

A Wizard's Secret

Chapter 6: Antiques II

Merlin could still faintly recall Gutt, the little fatty from his memory. Thus, Merlin searched his memory the best he could, unmoving on the surface. Finally, some information about Gutt popped up from his memory.

Gutt. His full name was Dougland Gutt. The Dougland family was nothing notable. They only attained their status during the generation of the old Dougland. Even though they were not wealthy, they were not even nobles on top of that, old Dougland was truly incredible. He built his fame from scratch. From the status of a civilian, he had become the wealthy man in the current Blackwater City in just a few decades.

More than ninety percent of the jewels in the entire Blackwater city was managed by the Dougland family, so the little fatty Gutt tended to be generous with his spending. Naturally, he soon mixed well with Merlin and Anson.

Gutt was very chubby. Sitting at the front row, he himself could take up the seats for two. He had small eyes and, with a little squint, his eyes could almost transform into a thin line. Gutt was obviously elated when he saw Merlin and Anson. He quickly said, "Quick. I already saved seats for both of you. It's in the first row!"

Merlin and Anson sat down at rest. Then, both of them began to discuss their new history teacher relentlessly.

Merlin shook his head slightly. Looking at Anson and Gutt, almost all their topic included women. No wonder Macy warned Merlin to not fool around. Without proper self-control, it was indeed not easy to not fool around with these two guys around.

However, Merlin still attained something useful. From their casual conversation, he slowly understood the situation. This was the etiquette class for nobles that was set up by a noble in Blackwater City. The purpose of this class was to teach aristocratic etiquette specifically for people like him.

These aristocratic etiquettes included music, history, philosophy, art and all sorts of complicated things. Other than those born into a noble family, the son of a wealthy man like Gutt, though not of a noble bloodline, would be sent here to learn of aristocratic etiquette as well. It was to ease the communication with the noble in the future.

After a while, the whole room became crowded. People kept flooding in. The empty house before was almost full at this moment. Merlin made an estimation. There were about forty people in the house.

One of them was a thin, pale man. He walked through the front door and seemed to intentionally walk past Merlin. He took a glance at Merlin and snorted. He was full of disdain towards Merlin. He then sat at the back row.

Merlin could not remember much about this man, but apparent enough, this man was not that friendly with Merlin.

“Tirath again. This self-centered guy. Merlin, don’t mind about him. The marriage between you and Avril has already been decided. No matter how unsatisfied this guy is, there’s no use anyway.”

Anson said in a low voice. Merlin nodded as he grasped at this information. However, Merlin was not aware of Tirath’s identity. He was lucky to have a big-mouthed friend like Anson who easily spat out information just by a little nudge.

Tirath was the oldest son of the Vingult family. Just like Merlin, he was also the absolute heir to the baron title. In fact, Merlin and Tirath’s conflict was not exactly personal. It was more of a conflict between families. It was rather cliché speaking of this.

Baron Vingult once fell in love with a woman. Coincidentally, Old Wilson fell in love with her as well. Both even had a duel secretly for her. At last, it was Old Wilson who won the duel and got the woman. She was the current eighth wife of Old Wilson, Macy’s mother.

Merlin was speechless. He did not think that huge breasted madam had such a charm in her during her younger days to the point of sparking a duel between two men of nobility.

Tirath loved Avril and the Vingult family also begged for her hand through the Parman family. However, in the end, Baron Parman allowed Avril to be engaged to Merlin instead. Thus, the conflict between the Vingult family and the Wilson family became completely tied and unable to dissolve.

“Merlin, Tirath hates you to the bone. He always seeks trouble with you. You need to be careful. Stay away from him and don’t fight with him. Even though this guy is self-centered, it is undeniable that he has a few things up his sleeve. He possesses affinity to the Earth Element and has a great chance of becoming Earth Swordsman. The three of us combined won’t be able to go against him.”

Anson advised deeply, apparently rather cautious against Tirath.

“Elemental Swordsman again?”

Merlin nodded. He had the opportunity to witness the power of these people who had an affinity to the Elements. Naturally, he would not be so dumb as to start a fight with Tirath.

