

A Wizard's Secret

#Chapter 11 - Read A Wizard's Secret Chapter 11

Chapter 11: Change of the Body

The servant girls in the castle cleared the dining table quickly. Merlin stood up, getting ready to go upstairs and rest.

"Merlin, I've news to tell you."

"What news?" Merlin turned and looked at Macy uncertainly.

"Swordsman Pero wants to bring us to the church in Grand City tomorrow and socialize with the other youngsters in the city."

Merlin's eyebrows furrowed slightly as he knew that the "us" Macy had mentioned did not include him. They must be those who possessed an elemental affinity with the most potential where they were worthy of great efforts by the church to nurture them.

"How many days will it take?"

"About four to five days, I guess."

Merlin nodded and said, "Alright, I know. With Swordsman Pero leading you guys, it should be really safe, so I'm not worried."

Then, Merlin walked upstairs.

There was some doubt in Macy's eyes as she watched Merlin's back. In a low voice, she murmured, "This fellow Merlin, he seems to be somewhat different from before."

Earlier, there was a big change in Merlin's tone of voice and expression as he spoke compared to how he had been previously. In the past, Merlin would never say something like, "So I'm not worried."

Back in his room, Merlin was sober. Once again, on his bed, he sat in the strange posture found on the relief sculpture.

Merlin was already very familiar with this strange posture so he did not feel awkward at all. He felt so comfortable even to a point where he laid on the soft bed and fell into a deep slumber unintentionally.

...

Early the next morning, Merlin woke up from his dreams. By that time, a thick layer of snow had covered the grounds as it snowed the entire night. As a result, a thin layer of ice crystals had formed on the edges of the window. It was also extremely cold indoors.

Merlin shivered involuntarily. It was only after he had awakened that he discovered he had fallen asleep the night before without him knowing.

“I’m sweating again...”

Merlin stretched his hand to wipe the back of his arm and found that it was oily sweat. Merlin could feel the stickiness all over his body, so it was very uncomfortable.

“Lucia, get me some hot water.”

Merlin opened the door and called for his maidservant, Lucia. Although Lucia was somewhat puzzled that Merlin still wanted a bath on such a cold day, she did not dare to question him although she found that it was rather perplexing. All she could do was to follow Merlin’s instructions and switched on the hot water tap, filling up the bathtub.

Merlin jumped into the bathtub and speedily washed his body to get rid of the sweat stain.

Although he had been frozen the entire night before, Merlin did not feel any discomfort at all. Instead, he was invigorated with a face flushed red and energy seemed to fill his body from the top to the bottom.

“Lucia, Master Merlin is bathing again?”

An exceptionally frail and old voice drifted into Merlin’s ears.

Merlin quickly recognized that this was the butler’s voice. Apparently, the butler was questioning Lucia.

Lucia replied in a soft voice, “Yes, butler, the master’s been in the bath after waking up in the morning.”

“Hmm... Tomorrow onward, prepare some hot water every morning.”

The butler instructed her in a low voice. Then, there were footsteps fading off into the distance. It was assumed that both of them were already leaving.

“The butler’s quite attentive.”

Merlin smiled gently. He knew that it must have been the butler coming to get him downstairs for breakfast, and so he stretched out his hand and opened the big doors to the bedroom.

“Eh? Why isn’t there anyone?”

Merlin was astonished as he heard the voices of the butler and Lucia clearly. They had obviously been right outside the door but how could there be no one?

He felt weird so he immediately walked to the corridor and looked downstairs, only to discover that the butler and Lucia were there.

“Downstairs? How can they be downstairs? Their voices were evidently clear when they were speaking earlier...”

Merlin raised an eyebrow. Then, a thought came to him – ‘could it be that he could hear people talking when they were downstairs?’

When Merlin reached downstairs, he did not give a second glance to the sumptuous breakfast spread on the table. All he did was grab a piece of bread at random and started eating absentmindedly.

“The weather today is really odd. It’s not winter yet but it’s already so cold.”

“Knopp, get to work quickly. If the butler finds out that you’re loafing on the job again, don’t think about getting to work here at Baron Lord’s after today.”

“...”

Merlin ate his bread as he listened carefully to various voices in the distance. They were at least a few dozen meters away from Merlin and some were even up to a hundred meters away, yet Merlin was able to listen albeit faintly, to them all. This showed that his hearing ability had greatly improved.

This was a very sudden change. Merlin was extremely sure that he had not undergone this change, at least before he went to bed last night. Right now, his hearing ability had been enhanced significantly. He could even hear the footsteps of every person within a few dozen meters from him very clearly.

“Master Merlin, is there anything else you need?”

The butler’s words interrupted Merlin’s deep thoughts. Only now did he turn his head, just to discover that the bread in his hand had been finished without knowing when.

“I’m done eating.”

Merlin wiped his mouth and hurriedly returned to his room upstairs.

In the room, Merlin took out the relief sculpture from the end of the bed, where he had hidden it. He knew that his change had definitely been brought about by the strange posture on the relief sculpture.

Furthermore, Merlin's boost in hearing ability was just the beginning. He could also feel his strength, agility, and other attributes had undergone an enhancement as well.

As long as he continued to practice the posture on the sculpture, the quality of his body would definitely improve and become more outstanding.

Merlin hung around upstairs for a while. After putting on a thick coat, wrapping a gray scarf around his neck, and wearing leather gloves on his hands, he went downstairs.

After snowing for the entire night, a thick layer of snow had piled up in front of the castle. The tops of the great bald trees were also covered with snow. Everywhere he looked was white snow.

Moss had been waiting for long outside. His face had been blown red by the chilly wind and was currently rubbing his hands repeatedly. Merlin did not feel like admiring the snowy scene so he hurriedly darted into the carriage and said to Moss, "Let's go."

The carriage moved gently. Merlin leaned against the wall in the carriage. Suddenly, he felt as though the carriage seemed rather empty today.

"Wait, where's Macy?"

Merlin hurriedly asked Moss.

"Miss Macy has already left the castle earlier today."

Merlin shook his head gently after hearing Moss' answer. It was only then that he remembered that Macy had gone to Grand City with Swordsman Pero and would be staying there for a few days, so he would not have to go to the church during these few days as well.

