moreover, he still had to explore the next training method in order to complete the Smoke Mission without delaying Ach's advancement to Archmage.

Compared to the previous training sessions where Leo was reluctant, this time he was very cooperative.

And because of their spiritual bond, the rider and dragon were of one mind, allowing them to adjust the details of training at any moment, thus maximizing the efficiency of training as much as possible. It took half a day to complete the two types of training; the following afternoon, Liszt spent trying out new training methods.

However, deep into the night, he still hadn't figured out any new leads.

Seeing that the moon was about to set in the west, Liszt stroked Leo's big head: "I'm going back tomorrow, you continue to stay at the Volcano Crater and train well."

"Oh! Ho!"

"Hmm, you're saying you want to come back with me?"

"Oh! Ho!"

Through Leo's mental communication, Liszt discovered, to his surprise, that Leo didn't need to stay in the volcanic magma every day. Essentially, it was enough for him to absorb the Extreme Nature Magical Power condensed in the volcanic magma once a month to form his Dragon's Intent. The rest of the time was just to sleep in the magma.

Clearly, the former Leo had been deceiving Liszt, or rather, he didn't like staying with Liszt and other humans.

The now united-in-spirit Leo had begun to be fond of Liszt.

This was a good thing.

Liszt agreed quickly: "You can come back with me, but most of the time you need to stay in the form of Dragon's Intent and not easily reveal your corporeal form in front of people."

"Oh! Ho!" Leo nodded in agreement.

"So go and absorb the Dragon's Intent condensed by the volcano, and we'll set off together tomorrow morning!"

"Oh-ho!"

Liszt suddenly stretched out his large tongue and licked Liszt's face, leaving no saliva or, as one might say, dragon drool, only the warm fire attribute mana. Then, taking a sudden step back, he plunged down the cliff of the volcano crater, flapping his wings as he landed and diving headfirst into the churning magma.

...

The night passed.

Early the next morning, with Hemp Rope Vine seeds and a batch of Human Skull Fruits in tow, Liszt called out for Leo.

Leo directly transformed into the form of Dragon's Intent and crashed into Liszt's body, solidifying at his chest into the shape of a flame-patterned Fire Dragon.

They descended the mountain.

He called over the Rainbow Whale Rose, who was playing by the sea, and greeted Ach before heading back directly.

Ten hours later, in the afternoon, they arrived at Black Horse Port. Liszt sent Ach ahead with the previously contracted Laver Bugs to the seaside villa in Fresh Flower Town. Liszt himself prepared to inspect his domain—there was a peanut seedling that might be nurturing an Elf Bug that he had yet to check.

"My lord, you have finally returned!" Goltai came forward to greet him.

"Has anything happened to the estate?"

"The Earl has returned to Tulip Castle. Yesterday afternoon, he sent a messenger knight to invite you to Tulip Castle to join the family banquet," Goltai said.

"Is that so? Did the messenger knight say anything about the follow-up to the Pioneer Mandate?"

"He briefly mentioned that the iron ore from Trapped Dragon Mountain Iron Mine had been completely transported away—a total of 1.12 million tons. No Dragon Knights rushed back to vie for the iron mine. However, the First Prince still declared the Pioneer Mandate officially concluded after all the iron ore had left the Eagle Kingdom's coastline."

"Everything returned smoothly?" Liszt asked, astonished. The raid this time involved a staggering 1.12 million tons of iron ore, and yet no Dragon Knights had mobilized!

Years ago, when the Earl had raided just 200,000 tons of iron ore, Dragon Knights had pursued him.

The contrast was simply incredible.

"The messenger knight reported that all the Knights of the Sapphire Order returned safely, and the Coral Island Knights not only suffered no casualties but actually returned with eight hundred more Earth Knights than when they set out. It is confirmed that the Earl's advancement to Marquis is a done deal, as the Grand Duke himself announced it in Bull Hoof City on Iron Hoof Island," Goltai continued.

"The Grand Duke went to Bull Hoof City?"

"Yes, the Grand Duke personally presided over Bull Hoof City and summoned a merit meeting, pretty much confirming the Earl's battle achievements as sufficient for the promotion to Marquis. The Earl has even discussed with him which part of Iron Hoof Island he would choose as his fief."