After a short while, the sound of boots slamming on the floor could be heard from outside of the house. A lady entered the room. Immediately, the whole room became silent.

This lady had long legs that were wrapped in nude-colored stockings. She was wearing a cashmere overcoat, but it could not cover the lush hills on her chest. She had a hot body that released a sort of mature and seductive aura about her.

Even though she looked seductive with her hot body, every movement of hers was filled with elegance. Enchanting and elegance, both extremely different qualities, seemed to perfectly merge in this lady.

“Perfect!”

Anson and Gutt stared hard at this lady who just came, obviously overwhelmed by her aura.

The lady did not mind the gaze set upon her. She gave a mild smile. “I am your new history teacher. You can call me Gia.”

“Perfect. Utmost perfect! I can’t believe I met such a perfect lady. No way. Merlin, Gutt, let’s make this clear first. Never go for Gia. She is mine.”

Anson seemed very worked up to the point of spouting nonsense.

Gutt said with dissatisfaction, “Pfft. Anson, can’t you see how many have their eyes set on her? Still, if you really want to do this, it’s not impossible, too. Everyone knows what’s the deal for being a teacher here. Isn’t it just to seduce the nobles here? These people want to attain the status. Let me look up the history of this Gia after this. At least, it makes it easier for you to get close to her.”

As for Gutt’s words, Merlin could not comment much. He had no impression of this place in his memory. Naturally, he did not know of the situation here. However, after listening to the conversation between Gutt and Anson, most of the female teachers here came to seduce nobles. If they were able to succeed, they could attain the status they wanted.

In fact, their previous history teacher no longer came to give classes because she had gotten together with the son of a baron. Thus, the teachers that came here basically did not have many pure motives.

Gia seemed extremely calm as she said nonchalantly, “alright. Let’s begin our class. Today, I’m going to talk about antiquess with you!”

As soon as she finished her sentence, Gia took a delicate ring from her pocket. She held it high. The sunlight that shot through the window fell on the ring, presenting a porcelain-like white color.

Chapter 7: Gia

“History delivers knowledge and civilization to the people. Therefore, as a noble, you must learn about the history. Antiques bore the marks of the history. To learn history well, you must learn about antiques well.”

“The nobles ought to be knowledgeable, elegant and intelligent. A true noble must love antiques and be an expert about it. This ring in my hand. Can anyone tell me about its background?”

Gia held the ring up high. Under the sunlight, it did not give off much of a gleam. Obviously, it was not made from gemstones. Its material should be rather special.

Merlin knew nothing about antiques, but Anson fancied it more. He used to collect some interesting antiques usually. Hearing Gia’s question, Anson immediately stood up.

“Miss Gia, can I have a good look at the ring, please?”

Gia nodded and handed the ring to Anson. Anson caressed the ring lightly and studied the pattern on it carefully. At last, he said confidently, “This ring is made from a special material. My guess is jade. Using jade to make rings. Historically, it was only during the secret age of the Molta Empire 3600 years ago that it was common for people to make rings out of jade. The pattern on the ring also presents a similar fashion. It should be a ring from the age of the Molta Empire without a doubt.”

As she listened to Anson’s logical analysis about the ring’s background, a hint of surprise dashed across Gia’s eyes. She nodded. “That’s right. You said well. What is your name?”

Anson was elated and immediately replied, “I am Anson.”

Gia nodded and continues, “Good. Anson’s analysis is accurate. I can see that Anson is very knowledgeable. He has already gotten a hold of the most basic element of aristocracy etiquette. Every noble should be knowledgeable. However, even if you don’t know anything about antiques now, that’s alright. I will use a long time to teach you the basic fundamentals of understanding antiques. Now, I will show this ring around. Feel the material and look at the pattern on it. Feel the touch of time upon it.”

The ring was first passed to the people at the front row like Merlin. Merlin was not particularly interested in antiques, but he was intrigued by the Molta Empire Gia mentioned.

Merlin had some recollection of this Molta Empire in his memory. The Molta Empire 3600 years ago was undoubtedly a great yet secretive empire.

It was great because the Molta Empire 3600 years ago had ruled over the whole land unlike now. There were at least a few dozens of kingdoms in the entire land now.