The etiquette class was only going to be held in the afternoon so Merlin could freely arrange his time in the morning. He thought about it for a moment. He had just arrived in this world a few days ago, and the places he had been could be counted using his fingers alone.

Only the antique at Nathan's felt somewhat new and strange to Merlin. Especially that piece of strange relief sculpture where Merlin had a great interest in. Furthermore, the antiques during the time of the Molta Empire had attracted his attention.

“Moss, stop. I’m not going to the church anymore. Go to Mr. Nathan’s!”

Merlin yelled loudly at Moss.

Chapter 12: Old Man Etha

The carriage came to a gradual halt. Moss pulled open the curtains in the carriage and said in a low voice, “Master Merlin, we’re here.”

Merlin nodded and alighted from the carriage. Once he was out from the carriage, a chilly wind blew over his face, causing him stinging pain as though he had been cut by a knife.

Merlin hurriedly covered his face with both hands. It was only then that he knew how much Moss suffered, sitting outside all that time.

“Moss, when I go in, I won’t be coming out for a while, so during this time you may just sit in the carriage.”

A look of gratitude washed over Moss’ face as he nodded before darting into the carriage. To be hit by the cold wind outside was also a form of torture.

Merlin only turned and walked in after seeing Moss climbed into the carriage.

It was still the charming Linny at the counter. Although Anson and Gutt were not with him this time, it was evident that Linny remembered Merlin. There was an immediate smile on her face upon seeing Merlin’s arrival, and she opened the secret passage in a respectful manner.

Merlin darted into the passageway easily as he was familiar with it. It felt much warmer there as there was no backflow of cold wind.

Very soon, Merlin reached the underground hall. Perhaps it was because of breakfast, or perhaps the weather was too cold, it was quite empty with not many people in it currently.

It seemed that Nathan was not here as well. Alone, Merlin began to stroll about casually.

There was no sunlight in the hall. Everything was illuminated by candles made of the fat of a strange sea creature. Although they were more expensive, they did not emit the unpleasant burning smell. On the contrary, they emitted a strange hint of natural fragrance.

The antiques were placed on stone platforms surrounded by even more expensive, transparent crystals for viewing. Merlin did not have a clue regarding antiques. After walking around the hall, he did not discover any antique that could cause him illusions like the relief sculpture did. This also indirectly proved the extraordinary quality of the relief sculpture.

As Merlin was admiring the antiques, he suddenly heard light footsteps behind him.

“Miss Carice?”

Merlin turned to discover that the person behind him was someone familiar – it was the person that little fatty Gutt had been constantly thinking about. Indeed, she was very pretty. She was wearing a white mink coat with tight cotton pants, accentuating her long and slender legs. It seemed that women would never forget to groom themselves no matter what the occasion was. Even on a day as cold as this, she still had to wear body-fitting cotton pants to accentuate her beautiful long legs.

Carice looked at Merlin rather hesitantly. It looked as though she did not have much of an impression of Merlin.

Anyway, Merlin did not mind. He smiled gently and said, “Miss Carice, we’ve just met a few days ago, right here. I came with Anson and Gutt...”

Carice’s eyebrows loosened up lightly. In a thoughtful manner, she nodded and said, “I remember now. Are you Wilson Merlin?”

Merlin nodded before taking two steps forward, drawing closer to Carice.

“Miss Carice, I’ve heard from Anson that you’re an antique specialist, especially in the antiques of the Molta Empire era. Recently, I’ve come to like some extremely special Molta Empire antiques but there’s nothing here at Mr. Nathan’s that I’m satisfied with. So, if there are some special antiques in Miss Carice’s possession, could you let me have a look?”

After he said that, Merlin looked at Carice. He knew that Carice had collected many antiques, perhaps one of them would be the mysterious relief sculpture that he yearned.

“Rare and strange antiques? You like the same things as an old gentleman I know. He also likes collecting rare and strange antiques from the period of the Molta Empire. If you have time, I can bring you for a look now, and perhaps you’ll find an antique that you’ll like.”

Carice and Merlin were standing close to each other. As a result, her warm breath blew toward Merlin’s neck, creating a weak and numb sensation. Carice’s perfume was also exceedingly refreshing and this made him happy and carefree.

“Then, I thank you, Miss Carice, for leading the way.”

Naturally, Merlin agreed cheerfully. As long as he could find that mysterious relief sculpture, he would be very contented even with a mere hint of a clue.

Thus, Merlin followed Carice from behind and walked out.

Light snow was still drifting about outside. The cold wind that blew on their faces felt like knife cuts. Carice had a carriage as well so she quickly darted into her carriage and it slowly moved forward.

“Moss, follow Miss Carice’s carriage in front.”

Merlin woke Moss up, who then drove the carriage slowly behind Carice’s carriage.

As the weather was very cold and there was still light snow, the surface of the road had also been frozen, which made it wet and slippery. Both carriages moved at a very slow pace, and it was only after half an hour that they reached their destination.

Carice and Merlin arrived at a small, old-fashioned wooden house. There was a garden in front of this small house with various flowers and trees. However, the garden was currently in a pitiful state; tiny trees that had yet to grow their big and thick branches were falling all over the place, squashed by the accumulating snow.

Snow had fallen the entire night yesterday, and the wind was very strong. A small garden like this would be destroyed easily. All that could be done was to wait for spring to come and replant them.

Seeing the mess in the garden, Carice shook her head gently and said helplessly, “Mr. Etha’s garden is ruined again. Poor Mr. Etha, he’s wasted a few months repairing his garden, but now it’s become like this.”

Both of them walked into the small house as Carice led the way. They went up to the second floor and came to a wooden door that had faded in color and looked extremely old.

Carice turned her to give an advice. “Merlin, Mr. Etha likes quietness, so you have to be a little quieter after you go in.”

Merlin nodded. It seemed that the person Carice had wanted to find was in this room.

“Is Mr. Etha here? I’m Carice, here to see you today.”

Carice knocked on the door and whispered into the room.

“Creak...”

The old, wooden door opened and an old man, around fifty years of age appeared.

The old man was short. The top of his head was balding and had very little hair but the old man had carefully combed the sparse hair back behind his head. He wore a black overcoat and had a thin face with fair skin, and he kept a pair of beautiful mustaches under his nose. He looked very sharp.

