

W. Secret 401

Chapter 401: Returning to the Ancient Monument II

In the quiet jungle, a figure in black appeared.

“Looks like this is it!”

Merlin looked around him and could vaguely feel a sense of familiarity from his memory. This was where the ancient monument had been. However, now there was only flat ground covered all over with a thick carpet of dead leaves. How could there be an ancient monument here?

“Rise!”

Merlin furrowed his brow, following which he waved his hand. Instantly, the fallen leaves were quickly spun by a whirlwind, drifting to the sides. An empty clearing appeared on the ground.

In the clearing, there was a small dirt mound. Merlin’s eyes brightened for after this mound appeared, the feeling in his heart became even stronger.

“The ancient monument must be here, only for some unknown reason it had sunk in, leaving only a small part above the ground. If I hadn’t come here before, it wouldn’t have been easy to find.”

Merlin mumbled to himself. He had already discerned that this small dirt mound was where the ancient monument had been, only for some reason, it had gradually sunk underground and was covered by the fallen leaves.

Back then, there had been a passage in the ancient monument, but now even the passage had been buried. Nonetheless, this did not faze Merlin.

“Open up!”

Merlin roared out in a low voice. His figure leaped forward in an instant, becoming a black flash as the energy in his entire body exploded furiously.

“Rumble.”

The loud sound reverberated in the jungle. Merlin was currently using the pure strength of his body. He was already very strong. In one strike, the loose soil immediately collapsed inward and revealed a deep-reaching passage which headed downward.

“So, there’s a passage!”

A smile tugged at the corner of his mouth. In the past, he had entered through the passage. Now, he had merely gauged the vicinity of the passage to directly force a way in.

Damp air came from within the deep passage. Although dead leaves and loose dirt covered the passage, there was still moisture which seeped inside.

Merlin entered the passage and felt a cool, gloomy force. He knew that there were patterned spiders and other guardian monsters in the ancient monument but with his current abilities, he should be able to easily deal with even the strongest guardian monsters.

“Squeak squeak.”

Indeed, in a short moment, Merlin heard a strange noise up ahead, following which patterned spiders appeared in the passage one after another, blocking Merlin’s path.

These patterned spiders had incomparably vibrant colors. Each of them had a large frame. Upon seeing Merlin, a blood-red look flashed in their eyes, and they appeared overjoyed.

In their eyes, Merlin was a delicious feast!

“Hmph!”

Merlin snorted coldly. A raging layer of flames immediately flared up around him. Wherever the Fourth-level spell Incinerating Fire went, the patterned spiders had no way of withstanding it, each being burnt to ashes.

Perhaps to the Merlin of the past, these patterned spiders were formidable, but to the current Merlin, they were barely worth a mention. Wherever he passed by, the patterned spiders were reduced to ashes.

“How weak!”

Soon enough, the patterned spiders were all burned to ashes. Merlin continued forward, and he quickly reached a flame-shaped statue.

This flame-shaped statue was life-like and detailed especially when Merlin arrived near it. It began to twist gradually, and a beam of firelight shot out wildly from the statue.

This firelight rapidly took shape, and it was the flame sprite that he had met back then in the ancient monument!

The flame sprite was surrounded by a furious burning blaze. As it saw Merlin, a stunned expression crossed its face. Following that, the flame sprite carefully sized Merlin up, and asked in a bewildered and uncertain voice, “I remember you. Back then in this ancient monument, you’re Wizard Merlin who cultivated Fiery Collapse! You’ve already become a Fourth-level Spell Caster?”

The flame sprite found it hard to believe. How long was Merlin gone? At most, it had been a mere few years’ time, and back then, Merlin was only a First-level Spell Caster.

Merlin shook his head lightly. “I’m still not yet a Fourth-level Spell Caster, only I’ve managed to construct a Fourth-level Fire-type spell.”

“You’ve constructed a Fourth-level Fire-type spell?”

The flame sprite’s eyes brightened as fluctuations emerged around it. Anyone could clearly see that it was ecstatic.

“Which is to say, you’ve come here now to cultivate the second form of Fiery Collapse?”

“That’s right. I’m here to cultivate the second form of Fiery Collapse. The treasures that enable me to do so can only be found here in the ancient monument!”

Merlin did not deny this. Once he had cultivated the second form of Fiery Collapse, it would be a great blessing to the flame sprite as well. This was because once Fiery Collapse had reached the second form, the binding of the entire ancient monument would gradually vanish, ultimately allowing the flame sprite to achieve freedom.

This was the opportunity that the flame sprite had dreamed of!

Perhaps because the flame sprite was overjoyed, it flitted around constantly, and a scorching force could vaguely be felt in the air.

“Yes, yes, yes! The day is finally here. I’ve waited such a long time, and now I have a chance to escape at last. Wizard Merlin, I’ll bring you to the obstacle. Only after clearing that obstacle can you obtain the various treasures within for the cultivation of the second form of Fiery Collapse!”

The flame sprite could wait no longer to bring Merlin to attempt the obstacle.

Merlin nodded. Previously, when he first cultivated Fiery Collapse, he had to go through an obstacle as well. Naturally, this time, in order to cultivate the second form, he also had to complete an obstacle.

Merlin did not know much about this ancient monument. He merely knew that it was left behind by a great Spell Caster named Wizard Dowland. According to Merlin’s conjecture, Wizard Dowland should also be a Great Wizard!

Only a Great Wizard would have the ability to leave behind such a massive ancient monument and set up various spells and techniques within which lasted even after a thousand years. Most Spell Casters would have no way of achieving this.

The flame sprite quickly brought Merlin through many passages until they came before a stone room. Inside the stone room, there was a gray monster which resembled a hedgehog currently in a deep slumber.

“Snap.”

The hedgehog-like monster seemed to have sensed the arrival of Merlin and the Flame Sprite and gradually woke up.

“Hmm? A puppet?”

Seeing this hedgehog-like monster, Merlin could feel its lifeless force as well as traces of severe energy. Only those puppets would emit such a force.

This hedgehog monster before him was a powerful puppet!

“Buzz.”

Without warning, the eyes of the hedgehog puppet flashed with a red glow as if it had come alive. Thereafter, its cold eyes flicked open and fixed upon Merlin!

Chapter 402: Pursuit

The hedgehog was merely a puppet, but in the instant that its eyes flicked open, Merlin could clearly feel a boundless surge of Fire Element fluctuations.

This meant that the powers of this puppet were rather terrifying. After all, during the Spell Casters' most glorious era, even a puppet would be a formidable presence.

There were even puppets which went against the natural order and were evenly matched with Great Wizards! However, those type of puppets had long vanished, and no one was able to obtain such a fearsome puppet anymore.

The full abilities of the hedgehog puppet before him were only equivalent to a Sixth-level Spell Caster.

“Wizard Merlin, be careful. This hedgehog puppet is powerful indeed!”

The flame sprite softly warned Merlin once again, for it had an unparalleled familiarity with the hedgehog puppet. The flame sprite hoped that Merlin would complete this obstacle and obtain the treasures for the cultivation of Fiery Collapse so that it would be set free, but it was unable to command this puppet. Therefore, it was powerless, and could only silently pray for Merlin's success.

"Whoosh."

After it opened its eyes, the hedgehog puppet did not seem to slow down at all, rushing toward Merlin without warning. It was so fast that even Merlin was a little taken aback.

Nevertheless, no matter how fast the hedgehog puppet was, it could not compete with Merlin's Flash Wind.

"Swoosh."

Merlin's figure immediately appeared behind the hedgehog puppet, after which he slammed down with one hand.

"Boom!"

Endless raging flames turned into a sea of fire which covered the hedgehog puppet. These flames contained the power of Fiery Collapse, and its might was extremely frightening.

Furthermore, this was the Fourth-level spell Incinerating Fire. Everything the spell encountered was reduced to ashes. This hedgehog puppet, even if it was transfigured from an extremely extraordinary material, had no way of withstanding the full explosive strength of Merlin's Incinerating Fire which was merged with Fiery Collapse. It became ashes in the blaze.

"It's defeated?"

After the flames had gradually died out, the flame sprite's mouth was agape as if it found it hard to believe. The powerful hedgehog puppet was reduced to ashes with barely a whimper?

However, after having seen Merlin's Incinerating Fire and Fiery Collapse which was combined into the spell, the flame sprite sensed that its own Fire Element seemed to be stirring.

“What a powerful spell! Even the hedgehog puppet could not defend against a single attack!”

Upon seeing that Merlin had defeated the hedgehog puppet, the flame sprite was astounded but it still smiled and said, “Wizard Merlin, you’ve defeated the hedgehog puppet so you may enter the stone room to cultivate the second form of Fiery Collapse!”

Merlin looked at the room and nodded, following which he came before the stone room.

“Rumble.”

After the hedgehog puppet had died, the stone door slowly opened, revealing a cramped room behind. Nonetheless, this small room was filled with precious treasures.

They were all Fire-type treasures. They were different in some aspects from when Merlin had cultivated the first form of Fiery Collapse back then, but mostly they just had a stronger effect.

Cultivating Fiery Collapse using these treasures would allow one to achieve the second form of Fiery Collapse quickly!

After looking through some of these treasures, Merlin bobbed his head. “Yes, I’ll be able to cultivate the second form of Fiery Collapse now, but I might need some time.”

Merlin looked at the flame sprite as he spoke calmly.

The flame sprite nodded. It knew very well about Fiery Collapse. Cultivation would take a long time. Even putting aside the rest of the process, the assimilation of the treasures alone would take no small amount of time.

Therefore, Merlin shut the stone doors, and patiently cultivated the second form of Fiery Collapse by himself in the stone room. The flame sprite waited outside, and would immediately know if anything happened.

In particular, the flame sprite's eyes revealed its extraordinary longing. It had been trapped in the ancient monument for far too long. Now that it finally had a rare chance to escape, naturally, it would be filled with desire.

One day, two days, three days...

In the blink of an eye, five days had gone by. However, in the stone room, Merlin seemed not to have moved at all. It was extremely quiet in the room, and there was not a single sound.

"What happened? Has the cultivation failed?"

The flame sprite was getting rather anxious. It had been five days but there was not the slightest movement in the stone room.

The flame sprite longed to enter the stone room and take a look, but Wizard Dowland had arranged everything in its place from the start, and the flame sprite had no way of entering the stone room.

Just as the flame sprite was becoming fretful and restless, the entire stone room began to tremble violently. At the same time, wisps of pale white flames emerged, burning from the cracks of the stone room.

"Pale white flames – this is the second form of Fiery Collapse!"

The flame sprite was overjoyed. It was familiar with Fiery Collapse. The first form was white flames whereas the second form consisted of pale white flames.

As for the third form of Fiery Collapse, it would be translucent. Therefore, seeing that pale white flames had appeared within the stone room, one could roughly determine that Merlin had succeeded in his cultivation.

"Rumble."

Indeed, Merlin's figure appeared before the flame sprite after the stone doors were opened. Although Merlin's complexion seemed to be somewhat drained, his eyes burned fervently, and he looked ecstatic.

“Is it a success?”

As soon as the flame sprite saw Merlin, it could not wait to ask.

“It’s a success!”

A smile tugged at the corner of Merlin’s mouth. Following that, he lightly stretched out a hand. His fingers were entwined with pale white flame – it was the second form of Fiery Collapse.

“You’ve succeeded indeed. Now we can head to the flame-shaped statue. Using the second form of your Fiery Collapse, activate the passage to leave the ancient monument!”

The flame sprite’s voice revealed its irrepressible excitement.

Merlin narrowed his eyes slightly yet he did not follow the flame sprite’s orders. Instead, he asked the flame sprite, “I wonder how would I cultivate the third form of Fiery Collapse?”

“The third form? Wizard Dowland did not speak of this back then but he had only mentioned that one could use the second form of Fiery Collapse to access a secret place within the flame-shaped statue. The third form of Fiery Collapse is hidden there.”

Upon hearing what the flame sprite had said, Merlin pondered the matter for a long moment. He had not received any clues regarding the third form of Fiery Collapse, and merely knew that he would still have to cultivate the third form in the ancient monument. In other words, the ancient monument might still contain treasures for the cultivation of the third form of Fiery Collapse.

“Let’s go to the flame-shaped statue and we’ll find out.”

The flame sprite could wait no longer and urged Merlin repeatedly.