It was secretive because the downfall of the Molta Empire was unbelievable. It had fallen almost in one night and without any indication. The entire Molta Empire only existed for less than a hundred years. Until now, there was not any acknowledged conclusion about the reason why the Molta Empire had crumbled apart in one night.

“Why would such a huge empire crumble apart in one night?” Merlin could not believe this. He tended to believe that the flow of time had caused inaccurate rumors to pass down generations upon generations. And so, the true reason that Molta Empire had fallen was covered up.

The ring was passed to the back and Gia followed to the back. At this time, Merlin noticed the riled-up Anson had a difficult look on him.

“What’s wrong, Anson?”

Merlin asked in a light voice.

Anson took a complicated glance at Gia who walked to the back, then sighed. He slowly said, “It is most probably impossible to get Gia now. I thought she is the same as any other woman that came here for some rich noble boys. But after seeing that ring, I think this is not plausible. Do you know how much that ring cost?”

“A dozen silver coins?”

Gutt did not know much about antiques as well. To him, gemstones were the most valuable. This ring was only made from jades. It was good enough to worth a dozen silver coins.

However, Anson shook his head. “It can’t be bought even from a dozen gold coins. You may not know this, the antiques from the age of the Molta Empire priced at an unbelievable value in the current market. Don’t even mention this delicate-looking ring that belongs to the nobles then. She can bring out an antique that priced at more than a few dozens of gold coins. Do you seriously think Gia came for money?”

Merlin fell into his thoughts. In this world, there were three currencies that could be used at face value: gold coins, silver coins, and copper coins. A gold coin was equivalent to a

thousand bucks in his previous life. A few dozens of gold coins were equal to more than ten thousand. Someone who could bring out more than ten thousand nonchalantly wouldn't seduce the nobles for status indeed.

"Yeah. Makes sense. Look like this woman has some background there, but that's fine. There is no one that I can't investigate. Give me a few days. I can even dig out the information of Gia's previous three generations."

Gutt was brimming with confidence.

Gia's first lesson soon passed. These nobles only had one class each day, so people began to leave slowly.

Merlin and his friends came out of the building. Moss was already waiting at that place. When Merlin was about to get into the carriage, Anson quickly tugged at his coat and spoke in a low voice, "Merlin, what are you doing going back so early? Let's go to a place together."

Merlin thought of Macy's previous warning. He shook his head helplessly. "It's fine. I should get back early. I will pass today. Moreover, Macy warned me to go back before the day gets dark anyway."

Anson quickly said, "Merlin, where do you think we are going? Hehe. I am bringing you to open your eyes now. Lately, an acquaintance of mine brought some new antiques. Gutt and I want to take a look at it."

"Just antiques?" Merlin was a little hesitant.

"Of course. Let's go."

Merlin finally nodded and said to Anson and Gutt. "Come on up. Let Moss send us there."

Anson was disdainful. "With this? It's a torture to be in there. Let us take Gutt's carriage."

Merlin raised his head. An extravagant-looking carriage that was covered with a layer of fur and pulled by four horses appeared in front of them. Merlin compared the carriages and showed a bitter smile. He nodded then and told Moss, "Moss, pick Macy up at the church. It's more comfortable to take the carriage in such a cold weather."

"Young Master Merlin, then how are you coming back?"

Moss took a look at Anson and Gutt, his face full of worry.

Gutt waved his hand. "I will send Young Master Merlin back."

Moss nodded and said no more. He immediately directed his coach towards the church. Merlin and the bunch then went into Gutt's luxurious carriage and slowly left.

Chapter 8: Relief Sculpture

In the carriage, the seats were covered with soft fur. The fur emitted a warm vibe in this cold weather. Even though Merlin was not clear with the pricing in this world, but he knew the fur he sat on now definitely worth a lot of money.

Even Merlin, who was born into a noble family, had to exclaim, "How sumptuous!" Even though the nobles had a high social status, in terms of wealth, the Wilson family was far behind the Dougland family with its income stemming just from tax collection.

It was, as expected, the luxurious carriage has an enjoyable seat. Without waiting much longer, they had reached their destination and the carriage slowly came to a halt

"Alright, let's get down."