Just as Merlin was sizing up the old man, the old man was also doing the same. He looked at Merlin and Carice contemplatively. However, he merely gave Merlin a cold glance before shifting his gaze upon Carice. He said in a hoarse voice, "Carice, come in."

The old man turned around and walked back into the room. Merlin and Carice followed him from behind before Merlin closed the door after them casually.

The fireplace in the house was still burning with fierce flames. The old man immediately walked to a wooden chair before the fireplace and sat down while speaking in a hoarse voice, "Carice, tell me, for what matter have you come looking for this old man today?"

A smile broke out on Carice's face. She brought Merlin straight to the spot before the old man. The light from the fiery flames in the fireplace shone upon his face, turning his originally chalk-white skin to somewhat rosy.

The old man did not even raise his head. He held a thread-bound book with a black cover with both hands, reading it with relish.

"Mr. Etha, I've brought my friend here to visit you today."

Carice gave Merlin a look, signaling him to introduce himself.

Merlin nodded and spoke as he stepped forward slightly in respect. "Mr. Etha, I'm Wilson Merlin. I really like some antiques, especially the antiques during the time of the Molta Empire. Today, Miss Carice mentioned that there are many unique antiques from the Molta Empire era in Mr. Etha's house, which is why I've taken the liberty of coming here to trouble you, sir."

The old man added more wood into the fireplace. The crackling sounds emitted by the burning wood in the fireplace could be heard clearly. It was after a long time before the old man slowly put down the book in his hands and stood up. He said coldly, "Come with me."

"Mr. Etha's temper is very weird."

Merlin felt that this old man Etha had a somewhat odd and unpredictable temper.

“Shush, lower your voice. Mr. Etha’s personality is just a little eccentric and antisocial, but he’s a very good man. Alright, follow Mr. Etha in.”

It was obvious that Carice knew old man Etha very well. Along with Merlin, she followed Etha into another room.

This room was small and seemed slightly cramped with the three of them inside. There were two gigantic red bookshelves which had been arranged in an extremely organized manner. There were no books on the shelves but some small and exquisite antiques.

Some of these antiques were broken and incomplete while some were flawless. However, these were unique and different from the antiques that Merlin had seen over at Nathan’s. They were like porcelain in distinctive shapes that Merlin had never seen before like the ancient bottle which had a curved opening on either side. It was indeed very strange and special.

Merlin stretched his hand out, wishing to touch these antiques. Old man Etha, who was beside him growled fiercely. “You may only look but you cannot touch!”

Merlin felt embarrassed and all he could do was withdraw his hand.

There were approximately over a hundred uniquely-shaped antiques arranged on the bookshelves. Merlin looked as far as he could, but there was not a single one that was the same as the relief sculpture. He could not help but felt somewhat disappointed, and casually asked, “Are these the only antiques here?”

Old man Etha seemed to be quite disgruntled with Merlin’s tone of voice and said in a deep voice, “I’ve been collecting them for a very long time. Why, do you consider them few?”

Seeing that old man Etha was somewhat upset, Carice hurriedly explained, “Mr. Etha, don’t get upset, it’s just that Merlin’s only interested in the antiques of the Molta Empire. Also, he has only just come into contact with antiques so it hasn’t been a long time.”

Carice whispered into Merlin’s ear, scolding him, “Don’t simply say things. Mr. Etha is quite upset already.”

Merlin nodded. Old man Etha really had a weird temper so it was better to speak less and not provoke him.

Although the antiques here at old man Etha’s were very strange and unique, Merlin did not find the mysterious relief sculpture he was looking for. Thus, he could not help but revealed a hint of disappointment on his face. Shaking his head a little, he spoke to Carice, “Let’s go out first.”

It was after Merlin and Carice had left the room that the odd-tempered old man Etha narrowed his eyes, fixing his gaze on Merlin's back for some time. There was a hint of a weird expression on his face.

After they left the house, Carice asked in a low voice, "Merlin, did you find any that you like?"

Merlin shook his head. Carice did not persist so she could only bid old man Etha goodbye. "Mr. Etha, sorry for bothering you today. We'll come and visit again in the future."

The odd-tempered old man Etha suddenly asked, "You're called Merlin?"

"Yes, Mr. Etha. What do you wish to request of me?"

Merlin looked at old man Etha doubtfully.

"Are you willing to learn antiques appraisal from me?"

As old man Etha's voice fell, Merlin became somewhat dazed and was puzzled. Why would this old man with a weird temper want to have him as a disciple now?

Although Merlin did wish to learn how to appraise antiques, he thought it would be easier for him to understand the origins of the relief sculpture. He was also absolutely clueless with regard to this weird old man Etha.

Just as Merlin was hesitating, there was a hint of delight and surprise on Carice's face. She hurriedly spoke to Merlin in a low voice, "Agree quickly. Mr. Etha's appraisal of the Molta Empire antiques can be considered to be the most authoritative in Blackwater City. It's your good fortune that he wants to have you as a disciple. Others don't even get this kind of opportunity even if they beg for it."

Merlin was amazed. How could this old man, who lived in such an ugly house and possessed such a weird temper had such great skills?

"Why? Aren't you willing?"

Old man Etha's face darkened as his anger grew.

Chapter 13: Molta Language

Although Merlin felt that old man Etha was rather odd, Carice had already said that the old man had very high attainments in appraising Molta Empire era antiques. Therefore,

he did not have any more misgivings. Bowing slightly before old man Etha, he said respectfully, "Merlin is willing to follow and learn from you, teacher!"

"Very good."

Old man Etha's face, which had just been somewhat ashen, immediately changed into a big smile. "Merlin, come this afternoon and begin by learning some basic knowledge about appraising antiques."

Merlin was unable to figure out old man Etha's temper. He did not dare to object, so all he could do was nod and indicate that he would come in the afternoon. Following which, old man Etha sent Merlin and Carice out the door.

"Miss Carice, who on earth is teacher Etha?"

Merlin could not wait any longer and inquired Carice.