After a long moment of consideration, Merlin did not have a better plan. His understanding of the ancient monument could never surpass the flame sprite’s. Thus, he followed behind the flame sprite as they hurriedly walked toward the flame-shaped statue.

Before the flame-shaped statue, Merlin stood quietly. The flame sprite hovered beside him.

“Channel the full flames of the second form of Fiery Collapse into the flame-shaped statue to open the passage and to obtain the third form of Fiery Collapse. If you don’t believe me, here’s a Runic Magic Circle which was left behind by Wizard Dowland back then.”

The flame sprite’s words caused Merlin to look at the flame-shaped statue. There were a few mysterious runes, which true enough, mentioned that the third form of Fiery Collapse was linked to the flame-shaped statue.

Although he still harbored some suspicions, Merlin did not overthink it and began to extend his fair palm. Immediately, pale white flames surged out rapidly from his palm.

The flames burned furiously, containing terrifying might in every wisp. If it was combined with Incinerating Fire, its power would become even more fearsome and would be comparable to the peak of the Seventh-level.

However, even such petrifying flames could not induce any changes in the flame-shaped statue as they burned steadily. This showed that the statue was made of a substantial material.

After a moment, a change finally occurred to the flame-shaped statue. Mysterious runes began to emerge quickly, corresponding with the runes on the flame sprite’s body.

“Crack.”

Finally, the runes on the flame sprite’s body disappeared. It began to bellow with laughter, and its voice was even shaky. Anyone could see that the flame sprite was excited.

“Haha, I’ve finally escaped. I can leave this d*mn place!”

The blaze on the flame sprite’s body flared up countless times over in an instant and it became a Flame Being which was the same size as Merlin. Its body was suspended in mid-air, which was a strange sight.

Merlin had always felt that something was wrong about the flame sprite, but he did not know what it was. In the moment the flame-shaped statue shattered, a beam of light shot toward Merlin.

This was a narrow beam of firelight which combined with Merlin's flames. In that instant, a message materialized in Merlin's mind.

It was this message that caused Merlin's face to change greatly as he turned his gaze toward the flame sprite.

"You need the flame sprite to cultivate the third form of Fiery Collapse!"

This was the message left in Merlin's mind. That trace of flame was obviously left behind by Wizard Dowland, only for some unknown reason, it was contained in the flame-shaped statue.

In fact, Merlin had already faintly guessed that this was all orchestrated by the flame sprite. It only wanted to leave the ancient monument so it had been deceiving Merlin from the start.

It was true that the cultivation method of the third form of Fiery Collapse was hidden in the flame-shaped statue. However, the flame sprite knew what it was long ago. Namely, the flame sprite itself was the price that needed to be paid for the cultivation.

In order to escape its bonds, the flame sprite slipped the message regarding the third form of Fiery Collapse left behind by Wizard Dowland into the flame-shaped statue. The flame-shaped statue was also the place where the flame sprite was trapped. Once it was shattered, the flame sprite would be set free.

This time, Merlin had been duped. In the instant that he broke open the flame-shaped statue, the flame sprite had already opened the passage and rushed outside at its greatest speed.

By the time Merlin learned of the message left behind by Wizard Dowland, it was too late. The flame sprite had already escaped from the ancient monument.

"Trying to escape? I'm afraid it's not that easy!"

Merlin was in a rage. He did not expect that the flame sprite would make a fool of him. In order to cultivate the third form of Fiery Collapse, what he needed was the flame sprite.

It was clear that the flame sprite had been captured by Wizard Dowland on purpose and left behind for future Spell Casters to cultivate the third form of Fiery Collapse.

It was just that the flame sprite had somehow learned of Wizard Dowland's plan and made meticulous preparations. Ultimately, Merlin had fallen for its trick, unwittingly releasing the flame sprite.

“Swish.”

Merlin's figure quickly flew through the passage as he gave chase. In terms of speed, he would not lose to anyone. As long as he could still sense the flame sprite's presence, he did not need to worry about losing track of it.

However, the flame sprite was also unbelievably fast. As soon as Merlin had rushed out of the ancient monument, he saw that the flame sprite had flown into the air, fleeing into the distance at top speed.

“Rainbow Wind!”

Merlin narrowed his eyes as his body gradually floated into the air as well, following which he transformed into a rainbow beam, chasing after the flame sprite into the distance.

One was in front, one was behind. The two figures had incredible speed. Merlin was able to lock onto the flame sprite's force. No matter where it fled, it could not escape Merlin's pursuit.

“Go on and run. I'll see how far you can run!”

Merlin was furious. The flame sprite was key to cultivating the third form of Fiery Collapse. Once it was gone, it would be impossible for Merlin to cultivate it.

Having been fooled by the flame sprite, Merlin was incomparably sullen. He did not say a word, only chasing after the flame sprite silently.

“This isn't good. If we keep on flying like this, I'll be caught in the end!”

The flame sprite glanced behind toward Merlin, full of agitation. It had initially thought that after a hard-won escape from the binds of the ancient monument, it could live its life in leisure, resuming its free life once again.

It had now successfully escaped from the binds of the ancient monument and had even left the ancient monument. Nevertheless, it could not obtain true freedom and liberty. Merlin's presence bitterly chasing from behind was enough to make the flame sprite experience a tremendous amount of pressure.

However, the flame sprite could do nothing else but escape, regardless of everything. As for battling against Merlin and chasing him away, the flame sprite had not considered it at all.

Although the flame sprite had great capabilities indeed, it was still lacking much in comparison to Merlin, especially since Merlin had merged Fiery Collapse with Incinerating Fire. Among Fire-type spells, there were very few who had a more powerful spell than Merlin's Fire-type spell.

The flame sprite did not even know that there was also a Flame Maxim in Merlin's Awareness. Overall, Fire-type spells were unlikely to harm Merlin.

The flame sprite no longer seemed to care in which direction it was going. It aimlessly picked a direction and escaped wildly while Merlin followed behind stubbornly. Without realizing it, the flame sprite and Merlin had lost track of where they were flying to.

Suddenly, a team of Spell Casters dressed in strange clothing appeared in the sky before them. Upon seeing the flame sprite, the Spell Casters were slightly shocked.

However, thereafter, one of them seemed to recognize that it was a flame sprite, something precious that one could only encounter by luck and not effort. Therefore, this strange group of Spell Casters instantly got into a peculiar formation, spreading out toward the flame sprite.

Chapter 403: Subzero Snowfield

The flame sprite's abilities were not very strong. In terms of pure strength, it was merely equivalent to a Fifth-level Spell Caster. Moreover, if a real battle began, it was not even at the standard of a Fifth-level Spell Caster.

The flame sprite was able to escape for such a long time only because of its unrivaled speed. Even after Merlin cast Flash Wind in addition to the Fourth-level Spell Rainbow Wind, he was barely able to keep up with the flame sprite.

However, this group of strangely-dressed Spell Casters had now formed into what looked like a formation of a Runic Magic Circle shaped like a pocket, trapping the flame sprite within.

The flame sprite began to panic and lost its wits, its body raging with flames once more. It was a sprite which had originally been born from flames, so naturally, it had perfected its control over fire.

“Boom!”

Endless flames began to rapidly cover the entire sky with shocking power. However, regardless of whether it was Merlin or that strange group of Spell Casters, they were not afraid in the slightest.

This was because Merlin had Fiery Collapse or his Defensive spells, and was not fearful of the flame sprite’s flame attacks at all. As for the strange group of Spell Casters, they had formed a gigantic formation that seemed to somehow combine their powers. Upon seeing the sweeping flames, they immediately cast an Ice-type spell.

Instantly, swathes of ice crystals began to form in mid-air. Even the flame sprite’s blaze was unable to escape and was frozen in place.

Merlin squinted slightly. These Spell Casters were completely different from the Spell Casters he had met before. They were merely Fourth-level Spell Casters but when grouped together, they were able to explode with the strength of a Sixth-level Spell Caster.

Even the flame sprite was forcefully halted by them as it was suppressed in a flash!

“Haha, so it’s a flame sprite. This is a treasure indeed. To think that we’ve encountered such a treasure during this trip. We should get a great reward if we bring it back, right?”

“That’s to be expected. A treasure like the flame sprite can only be found through sheer luck. It is our great fortune to be able to encounter it. However, there’s still someone there. What do we do?”

These Fourth-level Spell Casters only seemed to notice Merlin now. Following that, the leading Spell Caster waved one hand. “Kill him. It’s his bad luck that he has met us!”

However, before they could move, Merlin had struck. He had noticed the ruthless look on their faces and knew that they must have killed a certain number of Spell Casters. Their vicious nature was revealed in each of their eyes.

Spell Casters like these were significantly different from the Spell Casters Merlin usually met. It was as if he had arrived at an entirely new world.

“Darkness Illusory Death!”

Merlin did not hold back, and a blood-red light flashed over his body. The number of people he had killed was not few either. Seeing that they were about to attack, he did not need to spare their lives.

Therefore, a stretch of darkness descended. Almost every Spell Caster was instantly caught in an illusion. However, since this was Darkness Illusory Death, it also had an enigmatic power instead of merely causing illusions.

“Chi-chi-chi.”

In the boundless darkness, Darkness Element which was initially acting normally now seemed to transform into the sharpest weapons, slashing unceasingly at every Spell Caster.

These Spell Casters were caught in the illusion and were faced with the slashing and strangling of Darkness Element. They could not put up the slightest bit of resistance. This was clearly a massacre and not a fair fight. Once Merlin displayed Darkness Illusory Death in addition to being combined with Darkness Heart, it was rare for a Spell Caster to be able to resist the attack.

Therefore, even if there were more of these Spell Casters, it was of no use as they were facing a Darkness Wizard.

One after another, the Spell Casters dropped. There were even many who were still sunken in the illusion, having no clue of what was happening as they were slashed and strangled to death by Darkness Element.

Merlin looked at his palm. He could feel a cold, dark force coming from the dead Spell Casters and worming into Darkness Eye in his palm.

“Negative energy!”

Merlin mumbled in a low voice. Darkness Eye was able to absorb negative energy, increasing its own strength continuously. Merlin had long been warned by Wizard Leo to be careful of the negative energy of Darkness Eye for there were also dangers along with its benefits.

Its advantage was that Darkness Eye relied upon absorbing negative emotions to gradually grow stronger. There was the fourth form, the fifth form, and so on, which could be cultivated in the future. However, the risk was that the stronger Darkness Eye became, the harder it was to control, likely to ultimately lead to a backlash.

The area shrouded by Darkness Element had now turned into a killing field. The corpses of the Spell Casters fell to the ground, and the air was suffused with the acrid stench of blood.

Merlin did not kill all of them, leaving behind two Spell Caster for inquiries.

“Swish.”

Just then, the flame sprite grabbed the opportunity to escape. However, this time, Merlin would not let it escape so easily.

“Runic Heartprint, seal!”

Merlin’s eyes flashed coldly and the imprint of Runic Heartprint flickered constantly on his forehead. Following that, mysterious runes flew out abruptly, forming a Runic Magic Circle in mid-air.

This Runic Magic Circle fell from the sky, completely binding the flame sprite.

Although this was not a very powerful bind, without the power of a Seventh-level Spell Caster, one could forget about escaping the suppression of this Runic Magic Circle. It was more than enough to deal with the flame sprite!

Having captured the flame sprite, Merlin could breathe easily now. He dispelled Darkness Illusory Death, and the two Spell Casters he had intentionally spared recovered their senses.

As they saw before their eyes — Merlin and the mass of dead bodies on the ground — an alarmed look flashed across their eyes, and they said shakily, “O’ Wizard, we’re Spell Casters of Subzero Snowfield. We’ve offended you this time. Punish us as you will!”

“Subzero Snowfield?”

Merlin furrowed his brow. In the southern Spell Caster world, if he had killed so many Spell Casters and Fourth-level ones at that, he would have thought that they came from a powerful spell casters’ organization. However, it turned out it was a spell casters’ organization which he had not even heard of.

“Where’s Subzero Snowfield? What are you doing here?”

Merlin continued his inquiries.

The two Spell Casters raised their heads to look at Merlin. Although they thought it was a strange question, they did not dare to disobey, and answered quietly, “Subzero Snowfield is a massive country in Thule, a country consisting purely of Spell Casters...”

Before they had finished, Merlin’s mind flashed with understanding. He instantly recalled the extremely mysterious place to the north of the Kingdom of Blackmoon called the Ice Nation!

