

W. Secret 921

Chapter 921: Almighty Beast Fossil!

The Fossil Museum did not look very grand outside but it was decorated very luxuriously inside. The hall was extremely large, even larger than the hall of Count Stanwin's manor.

There were some giant skeletons in the hall. These were the legendary almighty beasts. Back when people had not been born yet, these almighty beasts dominated the entire world.

Merlin looked around the hall. He recognized most of these almighty beast fossils due to "Leon's" memory.

Perhaps it was because Leon could not inherit the almighty beast bloodline but was eager for power that he became infatuated with the legends of almighty beasts. He was also very interested in almighty beast fossils. Therefore, Leon often came to the Fossil Museum, and was very familiar with the almighty beast fossils here.

"Master Leon, you're here!"

An old man with an unshaven beard appeared in the hall. He was dressed in a mink coat and had a very clean body.

"Curator Heroult."

Merlin bowed slightly. Curator Heroult came from the capital of the Holy Dragon Empire, and ran the Fossil Museum. His origin was also very mysterious, and no one knew who he was. However, he had stayed in Boulder City for more than ten years.

"Master Leon, I heard there was an accident at the Count's manor a few days ago, and you were stabbed by the Blackbat Militia. How's your injury now?"

This seemingly neat old man asked softly.

“It’s no big deal. I’m almost completely healed. By the way, Curator Heroult, I heard that some new almighty beast fossils have been added to your Fossil Museum. Is that true?”

Merlin looked at the hall. These were all almighty beast fossils that he knew and were nothing special. Even with his keen perception, he could not sense anything.

Curator Heroult smiled and nodded. “Yes, I recently obtained some new almighty beast fossils. This batch of almighty beast fossils isn’t ordinary. If Master Leon is interested, please follow me!”

“Oh? Is there anything different about them?”

Merlin was also a little curious after seeing Curator Heroult’s mysterious behavior. Apart from being larger, he could not see these legendary almighty beasts once possessed just by looking at their fossils.

After all, in the myths of the Almighty Beast World, all legends were about almighty beasts. Even the people were descendants who inherited the almighty beast bloodline.

Curator Heroult did not answer directly but took Merlin into a small room in the hall instead. There, the ground was full of white tiles, and beautiful crystal ornaments hung on the walls. The candles were also covered in glassware, making the room very bright.

“Master Leon, these are the almighty beast fossils!”

When Merlin entered the room, he immediately felt something off. There seemed to be a faint roar that echoed in his ears. His keen perception felt that this room was different.

There was a faint feeling of threat, making Merlin stand on guard.

“An almighty beast fossil!”

Merlin saw that in the middle of the room, numerous huge bones formed a monstrous almighty beast the length of tens of meters with two heads. From the fossil, he could see that the almighty beast had rows of sharp teeth.

However, this was not what was most unique. What was most unique was the back of this almighty beast where there were two huge wings. This was a flying almighty beast.

Flying almighty beasts were very rare. Such almighty beasts had unique advantages in ancient times. They could soar in the sky, and were considered extremely ferocious predator almighty beasts.

However, Merlin had no idea how to appreciate this flying almighty beast. His attention was focused on the skeleton of the fossil, which seemed to contain a violent will that roared incessantly.

An average person might not be able to sense it. After all, it seemed like there was a big difference between the people of this world and the beings in the Void Zone. There was no one here who had or was born with Mind Power, so it was difficult to sense the subtle fluctuations.

There might be other special methods to sense it but Merlin did not know about them now. However, he seemed to sense a sound like the almighty beast's roar but the almighty beast in front of him was a fossil.

Seeing Merlin's changing expression, standing to the side, Curator Heroult's expression also changed slightly. A strange glint flashed across his smiling eyes.

"Master Leon, how do you feel?"

Merlin raised his head, and glanced at Curator Heroult. This almighty beast fossil was made by this old man, so he must know its special features.

"Nothing much, just a little strange. Flying almighty beasts are very rare. What kind of almighty beast is this?"

Curator Heroult had a meaningful look in his eyes as he said slowly, "This almighty beast is called the Two-headed Pterolycus. It's an extremely powerful, cruel, and cunning almighty beast. The two wings on its back are only found on a fully grown Two-headed Pterolycus."

Curator Heroult briefly introduced the almighty beast fossil. The Two-headed Pterolycus was a relatively powerful almighty beast but it was far from the top. However, once it matured, it grew wings and could soar in the sky. The Two-headed Pterolycus would become extremely strong and could be regarded as the most powerful almighty beast.

It was much stronger than the Hilderbrandt clan's Deinosuchus bloodline. After all, the Hilderbrandt clan's Deinosuchus bloodline was only roughly equivalent to a relatively powerful almighty beast bloodline.

As if seeing Merlin's interest, Curator Heroult continued. "Master Leon, in ancient times, the Two-headed Pterolycus was very powerful, especially a matured Two-headed Pterolycus. It's much more powerful than the Deinosuchus bloodline of your Hilderbrandt clan. Unfortunately, the bloodline of the Two-headed Pterolycus has been cut off for some reason, and no clan or person has been heard of having the bloodline of the Two-headed Pterolycus."

Curator Heroult shook his head regretfully. Although there were many clans and some ordinary people possessed almighty beast bloodlines, there were too many almighty beasts. Furthermore, because of unknown reasons, many powerful almighty beast bloodlines had not been inherited.

One such example was the Two-headed Pterolycus. No one had inherited the Two-headed Pterolycus bloodline.

"So, it's called the Two-headed Pterolycus... It does appear to be a relatively fearsome almighty beast. Curator Heroult, I like this fossil very much. Could I take it back and watch it for a few days? I'll certainly send it back to you in the future."

Merlin asked casually but he was already making plans in his heart. Earlier, he felt this fossil send out a strange force as if it was an almighty beast's roar.

Merlin found it strange, so he wanted to bring the fossil back to the Count's manor. After careful observation, he might find something unexpected.

"Oh? Master Leon seems very interested in this Two-headed Pterolycus fossil?"

Curator Heroult asked calmly but his deep eyes seemed to see through Merlin's thoughts.

“Curator Heroult, can I take this fossil?”

Merlin still wanted to take this fossil.

“You can, but Master Leon, you must tell me the truth. How do you feel? Did you hear the almighty beast’s roar?”

The smile on Curator Heroult’s face had completely disappeared and was replaced with a very solemn expression.

Chapter 922: Parasite!

Merlin was taken aback. He glanced at the pristinely dressed old man from head to toe a second time. As much as he hated to admit it, the old man had a great fashion taste and had a mysterious air to boot.

“Curator Herault, you were saying something about an Almighty Beast roaring?”

Merlin continued to deny it. Who knew what these Almighty Beasts fossil represented? He could not tell if the roars of Almighty Beasts would bring danger to him either. Hence, he could only deny it. Afterall, Merlin was now a weakling, so he had to take extra caution when dealing with things.

“No need to play dumb. You came close to being assassinated by the Black Manta troops, you should keep your guard up. That said... If I ever intended to harm you, those bodyguards you have, or anyone for that matter, can’t protect you. Consider this a second chance. It’s not every day you get to meet someone who’s attuned to the will of the almighty beasts, especially in a small place like this. Tsk tsk. I heard you have yet to inherit Hildebrandt’s ferocious bloodline. Don’t you desire power?”

Noticing the curator’s rather “enticing” words, Merlin remained ever so vigilant. After all, he’s the sole successor to Count Stanwin, and within the Stone Kingdom, that was good as being invincible.

However, Curator Herault seemed to disregard Merlin’s title.

“Power... How could you ever grant me power? I do not possess the Bloodline of the Almighty Beasts.”

Merlin responded slowly after a little contemplation. He knew that without the Bloodline of the Almighty Beasts, it was impossible to possess a great deal of power in the realm.

“It is true that things are much harder without the Blood of the Almighty Beasts. However, inheriting the bloodline isn’t the only way to go. There lies another way to obtain the might of the beasts.”

“What way?”

Merlin excitedly asked.

With a vague smile, Curator Herauld answered, “Master Leon, Count Stanwin is the fourth Greatest Wizard to have ever existed. Did he not tell you about the other method?”

Merlin furrowed his brows. Granted, the curator was extremely enigmatic, but this was his father that they were talking about. As the Stone Kingdom’s ruler, with a ferocious bloodline running high within him, surely his father would have known of an alternative. Yet in Merlin’s sea of memories, there was certainly no recollection of such a matter, or perhaps... None that Count Stanwin had ever mentioned to him.

Sensing Merlin’s silence, the curator continued, “Also, while this method may work, it does have a huge possibility of backfiring. It is highly dangerous. Considering that you are Count Stanwin’s one and only son, Master Leon, why would he ever allow you to undertake such risky measures?”