Carice was in a deep thought for a moment before lowering her voice and said, "Mr. Etha seems to have come to Blackwater City from some other place. It's just him as I've never seen that he has any relatives. His personality's a bit reclusive, and he only likes to collect antiques. I also met Mr. Etha by accident and asked for his advice on antiques. It has come to a point where I always consult Mr. Etha if I encounter some antiques I don't understand. As for other things about Mr. Etha, I'm not very clear myself."

Merlin nodded. Subsequently, they got on their way respectively and Merlin went back to the castle in his carriage.

...

In the afternoon, Merlin came once more before the small house of old man Etha.

By then, the weather had already cleared up. The snow which had fallen heavily for a full day had now stopped. However, the air was still very chilly. Merlin pulled his coat tightly and went up to the second floor before knocking on old man Etha's door.

The door opened very quickly. Upon seeing Merlin, old man Etha's face was indifferent.

"Still considered on time, not bad."

Old man Etha said nothing more and let Merlin through the door.

Merlin came to the side of the fireplace where old man Etha liked to sit. He could see a thick book placed next to the fireplace.

Old man Etha lifted his head, gave Merlin a look, and said casually, “Antiques are the sediments of history. A piece of antique may perhaps be bearing a special period of history. So, if you wish to understand antiques, you’ve to be knowledgeable and understand the historical background of antiques in depth. For example, the antiques of the Molta Empire era that you like – if you wish to truly be able to identify the antiques of this period, you must first understand the Molta Empire. Do you know what is the most important thing about the Molta Empire?”

Merlin shook his head as he lacked knowledge in the Molta Empire.

“It’s language. Language is indispensable to a great and united empire. Only through language can we understand the many events during the time of the Molta Empire. Of course, language is also a very good method in identifying the antiques of the Molta Empire era.”

Old man Etha casually picked up the small book on the table and handed it to Merlin.

Merlin casually flipped to a page and discovered strange symbols on it. He had never seen them before. Old man Etha explained, “This is the Molta language. It’s the language used during the time of the Molta Empire!”

“Molta language?”

Merlin’s eyes lit up. This Molta language was very different from the language that was being used in the Kingdom of Light now. The sacred language of Light was somewhat similar to the western Latin alphabets of his previous world, with various letters forming more than thousands of words and phrases.

As for the Molta language, every component looked like a tadpole. To Merlin, he was unable to identify the differences between these letters.

“Merlin, if you wish to appraise the antiques during the time of the Molta Empire, you’ve to begin by learning the Molta language.”

So, Merlin began to learn this complicated Molta language here at old man Etha’s.

Learning a language was an extremely dull task, but Merlin was passionate about learning the Molta language. Perhaps this body had been born very sensitive toward languages where he showed great talents while learning the Molta language. Within an afternoon, he had already mastered a few dozen words.

Of course, perseverance was required when learning a new language. One would only be able to grasp it fully after learning for a few months, or even years.

The afternoon passed very quickly. Seeing that the sky had gradually darkened, old man Etha said coldly, "Alright, that's it for today. Go back and practice the Molta vocabulary you've learned today properly."

"Teacher Etha, I'll definitely do my revision well when I get home."

Merlin gave old man Etha a slight bow to show his respect once more before leaving the small house.

"Hoo..."

Outside, the cold was biting with a chilly wind. Merlin's mind, which had been somewhat drowsy became much awake and clearer. He could already see Moss' carriage.

"Moss, back to the castle!"

Merlin darted into the carriage and stretched his legs, leaning his back against the carriage. He lightly massaged his head with both hands. Although it had been tiring learning from old man Etha today, this had been the most productive day he had ever since he arrived in this world.

...

A few days had passed. Merlin went to and fro old man Etha's place and the castle daily. Life was very simple then as he traveled between these two points.

"Butler, is there something wrong?"

After Merlin had his breakfast, he asked the butler in a soft voice. He had noticed earlier that something seemed to be amiss with the butler today.

The butler hesitated for a moment before opening his mouth to say, "Master Merlin, Miss Macy has already left the castle for nine days and hasn't been back since. Should we send people to look for her in Grand City?"

Merlin was stunned. During the past few days, he had only been concerned about learning the Molta language. Every day had been very productive so he had somewhat forgotten about Macy.

He remembered Macy saying that the social exchange in Grand City would only take about three to five days but it had almost been ten days now and she had not returned. No wonder the butler was worried.

"How about this, let's not send people over to Grand City in haste first. I'll find time later and ask Anson about it to see if he has any news."

The butler nodded before ordering the servants to clear the dining table.

“Hoo...”

Walking out of the castle, a burst of chilly wind blew into Merlin, causing him to shiver involuntarily. Although snow had not fallen these past few days and the weather had been sunny, it was still very cold.

“Moss, go to teacher Etha’s.”

Merlin hesitated for a moment. He usually goes to old man Etha’s in the afternoon. Since he was going to find Anson today to inquire about some news, he still had to first go to old man Etha’s and explain the situation.

The carriage slowly left the castle.

...

Merlin stood in front of old man Etha’s door and called out softly, “Teacher Etha.”

After a few moments, Merlin did not hear any response from old man Etha so Merlin stretched out his hand to knock on the door.

“Squeak...”

The main door was unexpectedly pushed open the moment Merlin’s hand touched it gently.

Merlin paused for a while before going inside. He searched all over the place and saw no traces of old man Etha. It looked like old man Etha was not at home.

“Teacher Etha is really too careless. The door’s not even locked. Isn’t he afraid that thieves would come in?” Merlin muttered.

Recently, the security in Blackwater City could not be considered satisfactory. However, Merlin knew that old man Etha had always been weird and mysterious. He had been coming here for almost ten days now, and still, he did not know what on earth old man Etha did for a living. He only knew that there was only old man Etha in this house. Other than Merlin and Carice who visited occasionally, no one else had come.

Merlin guessed that old man Etha had probably come to Blackwater City alone.

Seeing that old man Etha was not at home, Merlin sat quietly in front of the fireplace and waited, taking the time to review the Molta language he had learned over the past few days.

After waiting for about an hour, the temperature in the house seemed to have dropped considerably. Hence, Merlin casually added some firewood into the fireplace. It was at this moment that Merlin heard footsteps downstairs, outside the door. Old man Etha had most likely returned so Merlin hurriedly stood up.

“Bang!”

The main door was shut harshly. Seeing Merlin in the house, old man Etha was startled and asked, “Merlin, why are you here?”