Within the Ice Nation, most Spell Casters constructed Ice-type spells. They researched Ice-type spells intensively throughout their lives. Pandora Demon Abilities and other knowledge regarding Ice-type spells were developed by them to the peak. Furthermore, they were very different from Spell Casters within the Kingdom of Blackmoon.

“You mean the Ice Nation?”

Merlin spoke slowly as he fixed his gaze upon the two Spell Casters.

The two Spell Casters nodded hurriedly. It looked like this was the Ice Nation of the legends. Due to its unusual geographical location, most people besides Spell Casters would have no way of surviving in it.

In addition, the Ice Nation was a land of bitter cold, and the various resources needed by Spell Casters were scarce indeed. Therefore, many Spell Casters were unwilling to go to the Ice Nation. Over time, the Ice Nation seemed to become cut off from the rest of the world, existing only in the ancient records of a few spell casters' organizations.

"I didn't think that I've reached the Ice Nation. Tell me about the situation here."

Merlin did not have much understanding regarding this fabled country. Still, the distance between the Kingdom of Blackmoon and the Ice Nation was far too great. He did not expect that having chased the flame sprite the entire way, he had arrived in the Ice Nation.

Nevertheless, this indirectly demonstrated that the flame sprite and Merlin could move at an incredible speed. In reality, by using Rainbow Wind to its full potential combined with Flash Wind, Merlin's speed was astounding. It was a wild chase that took such a long time. Reaching the Ice Nation was not too far-fetched.

Upon hearing Merlin's question about "the Ice Nation", the two Spell Casters cautiously asked, "Sir Wizard, is it your first time coming to Subzero Snowfield? In this part of the world, almost no one talks about the Ice Nation as we now call it Subzero Snowfield."

"What do you want to know about Subzero Snowfield?"

Merlin thought for a moment, then asked softly, "What powerful spell casters' organizations are there in Subzero Snowfield?"

"Spell casters' organizations?" The two Spell Casters laughed bitterly. "There are no such spell casters' organizations in Subzero Snowfield. In general, it's every Wizard for themselves. You might think that there are so many of us, when in fact we only banded together recently."

Gradually, as the two Spell Casters gave a detailed explanation, Merlin began to have a rough idea of what Subzero Snowfield was like.

Subzero Snowfield was a peculiar place. Here, there was nothing that could be called a treasure, and the various resources needed by Spell Casters were almost depleted. Therefore, ever since the Spell Casters' most glorious era, almost no one was willing to come here.

For the following thousands of years, a few Spell Caster began to gather here for various reasons, gradually forming Subzero Snowfield.

Although Subzero Snowfield was established and Spell Casters gathered here, there was not a single spell casters' organization. An organization like this would need a heritage and inheritances. Furthermore, as a mighty force, it would need to be supported by a colossal amount of resources.

Subzero Snowfield did not fulfill any one of those prerequisites, so there were no spell casters' organizations in Subzero Snowfield. Everyone here was a lone wolf, and would sometimes struggle ferociously over a small number of cultivation resources.

This was the reason for the intense hostility that surrounded everyone as Merlin had perceived when he saw them.

Seeing that Merlin was deep in thought, the two Spell Casters were on tenterhooks. In Subzero Snowfield, a fight could break out at any time, and even a single word of disagreement could lead to a fatal brawl. They were not like those Spell Casters with profound knowledge. Conversely, they were more like the brutal Elemental Swordsmen.

Therefore, they were paying close attention to Merlin's attitude, hoping that he would be satisfied with their answers and thus spare their lives.

Chapter 404: The Thousand Miles Snow Cave

Countless thoughts flashed across Merlin's mind. He was still carefully digesting the information he had just learned.

After a long moment, Merlin cast a glance at the two Spell Casters and slowly said, "The Spell Casters of Subzero Snowfield are all lone wolves and can further combine their attacks to trap the flame sprite. What did you do it for?"

Merlin was interested in their technique of a combined attack.

The faces of the two Spell Casters shifted slightly, but they still clenched their jaws and replied, “We exchanged for our combined spell attack from other Spell Casters after paying a certain price. In fact, it’s an Assembled casting tool. Each one of us holds a component, and we cast our spells through this casting tool. Thus, our power is magnified!

“As for why we did it? It was all because the second volume of the Neverending Book has been discovered. Rumor has it that it was obtained by a Fourth-level Spell Caster Nelson through chance, and he’s now in hiding within an approximate range of a thousand miles in this location. Many Spell Casters are already looking for him.”

Merlin’s outward expression did not change at all but he was actually surprised. Assembled casting tools were extremely rare. Nevertheless, this was not to say that they did not exist.

It was just that an Assembled casting tool as powerful as the Bell Space was far too rare. Furthermore, most Assembled casting tools functioned just as how these Spell Casters had used them. Through Assembled casting tools, many Spell Casters were able to unite their strength, fighting above their own level!

Still, what Merlin was most interested in was not the casting tool of course, but the second volume of the Neverending Book that the two Spell Casters had mentioned.

Within Merlin’s ring was the first volume of the Neverending Book. Merlin still remembered that there was some information regarding the second and third volume of the Neverending Book in the first volume.

According to the information in the first volume of the Neverending Book, the second volume should be on the shores of the Death Sea. However, Subzero Snowfield was a vast distance away from the Death Sea. How could the second volume appear here?

“It looks like the actual hiding place of the second volume of the Neverending Book is not in the Death Sea! The location given was likely a wrong one to deliberately mislead future generations.”

Merlin gradually discerned that not all Spell Casters were so “generous” to pass down an inheritance to other Spell Casters willingly.

Some remarkable Wizards even had a twisted sense of humor, intentionally marking out some spells or Pandora Demon Ability or something else to be in a secret place to mislead future Spell Casters.

It was very likely that the first volume of the Neverending Book which Merlin had obtained was just like this. He was misled by the true creator of the Neverending Book, and details such as the location marked within the book were all false information.

“By collecting all three volumes of the Neverending Book, there’s a high chance of obtaining a Flame Maxim. This should be a true fact for that remarkable Wizard must have left behind a Maxim. However, its precise location is falsely given!”

Merlin was determined to obtain the second volume of the Neverending Book! As long as he could gather the three volumes, he would be able to find some clue regarding the Maxim.

From Merlin’s perspective, the thing which he now lacked the most was a Maxim. Perhaps others would not have much use for a Maxim even after obtaining it, only passively “enjoying” some benefits of the Maxim. However, for Merlin, he was able to derive new spells.

“Tell me, where’s Nelson?”

Merlin glared at the two Spell Casters icily. He did not believe that these two Spell Casters would know nothing about Nelson for that would go against common sense. So many Spell Casters joining forces for the time being, merely for the sake of carrying out a search?

Therefore, the largest possibility was that these Spell Casters had received some information about Nelson, which was why they dared to assemble so many Spell Casters and headed out to look for him.

Looking at Merlin’s cold stare, the two Spell Casters knew that they had no way of hiding the truth. Initially, they had decided that if Merlin released them, they might still try their luck and give it a shot. Perhaps they might really come upon Nelson within a certain region.

It was only a shame that they could not deceive Merlin at all.

“Sir Wizard, if only you let us go, we’ll tell you everything we know about Nelson!”

One of the Spell Casters gnashed his teeth and spoke in a low voice.

“Slash.”

As soon as that Spell Caster spoke, Merlin raised one hand. A stream of Darkness Element turned into a sword and pierced straight into the throat of that Spell Caster. Blood flowed over the ground, emitting a pungent, grisly stench.

Seeing the violent death of his companion and Merlin’s decisiveness, the remaining Spell Caster no longer dared to bring up any conditions, and hurriedly said, “Nelson is hiding in the Thousand Miles Snow Cave. Many Spell Casters had rushed there. As we were slightly late in receiving the information, we’re only going there now to try our luck.”

“The Thousand Miles Snow Cave?”

Merlin nodded thoughtfully, following which the Runic Heartprint on his forehead rapidly set out a Binding Runic Magic Circle which immediately restricted the remaining Spell Caster.

“I’m not familiar with Subzero Snowfield, so you would have to lead the way to the Thousand Miles Snow Cave!”

Even though Merlin’s tone was very level, the Spell Caster did not dare disobey, much less voice out any sort of opinion. He could only pray that Merlin would let him go upon reaching the Thousand Miles Snow Cave.

Following that, Merlin directed his gaze at the flame sprite which was suppressed by the Runic Magic Circle. This was the flame sprite mentioned in the message left behind by Wizard Dowland, an essential part of cultivating the third form of Fiery Collapse.

“Flame sprite, why did you escape?”

The flame sprite laughed gleefully. “If I don’t escape, then should I have waited for you to use me in the future for the cultivation of the third form of Fiery Collapse?”

It looked like the flame sprite had known Wizard Downland's arrangement, which was why it schemed to escape. If it was not for Merlin, it would have already successfully escaped the ancient monument.

Nonetheless, Merlin did not plan to refine the flame sprite immediately. He would have to wait until he became a Seventh-level Spell Caster to do so. Only after he was able to fulfill the conditions of cultivating the third form of Fiery Collapse would he refine the flame sprite.

“Confine!”

Merlin cried out hoarsely. Instantly, the Runic Magic Circle rapidly shrank, transforming into a mysterious cloak which was glowing with light and runes as it fitted snugly around the flame sprite.

Under the suppression of the Runic Magic Circle, the flame sprite was stored away by Merlin.

“Whoosh...”

Merlin immediately grabbed the last remaining Spell Caster. His body flickered with vigorous Wind Elemental fluctuations, and the air whistled as he flew forward.

...

The spotless snow blanketed the entire canyon, but at the top of the canyon, there were many Spell Casters who had gathered. These Spell Casters were all looking at the towering peak opposite the canyon.

On the peak, there were uncountable large and small cave entrances. In particular, the passages within the caves snaked into different directions, making it hard to find any one person.

“That fellow Nelson had entered the Thousand Miles Snow Cave for what — five days by now? Yet there's not been a single sign of him.”

“The Thousand Miles Snow Cave lives up to its name indeed. The crisscrossed cave entrances in addition to the wandering passages — once one enters the Thousand Miles Snow Cave, it's equivalent to gaining countless opportunities. It was not surprising that Nelson would flee into the Thousand Miles Snow Cave.”

“It’s just that we don’t know who would be able to smoke Nelson out... Also, as more time passes, there are more and more powerful Spell Casters here.”

Before the Thousand Miles Snow Cave, there were many Spell Casters who remained motionless as their gazes shone with a strange fervor, fixing onto the caves opposite them.

“Thud!”

Suddenly, a figure descended from the sky and landed heavily onto the ground, almost causing the entire surface to quake. The other Spell Casters were dumbstruck.

“How alarming. Who is this?”

Countless gazes instantly gathered on the figure who had landed from the sky. The figure gradually became clear. It was a bald, middle-aged Spell Caster with no eyebrows. There was also a vicious scar where his left brow would be, and he looked very fiendish.

The bald Spell Caster eyed the Thousand Miles Snow Cave, following which he smiled and nodded. “Good, it looks like I’m not too late. Let me try and see if I can force Nelson to come out?”

With that, the bald Spell Caster drew in a sudden, deep breath, following which he opened his mouth and unleashed a roar.

“Nelson, show yourself!”

“Rumble.”

No one had predicted that the bald man’s voice would be so loud. The opposite Thousand Miles Snow Cave, which was also a mountain, was initially piled high with a thick cover of snow.

However, after the bald Spell Caster had unleashed his yell, the snow on the peak gradually began to collapse, following which it tumbled with a rumble down the peak.

This was an avalanche, the mention of which would turn anyone pale!

“Wretched fellow, who is this bald Spell Caster? He actually caused an avalanche?”

“Does he have a death wish? Once the thick layer of snow burst out into a massive avalanche, even a Seventh-level Spell Caster who had not made thorough preparations would be buried in the avalanche.”

Therefore, all the Spell Casters gnashed their teeth in resentment toward the bald Wizard. Nevertheless, his ferocious appearance in addition to the indistinct force of a Seventh-level Spell Caster that he emitted, was one of the reasons why the surrounding Spell Casters did not dare to act recklessly.

The bald Wizard seemed oblivious that he had aroused the anger of the crowd and continued doing as he liked. He opened his mouth and intense Wind Elemental fluctuations appeared around his body. He wanted to try screaming his throat out again.