Anson could not wait to usher him down.

After that, they entered a small shop. The shop looked empty since there were only a few products placed on the shelves.

Merlin was not familiar with this place. Albeit full of confusion, he would not say it out loud. Instead, he followed Anson and Gutt closely.

Anson and Gutt seemed to know their way around. Both headed straight to the counter where there was a young girl in an outrageous outfit. Once she saw Anson and Gutt, she flashed a smile at them.

"Young Master Anson and Young Master Gutt."

The young girl apparently knew Anson and Gutt.

"Alright. Let's go inside. I heard your boss got some new stuff in lately?"

Anson rubbed his hands and asked the girl.

"Yeah. My boss got some new stuff in. Some are of superior quality. I am sure Young Master Anson and Young Master Gutt will be satisfied with them," The young girl said as she pressed something under the counter. Following that, a wall in front of them began to turn, showing a dark passage underneath.

"Linny, let me check if you have grown up lately."

Gutt came right in front of this girl named Linny and reached out his fat hand. He actually reached right into the girl's breast and grabbed her.

"Fatty, let's go."

Anson yelled in a hurry when he saw Gutt was falling behind.

"Hehe. Coming."

Gutt took out his fat hands and threw a shiny gold coin into Linny's hands. After that, he followed Anson's footsteps into the dark passage.

The passage was a little dark in the beginning. However, after a while, a fiery light could be spotted. It appeared that there were candles at the two sides of the passage used for illumination purposes.

Merlin squinted his eyes to find that the passage was heading downwards. They were already about eight feet deep into the ground. "This passage was dug deep, it appears."

After walking for about a hundred meter, some sound finally came to them. Along with some exclamation, Anson obviously picked up his pace and soon, they were out of the passage.

At the end of it was an extremely wide hall. It was about the size of two football fields. There were not many people in there, but all of them stood in groups of two or three. They were discussing the antiques lying around in this hall.

Surely, this was the place Anson and Gutt wanted to come.

Anson arrived in the hall as his eyes darted around. Then, a middle-aged man dressed in black approached him. "Young Master Anson, Young Master Gutt, you are a little late today."

Anson's expression changed and quickly asked, "Mr. Nathan, are all the good ones sold?"

The middle-aged man smiled. "Of course not, but it's almost finished. Let's go. Miss Carice is looking at the new stuff now."

"Oh? Miss Carice is here?"

Gutt's fat face gave out a delighted smile.

"Just arrived."

In a while, the middle-aged man brought Merlin and the bunch into a quiet room. In this small room, there were about five young people murmuring to each other as they surrounded some antiques on the shelves.

“Hi, Miss Carice. You are so quick.”

As soon as Anson stepped into the room, he greeted a lady in a green dress who had short, blonde curls.

Gutt approached her quickly and stared hard at Carice.

Carice frowned slightly and, when she looked at Anson, she pulled a stiff smile. “Anson, you are here right on time. Look at these new ones. Their quality isn’t bad.”

Carice’s gaze fell on Merlin, but she simply ignored him. She seemed to be a woman extremely crazy about antiques as well.

Anson took a beeline towards the shelf. There was a palm-sized white jade that was carved into a strange figure. The figure had the head of a fish and the body of a man. It was also making a strange gesture as if it was spitting water out of its mouth.

There were also some gruesome monsters that had spikes all over their body. They held iron whip as they swung their whip at some strangely dressed people. These images and carving styles were more than strange to outsiders like Merlin.

“Tsk. These are all antiques from the age of the Molta Empire.”

Anson had some knowledge about antique. With one look, he could see the background of these antiques.

Carice was holding a rather yellowed jade in her hand. It was also carved into a figure of monster. She asked Anson with knitted brows, “Anson, this antique is rather unique. Look at the design. I have never seen one like it before. But look at the material and carving styles. It’s definitely from the age of Molta Empire. I am sure of it.”

Anson also frowned, apparently confused.

At this time, the middle-aged Nathan spoke, “These new ones are from a ruin that dates to the age of Molta Empire. The things we found there are all peculiar, but I can promise you that they are all from the age of Molta Empire.”