Merlin saw that old man Etha was wearing long, leather boots which had mud and earth stuck all over them. The big coat on his body was also covered with some dew. His face was slightly pale, and he looked as though he was very tired. Merlin did not know where on earth he had gone to.

“Teacher Etha, I’ve come to ask for a vacation. I might have to attend to some family matters in the afternoon, so I won’t be coming today.”

Merlin watched old man Etha for any reaction. To Merlin’s surprise, old man Etha did not look furious but rather calm instead. A long time passed before old man Etha nodded his head and said in a composed manner, “I’ll be traveling far these few days, so your education might have to stop for a while.”

Merlin was astonished. Old man Etha usually looked like he could have been rather carefree and idle. What matters could he have to attend to?

“When is teacher Etha coming back?”

“Can’t say for sure, perhaps three or five days, perhaps ten days or half a month. But you must remember, even if I’m not around, you’ve to practice the Molta language well. I’ve some insights here on learning the Molta language, and some translations in the sacred language of Light. I’ve organized all these a few years ago so take them and try to figure them out yourself. They should be of some help in improving your level of understanding of the Molta language.”

While saying this, old man Etha took out a stack of thick materials and passed them to Merlin.

Merlin was at a loss. This stack of information was not an ordinary item. Was this not equivalent to a dictionary from his previous life? Moreover, these records were written by old man Etha, so they were extremely precious. In this era, such things could be considered a priceless treasure. Although Old man Etha was strict and stern, he still placed a lot of importance upon Merlin.

“Don’t worry, teacher. I’ll definitely practice the Molta language well at home.”

Hence, Merlin took the materials and turned to leave.

“Wait...”

Old man Etha’s face changed. Finally, as though he had made up his mind about something, he drew a black ring out from within his arms and immediately tossed it to Merlin. He said in a low voice, “I’ll give you this little knick-knack, so you wouldn’t be calling me ‘teacher’ in vain.”

“Teacher, this...”

Merlin was somewhat hesitant, but old man Etha waved his hand casually and said impatiently, “Go, go quickly, go do what you should be doing. I’m rather tired, I want to rest properly.”

The old man had not had a hint of courtesy where he immediately shooed Merlin out the door.

Merlin went downstairs and into the carriage, putting the materials inside. He was still in a daze, feeling that something was slightly amiss with old man Etha today, gifting him the materials as well as the ring.

“Old man Etha’s been mysterious, weird and kooky the entire time. I wonder what on earth had happened? But this ring’s really strange – it looks like it’s been around for a few years...”

He did not know what material this black ring was made of. It was so light that it felt like nothing as he held it in his hand. The entire ring was as black as ink, and there was a hideous monster with three heads engraved on it, baring its fangs and brandishing its claws. It looked remarkably true to life and made those who looked at it to feel somewhat strange.

Probably, not many people would be willing to wear a ring like that.

Merlin fiddled with it carefully for a moment but he did not discover anything special about it. Thus, he put the ring into his pocket and said to Moss, “Moss, let’s go. I’m attending etiquette class today.”

The carriage slowly left old man Etha’s small house.

Chapter 14: Heretic

Merlin sat in the spacious carriage. Although the journey was as bumpy as always, his physical attributes were no longer what they used to be, so this bit of distance felt like nothing to him anymore.

“Master Merlin, we’ve arrived!”

Moss said to Merlin while pulling the curtains in the carriage.

Merlin opened his eyes and alighted from the carriage. Before his eyes was a small three-story building, with an old man watching at the door. Merlin ignored the old man. Just as he was about to enter, little fatty Gutt’s luxurious carriage which was drawn by four horses, arrived as well.

“Hey, Merlin.”

The little fatty poked his head out from the carriage before leaping down casually. Anson alighted from the carriage behind him. It seemed that Gutt had picked up Anson along the way.

Gutt and Anson quickly walked to Merlin. The little fatty Gutt stretched his chubby hand out and patted Merlin’s shoulder lightly and said with a laugh, “Merlin, you’ve not come for so many days, what have you been up to?”

Before Merlin could answer, Anson’s face suddenly fell. His eyes were staring fixedly on something behind Merlin.

“It’s Tirath and Teacher Gia. Why are they walking together?”

Anson’s expression was dark and gloomy. Ever since he laid his eyes on Gia, he had always been thinking about her. Never had he thought that Tirath would rush in and take the first step.

Merlin turned as well to see Tirath and Gia chattering and laughing away. They seemed to be deeply immersed in their conversation.

Tirath also saw Merlin and the others. The corners of his lips curled into a sarcastic smile. In a high and mighty demeanor, he walked into the small building with Gia.

Gutt glanced at Anson, who was next to him. In a deep, heavy tone, he lowered his voice and said, “Anson, don’t be so crestfallen. This Gia is not an easy target. Hehe, haven’t I said the other day that I’d investigate Gia thoroughly within three days? I’ve really gone and did my investigation. Guess what I found out, guys?”

Seeing Gutt’s serious face, Merlin could not help but ask rather curiously, “What did you find out? Is Gia’s background really great?”

Gutt shook his head and spoke in a low voice, "Her background isn't great, it's that she has no background at all! To be accurate, I've not found anything. Gia has only appeared in Grand City, and it looks like she appeared out of thin air. I've not been able to find out where she's from, what she does, and who her relatives and friends are at all! Hehe, my family's business is spread throughout the entire Kingdom of Light so we're very powerful when it comes to intelligence. If we wish to investigate a person, we'll definitely be able to, but this Gia... She's really mysterious!"

Gutt might be careless and unconcerned most of the time, which made him look like a good-for-nothing rich man's son, but after Merlin had come into contact with him more, he had discovered that this little fatty controlled a part of the Douglan family's business. He was definitely not as deplorable as he seemed on the surface.

Even if the Douglan family's powerful web of intelligence could not find out anything about Gia's true identity, then he was afraid that there were really some secrets surrounding this Gia.

Gutt continued to speak to Anson, "Anson, you've to be alert. This Gia might be pretty but her identity is unclear and is very mysterious. You also need to be more careful and do your best not to have anything to do with her. As for this fellow Tirath, hmph, if there's anything wrong with Gia, he'll be sorry by then."