"Which part did my father choose?"

"The messenger knight doesn't know, as the Earl seems not to have disclosed his choice publicly."

That was essentially all the messenger knight had reported. The specifics would have to await Liszt's personal visit to Tulip Castle.

Eager to learn the details, Liszt did not linger in the port town and immediately rode the Rainbow Whale Rose in haste to New Harbor Town.

Upon inspecting the peanut plantation, sure enough, the peanut seedling was nurturing an Elf Bug.

After instructing the Bug Guard Team to carefully watch over the Cordyceps, he continued without rest back to Fresh Flower Town, took a quick bath at the castle, changed his clothes, and rapidly rode the Landwalker bird Loki to Tulip Castle.

He arrived just as darkness fell.

His arrival quickly stirred Tulip Castle, with the Earl personally leading family members and numerous servants to welcome him at the entrance to Tulip Castle.

"Liszt, the Son of Glory of the Tulip Family, welcome home!"

Chapter 659 Bull Tail and Iron Hoof

The Tulip Family's "Son of Glory" was once just a polite exaggeration, but now it has become an indisputable fact. If even Liszt could not be called the "Son of Glory," then probably the Duchy of Sapphire has no such son.

The youngest Sky Knight, inheritor of the Ghost Swordsman.

Vanquishing Domain Knights, capturing a Sword Saint.

Seizing iron mines, reaping the largest harvest of iron ore since the issuing of the Pioneer Mandate, spanning a century.

Such dazzling exploits, akin to a trail of sparks followed by lightning, were extremely difficult to go unnoticed. Now that the Pioneer Mandate had ended, and the tales of war had essentially spread throughout the nation, every noble and commoner on any island likely began discussing Liszt.

Even in the Eagle Kingdom, Liszt's name probably gained some renown.

At least around the Roaring River Mouth, surely no noble was unaware of him.

Having such a mighty figure for a son, Earl William Lee had no choice but to personally greet him at the door, as a gesture of respect and importance towards Liszt.

And those relatives and servants who relied on the strength of the family, naturally had to show their respect as well.

Gone were the days when that insignificant child of the family, the timid second son sent away to the remote Fresh Flower Town, was forgotten. Now, Liszt shone brightly in everyone's eyes, an unrivaled genius and hero. He was the Tulip Family's most distinguished scion, without any dispute.

"Father, you honor me with your personal reception."

"This is the treatment you deserve. I'm proud of you, my son!" Earl William Lee reached out and patted the shoulder of Liszt, who now stood a head taller than him.

It always felt like all the glory of knighthood favored Liszt alone—the strength to overpower the elite, the handsome looks that bewitched myriad young women, and the luck to stumble upon an elf. Each aspect was enough to drive people to envy, let alone all three combined.

He turned and said to Lady Marie, "Give the order to the kitchens. We're preparing a feast tonight worthy of a celebration feast."

"Alright, you father and son have a good talk. I'll go and personally oversee the kitchen's preparations," Lady Marie said with a smile as she left.

The Earl then spoke to Lidun, "Inform grandmother and your sister that they are to join us for the banquet this evening."

Afterwards, he said to Loria, "Prepare a pot of tea and bring it to the study later; we'll have a chat there first."

"Yes, Father," Loria said, also leaving with a smile.

Only Earl William Lee, Levis, and Liszt—the father and sons—remained, making their way straight into the study. Concerning the major affairs of the Tulip Family, these three men needed to make decisions—for accuracy's sake, Earl William Lee and Liszt needed to consult with each other to settle matters properly, with Levis merely involved peripherally.

"Father, did the transport of the iron ore go smoothly?"

"So smoothly it was a bit surprising. Alonso Xiankelai didn't show up at all, but we didn't dare to linger around the Roaring River Mouth. The transport of the iron ore had just been completed when the First Prince announced the end of the Pioneer Mandate. We protected the spoils of iron ore, and at the same time, we tried to gather information about Alonso's movements from the Steel Ridge Kingdom."