Merlin also took a few carefree glances in front of the shelves. He knew nothing about antiques, so he naturally could not join the conversation. These antiques sure looked peculiar, but in his eyes, he could not feel any sense of aesthetic about them. Rather, he felt uncomfortable looking at them.

Most objects on the shelves were made of jade. This indeed corresponded to the style of Molta Empire. Merlin continued scanning the objects. At the lowest shelf, in an inconspicuous corner, Merlin saw a piece of a broken relief sculpture.

Yes, the relief sculpture. It was obviously knocked out of its building by force.

This relief sculpture was only the size of a palm. Its carving represented a naked man that sat on the floor in an extremely awkward pose.

Merlin picked this relief sculpture up lightly and stared at the pattern on it.

Suddenly, Merlin felt his world sway. The relief sculpture in his hands seemed to come 'alive' and the naked man carved on it was doing an extremely awkward pose step by step.

"Hu..."

Merlin was in shock and the image in front of him immediately disappeared. He was still holding this odd relief sculpture, and nothing had seemed to move at all.

"Was I imagining things just now? An illusion?"

Merlin could not help but rub his eyes, then stared at this relief sculpture again carefully, especially on the patterns on it. Slowly, the image he saw appeared once again and the relief sculpture seemed to come alive. The naked man on it was doing the awkward movement in an extremely slow pace.

"Merlin, what are you doing?"

Right at this time, Merlin felt someone held his back. He immediately got back to his senses and found Anson holding him.

At this moment, everyone was judging Merlin with strange glances. They all saw Merlin, who came with Anson, had changing expressions as he held that relief sculpture. His body kept swaying as if he would pass out any second.

"This relief sculpture. Can you tell what this is?"

Merlin quickly handed this relief sculpture to Anson. It was not a coincidence that the illusions appeared two times in a row. There must be something wrong with this relief sculpture.

Anson took a thorough look at the relief sculpture, then nodded. "This relief sculpture is exquisite. It's also from the age of Molta Empire, but it seemed to be incomplete. Moreover, there should be more than one relief sculpture like this here. What? You like it?"

Merlin was observing Anson all this while and found Anson completely normal. He had to ask in a low voice, "Just this? You didn't find anything special about this?"

"Special?"

Anson looked at it carefully again, then shook his head. "It only has a unique design. I only like the jade products of the Molta Empire. I don't really fancy this relief sculpture."

After saying that, Anson then handed this relief sculpture back to Merlin.

After experiencing the panic before, Merlin had completely calmed down by now. He was clear that those were not simply illusions, but the people here, except for himself, could not see anything special about this relief sculpture.

"Could it be that only I had the vision?"

Merlin kept playing with the relief sculpture. Even though he did not know what was going on, there was obviously something wrong with this relief sculpture.

"Mr. Nathan, how much for this relief sculpture?"

Merlin wanted to buy it and study it thoroughly when he went back.

Nathan looked at Anson and smiled. "Young Master Anson, this is..."

Anson had not begun to reply before Gutt patted Merlin with a sneer as he said, "Hehe. Mr. Nathan, this is Wilson Merlin."

Nathan's eyes immediately flared up. Even if he had not seen Merlin before, but the name of Wilson was too much of an attraction. In Blackwater City, there were only just that few noble's families. Nathan could not be clearer about that.

"Oh, I see, it's Young Master Merlin. If Young Master Merlin like it, we will only take the cost of this relief sculpture. Ten gold coins!"

Anson came close to Merlin's ears and murmured, "Nice. Ten gold coins. A fair price. If you really like the relief sculpture, you can buy it."

Merlin naturally believed Anson, so he nodded. He then took ten gold coins from his pocket and bought this odd relief sculpture.

Chapter 9: Illusion

Holding the odd relief sculpture, Merlin did not look closely at it again. It was too odd to think that it could cause hallucination. He thought that it was better to study it when he was back home safely.

Anson chose a palm-sized jade product but Nathan gave a price up to a hundred gold coins. Although Anson was born into a noble family, he still had two brothers before him. He could not use more than thirty gold coins in a month. One hundred gold coins were more than what he could use.