Gutt curled his lips. It was obvious that he thought nothing of Tirath.

Hearing Gutt's advice, Anson's expression eased up a little. Merlin did not have much interest in this Tirath and the mysterious Gia so he asked Anson for news about Macy, "Anson, Macy, Swordsman Pero, and the others have gone to Grand City for so many days and they haven't returned by now. Have you heard about any news?"

"Macy, huh? I've actually heard some news. Let's get inside first. I'll tell you about it slowly."

Anson's eyes were flashing. For a moment, Merlin's heart sank a little.

In a single file, the three of them went into the spacious house. This class was a history class, as always. However, Gia and Tirath were both not here and no one knew what they had gone off to do.

"Anson, has something happened to Macy?"

Merlin asked hurriedly after they had sat down.

Anson shook his head gently, and said with a wry smile, "Don't worry, Merlin. Your sister Macy's fine. But you're in quite some trouble, though."

"I'm in trouble?"

Merlin did not know what Anson was talking about. He looked at Anson in confusion.

“It’s like this. Haven’t Macy and the others gone to Grand City under Swordsman Pero’s leadership to join the social exchange? It’s at this exchange that Cawthon had a breakthrough and became a true Elemental Swordsman, and what’s more, a Light Swordsman! This matter has even shocked the bishop of the Grand City church, who personally blessed Cawthon and received Cawthon as a Guardian Swordsman of the Church of Light. That was why they had delayed their return. Tsk tsk, this fellow Cawthon can be considered to have reached the heavens with a single step.”*

Anson’s face was full of excitement as though he was the one who had become an Elemental Swordsman.

Merlin knew that an Elemental Swordsman was not much but to be a Guardian Swordsman of the Church of Light was different. A Guardian Swordsman would receive the full nurturing of the Church of Light. Also, when it came to the position, although he would not receive the title of an aristocrat from the Royal Family of Light, the position of a Guardian Swordsman in the Church of Light was, in fact, practically the same as an aristocrat!

As the power of the Church of Light grew greater in the kingdom and their influence became more widespread, the position of these Guardian Swordsmen would also improve, like a ship rising with the water level.

After a while, Gia and Tirath walked in together. Gia was radiant and beautiful, as always. Tirath, on the other hand, had a long face. His expression was somewhat dark.

“Hehe, by the looks of Tirath, could he have been rejected and humiliated by Gia?”

The little fatty snickered secretly and delighted in Tirath’s misfortune.

Then, Gia began to explain the history course. Merlin had no interest in Gia’s course but he was secretly observing her. Even Gutt had not been able to figure out Gia’s identity by mobilizing the intelligence network of the Douglan family. She must have kept some secrets.

Nevertheless, Merlin was unable to see anything that was out of the ordinary with Gia even until the end of the course.

“Merlin, see you tomorrow.”

Little fatty Gutt and Anson bade Merlin goodbye. Thus, Merlin returned to the Wilson Castle in Moss’ carriage.

...

A team of more than twenty knights moved swiftly across the wide-open road. The outfits of this team of knights had very distinguishable features; all of them wore white light armor and on their backs was a greatsword each.

“How much further until Blackwater City?”

The team of knights came to a gradual stop. A middle-aged, golden-haired man asked in a cold voice. This man had long, brown hair which had been tied into a small braid, tucked behind his head. He wore a white robe with light armor fitted on the outside. He looked rather androgynous. However, there was a silver crossed-swords imprint embroidered in front of his chest.

“Sir Jason, after we go over the mountain in front, we’ll reach Blackwater City.”

A knight wearing a beautiful silver helmet spoke slowly. Fear flashed across his eyes as though he was extremely afraid of this androgynous, white-robed knight.

The white-robed knight nodded. His expression was cold and indifferent as he spoke to the knight in the silver helmet, “Swordsman Bogg, this operation cannot go wrong. The evil heretic hiding in Blackwater City must be captured. I believe that the bishop has already told you what should be done?”

The white-robed knight’s eyes were sharp, causing Bogg’s entire head to break out in sweat.

“Don’t worry, Sir Jason. The bishop has already told us before we depart. This time, all authority over the operation is in your hands, Sir Jason.”

“Very good, let’s go.”

The white-robed knight nodded satisfactorily. However, the heart of Swordsman Bogg was very heavy. He was one of the Guardian Swordsmen of the Church of Light in Grand City and also a powerful Second-level Light Swordsman.

Despite his level, Bogg was still very careful in this operation as the church had mobilized people from the Inquisition and Jason was one of them. Bogg was not clear about the Inquisition but all he heard before were some rumors about how the members of the Inquisition were mysterious and strange, and possessed great power which only ordinary people could imagine. Also, they were God’s most faithful believers.

Every time the Religious Court sent out its team, it was due to the evil heretic which Bogg understood well of. It was a mage in the legends that blasphemed against the God of Light and possessed evil powers, the most powerful force in the depraved Kingdom of Blackmoon.

Faced with the evil heretic and mobilizing the people from the Inquisition, even Bogg, a Second-level Light Swordsman, felt ill. He did not know what awaited him in Blackwater City.

...

With his eyes closed, Merlin laid quietly in the bathtub of steaming hot water. He was holding the piece of relief sculpture in his hands.

After a moment, Merlin opened his eyes, looked at the relief sculpture and a deep thoughtful expression appeared on his face.

“For the past few days, there’s no longer any sweat on my body in the morning. I don’t feel any effect anymore when I perform the posture of the relief sculpture. I think it’s already ineffective for me...”

Merlin murmured quietly. Although he had already expected it, he still felt sorry when this day had really arrived. He felt that the tremendous power he experienced with his body could practically rival that of real Elemental Swordsmen, and such a change had been brought about by this mysterious relief sculpture.

Then, Merlin got up, put the relief sculpture away properly and headed downstairs.

Macy had already given up on waiting for Merlin and had begun eating breakfast.

“I’m going to practice my swordsmanship at the church.”

Macy quickly finished eating and spoke in a cold tone to Merlin. Then, she immediately walked out of the castle with her sword.

Merlin was already used to this. Ever since Macy had returned from Grand City ten days ago, her entire personality had become cold and indifferent. Moreover, she had been desperately training her swordsmanship to a point that the liveliness she had possessed previously had disappeared.