The curator smiled again, finally realizing something himself.

“What is this alternative that you speak of?”

Deep down, Merlin had already made up his mind. No matter what the curator said, he intended to speak to Count Stanwin. In this new realm, he was the only one who could provide Merlin with any form of reassurance.

“A Parasite!”

“A Parasite?”

Merlin was shocked because he was reminded of himself. Back when he was in the Void Zone, he had inhabited the body of Stermann, and later, he had planned to invade Leon’s too. Except it was not easy to grab hold onto one’s will in this realm.

Given Merlin’s status as an “intruder”, he would be obliterated by the will of the Almighty Beast if he had successfully infiltrated Leon’s body because he lacked any meaningful link to the realm.

With no other solutions in sight, Merlin could only settle with possessing Leon’s body, and in doing so, “fooling” the will of the zone.

Technically, Merlin was no longer considered a Parasite. Since he had already gained full possession of Leon’s body, it was something even the enigmatic curator could not tell.

“Precisely! A host! Our body contains the blood of the Almighty Beasts. Those who possess a larger amount of it can tap into its potential to possess the might of the beasts. Now what happens if their blood does not course our veins then? Does that mean we’re left with no other choice? Never to wield such powers again?”

“Of course not! Apart from the bloodline, there is another way to grant those without the bloodline access to greater powers belonging to these magnificent creatures, the way of the Parasite!”

“Those sensitive to the presence of the will, either through the remains of the Almighty Beasts contained within a fossil or places teeming with the remains of the beasts’ will that have yet to fade could fuse their will and become one with the beast through a unique method. When that happens, they’ll be able to enhance their physical properties through the will of these creatures, thereby gaining their might too. In fact, at the peak of their powers, they may become a true Almighty Beast, thus making them more powerful than those who inherited them through a bloodline.”

With that elaborated explanation from the curator about “parasites”...Was he suggesting that one can will for their will to come together as one with the beasts’, thereby gaining possession of it?

No wait... What it truly meant was a man’s will tamed the will of the beast. However, that’s too high of a price to pay at this point, what more with Merlin being a magic-user manifested out of the Illusory World. The topic of one’s will was difficult for him to comprehend.

“Mr. Curator, I doubt this Parasite that you speak of comes easily, does it? Otherwise, why else would you possibly need some Almighty Beasts’ bloodline?”

Obviously, Merlin was not going to buy the curator’s explanation. If Parasites were as effective as they were, this world could easily do without some bloodline.

“Heh, you are observant, Master Leon. You’re absolutely right, the Parasite does come with certain life-threatening consequences. It so happens the will of the beasts are far too strong, and when one gains full control of its body, they would always need to suppress the beast’s will at all times. If one fails to keep it together, then the roles are reversed and the beast turns into a rampaging monster, a being without a mind of its own. In other words, death.”

It would seem that this “Parasite” does have its flaws with a high price to pay. However, coming from the mouth of the curator, all this seemed rather tame. Merlin thought to himself a little more. The stakes were high and the chances were slim.

Even one-tenth of a chance was a miracle at this point. After all, there was no telling how strong the will of a beast was. Not everyone can suppress a beast’s will, let alone the remains of a will belonging to a once-powerful creature.

Also, given that it was a Parasite, as the power of the human grew, so would the Parasite. All things considered, the user’s life will always be in jeopardy.

It explains how Merlin could not seem to recall any knowledge of a Parasite, because none of it ever existed in “Leon’s” mind to begin with. With a method that dangerous, Count Stanwin would have never allowed him to attempt it.

Merlin remained calm. He possessed no bloodline and this “Parasite” in question was but a battle of wills, he was sure of that.

He had once battled a Latitude Cosmos, so the will of a beast did not faze him.

Merlin had yet to conclude his decision. This curator was far too enigmatic and with his identity a shroud, it was better if he headed back to speak to Count Stanwin to learn more about Parasites before coming to a decision.

“Mr. Curator, I’ll be on my way now. I’ll be back tomorrow, perhaps.”

With that, Merlin quickly left the Fossil Museum for the Count’s manor.

Chapter 923: Barbarians

In the carriage, Merlin kept thinking about Curator Heroult’s words. If one could command the strength of almighty beasts through parasitism, empowering oneself, this could very well be an option.

The present Merlin desperately needed powers of self-preservation. Otherwise, it would be difficult for him to thrive peacefully in this unfamiliar world. After all, any accident could occur.

“Before my Illusory World has recovered, I must rely on the power system of this world.”

Merlin had already made up his mind. Nonetheless, he would not be impulsive. First, he had to ask his father regarding this.

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In the evening, the twilight sun had descended and the air carried a faint chill, causing one to feel as if the temperature had plummeted all at once.

The fire was roaring in the fireplace, lighting up the female servant’s face which was rosy red. This scene had a pleasant glow, but currently, in the hall, Count Stanwin and a well-built man in silver armor were not paying attention. Conversely, the atmosphere was somewhat serious.

“My lord, we’ve eliminated every member of the Blackbat Militia who was in Boulder City. However, more bad news had arrived from the front lines.”

This armored man was the commander of the heavy knights under Count Stanwin’s command. He was named Hanson. He had also inherited an almighty beast bloodline and had immense strength, second only to Count Stanwin.

“What news?”

Count Stanwin kept his cool as he asked calmly.

“It’s Marshal Kerry. It seems like the Blackbat Militia had colluded with the barbarian tribe. An opening had been created in Marshal Kerry’s line of defense. I’m afraid not even Marshal Kerry will be able to withstand the Blackbat Militia and the barbarian tribe.”

Hanson’s words immediately infuriated Count Stanwin, and he replied coldly, “The barbarian tribe? D*mn the Blackbat Militia to gang up with the barbarians. These barbarians can’t be tolerated by civilized society at all. Nonetheless, with the barbarians’ help, Marshal Kerry won’t be able to hold off the Blackbat Militia. Our Boulder City and the surrounding territories will become the front lines that hold off the Blackbat Militia.”

Count Stanwin frowned. Just the Blackbat Militia alone might not be scary but with the barbarians in the mix, it was terrifying. These barbarians were intelligent as the almighty beast bloodline had mutated in their bodies. Most of them were savage and berserk. Once they were enraged, they would lose their reasoning after shapeshifting.

This was the greatest trait that had separated the civilized world from the barbaric world. Those who had inherited the almighty beast bloodline in the civilized world, even after shifting, would not lose their minds. However, the barbarians would surely lose their rationality, slaughtering in madness, and doing whatever they liked. Only after a long time would they slowly recover their senses.

Therefore, there were frequent conflicts between the civilized world and the barbarian tribe. If the city was broken in, it was sure to fall into ruins. Those barbarians who had shifted would massacre madly.

Due to this, the civilized world and the barbarian tribe always shared an antagonistic relationship. Unexpectedly, the Blackbat Militia had ganged up with the barbarians.

“My lord, the Blackbat Militia who had colluded with the barbarians has fearsome power. Not even Marshal Kerry can withstand them. As for the situation in the Holy Dragon Empire, I believe my lord is clear about that. Sending out Marshal Kerry was already the limit. It’s impossible to send out more troops in a short time. Therefore, once Marshal Kerry’s defensive line collapsed, our Boulder City must face the Blackbat Militia directly, becoming the front lines.”

This well-built Commander Hanson had thought far ahead.

“Hanson, what do you mean?”

Count Stanwin did not appear anxious at all, maintaining a steady manner. This somewhat reassured Commander Hanson.

“My lord, I think we should make preparations for retreat...”

Hanson was being very tactful. According to his rationale, they should retreat at once. Count Stanwin was merely a nobleman, not a military officer of the Holy Dragon Empire. Therefore, he would not be punished for leaving his territory.

At most, he would lose his territory if he ran away. This would be a massive blow to the entire Hilderbrandt clan because the clan’s foundation was in Boulder City.

“Retreat... Maybe so. However, before that, I won’t let the Blackbat Militia off so easily. Go and prepare.”

Count Stanwin remained calm the entire while. This time, the Blackbat Militia had sent someone to kidnap Leon, and he was filled with fury. Even so, he knew that the Blackbat Militia which had joined up with the barbarian tribe was not something a mere count like him could face alone. Not even Marshal Kerry could uphold the line of defense.

Therefore, they could only leave this territory and head to Holy Dragon City. However, without his territory, his countship was merely an empty title. He was likely to lose the honor and glory accorded to aristocrats.

“Father.”

Merlin walked in from outside the hall. The frigid wind outside battered his body. As Merlin entered the hall, the warmth from the fireplace caused Merlin to relax involuntarily.

“Leon, you’re back. Today, your Uncle Hanson has just returned.”