“If you dare to make a single peep, you’ll die!”

Suddenly, a black-robed Spell Caster walked out from the crowd, a wide hood hiding his face, making him appear enigmatic. The previous warning was delivered by this black-robed Wizard who could not bear the unbridled “roaring” of the bald Spell Caster any longer. Otherwise, if a giant avalanche was induced, everyone could forget about entering the Thousand Miles Snow Cave.

“Heh heh, many have said this to me but I’m still here well and alive!”

The bald Wizard merely cast a glance at the black-robed Spell Caster, and paid him no mind, and roared again. Moreover, this time, his voice was even louder than before. Perhaps he might really force Nelson to come out but an avalanche might have already buried them all even before Nelson could show his face.

“It’s your death!”

The black-robed Wizard’s voice simmered with rage, after which his figure flashed and appeared before the bald Wizard in an instant. He opened his palm and slammed it forward in one vicious stroke.

One could even catch a glimpse of a strange, blood-red eye, blinking unceasingly in his palm...

Chapter 405: Dark Fire Incarnate I

The bald Wizard was a Seventh-level Spell Caster who was deemed untouchable in Subzero Snowfield.

When he sensed the intimidating aura coming from this black-robed Wizard and saw the blood-red vertical eye in the center of his palm, the bald Wizard suddenly felt a dreadful chill in his bones, like plunging into ice-cold water.

This sense of imminent death had not been felt by the bald Wizard for a very long time. Ever since he became a Seventh-level Spell Caster, he slaughtered all Spell Casters who had previously offended him, and his brutal reputation was feared by many.

When he heard that someone had gotten hold of the second volume of the Neverending Book, the bald Wizard immediately rushed over. He had little to no interest in the Fourth- to Sixth-level spells inside the second volume of the Neverending Book as his true intention was to find some information about the third volume.

What the bald Wizard was ultimately seeking was the legendary third volume of the Neverending Book, which supposedly contained many Pandora Demon Abilities. It was because if a Seventh-level Spell Caster did not have any Pandora Demon Ability, his powers would be vastly inferior to others.

Unfortunately for the bald Wizard, he had not even managed to obtain the Neverending Book, not to mention the second volume from Nelson, before he found himself in peril.

“Darkness Eye, disintegrate!”

The black-robed Spell Caster uttered with a cold voice. Following that, a crimson light wrapped around the bald Wizard, and he felt as if his body was being squeezed strongly all around.

“Splat.”

The bald Wizard, a Seventh-level Spell Caster, did not even get the chance to cast his spell when his entire body exploded violently into a bloody mess. Fresh blood spurted into the air and fell to the ground like raindrops.

He was dead. Just like that, with just a single blow, the bald Wizard was dead. His death was a stark contrast to his previously untouchable reputation.

“Sure enough, don’t be arrogant. The more arrogant you are, the faster you die!”

A few Seventh-level Spell Casters hid among the crowd. They, too, had initially planned to enter the Thousand Miles Snow Cave and force Nelson to hand over the second volume of the Neverending Book.

However, these Spell Casters were much more discreet. They did not stride in like a king but instead blended into the crowd. As a result, the arrogant bald Wizard was killed by the black-robed figure.

“Tsss.”

Everyone who was present took in a sharp intake of cold air. Some also recognized the power wielded by the mysterious black-robed figure. It was the legendary special Pandora Demon Ability Darkness Eye.

“It’s Darkness Eye. Even the legendary accursed power has appeared!”

“Darkness Eye is truly powerful. To be able to kill a Seventh-level Spell Caster so easily without any resistance, its power is terrifying!”

“It’s best not to provoke this Wizard... Since when did such a mysterious and powerful Wizard appear in Subzero Snowfield?”

Many of the Spell Casters were discussing fervently among themselves, yet no one had any intention to challenge the black-robed figures’ Darkness Eye. The power level displayed by the black-robed figure was fitting for Darkness Eye!

“True enough, Darkness Eye has stopped its backlash... Or perhaps, after I’ve constructed the Fourth-level Darkness spell, Darkness Heart had finally managed to properly achieve the second stage, so the negative energy emitted by Darkness Eye are absorbed by Darkness Heart and converted into Darkness-type Magic Power!”

The black-robed figure mumbled to himself. He was none other than Merlin, who came from afar!

Merlin’s Darkness Heart went through another transformation after combining with the Fourth-level Darkness Spell Darkness Illusory Death. The resulting power from the combination was particularly terrifying.

Moreover, the existence of Darkness Heart made it difficult for the negative energy emitted by Darkness Eye to affect Merlin. Therefore, Merlin no longer suffered from its backlash while wielding the third form of Darkness Eye, nor did he need the Flame Maxim to help suppress Darkness Eye.

This is unless Merlin opened the seal placed by Wizard Leo on the fourth form of Darkness Eye, then there could be an overwhelming backlash which required the suppression of the Flame Maxim.

Otherwise, in general, Darkness Heart was able to absorb some of the negative energy and convert it into Magic Power. Thus, in that sense, Merlin was more suited to cultivate Darkness Eye compared to Wizard Leo.

After killing the bald Wizard, Merlin swept his gaze over the crowd. Naturally, he was aware that there were some Seventh-level Spell Casters hiding among the crowd, but it appeared that none of them dared to show themselves. Merlin’s “viciousness” earlier had made them extra cautious toward him.

After all, Subzero Snowfield was not like the southern Spell Caster world. Here, it was the survival of the fittest, so it was normal for a powerful Spell Caster to kill a weaker Spell Caster. Unless there was a major conflict of interest, no one was willing to provoke a powerful Wizard like Merlin.

“The Thousand Miles Snow Cave, is it?”

Merlin narrowed his eyes. He could sense the deep horror within the Thousand Miles Snow Cave. Inside, there were a countless number of intersections and endless passages. It would be very difficult to find someone hiding inside the cave.

“Whoosh.”

Merlin rose into the air and entered the Thousand Miles Snow Cave.

“Finally, he’s gone!”

“We can also go in now but make sure we don’t run into a confrontation with such a person.”

Once they saw that Merlin had entered the Thousand Miles Snow Cave, the more powerful Spell Casters began to emerge from the crowd. In order to obtain the second volume of the Neverending Book as well as trace the location of the third volume, they would attempt the mission despite the danger it posed.

In the blink of an eye, numerous Spell Casters had entered the Thousand Miles Snow Cave, each manipulating their respective abilities to search for the elusive Nelson, who was holding the second volume of the Neverending Book.

...

Inside the Thousand Miles Snow Cave, Merlin was fully engaging his Mind Power. Although Mind Power of the peak of the Fifth-level was not considered particularly powerful, within this crooked, crisscrossed cave, even a stronger Mind Power would not be of any additional help.

Merlin was merely engaging his Mind Power to observe his surroundings. Inside the cave, it seemed that the deeper he ventured, the colder it became. In fact, the speed at which Merlin’s Ice-type Spell Model was accumulating Magic Power began to accelerate rapidly.

“I wonder where Nelson hid? Additionally, the Spell Casters who came into the Thousand Miles Snow Cave much earlier may have found some of Nelson’s tracks. If I can find their tracks, then I can find Nelson!”

Merlin knew that searching for someone in such a complex environment was an uphill task, hence following others was as good as any plan.

Thus, Merlin began to carefully examine some of the footprints left behind in the cave. Following the muddled footprints, he gradually ventured deeper into the Thousand Miles Snow Cave.

“Rumble.”

Suddenly, the entire cave seemed to shake, and a burning smell filled the cave passages, accompanied by scorching heat.

“Fire-type spells?”

There was a trace of uneasiness on Merlin’s face because he knew that in Subzero Snowfield, Ice-type spells were more commonly found. Due to environmental factors, it was extremely rare for Spell Casters to construct Fire-type spells. Even if there was, they usually originated from outside of Subzero Snowfield.

However, the Fire Elements fluctuations were beyond the level of an average Spell Caster, and could only be cast by a Seventh-level Spell Caster.

“Maybe someone has found Nelson!”

Merlin did not hesitate and began to head in the direction of the Fire-type spell explosion. The Wind Element flashed around his body and he transformed into a colorful ray of light, flying forward inside the pitch-black cave.

At the same time, a countless number of Spell Casters, too, like Merlin, flew toward the direction of the Fire Elements fluctuations.

...

Inside the Thousand Miles Snow Cave, three Spell Casters stood in a triangle, each of them watching the others warily. The situation tensed.

Behind them, a Spell Caster with tattered clothing was leaning against the cave wall, his body unmistakably weakened. He was panting heavily so it was apparent that he had suffered a massive injury and could not move.

Despite the supposedly massive injury suffered by this weakened Spell Caster, his eyes were constantly darting around, revealing a sly intention. However, the triangular formation of the three Spell Casters had blocked off all the exits.

All three Spell Casters looked unyielding, and powerful auras emanated from their bodies. They were all Spell Casters above the Seventh-level, and one of them dressed in a long red robe had a layer of flames burning all over his body.

“Damn you, Wizard Bass, are you really going to compete against the two of us? You know very well that you won’t be able to leave with the Neverending Book!”

These two Spell Casters had subtly teamed up, their greedy gazes fixated on the quaint book in Wizard Bass’ hand. It was the second volume of the Neverending Book, with sacred white rays glowing all around it.

The second volume of the Neverending Book had fallen into the hands of this red-robed Wizard Bass. He was not a Spell Caster from Subzero Snowfield but had traveled here from afar a few years ago.

“Hehe. My spell earlier had shaken the entire Thousand Miles Snow Cave. Anyone who’s not an idiot would be able to guess that we ran into some trouble, and once they arrive, none of us would get the Neverending Book. Therefore, I think we should leave immediately. Once outside the Thousand Miles Snow Cave, we can fight it out!”

Wizard Bass said with a sneer. He already made up his mind that upon reaching the cave exit, he would flee from Thousand Miles Snow Cave at all cost. Once he escaped from Subzero Snowfield, no one would be able to stop him.

Otherwise, in the face of the combined effort between two Seventh-level Spell Casters, he would be exhausted to death inside the Thousand Miles Snow Cave, never to make it out.

Wizard Bass was betting on the chance that these two Seventh-level Spell Casters had absolute confidence of blocking him at the exit. Otherwise, they might rather wait until more Spell Casters arrived and snatch the second volume of the Neverending Book amidst the chaos.

However, waiting for the chaos was a risky option as they did not know how powerful the other Spell Casters inside Thousand Miles Snow Cave were. If an Eighth- or Ninth-level Spell Caster appeared, then they definitely would not stand a chance.

“Let him go!”

The two Spell Caster dared not delay any longer. By allowing Bass to escape, they still had a big chance to obtain the second volume of the Neverending Book.

Whereas if they waited for the other Spell Casters to join in the scuffle, it would be chaos, and no one could be confident of obtaining the Neverending Book.

“Hehe.”

Wizard Bass’ plan was successful. His figure flashed and flew directly toward the cave exit.

“Fiery Collapse!”

An icy voice sounded, and at the same time, pale white flames began to burn fiercely, turning the pitch-black passage almost as bright as day.

From within the burning flames, a black-robed figure could be faintly seen standing in front of Wizard Bass.

Chapter 406: Dark Fire Incarnate II

“Fire?”

Wizard Bass was momentarily stunned. He was extremely proficient in Fire-type spells and had constructed his own spells until he became a Seventh-level Spell Casters. Fire-type spells, in particular, was one of his strongest element.

Yet, looking at the pale white flames released by the black-robed Wizard, he felt a sense of acute danger. It felt as if once he came into contact with the flames, there would be catastrophic damage.

It was a feeling which Wizard Bass had not felt in a very long time.

“Retreat!”

Wizard Bass did not hesitate and retreated backward. After all, he was a Seventh-level Spell Caster with lightning fast reflexes. The moment the thought formed in his mind, a spell had been released. His figure retreated backward in a flash and away from the burning flames.

Seventh-level Spell Casters derived spells that were best suited for them, so the level of compatibility was very high with some even achieving a hundred percent compatibility. Merlin, too, had been constructing Fourth-level spells with one hundred percent compatibility.

There were no essential differences between self-derived Fourth- and Seventh-level spells, but very few Spell Casters could derive new spells at the Fourth-level.