Merlin also understood the reason for Macy’s change. Apparently, Macy had been provoked by Cawthon.

Macy and Cawthon had always been the candidates whom Swordsman Pero looked highly upon – the geniuses who had the most hope of becoming Elemental Swordsmen. Cawthon, however, had broken through very early and had even become a Guardian Swordsman of the church. Macy, on the other hand, was a genius like Cawthon, and yet she had not become a true Elemental Swordsman until now. With this, Macy had changed into a cold and indifferent person. All she could think about was practicing her swordsmanship.

“It looks like I’ve to find the time and have a good talk with Macy.”

Merlin muttered quietly. Perhaps even he had not noticed that he had slowly melded into the identity he possessed now and had completely become one of the inhabitants of this world.

After finishing his breakfast, Merlin returned to his room upstairs. Within the past ten days, he had mastered over a hundred words in the Molta language. Including previous ones, he had already mastered over two hundred words and phrases in the Molta vocabulary. This was already enough for him to read some simple sentences in the Molta language.

To grasp the Molta language well, Merlin had even neglected his swordsmanship training at the church in the morning. It was lucky that Macy was now provoked by Cawthon, so all she could think about was to become an Elemental Swordsman, therefore she did not have the time or energy to meddle in Merlin’s business. This was why Merlin had been living comfortably for the past ten days.

“It’s been ten days, I wonder if old man Etha has returned?”

Merlin was about to continue practicing his Molta language, but upon careful contemplation, it had already been ten days – he should go and see if old man Etha had returned.

Although he had the materials old man Etha had given him, he would still encounter some problems while self-studying. If old man Etha was around, those problems would naturally be solved with the greatest of ease. He would no longer have to make guesses so painstakingly.

Thus, Merlin put on his clothes and left Wilson Castle, sitting in Moss’ carriage as it rumbled toward old man Etha’s little house.

(TN: The Chinese idiom used here is 一步登天. Literally translated, it means to step into the sky with a single step. It is used to describe instant success.)

Chapter 15: Spell Caster I

The carriage was driven slowly on the main road. Merlin had his eyes closed, resting in the carriage. Suddenly, he felt the carriage being jolted around violently and heard the horses outside neighing and whinnying.

“Moss, what’s wrong?”

Merlin pulled open the curtains of the carriage asked Moss with a frown.

At the same time, Moss was exerting as much energy as he could to control the panicking black horse. Hearing the dissatisfaction in Merlin's tone of voice, Moss said with some unease, "Master Merlin, a team of knights had rushed in from the back. I don't know who on earth they are, rampaging on the street."

Merlin raised his head and looked into the distance. Indeed, he saw a team of knights in bright and shining armor in front. They were currently rushing forward, completely ignoring the passersby and carriages on the road. The entire street was chaotic with the curses of many people.

The outfits on these knights' bodies were unlike those of the City Defense Troop knights. Merlin had never seen them before.

"Aye? Merlin?"

Suddenly, a familiar voice drifted into Merlin's ear from the side. Merlin turned his head to see a carriage stopping by the roadside on the right side of the street. The coachman was doing his best to calm the shocked horses down. As for the person in the carriage, it was surprisingly Carice, whom he had not seen for more than ten days.

"Miss Carice."

Merlin hurriedly got down from his carriage and went to Carice's carriage and asked, "Miss Carice, are you alright?"

Carice shook her head gently and said, "It's just that the horses have been frightened, I'm fine. Right, I've gone to visit Mr. Etha a few days ago but Mr. Etha wasn't home. Do you know what's going on?"

"Teacher Etha said he has some personal matters to attend to and has to leave Blackwater City for a period of time. I want to go and see if Teacher Etha has returned today."

A hint of a smile appeared on Carice's face. "Such a coincidence, I'm also preparing to go see Mr. Etha. Shall we go together?"

Merlin nodded. With their carriages in a single file, they drove toward Mr. Etha's small wooden house.

After a short while, the carriages came to a halt slowly. Moss pulled open the carriage curtains and said to Merlin helplessly, "Master Merlin, we're unable to go forward; it's been blocked."

"Blocked?"

Merlin frowned and lifted his head to look outside. At a location not far from old man Etha's small wooden house was a circle of people blocking the road.

"What's going on?"

Carice had also gone down from her carriage. She glanced at Merlin, looking very mystified.

"Miss Carice, the road seems to have been blocked. Shall we go and see what the matter is?"

So, Merlin and Carice got down the carriage and walked a few steps forward, arriving in the midst of the crowd. Merlin and Carice were tall so they were still able to see the situation inside even though they were outside of the crowd.

"This bunch of knights again? Miss Carice, do you know these people?"

Merlin saw over twenty knights wearing silver-white armor in the midst of the crowd. They had been the ones who had rampaged on the street and caused the chaos. Now, they were blocking the road and not letting anyone pass, resulting in a large crowd around them.

Carice frowned and observed the outfits of this group of knights carefully for a long time. Then, she lowered her voice and said, "I don't really dare to confirm it but looking at their attire, they seem somewhat like the Guardian Swordsmen of the Church of Light. But we don't have Guardian Swordsmen in Blackwater City, so I don't dare say for sure."

"Guardian Swordsmen?"

Merlin repeated the words. Immediately, he remembered Cawthon because he had become a Light Swordsman and a Guardian Swordsman of the church in Grand City.

"Could it be the Guardian Swordsmen of Grand City?" Merlin guessed in a low voice.

"Grand City? It's possible but they've mobilized so many Guardian Swordsmen to Blackwater City all at once. Could there be some great trouble?"

Carice and Merlin did not dare to say for sure. It was known that every Guardian Swordsman was a big personality, especially in a small city like Blackwater City. In a sense, the Guardian Swordsmen of the church were equal to aristocrats.

There could have been something serious to have all twenty Guardian Swordsmen who were equal to aristocrats to be sent out all at once.

It was at this moment that another team of knights came from behind. Merlin was very familiar with the attire of this team of knights. They were the knights brigade of the City Defense Troop in Blackwater City.

The crowd immediately split apart, letting the team of knights from the City Defense Troop through. The leading knight yelled at the unidentified knights, "Where are you knights from?"