The Trapped Dragon Mountain Iron Mine belonged to the Bronze Dragon Knight—Alonso Xiankelai. After receiving the message of the knights fleeing the mine, it was impossible for him to remain indifferent.

Even if he couldn't come himself, he should have sent someone to contend for the mine.

To make his presence felt, Levis hurriedly interjected, "Father and I have discussed it. We think it's possible that border conflicts detained Alonso, and since none of the Domain Knights beneath the Dragon Knight could beat you, he strategically gave up the Trapped Dragon Mountain Iron Mine."

Liszt nodded, "That's a possibility."

At the moment, this seemed the most logical. Hence, he didn't contemplate it further—having succeeded in dragon riding, he could calmly face any threat.

He was more concerned about the tallying of war merits: "Then, how will the Grand Duke define our war merits? How many tons of iron ore will be allocated to us? Where has he promised to grant you the Marchioness' fief? And what are his thoughts concerning me and the Grand Duke?"

"We made the main war merits in seizing the iron mines, but a significant share of the merits for transporting the iron ore was distributed to others. I estimate the Grand Duke will allocate us a hundred thousand tons of iron ore," the Earl said somewhat reluctantly. "Naturally, this portion of the iron ore will be your war spoils."

Liszt smiled and said nothing.

The military exploits belong to the Earl, and the spoils to him; it had been agreed upon long ago.

The Earl continued, "The Grand Duke stationed himself directly on Iron Hoof Island. Although everyone was squabbling at the war merit conference, the Grand Duke made it clear to me after the meeting that I could choose one of four titles: Marquis of Bull Horn, Marquis of Bull Tail, Marquis of Bull Hoof, and Marquis of Iron Hoof City."

"How come there's an additional Marquis of Iron Hoof City? Father, what is your choice?"

"Iron Hoof City is the second largest city after the Court's Blue Dragon City. Inserting a Marquis from the Blue Blood Alliance is just right for overseeing Iron Hoof Island... I chose the Marquis of Bull Tail. The Marquis of Bull Hoof needs to face the mainland directly, and the Marquis of Bull Horn has a complex mix of powers. The Marquis of Bull Tail is relatively calm in comparison."

Earl William Lee's thoughts leaned towards moderation.

Bull Hoof City is the starting point of Sapphire's attacks on the mainland and naturally has to bear the responsibility of suppressing the sea; Bull Horn City was once a bustling city not inferior to Iron Hoof City, with various underground forces from Sapphire jumbled

together in Bull Horn City; only Bull Tail City is less conspicuous, suitable for low-profile development.

The Tulip Family is just an Earl's family, with far less heritage than the Long Taro Family, and needs time to develop.

Choosing the Marquis of Bull Tail, to govern the large city of Bull Tail City, as well as two other large cities Bull Rump City and Bull Rib City, and the surrounding vast land, is enough for the family's development needs.

"That's a decent choice indeed," Liszt nodded in understanding.

With a complex look in his eyes, the Earl glanced at Liszt and said, "There's another reason I chose the Marquis of Bull Tail; the Grand Duke hopes I'd choose the Marquis of Bull Tail."

"Oh?"

"Because the Grand Duke told me, among the three Marquis titles of Iron Hoof Island, the Marquis of Bull Tail has the weakest development potential in his territory, but... he hopes to leave the position of Marquis of Iron Hoof City for you. That way, with the combined forces of our father and son, we would surpass both the Marquis of Bull Hoof and the Marquis of Bull Horn."

Liszt was noncommittal, "A balance of power, huh."

"But I would rather stay on Black Horse Island and in Fresh Flower Town, where I have been working hard to develop my base, and I don't want to follow the Grand Duke and become a Marquis in the Blue Blood Alliance."

Nobles of the Blue Blood Alliance, aside from seizing power, depended on living at the whims of the Grand Duke.

Liszt was unwilling to be even a Noble Landlord who followed the Grand Duke, let alone a hunting dog in the hands of the Grand Duke, even less impressed by the title of Marquis.

After all, he was a Dragon Knight aiming to establish his own kingdom.

"You still have plenty of time to think about it. All your military exploits this time were passed to me, but they are too substantial. I believe as long as you choose to follow the Grand Duke, I could still partition some of the military exploits to meet the requirements for you to advance to a Feudal Earl. If you join the Blue Blood Alliance, you might even directly become the Marquis of Iron Hoof City."