“Uncle Hanson!”

Merlin bowed slightly toward Commander Hanson. He knew that Commander Hanson was Count Stanwin’s right-hand man. Before this, he had been leading the heavy knights in observing the situation at a place not far from the Blackbat Militia. Now that he had suddenly returned, something major must have happened at the front lines.

“Master Leon, when you got engaged I still hadn’t returned from the front lines. Next time, I’ll surely bring you’re a gift.”

Hanson gave a courteous smile, following which he took his leave respectfully, leaving just Merlin and Count Stanwin in the hall.

“Father, what happened?”

Merlin immediately sensed that Hanson’s return was surely not insignificant. Perhaps it was something to do with the Blackbat Militia at the front lines. After all, it was no secret that these past few days, the Blackbat Militia had been facing off against Marshal Kerry’s army.

“Nothing’s the matter. Don’t you worry.”

Count Stanwin spoke with a placid expression as he gazed at Merlin, filled with tenderness.

Seeing that Count Stanwin was unwilling to tell him, Merlin did not further pursue this. Many thoughts flashed across his mind but he did not know how to inquire of Count Stanwin regarding the matter of parasitism.

After a moment of silence, Merlin decided to ask directly. In this world, the only one he could trust completely was Count Stanwin.

“Father, I wonder how parasitism works?”

“Swish.”

Count Stanwin instantly looked up, his gaze sharpening as his body exuded an unseen force, stifling Merlin until he almost could not breathe.

“Leon, how did you learn about parasitism?”

Count Stanwin wore a solemn look as he questioned sternly.

“Father, I went to the Fossil Museum today and heard Curator Heroult mention this. Apparently, through parasitism, one could possess strength on par with the almighty beast bloodline. I wonder if this is true?”

Merlin did not intend to hide this. He could no longer cover this up. After all, he had only gone to the Fossil Museum today. The heavy knight by Merlin’s side would surely report this to Count Stanwin. Merlin might as well inquire boldly and openly.

“Humph, that old Heroult, he’s arrived from Holy Dragon City for over a decade, and always acted surreptitiously. Does he think I don’t know that he’s equipped with powerful almighty beast bloodline? It just that he always seems to know his place, so I didn’t bother him. Now he dares to incite you, Leon, to try parasitism. D*mn him!”

Count Stanwin’s expression was an unpleasant one. Merlin could sense that his father now was truly harboring murderous intent toward Heroult, purely because Heroult had mentioned parasitism to Merlin.

“Father, this has nothing to do with Curator Heroult. I don’t have the almighty beast bloodline, and parasitism is my only option.”

Merlin spoke sincerely. Maybe it was his steady voice that caused Count Stanwin to fall silent for a moment.

“Parasitism... Leon, once you’re parasitized, you might die! I’ve promised your mother that I’ll protect you, giving you a lifetime of peace without any worries. So what if you don’t have the almighty beast bloodline? I’ll leave behind enough riches for you in the future, and you can inherit my title of count. There’s no need to fret about your livelihood. Forget whatever Heroult said. You definitely mustn’t choose parasitism!”

Count Stanwin bore a resolute manner that left no room for questioning.

Chapter 924: Restoring the Framework

Count Stanwin spoke staunchly, and for a moment, Merlin was stumped.

However, he finally said slowly, “Father, even if I don’t choose parasitism, I still need to learn about it, in case Heroult has deceived me.”

Count Stanwin hesitated for a moment, glancing at Merlin, before finally replying, “Leon, parasitism is a hazardous means. In general, only those who inherited no bloodlines, and who had no hope left at all, would choose this path. Practically, no one who chooses parasitism can survive. Even if someone succeeded by fluke, then as their abilities increased, the almighty beast’s will would grow stronger too. In the end, they’d be incapable of suppressing the almighty beast’s will and forfeit their own consciousness completely.”

Throughout a long history, a method like parasitism was gradually developed by people who did not have the almighty beast bloodline. They desired to become contenders and would stop at nothing just to gain formidable power.

When they had incidentally discovered that the almighty beast’s will existed, they used all methods to merge with the almighty beast’s will, thus carving out a path divergent from those who inherited the almighty beast bloodline. However, choosing parasitism was too dangerous. In the first place, the success rate was pitifully low. Moreover, upon success, they had to struggle against the almighty beast’s will at every moment, teetering on the brink between life and death.

Therefore, how could Count Stanwin possibly allow Leon to go for such a risky method? In Count Stanwin’s eyes, Leon could inherit the countship, the territory, and a great amount of

wealth. In his territory, he would have supreme authority. Leon could have a good life without any need to endanger himself with a dangerous path like parasitism.

Nonetheless, Count Stanwin did not know that this son he pampered had switched with another soul, who would gain self-preservation skills at all costs.

“Leon, don’t mull over parasitism anymore. Have a good rest first.”

Merlin nodded without any signs that he had taken this advice to heart. He turned to leave the hall, and headed to his room upstairs.

Seeing that Merlin had left, Count Stanwin’s face slowly darkened. He waved his hand lightly and a guard dressed in heavy armor came in.

“Go, chase Heroult of the Fossil Museum out of Boulder City. I don’t care where he comes from. He comes to my Boulder City and dares to incite Leon to try parasitism, so he mustn’t be allowed to stay here!”

Count Stanwin was ultimately somewhat apprehensive because he had come into close contact with Heroult before but found that he could not see through the other party. Heroult must be someone who possessed a formidable almighty beast bloodline, only he had come to Boulder City for some unknown reason.

Although banishing him in this manner might easily offend this mysterious contender, for Leon’s sake, Count Stanwin would stop at nothing.

The guard nodded, then left with soft steps. The hall was quiet once more, and only the roaring flames of the fireplace would crackle now and then...

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Back in his room, the place had been tidied up by a maid. A white slip of paper was placed on the table, with a message on it.

“Leon, today the Honorable Count has allowed me to visit my clan. I might only return after a few days. Things are rather chaotic outside, so try not to go out.”

It was signed by Reese. She had left this note.

A smile tugged at the corner of Merlin's mouth. Reese had been staying in the Count's Manor long ago. Of course, this was not in keeping with propriety but with Count Stanwin's overbearing manner, Reese's clan dared not speak up.

Moreover, Reese's clan would not care about her, a descendant of the clan who did not inherit the almighty beast bloodline. Now that they could form a relationship with Count Stanwin, naturally, it was perfect for them. Why would they not agree?

Thus, Reese had always stayed in the Count's Manor, preparing to hold the wedding after the matter of the Blackbat Militia at the front lines had been resolved.

Merlin kept the paper slip, following which he sat down before the mahogany desk, making light strokes across the white paper with a quill. If one looked closely, one would know that this was the Molta language of the Void Zone.

"It's too difficult."

After a long moment, Merlin slowly put down the quill. On the paper, he had drawn one model after another. In his past life, he was a Great Lord among the Spell Casters, having perfected the Mind Power system. Therefore, he could not create another cultivation system suited to his present body.

Nonetheless, this required a very extensive period. Furthermore, though he borrowed from the Spell Models constructed by Spell Casters, this still required research and experiments, bit by bit. How could he come up with something in a short while?

After putting down the quill, Merlin's brain spun with countless ideas. He immersed his consciousness in his Awareness. The Illusory World was scattered and smashed, leaving just a bit of the power of the natural order now.

"To restore the Illusory World, I'll have to first mend the collapsed framework of the Illusory World but this would consume a lot of Mind Power."

Merlin was rather hesitant. His Mind Power would dwindle each time he used it. If he mobilized his Mind Power now, he would be in trouble if he ran into any danger.

However, if he did not even repair the framework, relying solely on that most basic strand of the natural order, who knew how many years it would be before it slowly recovered? Thus, this was a dilemma.

“The Illusory World is my foundation. Only by materializing it as reality, will I have the chance to truly break away from the Latitude Cosmos, like Aruba, roaming through each one of them instead of being like me now, being trapped in this Latitude Cosmo, like in a prison. Therefore, no matter what, restoring the Illusory World is the most crucial thing.”

Merlin contemplated the matter. After an intense bout of debate, he finally decided to first restore the general framework of the Illusory World. Otherwise, he only had one strand of the most basic and essential natural order, which would not be of much use. Once the Illusory World had its basic framework, it could slowly repair itself from then on, even if this would still take an inconceivable amount of time.

Therefore, Merlin started to immerse his consciousness in the natural order. His Mind Power was quickly mobilized. With this strand of the most basic natural order, restoring the Illusory World was difficult. However, restoring the framework of the Illusory World would still be feasible.