Thus, Anson could only give it up regrettably. Meanwhile, Carice chose a jade bracelet but it was priced even higher at one hundred and twenty gold coins. Exquisite jade ornaments from the Molta Empire were trendy amongst the nobles so Nathan would not worry about being not able to sell it due to the price.

Carice wore an emerald earring and a jade bracelet on her right hand. She appeared to adore jade ornaments. Even if this jade bracelet cost more than one hundred gold coins, she still bought it with gritted teeth.

Gutt approached her and offered to buy the bracelet for Carice. It was obvious that fatty Gutt truly liked Carice. However, she declined the offer without much thought, making Gutt rather disappointed.

“Hey, fatty. Carice is gone. What are you still looking at?”

Seeing his disappointed look, Anson laughed sneakily.

“Anson, who is this Mr. Nathan? His antiques obviously come from a questionable source. Even though he does it discreetly, it’s impossible that the Defense Troop doesn’t know. Why haven’t they taken any action?”

Merlin asked in a low voice.

“Hehe, why would the Defense Troop come here? Mr. Nathan is the only person out front. The boss behind this place is the...”

“...?”

Merlin was surprised but he calmed down soon. If Nathan answered to the..., then the Defense Troop would naturally not check this place.

In Blackwater City, the noble of the highest title was only Baron. The ... was strictly controlled by the Augustin family. Even though he was a Baron as well, his influence was the greatest in the city. Under normal circumstances, the nobles in Blackwater City would have slightly lower status than the Augustin family. Just like the Defense Troop, though it was meant for the city, it was the private troop of the Augustin family.

They walked out of the passage. Just when they reached outside, a cold breeze blew, freezing them to their bones.

“Look, it’s snowing!” Anson shouted.

Merlin squinted his eyes and looked at the sky. As expected, the cold raindrops before had turned to white snowflakes now.

‘Snow in September? This weather was unusual!’

“Hu... so cold, let’s go home quickly! Bloody hell, snowing in September. Oh right, Merlin, I will send you back to Wilson Castle first.”

Fatty Gutt pulled his coat closer and dived into his carriage in a lightning speed.

The carriage slowly came to a halt in front of Wilson Castle. Merlin alighted from the carriage. Even with a cashmere coat, he still felt like he was freezing.

“Merlin, see you tomorrow. D*mn this weather!”

Anson and Gutt waved goodbye to Merlin. After seeing the carriage trotting away, Merlin walked into the castle.

“Hu...”

As Merlin entered the castle, he heaved a sigh of relief. He saw that there were maids building fire at the firepit, so the house was warm. He took off his coat and patted the snow off it lightly.

“Hmm, the relief sculpture?”

Merlin’s eyes fell on the relief sculpture that was fed into his coat. After looking around and taking note that no one was paying attention to him, he headed straight upstairs into his own room.

After shutting the door, Merlin took the relief sculpture out from his coat.

“Let’s try it one more time.”

Merlin rubbed his eyes lightly, then focused his attention on the relief sculpture. Then, he stared at the pattern on it from up to bottom.

“Hoof.”

The whole relief sculpture seemed to tremble slightly then the familiar sensation hit him again. Merlin felt the world was swaying and the naked man on the relief sculpture

came alive. Right before Merlin's eyes, he was starting to do an extremely awkward action.

The movements were complicated, and they almost stretched the human's body to its extent. In a daze, Merlin felt his body starting to copy the movements of this naked man.

"It hurts..."

Merlin could not help but yelp. At this moment, Merlin came back to his senses, only to realize that he was now lying on the floor. The relief sculpture was dropped to the floor but to his surprise, it did not break. Merlin was maintaining an extremely odd yet complicated pose.

Merlin quickly stood up and broke out in cold sweat thinking about his action.

"Something is wrong with this relief sculpture! Terribly wrong!"

Merlin was still panicky. He did not dare to look at the relief sculpture. The feeling of not being in control of his own body was terrifying and it made him shiver thinking about it. This relief sculpture was truly odd.

After half an hour, Merlin calmed his nerves completely. Even though he did not look at the relief sculpture again, he had totally noted down that awkward pose in his mind.