No matter how talented an elementary school student could be, it was impossible to understand calculus without slowly accumulating the knowledge that it comprised. Similarly, with the accumulation of profound knowledge and experience in constructing spells, it was much easier to derive a spell upon reaching the Seventh-level.

In terms of quality, however, as long as the spells were self-derived, there were no fundamental differences between them. The only difference would be their power levels.

Another benefit of self-derived spells was that the reaction time to cast a spell was nearly zero. On the other hand, previous spells, due to lack of perfect compatibility, would have a slight time lag. The time lag was usually very short that it was almost indiscernible.

Nevertheless, in a life-or-death moment, that tiny time lag was enough to determine the outcome of a battle. If Wizard Bass had not been a Seventh-level Spell Caster, there was no way he could have escaped the attack of Fiery Collapse earlier.

“Who the heck...?”

Wizard Bass was still a little nervous as he watched the black-robed figure gradually emerge from behind the pillar of flames.

“Hand over the Neverending Book!”

The mysterious black-robed Wizard was still covered in a layer of menacing flames, almost like an embodiment of fire. Of course, it was Merlin, who had entered the Thousand Miles Snow Cave earlier.

Merlin had followed the strong Fire Elements fluctuations and rushed here. Unexpectedly, he was the first to arrive and witnessed the exchange between Wizard Bass and the two other Seventh-level Spell Casters.

However, Merlin kept himself hidden in the dark. Since Wizard Bass and the others were fully focused on guarding against one another, they did not notice that there was someone else lurking in the dark. It was up till the point that Wizard Bass tried to leave that Merlin showed himself.

Since the Neverending Book was in Wizard Bass’ hands, Merlin decided to act immediately. However, he did not expect that his sudden attack would be dodged by Wizard Bass.

On the other hand, Wizard Bass just had a close brush with death and was extremely wary of the mysterious black-robed Wizard. The flames earlier made him shudder in fear. It was definitely not the kind of force that he could handle by himself.

Nevertheless, obtaining the Neverending Book had not been easy for Wizard Bass either. He had to track down Nelson for many days and nights to obtain the Neverending Book, and even devised a plan to stop two Seventh-level Spell Casters from attacking.

Unpredictably, in the end, he was just one stroke short of success!

“Heh heh, you’re not the only one who wants the Neverending Book!”

Wizard Bass was trying his best to delay time because the black-robed Wizard was far too intimidating. He did not have the confidence to challenge the black-robed Wizard alone, so the best he could do was to delay time and wait for the other Spell Casters to arrive.

He believed that the fluctuation earlier would have attracted a lot of attention from the Spell Casters inside Thousand Miles Snow Cave. At this point, Wizard Bass could only hope that he would benefit from the imminent chaos.

The catch, however, was that even he himself was not confident that he would be able to hold onto the Neverending Book amidst the chaos. Nevertheless, it was his only hope!

“Unwilling, I see?”

A cold look flashed across Merlin’s eyes. He must get the Neverending Book, no matter what!

“Boom!”

It was only a single step from Merlin yet it felt like a huge stomp directly on Wizard Bass’ heart. With a light flick of Merlin’s finger, infinite darkness enveloped Wizard Bass, trapping him in complete darkness.

“Illusion?”

Wizard Bass was shocked as he recognized the illusion at once. The revelation made him even more shaken because he was a Seventh-level Spell Caster who had achieved the Mind Power of the peak of the Seventh-level. Most illusions were unable to affect him.

Yet with just a gentle flick of his finger, Merlin had cast an unknown Darkness Spell which managed to trap a Seventh-level Spell Caster like him in an illusion although the entrapment only lasted for a second before Wizard Bass managed to regain his consciousness.

Nevertheless, in a battle involving Seventh-level Spell Casters, one moment was all it took to determine the outcome!

“Incinerating Fire!”

The icy voice rang out again, and a faint gulp appeared on Wizard Bass’ face. He had been entrapped by the illusion for just a second but when he regained consciousness, the opponent’s Fire-type Spell had been activated.

This time, Wizard Bass was no longer able to escape. Pillars of fire had formed a circle around him and trapped him within. The scorching temperatures climbed, slowly draining his Defensive-type spell.

“Darkness Eye, disintegrate!”

Merlin extended his palm again and pressed downward. A crimson ray shot out and surrounded Wizard Bass. The Defensive-type spell on his body shattered immediately, allowing the white flames to engulf him and turned him into ashes within seconds.

Within a short time, Merlin had managed to kill a Seventh-level Spell Caster. It shook the other two Seventh-level Wizards to the core. Even if they joined forces, the most they had hoped to achieve was overpower Wizard Bass. It was downright impossible for them to kill him.

Contending and killing were two completely different concepts. Usually, the intention to kill required a person to be much more powerful than his opponent and had an absolute advantage over him in order to succeed.

Despite Merlin using only a short period of time to kill Wizard Bass, he had already used Fiery Collapse, Darkness Illusory Death, and Darkness Eye, all three of which were his strongest abilities.

It was with these three strongest abilities that he was able to kill Wizard Bass in such a short time as it was not easy to vanquish a Seventh-level Spell Caster.

Once he killed Wizard Bass, Merlin caught his opponent’s ring in his hand and examined it with his Mind Power. Very quickly, he found a quaint book shrouded in a sacred aura. Lo and behold, it was the second volume of the Neverending Book. It was exactly the same aura that he sensed previously while obtaining the first volume, which proved that it was indeed the Neverending Book.

Merlin kept the ring securely, and turned around but narrowed his eyes again the next moment. Apparently, while he was examining the ring, the two remaining Seventh-level Spell Casters had blocked his way out.

“What? You want the Neverending Book in my hands as well?”

A chilling look flashed across Merlin's face. Two Seventh-level Spell Casters were indeed more troublesome to handle. Even so, it was just a minor inconvenience as he was confident that he would be able to eliminate these two Seventh-level Spell Casters within a short period of time.

It was for the sake of the Neverending Book, especially combined with the second and third volumes, to get the maxim left behind by the mysterious Wizard. That was Merlin's true purpose.

Therefore, Merlin would not easily give up on the Neverending Book, regardless of the obstacles.

Just as Merlin's murderous intent began to build up and was about to act, jovial laughter reverberated from inside the cave. "Haha, I'm not too late!"

"Swish."

When the sound faded, a burly middle-aged Wizard slowly emerged from the passage and gazed at Merlin and the other two Seventh-level Spell Casters.

Seeing the weakened Wizard leaning on the cave wall behind Merlin, a joyful look appeared on his face. "Nelson? I see, that means one of you have gotten the Neverending Book?"

The middle-aged Wizard did not emit a particularly dangerous vibe but the two Spell Casters' expression changed rapidly upon seeing him. In a low voice, they said, "Mad Wizard Mobundo!"

"Oh? There are people who still remember me? Not bad, not bad, it must be rare to find a such a loyal and kind Wizard who is willing to do good deeds like myself..."

The Spell Caster known as Mad Wizard said with a twinkling smile yet it sounded extremely sarcastic in the ears of those two Spell Casters. Both their faces showed a weird expression.

Mad Wizard Mobundo was a shameless, unscrupulous Wizard whom many Spell Casters were unwilling to go against. This was because Mobundo would do whatever it took in order to win. Normally, this was not frowned upon but Mobundo disregarded even the basic dignity of Wizards. He even used various despicable tactics such as poisoning and sneak attacks. In other words, there was nothing he would not do.

Once, he even dressed up as a woman... The fact that a Wizard like him dared to claim to be loyal and kind, literally made the two Spell Casters who knew him to feel ashamed to be called Spell Casters.

“Three!”

Merlin looked at Mad Wizard Mobundo calmly. He did not sense a particularly strong threat coming from him.

However, with the appearance of Mobundo, more Spell Casters began to appear. All of them were Seventh-level Spell Casters, and one after another, it came up to eight Seventh-level Spell Casters!

These eight Spell Casters all knew that the Neverending Book was in Merlin’s hands, so their gazes were locked on Merlin. Nevertheless, no one dared to act because they could feel the extreme danger emanating from Merlin. No one wanted to be the first to strike.

“Eight?”

Merlin took a deep breath. At this moment, his heart was filled with adrenaline. So, what if there were eight Seventh-level Spell Casters? He would triumph over all of them!

Chapter 407: Dark Fire Incarnate III

Eight pairs of eyes were locked on Merlin. The Spell Casters were, to some extent, imperceptibly accumulating their powers. In order to obtain the Neverending Book, these Spell Casters from Subzero Snowfield were ready for the worst-case scenario.

“Kill him!”

Suddenly, without warning, a Seventh-level Spell Caster led the first attack. Wind Elements started to flash on his body and subsequently converged into a strong tornado. Inside the tornado were also some ice crystals.

This was a combination of a Wind-type spell and an Ice-type spell, and the resulting power was astounding! Even though it did not have any Pandora Demon Ability, its power was no less than an average Pandora Demon Ability.

The truth was, once Spell Casters reached the Seventh-level, their ability levels would begin to differ greatly from one another. One reason was that Seventh-level Spell Casters with Pandora Demon Ability would be able to cultivate their Pandora Demon Ability to its third form or third stage, thus they would witness a massive leap in their abilities.

Nevertheless, Spell Casters with Pandora Demon Abilities were of course very few in number. The other reason for the ability gap between other Seventh-level Spell Casters was due to the power level of their self-derived spells.

If a Spell Caster was proficient at constructing spells and spent the time to slowly derive a spell, it would be extremely powerful compared to Spell Casters who just rushed through the process.

This Spell Caster who led the first attack had derived a very powerful spell, one beyond the level of an average Seventh-level Spell Caster!

“Crash crash crash.”

A huge tornado filled with ice crystals as sharp as jagged rocks hurtled violently onto Merlin’s body. Merlin, however, was ready for the attack and already cast Rippling Armor. When hit, Rippling Armor released waves after waves of ripples that dispersed continuously, thus reducing the impact of the attack.

The power of Rippling Armor was rock-solid but with the infusion of Pandora Demon Ability Fuse Earth, its defensive power was even more impenetrable. It was impossible for a Seventh-level spell to break the defense of Rippling Armor.

Even the most powerful Seventh-level spell would only end up consuming more of Merlin’s Magic Power. This was of course unless the spell contained a Pandora Demon Ability but then again, that would no longer be considered a mere Seventh-level spell.

The ripples on Rippling Armor gradually weakened and disappeared, which meant that the attack had been completely dispersed without causing any harm to Merlin.

“Swish.”

Merlin made his move at the exact moment his opponent attacked. His bodily movement was indecipherably fast. In the blink of an eye, he was already right in front of the Spell Caster who led the first attack.

“Darkness Illusory Death!”

Merlin was not targeting this Spell Caster alone. He knew that although the remaining seven Seventh-level Spell Casters had not launched their attack, they were simply waiting to gauge his abilities.

However, if one of them was being threatened, Merlin was sure that the other Spell Casters would not stand down. Therefore, he decided to keep them preoccupied with their own predicament, and in the meantime, kill as many as he could as fast as possible. Any one less would help reduce Merlin’s burden later.

After all, not everyone could stand up against eight Seventh-level Spell Casters without feeling unnerved.

“Fuu...”

Darkness descended abruptly and turned the entire passageway pitch-black. This pitch-black darkness was woven together by thick Darkness Elements and was not a mere illusion.

In fact, once a Spell Caster’s Mind Power had achieved the Seventh-level, it was very difficult to entrap them in an illusion. At best, they would only be slightly disorientated, and would recover soon enough.

Merlin’s purpose of casting Darkness Illusory Death was not to cause any harm to these Spell Casters but only to disorient them. Once they were disoriented, even for a split second, he would have the advantage to initiate the first move. He could also focus his power and kill at least one Seventh-level Spell Caster.

“Sh*t, this is a Hallucinating spell, act quickly!”

Some of the Spell Casters immediately sensed that something was wrong. Merlin’s tactic was meant to give himself an opportunity but these Seventh-level Spell Casters were almost as old as time, hence they would not be fooled so easily.

However, despite their realization, it was not an easy task to regain consciousness. Darkness Elements had enveloped the entire passage, so everyone who was inside the passage would be affected by Darkness Illusory Death.

Just Darkness Elements alone would not cause them any harm but instead, the time spent being disorient would pose the greatest danger.

“Incinerating Fire!”