A wave of invisible fluctuations emerged over Merlin. These were Mind Power fluctuations. Merlin had to be extremely cautious. The Mind Power fluctuations were no big deal. Even though they were a new form of power, the will of the Almighty Beast World would not notice them. After all, they were no threat to the Almighty Beast World.

Nonetheless, if a trace of the force of the natural order in the Illusory World was leaked out, the entire Almighty Beast World might be affected. With Merlin’s present circumstances, he must not let the force of the natural order to leak out. Therefore, as he repaired the overall framework of the Illusory World, he could only be extra careful.

Chapter 925: Heroult!

Three days had passed. Merlin seldom ventured out during this period. There were suddenly fewer guards in the manor as well. Moreover, they came in and out, appearing very busy. Merlin did not know what happened for they looked more anxious.

When Merlin occasionally went down, he did so hastily. A maid noticed that Merlin's complexion was increasingly pale but dared not ask him about it so casually. Fortunately, Count Stanwin had gone somewhere these few days, so he did not question Merlin.

"Almost there. There's not much Mind Power left but at last, the framework of the Illusory World has been built."

Merlin's face was pale because his Mind Power had been severely exhausted. Over three consecutive days, he had used Mind Power to constantly repair the general framework of the Illusory World.

Luckily, he still had the most essential natural order. Repairing the framework of the Illusory World was much easier. Otherwise, to reconstruct the entire Illusory World would be impossible even in ten thousand years.

The overall framework of the Illusory World had been established. Thereafter, Merlin did not have to worry anymore. It just needed a long time to slowly recover. At that point, the natural order would derive even more natural order.

As for recovering his previous strength in the Void Zone, even surpassing the natural order and materializing illusions as reality, these were all too distant for Merlin. He was facing a more practical concern, which was his lack of self-preservation power now.

In this period, although the guards in the manor did not mention anything to him, the entire atmosphere at the manor seemed suspicious. Merlin who had keen senses could naturally perceive that this was a very tense atmosphere. Even without inquiring, Merlin could vaguely guess that something had happened at the front lines.

It was very likely that this calm lifestyle would not continue. If so, powers of self-preservation were vital.

"I'll go and ask Heroult at the Fossil Museum once more."

Merlin stood up, having made up his mind. Even though Count Stanwin forbade him to be parasitized, from the depths of his heart, he desired to have self-preservation powers. Only parasitism could grant him such strength, so that was all that mattered.

Nonetheless, before that, Merlin had to ascertain how it worked and not act rashly.

After leaving the room, Merlin headed directly outside the manor.

...

In the Fossil Museum, there was a bustle of activities. Many people were buzzing about in and out, moving precious fossils. Outside, there was one carriage after another, totaling more than ten. It appeared that the entire Fossil Museum was moving out of Boulder City.

“Be careful there. These are precious almighty beast fossils. Don’t break them.”

A few black-armored knights were directing things. They were the security force of the Fossil Museum. Curator Heroult was a mysterious man. After opening this Fossil Museum, he even employed an entire troop of knights for protection.

Suddenly, a splendid carriage gradually stopped outside the Fossil Museum. From the carriage, out hopped a skinny, pale-faced young man.

“What are you all doing here?”

Merlin noticed the people who were incessantly moving things outside the Fossil Museum, and his brow immediately scrunched up.

“Master Leon.”

A black-armored guard seemed to know Merlin’s identity and immediately replied respectfully, “Master Leon, Curator Heroult has asked us to move these fossils away. We’re leaving Boulder City today.”

“Moving away?”

Merlin appeared astounded. Countless thoughts flashed in his mind as if he seemed to think of something. He asked softly, "Where's Curator Heroult?"

"Curator Heroult is inside."

Merlin entered the Fossil Museum. Indeed, he saw Curator Heroult directing a few people to carefully move the almighty beast fossils.

"Curator Heroult, are you moving away?"

Merlin stepped forward and asked.

When Curator Heroult saw Merlin had come. His eyes brightened, following which he gave an ambiguous smile. "Master Leon, do you not know? Honorable Count Stanwin had already sent his heavy knights to warn me. If I don't move, I'll be responsible for the consequences! In this Boulder City, if one offends the honorable count, is there anyone who can stay on?"

Merlin had already guessed this somewhat that it was indeed his father who gave the order. He was the master of Boulder City. With one command from him, a mere curator naturally could not disobey.

Nevertheless, Merlin still felt that this Heroult was not that simple. He was not moving away for a reason like this. It was just that this might involve Heroult's own secrets, so Merlin could not ask.

"Curator Heroult, I'm truly sorry. I didn't think that I'll give you so much trouble."

Even though Heroult was very enigmatic, as of now, Merlin did not detect any evil intent on his part. Conversely, it was Curator Heroult who was implicated by Merlin.

"Haha, Master Leon. Even without the honorable count's banishment, I'll be leaving Boulder City as soon as I can. After all, the front lines can't hold on for long. At that point, we might meet again."

Heroult seemed well-informed, knowing about the situation at the front lines.

“The front lines can’t hold on? Curator Heroult, has something bad happened?”

Merlin immediately thought of his father, Count Stanwin, who had not been in the manor these few days. Even the heavy knights were fewer in number.

“Master Leon, don’t you know? The Blackbat Militia had colluded with the barbarian tribe. By now, the line of defense that Marshal Kerry had blockaded over is completely torn apart. The collapse of that defensive line is not too far behind. Therefore, no matter what, I’ll move away as quickly as possible.”

Heroult did not conceal this fact. It seemed like many people knew of this development.

Most people had heard of this. Thus, everyone in Boulder City had grown alarmed. Most of the heavy guards had been sent out to guard the city gates, reassuring the masses.

“So something this major had happened. It looked like the Holy Dragon Empire isn’t far from chaos...”

Merlin understood the entire situation of the Holy Dragon Empire. The matter of the Blackbat Militia was merely a microcosm of what was happening in the Holy Dragon Empire. All over the empire, organizations similar to the Blackbat Militia were popping up everywhere. Troubled times were coming. At that point, it was difficult to say whether Count Stanwin could protect the entire Hilderbrandt clan.

With this in mind, Merlin became more determined in his plan to gain self-preservation powers.

“Curator Heroult, I came here to ask for more details about ‘parasitism’.”

“Parasitism? Master Leon, would Count Stanwin allow you to choose an eternally doomed path like parasitism?”

Curator Heroult asked with an awkward smile. Surprisingly, he did not show the fear others typically displayed upon mentioning Count Stanwin.

“If father doesn’t allow me, am I not able to make the choice myself? Danger is lurking everywhere throughout the Holy Dragon Empire. This is an omen of impending chaos. If I don’t have the slightest power to defend myself, even father would be unable to protect me.”

Merlin spoke resolutely.

“Oh? Master Leon has such determination?”

Curator Heroult appeared taken aback as he sized up Merlin. After a moment of hesitation, he finally invited Merlin into a room in the Fossil Museum.

“Master Leon, have you decided on parasitism?”

“Of course!”

Merlin answered with steely conviction. If he had any hesitations before, they were completely gone after he heard about the Blackbat Militia breaking through Marshal Kerry’s line of defense.

Troubled times were coming. Without self-preservation powers, it would be dangerous.

Moreover, being parasitized by an almighty beast’s will was ultimately dependent on the mind. In that aspect, Merlin was unafraid. His Illusory World, despite having only a framework built, was not something most almighty beasts could destroy.

Plus, Merlin was left with some Mind Power. He was not afraid of the remnants of the almighty beast’s will.

After considering various situations, Merlin finally made up his mind. Choosing the path of parasitism was now the only plan he could think of in a short time that would gain him formidable power.

“Curator Heroult, I wish to allow an almighty beast’s will to parasitize me. I wonder if you have a way?”

Merlin stared at Curator Heroult with burning eyes. He knew that this mysterious Curator Heroult was sure to have a way, only he did not now know whether Curator Heroult was willing to anger Count Stanwin.

“Heh, Master Leon, you’re making things difficult for me. Once the honorable Count Stanwin knew that I’ve brought you onto this irreversible path, he might tear me apart... Nonetheless, I’m studying parasitism. Although I don’t choose to walk this path, I’ve researched the almighty beasts’ will and parasitism for over ten years.

“I won’t deny that those who can sense the almighty beast’s will are rare. I don’t know what’s the reason, but only those who can sense the almighty beast’s will are able to choose parasitism. Therefore, I wish to let Master Leon try it as well, but do you need to think about this more carefully? After all, if you want to be parasitized, your father Count Stanwin can help you.”

Curator Heroult’s eyes were faintly zealous. He had studied parasitism for over ten years. Having met a “test subject” like Merlin delivered to his doorstep, naturally, he was overjoyed.

Even so, he still sought for Merlin’s opinion. Though he was not fearful of Count Stanwin, there was no need to offend a count who might be a peak fourth-form shifter without good cause.