Deep down.

The Earl actually hoped that Liszt would choose the title of Marquis of Iron Hoof City, the largest city on Iron Hoof Island, with an attached territory not much smaller than the average Earl's domain.

With Liszt's strength, it was unlikely he would be used by the Grand Duke like other nobles of the Blue Blood Alliance.

Essentially equal to half a feudal lord, half a member of the Blue Blood nobility, joining hands with him, the soon-to-be Marquis of Bull Tail, they could leap to become the largest power on Iron Hoof Island.

At that time, the Tulip Family would become the truly great Nobles second only to the Sapphire Family.

However, to his disappointment, Liszt shook his head decisively, "It's impossible for me to directly follow the Grand Duke... Brother, please go out for a while, check if there are any people moving around, and send them further away."

"Huh?"

Levis was stunned for a moment, then stood up, "Oh, all right."

Chapter 660 The Earl is Baffled

Levis walked out of the study, closing the door firmly behind him. He was no fool, and it was clear that Liszt wanted to send him away—although reluctant, at this stage, he truly did not possess the capacity to partake in the family's top secret affairs.

Inside the study.

The Earl and Liszt were each seated in spacious chairs. Loria had just paid a visit, bringing several cups of freshly brewed tea. The Earl tasted his tea, waiting for what Liszt was about to say—he was indeed a bit curious, as his son seemed consistently reluctant to follow the Grand Duke.

Normally, becoming a follower of an even more prominent noble was certainly a cause for excitement.

To become a direct follower of the Grand Duke, one would definitely obtain more opportunities and benefits than becoming a follower of an Earl or a Marquis. Other nobles would fight tooth and nail for such fortune, yet when it came to his own son, he flatly refused.

It was utterly incomprehensible.

The last time, it was tolerable given Liszt was only a Viscount, and following the Grand Duke wouldn't have brought him significant importance, not as much as following the Earl and helping the family strive for glory.

This time, a Marquisate was within reach, with such high status and glory, refusal was inconceivable.

He did not understand.

Yet, Liszt was well aware of what he was doing.

He had clear reasons for not wishing to follow the Grand Duke. As a noble Dragon Knight, the Grand Duke might just be a Dragon Domain Landlord, and the Sapphire Dragon seemed to be in a crippled state—how could a Dragon Knight pledge loyalty to a disabled Dragon Domain Landlord. If Leo discovered that he would have to submit to an injured Gemstone Dragon, he would probably fly into a rage on the spot.

"Father, you must be wondering why I am unwilling to follow the Grand Duke and also unwilling to split from the family," Liszt spoke calmly, "My reason for not wanting to split

from the family is simple: I dislike the 'Giant Algae' surname. It doesn't sound prestigious, and besides, I have a more noble surname to choose from."

Disliking the "Giant Algae" surname?

What an absurd reason. The Earl found he was increasingly unable to understand his son: "What nobler surname can you choose?"

"I haven't decided on that surname yet."

The Earl was taken aback: "What?"

Liszt spoke deliberately: "Based on my deduction, the Grand Duke hasn't actually succeeded in Dragon Riding; he is only a Dragon Domain Landlord. Furthermore, the Sapphire Dragon has been severely injured and is not only unhealed but also likely to have its lifespan shortened. Such a Landlord is not one I should be following."

He held a certain disdain for the Sapphire Duke—the Grand Duke who made his debut riding a Dragon was truly formidable, with a noble stance that made one believe he was a true Dragon Knight—yet he was merely a Dragon Domain Landlord.

At this moment, Liszt was organizing his thoughts, weighing the pros and cons, considering how to reveal his identity to the Earl. He no longer needed to be overly cautious; it was time to clear the air with the Earl, letting him weigh the future actions of the Tulip Family.

Once a kingdom was formed, the Tulip Family would inevitably have to follow him.

How the Tulip Family should then develop within the Duchy of Sapphire was a matter of another plan and strategy.

The Earl was unaware of this.