With a slight narrowing of Merlin’s eyes, he transformed into an embodiment of raging fire with flames covering his entire body. Then, he pointed a finger toward the Spell Caster who had made the first attack.

“Boom!”

Endless surging flames began to burn rapidly on this Spell Caster, frantically attacking his Defensive spell.

Soon enough, the Defensive spell collapsed, and a sliver of fear appeared on the face of that Seventh-level Spell Caster. He did not expect that despite the threat posed by eight Seventh-level Spell Casters, he would be killed so quickly.

“No...”

With one final wail, the Spell Caster was swallowed by the column of pale white flames...

“Damn it!”

When the other Spell Casters recovered from the illusion, it was already too late. Merlin had already killed a Seventh-level Spell Caster at top speed. Some of their faces appeared gloomy because the killing of a Seventh-level Spell Caster had caused some apprehension and anxiety among them.

This was because at some point, they might also be killed by Merlin’s lightning speed!

“Everyone, let’s not hesitate anymore. This person is very powerful and can kill any of us in a moment’s notice. If we don’t join forces now, I’m afraid we’ll be in trouble today!”

The remaining seven Spell Casters quickly formed an alliance. Merlin’s tactic had shocked and repulsed them. At the same time, it also made them feel extremely threatened, so it was easier for them to join forces.

“Darkness Illusory Death!”

Merlin did not hesitate and cast Darkness Illusory Death again. For a moment, Darkness Elements filled the entire cave but this time, these seventh Spell Casters were prepared for it. They released their Mind Power at full blast, their concentration locked on Merlin.

Their strong Mind Power managed to pierce through Darkness Illusory Death, and the Darkness Elements gradually collapsed and disappeared. Merlin’s attack did not work.

On the contrary, these seven Seventh-level Spell Casters released a party platter of attacks as spells filled the air and began to rain heavily on Merlin.

Merlin’s Rippling Armor emitted a huge glow, and at the same time, Merlin gently extended his palm. This time, everyone could clearly see the oddity in his palm.

A blood-red vertical eye seemed to be embedded in Merlin’s palm. The eye was blinking continuously, and whoever crossed gaze with this blood-red eye felt a heart-faltering sense of fear in their hearts that could not be dismissed.

“Is that the legendary Darkness Eye from the Great Legend of Darkness?”

Even though the Spell Casters in Subzero Snowfield were isolated from the rest of the world, there were occasional Spell Casters who came to them from the outside, so naturally, they knew of the legendary infamous Darkness Eye.

It was an accursed power, and any Spell Caster who cultivated the Darkness Eye would not have a pleasant outcome awaiting them. Yet, every Spell Caster who cultivated Darkness Eye had been incomparably fearsome.

Darkness Eye represented something far more terrifying – wherever Darkness Eye appeared, darkness and murder would follow!

“Darkness Eye, dispel!”

Faced with the endless spell attacks, Merlin dared not act carelessly. He did not want Rippling Armor to withstand so many Seventh-level spells. Even though Rippling Armor was powerful enough to withstand the attacks of Seventh-level spells, there were too many spells, so he was afraid that his replenishment of Magic Power might not be able to keep up with its consumption. In that situation, it would be dangerous for him.

If Rippling Armor disappeared, no matter how strong he was, Merlin would be decimated into fine powder by that barrage of spells.

Therefore, Merlin wielded the third form of Darkness Eye so that it could at least reduce, if not completely dispel, the attacks from the seven opponents.

A crimson ray flew forward and transformed into a large net, aggressively tackling the barrage of incoming spells.

“Hum hum hum.”

The crimson ray glowed bright red as the attacking spells began to weaken, with some even fizzling completely. Facing Darkness Eye, many spells could not contend against its strength.

Even the strongest spells would only cause Darkness Eye to consume some additional Magic Power at most!

With Darkness Eye blocking the barrage of spells head-on, Merlin began to feel a great amount of pressure. At the same time, the blood-red eye in his palm seemed to be emitting a mournful wail. Although the third form of Darkness Eye was capable of withstanding Seventh-level spells with ease, it could only hold up for a short while in face of such a constant siege.

“Crack.”

Finally, the crimson light ray split apart. The blood-red eye in Merlin's palm appeared to be gravely injured and became lethargic. Even the crimson ray faded slightly.

Darkness Eye was indeed gravely injured as its third form was incapable of withstanding so many Seventh-level spell attacks. However, Merlin could also distinctly feel that there was a stronger force within Darkness Eye which was trying to break free of its bindings.

This force, once released, would not allow any of these Seventh-level Spell Casters to escape unscathed. In fact, even an Eight-level Spell Caster was not a noteworthy opponent!

In his heart, Merlin knew very succinctly that the vicious force inside Darkness Eye should not be released. It was the fourth form of Darkness Eye which had been sealed by Wizard Leo.

Once the seal was broken, an unparalleled force would burst forth from within. Back then, Wizard Leo had used the fourth form of Darkness Eye to kill a powerful Eighth-level Spell Caster!

However, despite having obtained unparalleled power, Wizard Leo paid a heavy price for it. Not only had his body become skin and bones but he was also killed by the backlash from Darkness Eye when he wielded the fourth form for the second time.

Unless it was the last resort, Merlin would not break open the fourth form of Darkness Eye. It was his final trump card, one that he would not use unless and until he was faced with a life-or-death situation and had no other way out.

Right now, the spell attacks had been greatly weakened and his Ripping Armor had not shown any indication of failure. The spells were still landing relentless on the armor, but all they did was stir up waves of ripples on the armor.

"It's my turn!"

Merlin withstood the first wave of attacks from the seven Spell Casters, and now the Runic Heartprint began to appear subtly in between his eyebrows.

Chapter 408: Dark Fire Incarnate IV

"Fire!"

With Merlin's low growl, raging flames began to pour out and melded into a pack of huge flaming dragons. These dragons then flew toward the seven Spell Casters.

Merlin's Incinerating Fire was on par with the peak power of a Seventh-level spell, so these Spell Casters did not dare to overlook it and began to cast their individual spells to resist its attack.

However, casting Incinerating Fire was merely a distraction to buy time for Merlin to set up a Runic Magic Circle. The Runic Heartprint gradually glowed brighter and became more visible.

"Binding Circle, seal!"

Merlin's Runic Heartprint contained an array of Runic Magic Circles such as Attacking Circles, Defensive Circles, Suppressing Circles, and so on. However, most of them required a long time to set up.

After all, the Runic Heartprint was not a Runic Magic Disc, so it was not a pre-prepared arrangement. The Runic Heartprint was created by the Great Wizard Fidel's profound understanding of runes. It was capable of storing countless numbers of Runic Magic Circles, and these could be set up by a completely rune-illiterate Spell Caster.

Nevertheless, truly strong Runic Magic Circles still required a long time to be laid out, thus Merlin could only search for a relatively suitable Runic Magic Circle that only required a short time to be set up.

Of course, the Binding Circle was still strong enough to bind a Seventh-level Spell Caster!

"Hum hum hum."

Flecks of mysterious runes emerged from the Runic Heartprint and rapidly coalesced into a mysterious Runic Magic Circle. Following a point from Merlin's finger, the Runic Magic Circle flew toward one of the Seventh-level Spell Casters.

"Sh*t, it's a Runic Magic Circle!"

“This bastard can also cast Runic Magic Circles?”

These Seventh-level Spell Casters became even more flabbergasted. The techniques wielded by Merlin far exceeded the limits of an average Spell Caster. Moreover, the power of his Pandora Demon Abilities, spells, and now Runic Magic Circle, were all extremely powerful, making it seem like Merlin would not be defeated despite the odds of seven to one.

In addition, these Spell Casters did not seem to have noticed that Merlin was not actually a Seventh-level Spell Caster or even a Fourth-level Spell Caster. If they knew the truth, he would have been just another worthless low-level Spell Caster in their eyes...

“Boom!”

The Runic Magic Circle slammed down mercilessly and transformed into an invisible cage, confining one of the Spell Casters within.

Breaking a Runic Magic Circle too, required a long amount of time. Therefore, when Merlin saw the effectiveness of the first Runic Magic Circle, he began to repeat his steps. Relying on the power of the Runic Heartprint, he set up another Binding Circle and imprisoned another Spell Caster.

“Damn it, since when did such a powerful Spell Caster emerge in Subzero Snowfield? Not only does he have powerful spells but he also has mysterious Pandora Demon Abilities and can set up powerful Runic Magic Circles in a short time. Who could defeat him?”

The remaining Spell Casters appeared in despair and lost their will to fight. In the first place, their temporary alliance was a fragile one which was formed for a common goal only.

Once they saw that it was hopeless to defeat Merlin, the thought of retreating immediately formed in their minds. The Mad Wizard Mobundo, especially, was incontestably the most thick-skinned as he was the first to run away.

“Go, go, go! The Neverending Book might be invaluable but we won’t be able to get our hands on it this time. This person is as formidable as those Eighth-level monsters!”

The fact that the Seventh-level Spell Casters wanted to leave made things much simpler for Merlin. Although he was powerful, he could not stop any of the Spell Casters who were bent on leaving, besides the ones he had already imprisoned.

Moments later, the seven Spell Casters had disappeared without a trace, leaving only two Spell Casters who had been imprisoned by Merlin's Runic Magic Circle.

"Swish."

Merlin's gaze landed on these two remaining Spell Casters. Their hearts ran cold and one of the older, a white-haired Spell Caster hurriedly said, "Great Wizard, we're willing to sign a contract with you and follow after your lead."

"Sign a contract?"

Merlin paused in thought. A Seventh-level Spell Caster would make a great assistant. No matter the situation, a Seventh-level Spell Caster would not be taken lightly.

If he had two Seventh-level Spell Casters as assistants in this unfamiliar Subzero Snowfield, it would save him a lot of trouble.

With this line of thought, Merlin replied, "Sign a slave contract and I'll spare your lives!"

"A slave contract?"

Upon hearing Merlin's demand, the two Spell Casters' faces paled. In order to survive in a harsh region like Subzero Snowfield, they had used all sorts of underhanded methods including murder and deception, and slowly grown step by step.

The journey to become a Seventh-level Spell Caster was truly not easy. Therefore, compared to Spell Casters from other regions, Spell Casters in Subzero Snowfield were more willing to surrender themselves to more powerful Spell Casters.

Thus, signing a contract was very common.

However, the restrictions of a slave contract were much greater because their lives and deaths would be held in the hands of their master. This was the reason why both Spell Casters hesitated.

Merlin narrowed his eyes and extended a pale hand. A white flame flickered to life and started to burn. If they turned down his demand, he would kill them immediately with Incinerating Fire.

Seeing the white flame in Merlin's hands, the two Spell Casters paled further. Gnashing their teeth, they gritted and said, "We can sign the slave contract but there must be an expiry date. A hundred years! After a hundred years, you must let us go free!"

Finally, the two Spell Casters agreed to sign the slave contract with Merlin. Again, compared to Spell Casters from other regions, due to long periods of surviving in a harsh environment, concepts like self-dignity had long since been abandoned.

Their foremost priority was to preserve their own lives, so even the most severe slave contract was acceptable to them.

A smile appeared on Merlin's face. He was starting to like Subzero Snowfield. If he was in the southern Spell Caster world, no matter how dire the situation, it would be totally impossible for a Seventh-level Spell Caster to agree to a slave contract. In contrast, this demand did not appear too difficult to fulfil in Subzero Snowfield.

Following that, Merlin extracted two contracts from his ring, which swiftly flew in front of the two Spell Casters. They could only clench their teeth together as they carved down their mind imprints on the contract.

Merlin held the two contracts in his hand but did not stow them away immediately. Instead, he imprinted the power of the Flame Maxim onto both contracts. With the binding power of the Flame Maxim, even if the two Spell Casters became Great Legend Spell Casters later, they would not be able to break the binding power of the contract.

Merlin was being too cautious. Even during the Spell Casters' most glorious era, Great Legend Spell Casters were few and far in between. Every Great Legend Wizard had been a powerful existence who was able to fight against the gods.

Today, whether or not the Great Legend Wizard still existed was a mystery. Therefore, even without the imprint of the Flame Maxim, Merlin did not have to worry about any unexpected occurrences.

With the contract in hand, Merlin no longer had to worry about the threat from these two Spell Casters. The Runic Heartprint between his eyebrows flashed faintly and the Runic Magic Circle disappeared in an instant.