“Curator Heroult, I’ve already thought this through. Plus, do you think that if I go to father, he would agree to let me choose parasitism?”

Merlin had already considered this matter. Heroult did not seem afraid of his father, so there was no one more suited to help Merlin begin the parasitism. Furthermore, Merlin did not detect any evil intent from Heroult. This was the crucial part.

Curator Heroult carefully scrutinized Merlin. After a long moment of thought, he gradually raised his head. “Very well, we don’t have much time. If we take too long, Count Stanwin will discover us. Follow me, Master Leon, I’ll help you be parasitized. This would thoroughly aggrieve Count Stanwin. I hope after you succeed, you won’t forget me.”

“If I fail?”

Merlin asked.

“If you fail... You’ll die, and your father, Count Stanwin, would turn insane as he hunts me down everywhere. Hehe, now do you see how much of a risk I’m taking due to your choice of parasitism?”

Although Curator Heroult complained over and over about this pressure he was under, Merlin could discern a frantic light in his eyes.

Chapter 926: The Two-headed Pterolycus I

Merlin followed Curator Heroult into the Fossil Museum. It was a completely different world within. With a gentle press, the surface of the wall revealed a tunnel entrance that directly headed underground.

This was an underground secret passage. To think that Curator Heroult who had come to Boulder City for merely over a decade had already built a basement without anyone’s realization.

The basement was rather dim and cold, but there was no odor of dust. It must be visited often. Merlin walked behind Curator Heroult for a moment and soon saw a stone door.

There were so many mechanisms here. It looked like this was an important place.

“Rumble.”

After the stone door opened, it revealed the true appearance of the basement, which was very spacious. As soon as Merlin entered, he had detected the pungent smell of blood along with a composite of potions. It was an unpleasant odor, and he could not help wrinkling his nose.

The basement was in a mess. The gray tiles were covered in a sheen of grease, which looked disgusting. Some mice were making “squeaking” noises.

In the center were a few desks, on top of which some transparent glassware seemed to contain something. As he glanced at this cluttered appearance, Merlin could not restrain from frowning. However, as he looked at Heroult beside him, he saw that Heroult's gaze was filled with nostalgia as if these were all precious items.

As if sensing Merlin's misgivings, Curator Heroult calmly said, "Master Leon, this is my laboratory. You should know that, to someone who devoted his efforts to researching parasitism, the laboratory is his greatest treasure. It's a shame that the menace of the Blackbat Militia is fast approaching. Otherwise, I would be able to move the laboratory as well."

One could see that, truly, Heroult was not acting because of Count Stanwin, but had already made this decision long before.

"What's the function of the laboratory? Do I need it too?"

Merlin only had a half-baked understanding of the cultivation system in this world. This was thanks to Count Stanwin. Count Stanwin might be very formidable but because Leon did not inherit the clan's Deinosuchus bloodline, Count Stanwin did not further explain matters regarding cultivation.

Heroult said in a low voice, "To most people, inheriting the almighty beast bloodline wouldn't require constructing a laboratory, but it's different if you study parasitism. In particular, for those who choose the path of parasitism, a laboratory is indispensable. This is because by choosing to be parasitized by an almighty beast's will, one would be teetering on the brink between life and death at every second. Not only does one have to get along with the almighty beast's will, one must manufacture potions to stimulate the body, the blood, and even one's own potential. Only then can one increase the power of their bloodline accompanied by the almighty beast's will!"

After Heroult's explanation, Merlin realized that the path of parasitism was not a pleasant one. One might be overwhelmed by the almighty beast's will at any time. Moreover, the cultivation could not rely upon the bloodline, so one required various potions to stimulate their body, enhancing their physical strength, to obtain power compatible with an almighty beast.

As for those who had inherited an almighty beast's bloodline, they only had to train the power of their bloodline diligently. As time passed, they would naturally possess formidable strength. Compared to those who had inherited an almighty beast bloodline, parasitism did not seem to have the slightest advantage.

“Don’t you feel that it’s hazardous, without any advantages? Haha, parasitism’s upper hand lies in one’s own control. If one relies upon the bloodline’s power, the upper limits of their strength are already determined. The higher the grade of one’s bloodline, the stronger they’d be in the future. However, no matter what, there’s ultimately a limit.

“Parasitism is different. When the almighty beast’s will selected by a Host no longer fulfills the requirements of their strength, the Host can choose to merge with a stronger almighty beast’s will or even fuse a few almighty beasts’ wills. If they succeed, their potential would be terrifying to an unimaginable extent...”

Heroult’s eyes burned with a fervent light. He was such an insane person. However, Merlin could tell that fusing different wills or absorbing a second almighty beast’s will would be very difficult with almost no chance of survival. Those who survived had a perverse amount of luck.

By now, he had ascertained that those who chose parasitism must all be lunatics.

On second thoughts, was Merlin himself not a lunatic as well? Perhaps in the eyes of others, bypassing the easy path of a count in favor of the parasitism’s suicidal path was the act of a madman.

“What should I do?”

Merlin asked hoarsely.

“Parasitism is more troublesome. Now, the almighty beast’s will here isn’t that great. There’s only the Two-headed Pterolycus’ will, which you’ve seen that day. The Two-headed Pterolycus isn’t that powerful, only considered a low-tier almighty beast. Nonetheless, it’s rather formidable among that tier. If you can unleash its full form which has flying abilities, it’ll compensate the inadequacies of the bloodline, and just about reach into the mid-tier.

“Still, I don’t suggest that you choose the Two-headed Pterolycus. Its bloodline is low-grade, but its will isn’t feeble. Conversely, it’s rather bloodthirsty and ferocious. If there’s enough time, I’d like to bring you to Holy Dragon City. I’ve left some mid-level almighty beasts’ wills there which are very powerful, certain to suit you.”

Heroult's eyes shone brightly. He was treating Merlin as a test subject. Nevertheless, Merlin still could not trust him completely. In Boulder City, because of Count Stanwin, Heroult would still have some reservations no matter what.

If Merlin followed Heroult to Holy Dragon City, Heroult would be able to do anything he wanted.

Therefore, in any case, Merlin would not leave with Heroult.

After a moment of consideration, Merlin decided on the Two-headed Pterolycus' will. Although it was low-tier, in truth, even a low-tier almighty beast was very fearsome. Moreover, Merlin could take on more wills of almighty beasts in the future. This was the sole benefit of choosing parasitism.

"Curator Heroult, it's not necessary. I'll choose the Two-headed Pterolycus."

Merlin sensed the urgency of the situation. Who knew when the Blackbat Militia would sweep into Boulder City murderously. The heavy knights of his father, Count Stanwin were certain to be unable to hold them off.

Therefore, Merlin must gain powers of self-preservation before that happened.

"That's a shame. Since you insist on the Two-headed Pterolycus, I'll grant your wish. Follow me."

Curator Heroult was somewhat rueful. He had treated Merlin as a test subject. It was not easy to find a voluntary test subject. After all, not everyone could sense an almighty beast's will.

Fortunately, he still had time to record the parasitism process between Merlin and the almighty beast's will. If they succeeded, this would greatly advance his research of parasitism. If they failed, Heroult could imagine Count Stanwin's fury. If it came to that, he would leave Boulder City without a moment's hesitation, hiding far away.

Although he was not fearful of Count Stanwin, no one wanted to fight for their life against a wild contender who possessed a mid-tier almighty beast bloodline, who had reached the peak of the fourth-form.

Merlin trailed behind Heroult, entering a small room in the basement. However, this room contained an overpowering foul odor. Merlin could hardly stand that pungent stench.

In the middle of the room, there was a revolting green pool, which was bubbling in a viscous manner. The smell was unbearable.

“What’s this?”

Merlin asked softly.

“This is the Nourishment Pond, Master Leon. It’s not so easy to be parasitized. An almighty beast’s will is incomparably powerful. Can a body whose bloodline isn’t enhanced withstand the power of an almighty beast’s will? Without preliminary enhancement, almost no one can narrowly escape. They’d explode and die. Thus, to be parasitized, you must first augment your own physical strength, stimulating your greatest potential. For this, the Nourishment Pond is essential.”

It turned out that parasitism was so troublesome. However, this small pond that looked so sticky was too disgusting. Who knew what its contents consisted of?

Nevertheless, Merlin now had no choice but to strip down, endure the acrid odor, and leap into the Nourishment Pond with a splash.

Chapter 927: The Two-headed Pterolycus II

“Blub blub.”

After Merlin had jumped into the pond, bubbles rose up to the surface. Merlin felt as if he was caught in a swamp where it was difficult to move even an inch.