Hearing Liszt's argument, he frowned and spoke in a stern tone, "Liszt, I know you are powerful, and as an inheritor of the Ghost Swordsman, you are capable of defeating Domain Knights. But do not underestimate the Grand Duke's strength; even if he is not a

Dragon Knight but merely a Dragon Domain Landlord, he can still easily defeat any inheritor of the Ancient Warrior!"

"In fact, he can't kill me. Even in an honorable battle, the Grand Duke might no longer be able to best me."

"You are too young and arrogant. Is it defeating a Domain Knight that has made you so blindly confident, or does the Ghost Swordsman Inheritance make you feel comparably strong as a Dragon?"

"Father, no one knows the power of a Dragon better than I do."

"Then you should further recognize your current status, that you still need to respect the Grand Duke to continue developing within the Duchy of Sapphire!"

"Please take a sip of your tea and let me organize my words," Liszt extended his hand, signaling the Earl to remain calm, his expression serene and in control.

He was a Dragon Knight, and Ach was an Archmage.

Although they had not yet reached their peak, their combined strength was absolutely capable of contending with the Sapphire Duke.

Sooner or later, his identity had to be revealed; it couldn't be kept secret for a lifetime, nor did he wish to stay low and miserable without joy.

The Earl was so far the most suitable person to be informed first. With the protection offered by the Earl, the secrecy of his Dragon Knight status could still be maintained. This also spared him the trouble of having to follow the Grand Duke—having been given the option to follow the Grand Duke twice, it would be hard to keep refusing without a good explanation.

Although he didn't want to bow to the Dragon Domain Landlord, if it was beneficial to his development, he could bear the humiliation and endure the burden for the time being.

What he worried about more was that the Grand Duke, having spent decades with dragons and now having become the Dragon Domain LandLord, might detect his Dragon Knight identity during the oath of fealty. At that point, it would likely not just be a matter of swearing allegiance but could involve a battle to slay dragons.

One must not harbor ill intentions but should never be without caution.

Who knew whether the Sapphire Duke, upon discovering a Dragon Knight whose strength had yet to rise, would choose to nurture and provide an environment for growth, or resort to thunderous means to snatch the young dragon—most likely, there was a ninety-nine percent chance of the latter, securing longevity for his own family.

Regardless of whether Liszt defeated the Grand Duke or the Grand Duke crushed Liszt, it would cause a huge stir.

If foreign Dragon Knights took advantage of the void, the situation could become unmanageable by then.

Therefore, the Earl's protection was crucial—his father preventing his son from swearing allegiance to others, to earn more military exploits for himself, might look greedy to outsiders, but truly it was an unarguable excuse.

A moment later.

Having thought through the details, he candidly confessed his identity: "I have to be honest with you about one thing; there is no Ghost Swordsman Inheritance, that's just a ruse to mislead others. I have always been of the orthodox Knight cultivation system, merely a Sky Knight."

"No Ghost Swordsman Inheritance?" The Earl's face changed, then he stared at Liszt, "But your strength is greater than that of a Domain Knight, don't tell me this is just your natural talent?"

"Half of it is indeed my extraordinary talent, the other half is simple, I am a Dragon Knight," he said calmly, revealing his identity.

"What?"

The Earl doubted he had heard correctly.

Liszt seriously repeated himself: "I am already a Dragon Knight."

"Dragon Knight?" The Earl extended his hand, not knowing what he was gesturing, his expression turning quite stiff, "You mean a Dragon Knight, one who rides a dragon?"

"It's a Fire Dragon."

"A Fire Dragon? An Evil Dragon?"

"Rest assured, I will keep it from doing evil."

The Earl nodded faintly upon hearing this, seemingly coming to terms with the fact. He leaned back in his chair and casually picked up his tea, which he had already drunk halfway. However, Liszt still noticed that inside the transparent glass cup, the tea leaves were slightly trembling.

Wanting to bring the cup to his lips, but the trembling grew worse, until his whole arm was shaking, and the tea was nearly spilling out, somehow unable to reach his mouth.

Finally.

The tea from the cup spilled, creating a large stain on his chest, yet he seemed oblivious, his gaze fixed on the void in front of him, "A Dragon Knight, it is?"

"Yes."