The two Spell Casters exchanged a convoluted glance, their expressions troubled. Right now, they had become Merlin's slaves and would be controlled by Merlin for a hundred years.

"Master!"

Nevertheless, these two Spell Casters had succeeded in growing themselves despite the harsh conditions of Subzero Snowfield. Naturally, they were not Wizards who were easily defeated. They quickly adjusted their outlook and greeted Merlin respectfully.

Merlin nodded, assessing both Spell Casters from top to toe with his gaze. He was not unfamiliar with handling slaves. For example, he had placed his slave Wizard Banmou with the Wilson family.

Between the two Spell Casters – one was slightly older, and the other had triangular eyes and looked somewhat fierce. At this moment, however, their faces were filled with congratulatory expressions. The transition from a respected Seventh-level Spell Caster to a lowly slave could be described as a plummet from their previous positions, which would be hard to accept for most people. Yet, these two controlled their emotions well.

"What are you called?" Merlin asked casually.

The older Spell Caster hurriedly replied, "Master, my name is Ernie!"

The fierce-looking Spell Caster also spoke respectfully, "Master, my name is Watson!"

"Ernie, Watson, you two lead the way. We can leave the Thousand Miles Snow Cave now."

Merlin said in a deep voice. He had obtained the second volume of the Neverending Book, so it was not necessary to remain inside the Thousand Miles Snow Cave any longer. Otherwise, if some Eighth-level or Ninth-level Spell Casters came along, then Merlin would be in danger.

Leaving the Thousand Miles Snow Cave right now would be dangerous as well but he had his newly minted slaves, Ernie and Watson, to walk in front of him and fend-off some of the unexpected attacks.

Ernie and Watson exchanged a helpless glance but had no choice. They, too, knew that it was extremely dangerous to walk in front of Merlin right now. Perhaps another powerful Spell Caster was just lurking around the next corner in the dark, waiting for Merlin to appear and launch a violent attack on him.

Since the two of them were walking in front, they would have to block any surprise attacks for Merlin.

In the dark silent cave, Merlin followed behind Ernie and Watson and carefully sensed for movement in his surroundings. At the same time, Ernie and Watson also dared not lower their guards because if there was an attack, they would be the first to be sacrificed.

Ernie and Watson were well familiar with the underhanded tactics of Spell Casters in Subzero Snowfield, so they were extremely cautious. Their Mind Power was constantly engaged to watch out for any movement around them, and they had cast Defensive spells around themselves. They would rather expend their Magic Powers than to save it without the spell.

Although they were extremely watchful and cautious, they did not encounter any attacks all the way until they saw the light at the cave exit. The closer they inched to the exit, Ernie and Watson heightened their guard.

Suddenly, both Ernie and Watson stopped in their tracks. Ernie grounded his teeth a few times and said in an almost-begging voice, "Master, there'll definitely be many Wizards waiting to ambush us at the cave exit right now. It's very dangerous for us to leave."

"You two go ahead!"

Merlin sighed deeply and then commanded in a steel voice. Obviously, he was sending Ernie and Watson to test the waters and bear the first wave of attacks.

Ernie and Watson did not have a choice since they had signed the slave contract and their lives rested in Merlin's hands. Naturally, they did not dare disobey his orders.

"Damn it, let's just sprint out as fast as we can!"

They exchange a look of resigned determination at one another. Merlin was rendered speechless watching their behavior. All they were going to do was to leave the cave. Was there really a need to look as if they were walking to the gallows?

Following that, strong elemental fluctuations flashed on their bodies. Like a spark of electricity, they zoomed out of the cave.

Chapter 409: Dark Fire Incarnate V

“Rumble rumble.”

Before Wizards Ernie and Watson could even exit the cave, the entire cave was shaken by a huge bombardment, like the entire structure was quaking.

Flames, ice crystals, tornados... Almost every spell conceivable had been concentrated to full power and aimed straight at the mouth of the cave. The power levels of the spells were also vastly different. There were Fifth-, Sixth-, and even Seventh-level spells.

Under the siege of so many spells, the previously determined looks on Wizards Ernie and Watson changed rapidly into despair. With speeds faster than before, they flew back into the cave.

“Master, there’s really no way to go out!”

Wizards Ernie and Watson hung their heads bitterly. They really dared not dash out again. If the horrible wave of attack resumed and landed on their bodies, no matter no how many layers of Defensive spells they wore, the impenetrable barrage of spells would kill both of them in an instant.

The mere recall of the horrible attack still left some residual fear in them.

This was the reality of Subzero Snowfield. As long as there was a common enemy, regardless of whoever it was, these Spell Caster would join forces. Ernie and Watson could just imagine that hundreds of Spell Casters joining forces outside, waiting for Merlin to appear and launch a vicious attack on him.

The scale of attack earlier had shocked even Merlin as he was not sure if he would be able to withstand it.

“What do we do now? We can’t just hide in here!”

Merlin’s face sunk and his eyes landed on Ernie and Watson in contemplation. He was thinking if he should use the two of them as cannon fodders to divert the attention of the Spell Casters outside so he would dash out behind them.

As long as he could exit the cave, he could rely on Flash Wind to further increase the speed of Rainbow Wind, and no one would be able to catch up to him.

Seeing Merlin sizing them up with his gaze, Ernie and Watson’s expression waned slightly. They were Wizards who had survived as Seventh-level Spell Casters in Subzero Snowfield, so they were, of course, aware of Merlin’s line of thought to use them as cannon fodders.

If they previously held a tiny trace of hope to survive the dash outside, after the horrible siege of spells, they no longer held any hope. If they really continued to dash outside the cave, they would be killed by the endless barrage of spells in an instant.

The fact that these two were willing to sign such a severe slave contract with Merlin in the first place proved that they were less than eager to die. Therefore, before Merlin could speak, Wizard Ernie said, “Master, we can’t just dash out like that. We might be killed by those hiding at the mouth of the cave itself.”

Since some of the Seventh-level Spell Casters managed to escape earlier, they must have spread the word that the Neverending Book was with Merlin. That was why so many people had joined forces to kill Merlin as it was their only hope to obtain the Neverending Book.

“What ideas do you have?”

Merlin asked slowly. Unless he had no other choice, he, too, did not want to sacrifice these two Seventh-level Spell Casters as cannon fodders. However, if there was no other way, then they would have to do it.

Wizards Ernie and Watson obviously knew their lives were hanging on the line, so they cracked their brains to think of a solution. After a moment, they came up with a plan.

“Master, we can help test the waters and take the risk dashing outside, but we’ll have to make some preparations, and we need your help.” Wizard Ernie paused, then bit his lip and continued. “Please also lay out some Runic Magic Circles on our bodies, especially those with powerful defensive powers!”

“Oh? Runic Magic Circles? That’s quite easy!”

With the Runic Heartprint, Runic Magic Circles were a relatively simple solution for Merlin. He activated the Runic Heartprint that was looming between his eyebrows.

The Runic Heartprint contained an array of Runic Magic Circles, including some powerful defensive Runic Magic Circles, but they required a long time to be set up.

Fortunately, they were not pressed for time right now because none of the Wizards outside dared to step inside the Thousand Miles Snow Cave. Therefore, Merlin had plenty of time to slowly arrange the Runic Magic Circles on Wizards Ernie and Watson.

Soon, with the help of the Runic Heartprint, Merlin had arranged two Runic Magic Circles that covered Wizards Ernie and Watson from head to toe. The mysterious runes glowed brightly, giving Ernie and Watson a little peace of mind.

With the protection of the Runic Magic Circles as well as their own powerful Defensive spells as Seventh-level Spell Casters, their confidence increased a notch to dash out of the cave.

Nevertheless, before exiting, there was one last critical step.

“Puppet, come out!”

Wizard Ernie used his large hand to grab two golden puppets from his ring. These puppets were commonly used in alchemy products.

Of course, an intelligent puppet would require advanced knowledge of alchemy to produce but an ordinary inanimate puppet like this was relatively simple to make. All it needed was a large number of alchemy ingredients.

Once these two puppets were affixed with elemental crystal stones, they began to move slowly. Their abilities were not very strong, only about equivalent to a Sixth-level Spell Caster but the purpose of Ernie and Watson summoning the puppets was to use them as cannon fodder. They would at least divert the first wave of attack, which would hopefully enable Ernie and Watson to dash out the cave after them.

Although it was still highly dangerous, the Thousand Miles Snow Cave had only one exit. Moreover, since they had become Merlin's slaves, they had no choice but to dash out. It was their only hope of survival.

Otherwise, with just a single intention from Merlin, he could sentence them to death!

“Go!”

Wizards Ernie and Watson were now Merlin's cannon fodder, but even then, they did not want to just wait helplessly to be claimed by death. On the contrary, they would do all they could in exchange for a hope of survival.

In fact, the two of them had a good grasp of the psychology of the Spell Casters waiting outside. If they were one of the Spell Casters outside, they, too, would be aiming straight at the exit. No matter whoever appeared from the cave, they would do whatever it took to kill the person, all for a chance at obtaining the Neverending Book.

Following the low growl from Wizard Ernie, the two puppets were the first to dash out of the cave. Despite their huge physiques, upon emerging outside the cave, a barrage of spells already blasted them into fine ashes.

The two powerful puppets dashed out of the cave and just like that, they were blasted into ashes. This made Wizards Ernie and Watson feel very uneasy.

Nevertheless, they followed after the puppets and dashed out, seizing the tiny gap after the first wave of attack to exit the cave.

“Bang bang bang!”

However, despite having managed to dash out of the cave, they were still faced with a series of terrifying attacks. Numerous Spell Casters wielded their strongest powers, hell-bent on killing anyone who exited the cave.

Unfortunately for Wizards Ernie and Watson who were cannon fodder, they attracted the attention of all the Spell Casters, and a barrage of spells rained down upon the two of them.

“Crack.”

The incomparably powerful defensive Runic Magic Circle only managed to withstand the attacks for a small amount of time and suddenly broke apart. Even the Defensive spells on their bodies flashed continuously as if they were going to collapse at any time.

“Master, save us!”

Wizards Ernie and Watson did not care anymore. At the brink of life and death, they shouted at the top of their lungs.

“Whoosh.”

When their voices fell, a Spell Caster had appeared outside the cave, unbeknownst to everyone. It was Merlin!

While Ernie and Watson were occupying all the Spell Casters’ attention, nobody noticed that there was still one more Spell Caster left inside the cave. It was their real target, Merlin, who also held the Neverending Book.

After Merlin exited the cave, he saw a dense group of Spell Casters gathered below, driving Ernie and Watson into a dangerous situation.

“Humph!”

Merlin’s eyes glimpsed as he had not perform a massacre for a long time. After all, killing was almost part and parcel of Darkness-type spells. Additionally, Spell Casters who cultivated Darkness-type spells for an extended period tended to be more or less affected.

“Darkness Illusory Death!”

By nature, Darkness-type spells were never limited to a certain number. No matter how many people were present, it did not affect the effectiveness of the spell. Thus, with just one Darkness-type spell, most of the Spell Casters were trapped in an illusion.

With a wave of Merlin’s finger, the bright clear sky suddenly dimmed and darkened into a night sky. Large slabs of Darkness Elements began to shroud the entire sky.

The sky was completely pitch-black, and nothing could be seen. Even their Mind Power did not seem to have any effect, and most Spell Casters were still trapped inside the infinite illusion.

“Slash slash slash.”

Darkness Illusory Death could not only entrap but also kill a Spell Caster. In this case, the Darkness Elements morphed into a razor-sharp blade and slashed the Spell Casters who were still trapped in the illusion.

Although the attacking power from the Darkness Element was quite weak, for Spell Casters who were trapped in the illusion, even the weakest attack could not be resisted.

Therefore, from the moment Merlin wielded Darkness Illusory Death, numerous Spell Casters were slaughtered. The stench of blood and death rose into the air and lingered.

Merlin activated Darkness Eye. He could clearly feel the negative emotions grow as the number of deaths increased which were subsequently absorbed greedily by Darkness Eye.

Negative emotions were the source of power for Darkness Eye. As long as it continued to absorb negative energy, Darkness Eye would become more and more powerful and could be cultivated to its fifth or even sixth form.

“It’s not surprising that Spell Casters who cultivated Darkness Eye are often accompanied by killing and fear. It’s the favorite source of power for Darkness Eye!”