A knight wearing a silver helmet walked forward. With a high and mighty expression, he said to the knight of the City Defense Troop, "We're the Guardian Swordsmen from the Church of Light in Grand City!"

"Guardian Swordsmen from Grand City?"

The knights of the City Defense Troop were shocked. On normal days, even the castellan had to give a Guardian Swordsman careful treatment if one was to come from Grand City. Therefore today, it was needless to talk about it when more than twenty Guardian Swordsmen had come all at once.

"May I know what business do these few honorable Swordsmen have to come to Blackwater City?"

The knight from the City Defense Troop asked cautiously.

"We've received orders from sir bishop to come and capture the evil heretic of the Kingdom of Blackmoon. You should leave quickly or you'll be hurt by the magic of the evil heretic."

"The evil heretic?"

As though they had heard about some frightening thing, the crowd which had just been densely packed retreated speedily. In the blink of an eye, they were far away from these Guardian Swordsmen.

Even the young knights in the City Defense Troop were shocked with looks of horror on their faces.

Merlin did not know what that evil heretic was. However, seeing the reaction from those around him, he could more or less guess that it was someone who was extremely horrifying and scary.

"Swordsmen Bogg, the evil heretic is in the small wooden house in front. Bring your men and surround the place."

A man wearing white robes with light armor instructed the Guardian Swordsmen around him.

There was a chill in Bogg's heart. As expected, they had found the evil heretic. He did not dare to waste any time. Unsheathing his greatsword in a hurry as though he was about to face a great enemy, he got a dozen or so knights to quickly run forward and surround the small wooden house.

"Ah? Isn't that Mr. Etha's house?"

Alarmed, Carice cried out involuntarily. It was fortunate that the noises of the surrounding crowd were very loud, covering her voice.

Merlin hurriedly grabbed and pulled Carice's hand. He could not bother himself with how it felt, and hurriedly said in a low voice, "Miss Carice, don't make a sound."

Of course, Merlin could see that the target of this group of Guardian Swordsmen was the small wooden house of the mysterious old man Etha. He knew that since this group of Guardian Swordsmen had arrived, they must have had obtained some sort of news.

"Merlin, don't know if Mr. Etha's back yet, huh? But the situation now seems to be very disadvantageous for Mr. Etha. I hope it won't involve him."

Carice spoke in a low voice.

Merlin's expression was grave and heavy where he shook his head slightly. There was a bad premonition in his heart as though this matter and the mysterious old man Etha were irreversibly linked.

A few dozen Guardian Swordsmen surrounded old man Etha's small wooden house in groups. Swordsman Bogg, who was wearing the silver helmet on his head, asked the white-robed man respectfully, "Sir Jason, what do we do now?"

The white-robed man narrowed his eyes slightly, trying to see the situation in the small wooden house. However, the doors and the windows of the small wooden house were shut tight. No one could see what was inside properly.

After a long time, the white-robed man waved his hand and said, "Swordsman Bogg, go in. It'll be best if the heretic can be captured alive."

Swordsman Bogg was slightly stunned. He felt suffering in his heart as everyone knew how horrifying the evil heretic was, but Jason had already given the order. Although Bogg was a Second-level Light Swordsman, he could only obey.

So, Swordsman Bogg summoned three Guardian Swordsmen and rushed into the small wooden house together.

Everyone stared nervously at the small wooden house. After those four Guardian Swordsmen had entered, there did not seem to be any movement. Even the white-robed man frowned and muttered under his breath, "Could the information be wrong?"

"Bang! Bang! Bang!"

Suddenly, there were a few muffled sounds came out from the originally calm and quiet small wooden house. The bodies of the few Guardian Swordsmen who had rushed into the house earlier flew out immediately from the small wooden house. Their bodies were charred black as though they had been burnt by fire. There was even the charred stench of grilled meat.

The bodies of the few Guardian Swordsmen fell to the ground heavily, unmoving. They were all dead.

The knights of the City Defense Troop who had been nearer to the small wooden house were no longer able to hide the horror in their hearts after seeing the three charred bodies. All of them turned and ran, retreating far away.

These Guardian Swordsmen were not ordinary men. Every Guardian Swordsman was at least a First-level Light Swordsman and can be concluded that they were all great and powerful Elemental Swordsmen.

Nevertheless, now, these Elemental Swordsmen had only gone in for a while to only die mysteriously.

"Holy Light Cleave!"

It was at this time that a loud roaring voice rang out from within the small wooden house. There had been four Guardian Swordsmen who entered the house. Three were now dead and Swordsman Bogg was still inside.

This voice came from Swordsman Bogg.

A figure immediately jumped out from the small wooden house accompanied by a dazzling white light. Astonishingly, it was Swordsman Bogg.

"Sir Jason, the evil heretic is inside."

Bogg's body was shrouded in dazzling white light. However, the tattered clothes on his body could still be vaguely seen. There was also fresh blood dripping to the ground from his right arm. It was obvious that he had also been injured.

"Second-level Swordsman, it's a Second-level Swordsman!"

Carice, who was standing next to Merlin, said in a tone of disbelief. There was also a slight chill in Merlin's heart. He was afraid that a Second-level Elemental Swordsman would be the number one master in the entire Blackwater City, and in a way that was rightfully deserving.

Swordsman Pero was only a First-level Fire Swordsman and Old Wilson who had been through the battle for a long time seemed also to be a First-Level Elemental Swordsman at his peak. However, they had never broken through to the Second-level.

However, right now, a great and powerful Second-level Elemental Swordsman was in such an unexpected and pitiful state. He had practically escaped out of the small wooden house in a flurry.

The white-robed man gave a cold glance at Swordsman Bogg. Then, he took a deep breath and shouted at the small wooden house, "Heretic, God is forgiving. If you could only return into God's embrace, believe in God and be one of God's people, then the sin on you shall be cleansed."

"God? Is there a God in this world? You Church of Light have been around for so many years, and you're still so pretentious. Laughable, really laughable! You, as a First-level Spell Caster, could you still not know about those laughable lies of your church? I only believe in the truth, I believe in the true essence of magic, and not the imaginary God that you men speak of."

A hoarse voice rang out from the small wooden house. Subsequently, a figure slowly walked out from there.