"What use does this pose have?"

Merlin thought about it. He still felt that he should have tried to replicate that complicated pose when he was fully conscious. It was as if this movement was unbelievably attractive to Merlin.

The move was complicated. It required the person to do it slowly step by step. Merlin was lucky that he had remembered the move in his mind, so without using much time, he was able to pull that move off completely.

This time, Merlin was no longer in a trance and he was fully conscious. He could carefully feel the specialty of this pose.

"Hmm, I was a little cold earlier, but I feel warm now. My muscle also seems to be tight." Merlin felt the changes in his body.

After maintaining this pose for half an hour, Merlin did not feel anything wrong with his body. It was just that his muscles were tightened. It became more obvious with time and seemed as if something was stirring up.

One hour, two hours, three hours...

The sky slowly darkened. Merlin seemed to have completely absorbed himself in this posture as he experienced this odd feeling.

“Bang, bang, bang!”

Suddenly, a series of urgent knocking sound came from the door.

“Merlin, what are you doing hiding in the room?”

Merlin was surprised by the noise. It was Macy. He opened the door and saw that the sky had gone totally dark at this hour.

Macy stared at Merlin in confusion, then the smell of sweat hit her. She saw that Merlin was drenched in sweat.

“Merlin, what are you doing? Why are you sweating so much?”

Merlin also noticed that he was covered in sweat but there was this sort of warm and energizing feeling in his body where he did not feel exhaustion at all.

“Nothing, it’s already dark, huh. I will go down soon.”

Macy was still trying to sneak a glance in the room but Merlin was blocking right at the door so she could not see anything. She could only cover her nose and said, “Let Lucia prepare some hot water for you. You should take a bath before you go down.”

Merlin nodded and agreed that this stench was undoubtedly too much. Even he himself could not stand this smell.

After a while, Lucia had prepared hot water in the bathtub. Merlin took off his drenched clothes and jumped into the bathtub. The warm water almost made him moan with pleasure.

Merlin soaked himself in the bath without moving a muscle. His head leaned on the side while his eyes stared unfocused at the ceiling of the room.

Chapter 10: General Prat

Soaking in warm water, Merlin closed his eyes. He was not trying to sleep but was feeling the change of his body quietly.

“Higher strength. My body feels relaxed, but my limbs are sore as if I have done intense sports. Are these the effects of that strange posture?”

Merlin tightened his fist while his veins engorged under the skin. He could sense that his strength had increased, though not obvious. The sweat earlier was as if he had done some intense sports but Merlin knew very clearly that he was simply maintaining the strange posture of the relief sculpture.

Overall, that pose seemed to develop Merlin's body in a good way although the background of the relief sculpture was not exactly known. However, since there was this incredible effect, there was no reason for Merlin to discontinue the practice.

Merlin soaked for a bit in the bathtub to rid himself of the sweat odor. Then, he got up and dressed. When he saw the relief sculpture on the table, Merlin thought about it for a while as he caressed the pattern on the relief sculpture.

Merlin had that posture etched in his mind, so this relief sculpture no longer served any purpose. He then hid it under his bed and proceeded downstairs.

In front of the dining table, Macy was holding her jaw with her left hand while her right hand randomly drawing on the table out of boredom. The butler was standing at a side. When he saw Merlin, he bowed a little and said respectfully, "Young Master Merlin, dinner is ready."

"Alright, sorry for waiting."

Merlin was elated so he had a good appetite. After getting a large portion of grilled gigot and a glass of milk, he quickly rid the chill off him. He felt warm throughout and extremely comfortable.

Merlin opened his cashmere coat a little and leaned on the chair. With his squinting eyes, he could see snowflakes floating about in the sky outside.

"It's so cold. I wonder how father is doing now."

Macy had finished her meal as well. She looked at the snow outside and said with worries.

Old Wilson went to his land to collect tax, and it usually took three to five days. It was about time that Old Wilson came back.

"Doom, doom, doom."

Suddenly, urgent knocking sounds came from the main door. Merlin and Macy looked over to the door quickly. Who would come to the castle at this late hour?