Particularly, the thick, sludge-like stuff pressed in on Merlin from all sides. Other than his head, all the rest of him was sunken. He felt cold and damp. However, thereafter, a numb sensation arose, followed quickly by a hot and stinging feeling.

These sensations were difficult to endure. Any average person would be unable to stand it but Merlin's Mind Power was incomparably powerful. How would he be afraid of this smidgen of pain?

Conversely, he was using his Mind Power to carefully study the pond. There was special energy within that slowly seeped into his body, binding with his body's blood. It was indeed able to enhance the power of his bloodline multiple times.

"It's not surprising that it's called the Nourishment Pond for it can strengthen an ordinary person's bloodline multiple times. I suppose the formula isn't that simple?"

Merlin opened his eyes and asked in an even tone.

Heroult was somewhat astonished. He did not expect that Merlin could still reason so soberly under such circumstances. He smiled as he replied, "Of course, it's not simple. The Nourishment Pond formula is every Host's secret. Back then, I've only obtained this Nourishment Pond formula due to random chance. However, don't you count on me passing it on to you. This Nourishment Pond formula is the most basic of all. Even if your parasitism succeeds, you'll need the Nourishment Pond formula. Perhaps, if you follow me to Holy Dragon City, I'll consider passing on the Nourishment Pond formula to you."

Merlin eyed the pond, not expecting that this small pond would be so crucial. Nonetheless, a formula that could strengthen the power of one's bloodline was vital indeed. At least, in "Leon" memories, Merlin could find nothing that would enhance one's bloodline. After all, Merlin's current bloodline was merely an ordinary one.

"How easy it would be with the Matrix. With one scan and I'll know the Nourishment Pond formula."

Merlin missed the Matrix but it was a shame it would not appear again.

When he thought of the Matrix, Merlin naturally recalled the Vestigial Tribe. The Illusory Tribe Civilization in his Illusory World was completely developed based on the Vestigial Tribe. If the Illusory World were to recover even more, he would first develop the Illusory Tribe Civilization.

It was similar to the Matrix in the Illusory Tribe Civilization. Even though it was not as outrageous as the Matrix that could construct Spell Models, it could still scan spell formulas and exert precise control. At that time, the Nourishment Pond formula would not be a problem.

With this in mind, Merlin was not worried anymore. He had come from the Void Zone, a great existence able to contend against the will of the Void Zone. Naturally, he had some advantages.

“There’s no need for that. I’ll look for the Nourishment Pond formula myself in the future.”

Merlin replied coldly. His tone contained no trace of gratitude. He could see the current situation clearly. He was a test subject, and Heroult would obtain precious experiment data from him. As for Merlin himself, if the parasitism succeeded, he would gain some powers of self-preservation.

This was a mutually beneficial matter and could be considered a transaction. Thus, feeling thankful was not in the equation.

“Alright, you might be in agony, so be prepared!”

After Heroult spoke, he took out a spotless, white porcelain bottle and gently opened the lid. From within out poured a gray powder.

“Sizzle sizzle.”

As the powder fell upon the Nourishment Pond, it was like water poured into a deep fryer. The pond started to boil violently, and Merlin felt a scorching pain.

“Endure it. Only by passing this stage can your body withstand the Two-headed Pterolycus’ will!”

Heroult noticed Merlin’s expression of suffering and spoke hurriedly. He was afraid that Merlin could not bear this. If that happened, all his previous work would go to waste.

Merlin glanced at Heroult. He could endure this. Though it was great agony, his will would not be affected in the slightest even if this was ten thousand times worse.

Under the observation of Merlin's Mind Power, he could distinctly feel that his body was gradually strengthening. His blood surged with immense power, which was proof of the wonder of the Nourishment Pond.

"Alright, you can come out!"

After an unknown period, when Merlin was even feeling somewhat numb, Heroult's voice sounded in his ear, yelling that Merlin could leave the Nourishment Pond.

Merlin was somewhat reluctant to leave, noticing a slight twitch at the corner of Heroult's mouth. Heroult felt a pang. This Nourishment Pond could be considered his greatest asset. So many precious items had been put into it for it to have such astonishing effects.

"Master Leon, you may now inspect your body."

Heroult tossed Merlin a clean robe. Merlin put it on. Although it was not as well-fitting as his own clothes, he could get by. It just appeared somewhat oversized.

However, this was unimportant. What mattered was that Merlin felt his own body seemed to have grown stronger. It really had. If he weighed himself now, his mass would surely have increased significantly.

Merlin lightly gripped his arms, which felt different from their previously weak state. Now they seemed filled with strength.

"This was all transformed by the Nourishment Pond?"

Merlin was rather taken aback. It looked like he had underestimated this world. It could produce such a miraculous thing like the Nourishment Pond, which forcefully increased the strength of those who did not have any almighty beast bloodline.

Of course, compared to those who had inherited an almighty beast bloodline, there was still no way to be on par. One's physique was merely enhanced at least five times compared to an average person.

“Not bad, Master Leon, your will isn’t bad at all. Your body could be enhanced more than five times. Most people can no longer stand it after they were enhanced three times over.”

Curator Heroult was rather surprised but also mournful as well. Admittedly, he was delighted over Merlin’s physique being enhanced five times over but the greater the enhancement, the more Merlin had consumed the substances in his Nourishment Pond.

These materials were extremely precious. He had collected them for many years before manufacturing this Nourishment Pond. Initially, he had planned to use it for long-term research on parasitism but now, it was used by Merlin.

Nonetheless, he had already recorded Merlin’s physical situation and his body’s data. This was always a part of the research and could be considered a fair trade. There was nothing to rue.

“Alright, next is the crucial step – to allow the almighty beast’s will to parasitize in your body, coexisting with your consciousness!”

With that, Curator Heroult had moved the Two-headed Pterolycus’ fossil into the room at an unknown time. Instantly, Merlin’s ear seemed to ring with the almighty beast’s snarls.

“Tell me, what do I do?”

Merlin did not hesitate at all and asked softly.

“It’s simple. Focus your attention and hold onto the Two-headed Pterolycus’ fossil. The Two-headed Pterolycus’ will would slowly detect your presence, then infiltrate your consciousness, parasitizing your mind!”

Heroult pointed to the Two-headed Pterolycus’ fossil on the floor, indicating that Merlin could begin.

Merlin drew in a deep breath and crouched down. The moment his hand gripped the Two-headed Pterolycus’ fossil, Merlin felt a bleak force invading his body furiously. Moreover, the almighty beast’s roars seemed to magnify innumerable times over in his ears.

Heroult swiftly retreated to one side, closely observing Merlin's changes. Currently, this was the complete process of parasitism. This precious experiment data would be very useful for his future research on parasitism.

As for whether Merlin would succeed, this was no longer within the scope of his considerations. Now, it was all up to Merlin.

Chapter 928: Parasitism Successful!

"Boom."

In Merlin's Awareness, an incomparably massive Two-headed Pterolycus roared fiercely at Merlin's consciousness. An earth-shattering pressure descended upon Merlin. Bloodthirst, cruelty, and other negative emotions were endlessly sweeping over, futilely battering against Merlin's will.

However, in Merlin's Awareness, would he fear a puny almighty beast of this world? Forget about a mere low-tier almighty beast – even a mid-tier or high-tier one, despite being a legendary almighty beast's will, was no match for Merlin in his Awareness.

This was because Merlin had the natural order of the Illusory World.

The natural order had suppressed everything! Though Merlin's natural order was reduced to a strand now, being the most fundamental force of the Illusory World, even one strand was not something the Two-headed Pterolycus could content against.

"Suppress!"

Merlin yelled hoarsely, his voice washing over the Two-headed Pterolycus from all directions. Instantly, the recently built framework of the Illusory World swiftly enveloped the Two-headed Pterolycus. In his Awareness, Merlin's natural order would not be noticed by the will of this Latitude Cosmo. Thus, Merlin's strand of natural order dominated this space, controlling everything.

"Boom."

The might of the natural order could not be withstood by the Two-headed Pterolycus at all. Its cries even contained a hint of a pitiful whimper. Initially, it was aggressive and blustering,

trying to swallow Merlin's consciousness in one gulp but now, it stayed in his Awareness obediently, starting to slowly merge with Merlin's consciousness.

This was parasitism because the consciousness must be merged, using the almighty beast's will to spur the transformation of the body's bloodline. One must constantly maintain and suppress the almighty beast's will. This was difficult for most people but Merlin who suppressed with his natural order faced no such problem. Even if there were more almighty beasts' wills, he could suppress them.

"Although I don't have the Matrix, my Illusory World is my biggest asset!"

Merlin opened his eyes. No matter what happened, the Illusory World was his core. Although the Illusory World must not appear in the self-centered Almighty Beast World, being unable to confront the Almighty Beast World's will, suppressing the almighty beasts' will was still a piece of cake.