Merlin muttered under his breath. Naturally, the negative energy did not affect him but it gave him a deeper understanding of Darkness Eye.

“Our Master’s Darkness-type spell is truly formidable!”

Seeing that Merlin was able to effortlessly kill numerous Spell Casters, especially those who were completely immersed in the illusion, they could be killed with any spell.

Wizards Ernie and Watson felt a slight chill in their bones. Compared to Merlin, the so-called “massacre” in Subzero Snowfield was nothing but a child’s play.

This was a true massacre. Wherever darkness shrouded, the stench of blood appeared...

Chapter 410: Dark Fire Incarnate VI

Wisps of negative energy wormed into Darkness Eye. Merlin could even sense the “glee” of Darkness Eye in his palm. Before Wizard Leo died, he had told Merlin that Darkness Eye was sentient.

Merlin now felt even more keenly that Darkness Eye was sentient indeed. Darkness Eye only required a continuous supply of negative energy to grow. The master of Darkness Eye would finally be unable to suppress it and suffer from a backlash.

In its lengthy history, most Spell Casters who cultivated Darkness Eye had, in fact, died due to the backlash from Darkness Eye. It was not surprising that Darkness Eye was called a cursed power.

“Want to come out? Without my permission, you have no way of doing so!”

Merlin seemed to be speaking to himself. In his eyes, he glimpsed an enormous ghostly face which snarled as it battered against the unyielding cage. Once it broke through, the ghostly face would surge out and swallow Merlin.

This was the fourth form of Darkness Eye which had been sealed by Wizard Leo using the last of his strength. Now that it was stimulated by the negative energy, it was futilely trying to break the seal.

“Darkness Eye has always been a concealed danger!”

Although Merlin knew that Darkness Eye could not become much of a threat within a short period, if there ever came a day when he unleashed the fourth form of Darkness Eye and resulted in its backlash, he could still use the Flame Maxim to quell it by force. He would not end up like Wizard Leo who died due to the backlash.

However, even the fourth form of Darkness Eye would result in such a terrifying backlash. In the future, there would be the fifth, the sixth, even the seventh form – how dreadful would those be?

Anyone who cultivated Darkness Eye would have no way of getting rid of it unless they acted like Leo, who paid with his life to seal Darkness Eye. Only then could he extract Darkness Eye. Nonetheless, in that particular case, Wizard Leo had died all the same.

Merlin could not bear the burden of such a cost! Thus, in the long term, Darkness Eye was really an unstable, dormant danger. No one knew when it would suddenly flare up.

These thoughts flashed across Merlin’s mind all at once because Merlin’s recent massacre had generated great amounts of negative energy. This was absorbed by Darkness Eye, which tried in vain to tempt Merlin to unleash its fourth form. Thus, all of these considerations crossed his mind.

Nevertheless, the priority now was to suppress the Spell Casters below because numerous beams of colossal Mind Power had soared into the sky, threatening to dispel Darkness Illusory Death.

Darkness Illusory Death was not of much use against Spell Casters above the Seventh-level. Therefore, Merlin pointed to the space between his eyebrows with both hands. The Runic Heartprint instantly emerged once more.

“Seal!”

Mysterious runes rapidly flew out from the Runic Heartprint, glowing brightly in the sky. Following that, they were directed by Merlin’s Mind Power and rushed down immediately toward a few Spell Casters with formidable Mind Power.

“Swoosh swoosh swoosh.”

This time, Merlin freely displayed the amazing capabilities of the Runic Heartprint. Blocks of mysterious runes quickly filled the sky, and powerful Runic Magic Circles were consolidated one after another. Then, they all flew downward.

All those who were bound by the Runic Magic Circles, even if just for a while, was enough to please Merlin because he had employed the Runic Magic Circles only to restrict their movements.

“Fiery Collapse!”

Pale white flames burst out in an instant, and like the spark that started a prairie fire, quickly extended in all directions. The area which was engulfed in darkness was turned into a sea of fire.

If Runic Magic Circles and Darkness Illusory Death were unable to cause those Seventh-level Spell Casters any real damage, then the current Fiery Collapse caused them no end of dread. This was because the Seventh-level Defensive spells they had cast were unable to withstand even the slightest contact with Fiery Collapse.

By relying on the second form of Fiery Collapse, Merlin had eliminated a few Seventh-level Spell Casters before so those Seventh-level Spell Casters could not afford to underestimate this attack.

“Let’s go quickly. Dark Fire Incarnate is far too fearsome. We have no way of contending against him!”

“Dark Fire Incarnate – from now on, there’s one more terror in Subzero Snowfield!”

Without realizing it, Merlin had acquired the nickname of “Dark Fire Incarnate”. Of course, Merlin obtained this through his killings and his force. It was merely a nickname, yet it encapsulated Merlin’s most frightening techniques.

However, Seventh-level Spell Casters were formidable, after all. The Runic Magic Circles which Merlin had constructed in a hurry could not hold on for long, so a few Spell Casters broke out of the binding of the Runic Magic Circle. Thereafter, they quickly escaped from the burning sea of fire, terror-stricken.

Following their departure, the name of Dark Fire Incarnate would also reverberate across Subzero Snowfield!

“Dark Fire Incarnate?”

An eerie smirk appeared on Merlin’s lips. He had not expected that he would have such a nickname, one that was unmatched in its tyranny. In the southern Spell Caster world, not even those Ninth-level Spell Casters would dare to go by such an imperious title.

However, this was not the southern Spell Caster world but the incomparably chaotic Subzero Snowfield. Here, there was a simple method to obtain a nickname, which was to slaughter!

It was just like in the case of that Mad Wizard Mobundo, who was malevolent and unscrupulous but with powerful abilities. Once he began killing, he had no mercy, so he achieved the label of Mad Wizard, making Spell Casters clenched their jaws when they mentioned him.

“Master!”

Just then, Ernie and Watson hurried to Merlin’s side. Their current appearance was rather pitiful. They had fled from the caves previously. Although they used two puppets to withstand the first wave of attack, they were still in a dangerous situation as they were bombarded by countless spells.

If Merlin had not appeared in time and cast Darkness Illusory Death inundating all the Spell Casters here, Ernie and Watson would have been in a less favorable situation.

Buoyed by the elated adrenalin of having narrowly escaped death, their minds could think of nothing else when they saw Merlin’s god-like display of might.

“Master, we spotted Mad Wizard Mobundo escaping earlier. Heh, only Mad Wizard Mobundo could instigate so many Spell Casters to attack!”

Upon mentioning Mad Wizard Mobundo, an expression of rage flashed across Wizard Ernie’s face. It looked like Mad Wizard had made him suffer in the past.

“Master, do you want us to hunt down Mad Wizard Mobundo?”

Wizard Ernie currently appeared to be incomparably disconcerted, yet he wanted to chase after Mad Wizard Mobundo. It must be a matter of pride. Merlin could tell that although Mad Wizard Mobundo's powers were not that great, he had many tricks up his sleeve. Moreover, he was treacherous and cunning, being able to stay on in Subzero Snowfield without trouble despite offending so many. Naturally, there must be something special about him, and he would not be that easy to kill.

"There's no need to create further trouble. Come on, we can't stay here any longer."

Merlin looked at the utter state of disorder that stretched across the front of the Thousand Miles Snow Cave. The stench of blood pervaded the air. He knew that they must not linger on here. If they did so and attracted Eighth-level Spell Casters, they would be in danger.

Thus, Merlin, Wizard Ernie, and Wizard Watson quickly left the Thousand Miles Snow Cave.

...

The icy wind wailed in the white, blinding expanse of the snowstorm. Three figures sped along in the air.

"Master, the snowstorm is far too violent. Should we find a place to rest first?"

These three individuals were Merlin and his two Seventh-level slaves. They were flying aimlessly, only wanting to leave the Thousand Miles Snow Cave as far behind as possible. They did not expect to encounter such a huge snowstorm in their journey.

The forces of nature were still beyond Spell Casters. Even a Great Wizard would become helpless when faced with certain powers of nature. Only the Great Legendary Wizards had the ability to shift even the weather and the landscape.

Merlin nodded in assent. There was really no point in continuing their flight with such a powerful snowstorm, so they found a cave which was relatively dry as a temporary shelter from the snowstorm.

The climate of Subzero Snowfield was so unpleasant that even Spell Casters found it hard to take. It was thanks to this that no Normies lived in Subzero Snowfield despite the provision of ample land. Only Spell Casters were able to survive in Subzero Snowfield.

In the cave, Wizard Ernie started a bonfire. The red flames were reflected upon the faces of Merlin and the rest, shifting incessantly along with the cold wind that blew in from time to time.

Merlin thought back to the battle today. His Darkness-type spell in addition to Darkness Heart was now so formidable, and it was unaffected by the number of Spell Casters.

Perhaps other Spell Casters would be afraid of the joined forces of countless Spell Casters. In such a case, even Seventh-level Spell Casters could be overwhelmed and killed. However, with Merlin's Darkness-type spell, he could place everyone into an illusion no matter how many of them.

Besides the Darkness-type spell, the might of Fiery Collapse had also increased. The second form had improved its powers greatly, reaching the peak of a Seventh-level spell, which was also its limit. Any spell that was not on the Eighth-level would be unable to block the scorching of Fiery Collapse. It was because of Merlin's powerful Darkness-type and Fire-type spells that he was named Dark Fire Incarnate by the many Spell Casters of Subzero Snowfield!

Still, other than these spells, what pleased Merlin was the use of the Runic Heartprint. The Runic Magic Circles created by the Runic Heartprint had miraculous strength. He was able to contend against eight Seventh-level Wizards, defeat them, and even turn two Seventh-level Spell Casters, Ernie and Watson, into his slaves. He could not have done all this without the Runic Heartprint!

The functions of runes did not merely include attacking, defending, and binding, which were not that different from most spells. They could further be used to create Runic Magic Circles to be used to teleport over long distances.

Nonetheless, this would require Runic Magic Circles that were set up in advance. The one-way teleportation could only be carried out after the two Magic Circles were mutually activated. Otherwise, if one traversed through space aimlessly by carelessly using a Runic Magic Circle, one was very likely to become trapped in a Spatial Gap, which was akin to seeking one's own death.

The only exception was Spatial-type spells. Only then would one be able to freely traverse space. Nevertheless, even then, one would need to use up an inconceivable amount of Magic Power, which most Spatial Wizards could not endure.

Ever since Merlin had arrived at Subzero Snowfield, he discovered that the Runic Magic Circles he created here were unable to react with the Runic Magic Circles surrounding the Dark Magic Region. In other words, he had no way of teleporting there directly. He would still have to rely on flight to return to the vicinity of the Dark Magic Region in order to locate the Runic Magic Circles to enter the Dark Magic Region.

“Subzero Snowfield is a good place indeed. At the moment, the southern Spell Casters must have descended into chaos. It looks like I should stay in Subzero Snowfield for a period of time and set up some Runic Magic Circles for emergency use!”

All these thoughts crossed Merlin’s mind. Although Subzero Snowfield was disorderly, this could not be more suitable for Merlin. Moreover, he was able to avoid getting involved with the conflict between the southern Spell Caster world and Ozmu.

Thus, he should leave behind a few concealed Runic Magic Circles in Subzero Snowfield. In the future, if he encountered danger, he would have the chance to escape in this direction through the Runic Magic Circles set up by the Runic Heartprint.

If Merlin had set up a few hidden Runic Magic Circles in Subzero Snowfield beforehand, he would not have to force his way out of the Thousand Miles Snow Cave, and could instead bring Ernie and Watson directly to the Runic Magic Circle, teleporting their way out.

This was a frightening characteristic of a runologist, who was unmatched in their ability to escape. According to Merlin’s understanding, that Mad Wizard Mobundo who had offended many Spell Casters, including a great number of powerful ones, was himself a runologist who was highly accomplished in runology.

It was by relying on Runic Magic Circles that Mobundo had escaped from being killed repeatedly, surviving up until now.

“Hum.”

At last, Merlin set out a Runic Magic Circle in the cave. He did not keep this a secret from Ernie and Watson. They were Merlin’s slaves, so Merlin controlled their every gesture and every word. Even if they knew that Merlin had arranged a Runic Magic Circle here, they would not dare to mess it up, to say nothing of telling others.

Therefore, the other two might as well pretend that they knew nothing, and closed their eyes to restore the Magic Power they had used up today.