The butler opened the door quickly and a gush of chilly wind immediately flew into the house. Amongst the freezing breeze, Merlin's expression changed. He smelled a thick bloody scent in the wind.

“General Prat? What is the matter?”

The butler yelled in surprise. The person standing outside of the door was the general of guards beside Old Wilson.

Upon hearing the butler’s exclamation, memory about Prat immediately jumped into Merlin’s mind. Prat led all knights in the castle and within the Wilson family’s land. Except for Old Wilson, he had the most power and influence in the land. He was Old Wilson’s right-hand man, so even Merlin had to call him uncle.

“Uncle Prat, why are you back? Did father come back early as well?”

Macy quickly stood up and asked excitedly.

Prat followed Old Wilson to his land to collect tax. Since Prat was back now, Old Wilson should be back as well.

However, Prat shook his head slightly and spoke in a low voice, “Sir Baron is not back yet.”

The people’s heart jumped to their throat. Could it be something happened to Old Wilson?

“It’s cold outside. Come inside and talk.”

The butler quickly let Prat in and shut the door tight. Immediately, the chilly wind stopped, and the house warmed up again.

Merlin now had a good look at Prat. Prat was tall and strong with a silvery white armor on him. His auburn short hair was ruffled and was sprinkled with white snow.

However, Prat’s white armor was stained with fresh blood. There were even a few openings on his huge sword. He had obviously gone through some intense fight.

“Uncle Prat, what is wrong with you? Where is father?”

Prat smiled. “Hehe, Sir Baron is, of course, safe. But during our journey to the land, we met a small group of thieves. That’s all. Sir Baron commanded us to rid of these thieves. Sir Baron worries that they may come back and threaten the land, so he let me rush back to bring one hundred heavy-armored knights from the castle!”

Merlin relaxed a little. Thieves were not a small matter but Old Wilson returned from the battlefield. He was already used to killing and battling. He had better ideas to deal with these thieves.

Moreover, Old Wilson had trained a troop of heavy-armored knights, totaling to one hundred and fifty of them. They could be known as the strongest force in the castle.

“Uncle Prat, the castle is still very quiet now. It shouldn’t need so many heavy-armored knights for protection. You should bring all one hundred and fifty heavy-armored knights away to ensure the safety of father and the land.”

Prat hesitated a little and finally nodded. “Alright. Let’s do as Young Master Merlin said. I will bring all one hundred and fifty heavy-armored knights. Rest assured, Young Master Merlin. Those thieves are nothing to worry about. Back when I was following Sir Baron, I have cut down countless of those easterners. These thieves can’t even compare to that.”

Prat said as he laughed, apparently confident about himself. He was also one of the soldiers following Old Wilson back then. He had experienced the cruel war against the easterners. After that, Old Wilson was given noble title by the kingdom and he brought Prat back.

As compared to Old Wilson, Prat was more of a standard soldier: Battle-oriented, loyal and decisive but also cruel and bloodthirsty. In the castle, many servants were afraid of General Prat.

“Uncle Prat, you haven’t eaten anything, right? You had a rough journey in this cold weather. There’s still half of the grilled mutton. Come and have some.”

Prat did not hesitate at all. He had rushed over in the snow for one day and one night. He was indeed starving, so he grabbed the grilled mutton on the table and gobbled it down. However, Prat did not take much time resting. He soon gathered one hundred and fifty heavy-armored knights in the castle and went on their journey.

Merlin’s frown did not disappear as he watched the knights leaving the castle. He asked the butler, “Blackwater City has always been safe. Why would there be thieves all of a sudden? Also, look at Uncle Prat. These thieves are not weak. Or else, father wouldn’t let Uncle Prat bring the heavy-armored knights.”

The butler looked at Merlin and said hesitantly, “Blackwater City used to be safe but for some reasons lately, these thieves have been going around. They have attacked a few towns near Blackwater City. The knights of Defense Troop have been dispatched numerous times but they never found those thieves. But rest assured, Young Master. Sir Baron has one hundred and fifty knights. Along with the knights in his land, there should be no problem dealing with these thieves.”

Merlin nodded lightly. With Old Wilson there, surely the land would be alright.