Therefore, parasitism, so dangerous and fatal to most people, was in fact, perfect for Merlin.

"Two-headed Pterolycus!"

Merlin stood up abruptly. He sensed a mystical energy coursing in his arms, exploding in accordance with his will.

Merlin's hand instantly morphed into two wolf claws, covered in long fur. The strong claws seemed able to slice through metal with a gentle swipe.

"Shifting already? You've reached the first-form so soon. Not bad, Master Leon, you've succeeded!"

Heroult stared at Merlin's appearance and his eyes gleamed, feeling a burst of joy. Merlin had truly succeeded. It should be known that he had carried out a few experiments before but all had failed. Unexpectedly, Merlin had made it. This was rather unbelievable.

"Master Leon, how do you feel now?"

Heroult was busy recording data. Generally, he had recorded most of the previous data. Now all that was left was Merlin's experience.

"Feel?"

Merlin thought about it then pointed to his head. "The only feeling is that there's an additional almighty beast in my head."

Merlin was talking about the Two-headed Pterolycus. Currently, the Two-headed Pterolycus' consciousness was tangled up with his own, and not completely merged. Once it was merged, it would not be able to transform Merlin's bloodline, so this was a weird situation indeed.

Nonetheless, even now, no one had completed the path of parasitism. No one had a comprehensive system either. Even Heroult himself did not take this path of parasitism. He simply was interested in the subject, and thus studied it for years.

This situation of coexisting with the almighty beast's will was surely not the optimal state. The optimal state would be to wipe out the almighty beast's will completely, yet still obtaining formidable power.

Of course, this was something far from Merlin's current considerations. Right now, he did not even know what grade his strength was after shifting.

"Swish."

Merlin swiped gently. The speed of his shapeshifted claws was outrageous. Even with a quick gesture, all that he could see was a blur. Ordinary people would not be able to evade such an attack. Even a solid breastplate would not hold up against such sharp claws.

Moreover, the Two-headed Pterolycus was merely a low-tier almighty beast. Even in its full form, it could compare to a mid-tier almighty beast at best. However, the grade of its bloodline was only in the low-tier. It was enough to demonstrate how fearsome these formidable almighty beasts' bloodlines were.

"The Two-headed Pterolycus' specialty is its speed and sharp claws. Still, you're currently shifting to the first-form only, which merely consists of the claws. Your speed won't be that fast. At best, you possess sharp claws as your weapons."

Heroult told Merlin calmly.

With Merlin's single thought, his shapeshifting swiftly vanished, and his hands resumed their initial appearance. It was truly wondrous.

"What's the difference between the different grades of shifters?"

Although Merlin had heard of the shifters' grades before, it was not in detail. After all, since Merlin did not inherit his clan's Deinonychus bloodline, Count Stanwin was afraid that Merlin would let his imagination run wild. Therefore, he forbade people from mentioning the almighty beast bloodline in front of Merlin.

As a result, in Merlin's memories, he only had a half-baked understanding of the strength differentiation of an almighty beast bloodline. He did not know them well. Now, he used this chance to ask Heroult about this.

"The differentiation of the almighty beast bloodline is simple. The first-form usually includes the arms, the second-form the legs, the third-form the torso while the fourth-form transforms every part except the head. The fifth-form morphs you completely, becoming a true almighty beast. This is the shifter's most externally obvious fifth-form.

"After the fifth-form, it depends on the strength of one's almighty beast bloodline. The fifth-form is a new form called a full-shift while those before the fifth-form are half-shifts!"

Heroult's explanation was very detailed, and Merlin slowly absorbed it all. Shifting had five forms, differentiated between the half-shifts and the full-shift. Whether one relied on an almighty beast bloodline or the parasitism of an almighty beast's will, it was the same.

Merlin nodded, then asked the question that he was most concerned about.

"How does a Host increase his capability?"

This was Merlin's priority. Those who inherited an almighty beast bloodline did not need to worry. By constantly training their bloodline, they could become more powerful, like Count Stanwin. As his Deinonychus bloodline was concentrated, with incessant training and the

passage of time, he naturally reached the peak of the fourth-form. It was even possible to step into the fifth-form and become a full-shifter.

Of course, going from the fourth-form to the fifth-form was a threshold that had blocked many others.

However, Hosts did not have an almighty beast bloodline. How did they boost their strength?

“Master Leon, I’ve explained this before. You’d have to rely on the Nourishment Pond. Though you’ve succeeded in becoming a Host, you still need the Nourishment Pond. Its formula can produce rich nutrients that stimulate the bloodline. Under the imperceptible influence of the almighty beast’s will, you’ll gradually grow stronger. Without the Nourishment Pond, even if your parasitism was successful, it’s not of much use.”

Heroult had held on to one last bargaining chip. It was not surprising that he was not worried that Merlin’s parasitism succeeded. Even so, without Heroult’s Nourishment Pond formula, Merlin could not possibly increase his strength.

Following that, Heroult made a supreme effort in inviting Merlin to leave Boulder City for Holy Dragon City. Merlin only had to allow Heroult to study his condition and he could use the Nourishment Pond formula that Heroult manufactured for free. In a very short time, he could enhance his capabilities.

“There’s no need for that. Although I’m somewhat rueful to not have the Nourishment Pond formula, I think I’ll get some other formula in the future. Curator Heroult, you’ve gotten your data. We don’t owe each other anything.”

With that, Merlin stood up, and swiftly left the Fossil Museum.

Chapter 929: Sudden Changes

Looking at Merlin’s departing silhouette, Curator Heroult’s lips quirked into a meaningful smile. He said loudly, “Master Leon, maybe we’ll meet again. If you happen to be in Holy Dragon City, you can find me at Brews Castle...”

Curator Heroult's words resounded in Merlin's ear. Merlin left the Fossil Museum without looking back.

"Master Leon, what happened inside?"

The knights who were standing guard around the carriage outside asked panickily.

"Nothing. Go back to the manor."

Merlin replied, and headed into the carriage. He urgently needed to adapt to the changes in his body as well as study the details of parasitism.

...

Below the sprawling city walls, it was dark and dense, filled with crowds of people. Some of them had already begun to shift, and were roaring and snarling wildly. The city walls would not be able to stop them.

"Marshal Kerry's line of defense cannot hold on anymore. With the addition of the barbarians, the situation has become more complicated..."

Commander Hanson said impassively. He had been at the front line for a very long time to observe the battle situation. Now that the Blackbat Militia had engaged the barbarian tribe, he knew that Commander Kerry's line of defense would not last long.

"Hanson, gather the knights and return to Boulder City. We're giving up this territory..."

Count Stanwin's tone was slightly doleful. This territory had been acquired, little by little, through his hard work. Naturally, he was unwilling to hand it over to another person. However, the situation left him with no choice. The joint forces of the Blackbat Militia and the barbarian tribe could not be stopped by Boulder City alone.

"Boom."

Just as Count Stanwin was preparing to leave, a massive Roc spanning hundreds of meters appeared on top of the city wall. The Roc gently spread out its wings and flapped, which stirred up a hurricane. The hurricane killed a portion of the barbarians.

“Marshal Kerry has acted. He’s a mid-tier top-level almighty beast bloodline, the Red-tailed Roc!

Hanson remarked in amazement. This was a full-shifter existence. Besides being an outstanding commander, Marshal Kerry’s ability was also very impressive. He had achieved the rare fifth-form, which was a remarkable full-shifter.

Looking at the fearsome Roc in the sky, Count Stanwin appeared shocked too. Nonetheless, he said regrettably, “If even Marshal Kerry has acted personally, the situation must be unsalvageable.”

As he spoke, from the other side of the battlefield, a black bat with a terrifying aura emerged. It was the leader of the Blackbat Militia. He had also achieved the fifth form of full-shifter.

The two full-shifter existences collided fiercely in the sky. The resulting impact spread in all directions. All the soldiers below them who were hit by the aftershocks were immediately killed or grievously injured.

Upon achieving the fifth-form, these terrifying existences were no longer human. They had begun to wield the terrifying power of the ancient almighty beasts.

“Haha, Kerry, you’re not worthy to be my opponent!”

A burst of laughter echoed in the sky. Following that, the gigantic bat emitted an invisible vibration from its mouth. The red Roc appeared to be hit and spiraled downward rapidly. At the final moment, it somehow made its way onto the city wall but seemed like it was severely injured.

“Even Marshal Kerry has been defeated. Honorable Count, it seems like we’ve truly underestimated the Blackbat Militia!”

Commander Hanson's face turned grim. Previously, all of them assumed that the Blackbat Militia was just the same as the other rebels in the Holy Dragon Empire, and that Marshal Kerry would be able to stop them easily.

However, now it seemed like there was more than met the eye. Moreover, the Blackbat Militia was able to engage the barbarian tribe. If the barbarian tribe were so easily persuaded, they would not have been called barbarians.

The fact that they were able to rope in the barbarians meant that the Blackbat Militia was very resourceful. Additionally, this mysterious leader of the Blackbat Militia had demonstrated such powerful abilities in his first confrontation, to the extent that Marshal Kerry was defeated.

"The odds of Holy Dragon Empire are looking dismal. Let's leave now, away from the territory. The only safe place left for now is Holy Dragon City!"

Count Stanwin sighed. As the master of the territory, he certainly would not give up on his territory easily. However, seeing the abilities of the Blackbat Militia, he knew that he did not stand a chance. He could only give up.

Under the heavy escort of guards, Count Stanwin hurried back to Boulder City.

...

In a spacious room, Merlin was sensing the blood flow in his body. He carefully felt the Two-headed Pterolycus' will and its effect on his body.

Under Merlin's Mind Power observation, everything was laid bare. There were some effects, and they were quite major. It appeared that the almighty beasts' will from this world was able to affect the blood circulation system, causing one's blood to gradually possess the will and strength of the almighty beast. Nonetheless, this was a very long, drawn-out process.

Based on this progress speed, Merlin would need at least ten years to accumulate enough strength in his blood to level-up to become a second-form shifter.

Therefore, it seemed like the Nourishment Pond formula was very important.

“I wonder if Father has the formula of the Nourishment Pond? However, Heroult said that the Nourishment Pond formula is every Host’s most guarded secret, and wouldn’t be easily passed on to others.”

Merlin was not sure whether Count Stanwin had the Nourishment Pond formula. If he did not, then it would be troublesome. After all, he chose the parasitism path, and many people who had succeeded. Currently, Merlin was a mere first-form shifter, so it was completely unrealistic for him to force someone to hand over their Nourishment Pond formula.

“Forget it. Let’s look at the recovery progress of the Illusory World instead.”

Merlin’s foremost concern was on parasitism but without the Nourishment Pond formula, he had no way to improve his ability. Although he used to be an existence capable of challenging an entire Latitude Cosmos, currently, his Illusory World had been crushed and was only held by a thin thread of natural order. He could not even use its power, so how could he possibly improve himself?

When Merlin immersed his consciousness in the Illusory World, he realized that the Illusory World was still chaotic. There was only an empty structure left, it could not even be called a “world”.

“Merlin, according to this rate of recovery, I wonder how long it will take for the Illusory World to recover?”

Titus appeared beside Merlin. Even though the Illusory World had been shattered into smithereens and the Illusory Tribe civilization had been completely wiped out, Titus was a transcendental existence in the Illusory World. Therefore, he did not suffer any harm.

Merlin nodded. The Illusory World was not yet stable. It still needed a lot of attention.

“Hmm? What happened? The Illusory World seems to have stabilized a lot more out of a sudden?”

Upon dipping his consciousness into the Illusory World, Merlin immediately felt a subtle change.

Chapter 930: Coming Clean

Merlin's consciousness was immersed in the Illusory World. He had discovered that the Illusory World appeared much more stable than before. He traced the source of this change and found that it was related to the newly merged Two-headed Pterolycus' will.

"The almighty beast's will can stabilize my Illusory World? No, it's more like the almighty beast's will hastened the recovery of the natural order."

Merlin did not know the reason. Was it because of the multifaceted nature of this civilization? Then, once the Illusory World had recovered, perhaps he should consider creating an Almighty Beast civilization using the Almighty Beast world as a blueprint?

In any case, the fact that the almighty beast's will was able to promote the recovery of Merlin's Illusory World natural order, no matter how slight, was certainly good news.

"Chi."

With a single thought, Merlin's arms began to shift into two sharp wolf claws. Just a gentle slash would probably cut through solid walls.

This Two-headed Pterolycus was close to a mid-tier almighty beast. Upon transformation, its abilities were admirable. However, Merlin could only transform into the first-form. He could not wield its full abilities.

"I need to find the Nourishment Pond formula as soon as possible."

Merlin stood up. The servant girls allowed him to eat downstairs. After this body merged with the Two-headed Pterolycus' will, his appetite appeared to be slightly altered. His appetite improved tremendously. He could eat two meals worth of food in a single meal, and had a preference for meat.

At the dining table downstairs, Merlin was eating alone. Beside him, two beautiful servant girls stood in attendance. The fire in the fireplace burned steadily. The chill of winter could hardly be felt in the great hall.

Merlin used his fork to pick up a piece of meat and took a ravenous bite. Suddenly, his head bobbed up. He heard the living room door open with a “creak”, then, in walked Count Stanwin and Commander Hanson. A chilly gust followed behind them.

“Father, Uncle Hanson.”

Merlin hurriedly stopped his meal, and gazed inquisitively at the two dusty men. Count Stanwin and Commander Hanson had previously gone to the front line and was not supposed to return for a while. However, after just a few days, they had returned. Something must have happened.

Upon seeing Merlin, Count Stanwin’s grave face finally broke into a smile. He beamed at him. “Leon, not bad, I see that your body has recovered. You even look stronger than before.”

Count Stanwin’s gaze was indeed piercing. Ever since Merlin had merged with the Two-headed Pterolycus’ will, his body had unknowingly undergone some changes.

“Father, how come you’re back?”

Merlin asked hurriedly. His instinct told him that there must be a problem.

“Leon, come with me.”

Count Stanwin deliberated and thought that he should tell Merlin. After all, this was a critical matter. As his only son, Merlin had the right to know.

Merlin glanced at Commander Hanson. The latter, too, was wearing a solemn expression. Something disastrous must have happened. He stood up and respectfully followed Count Stanwin into the room.

The furnishing in the room was very tidy. Although Count Stanwin had not been home, the servants still came in to clean it. However, no one dared to touch any item in this room. Count Stanwin was quite strict with his servants.

“Leon, you probably know of the Blackbat Militia at the front line, right? The last time you were injured was caused by the Blackbat Militia.”

Count Stanwin spoke to Merlin calmly.

“Father, what’s the problem with the Blackbat Militia? Aren’t they being stopped by Marshal Kerry’s line of defense? Did something happen?”

Merlin asked in confusion. A trace of worry crept into his heart. He recalled that Curator Heroult of the Fossil Museum had left Boulder City in a hurry due to the dismal outlook at the front line.

“That’s right, something happened. The Blackbat Militia has joined forces with the barbarians. Currently, Marshal Kerry’s line of defense has been broken. In as soon as ten days, Boulder City would be invaded by the Blackbat Militia. Therefore, I’ve discussed with Hanson and decided to give up the territory. We’ll leave Boulder City and escape to Holy Dragon City. After years’ worth of savings, we won’t be impoverished even if we escape to Holy Dragon City. However, we won’t have any territory, and won’t be able to live as freely as we do now...”

Merlin found out that, true enough, something had happened at the front line. Old Heroult had escaped pre-emptively. If Marshal Kerry could not stop them, what more Boulder City. If a master simply gave up a territory, it would not be considered as disobeying the empire.

However, if they escaped after the Empire’s territory enlistment decree arrived, then they would be dealt with as military deserters. Even a master would not be able to escape the death penalty. Count Stanwin intended to leave Boulder City immediately to exercise this loophole. If the Empire’s decree arrived, then the entire Hilderbrandt clan was doomed.

“Leon, you should pack. We’ll be leaving Boulder City early tomorrow morning!”

Count Stanwin already made up his mind. If they dithered any longer, it would be too late.

“So soon?”

Merlin hesitated. He felt that he should not hide things from Count Stanwin, especially about his parasitism. There was no need to hide it because sooner or later, Count Stanwin would find out.

Moreover, he wanted to obtain more information from Count Stanwin regarding the Nourishment Pond. Perhaps, with Count Stanwin's extensive knowledge, he might know of some Nourishment Pond formulas.

Furthermore, Count Stanwin was not considered a weakling. He had achieved the fourth-form, which was very close to a full-shifter.

"Father, there's something I would like to speak with you alone."

Merlin glanced at Hanson. It was not that he distrusted Hanson, but since this was his personal secret. The fewer people who knew, the better. If not because they had to leave in a hurry, Merlin would have chosen a later time to explain to Count Stanwin properly.

"Leon, what's the matter?"

Commander Hanson had graciously taken his cue to leave. On the other hand, Count Stanwin was slightly puzzled. Hanson was his left- and right-hand man, there was nothing he could not know.

"Father, please take a look!"

Merlin held out a hand. With a single thought, his pale white hand grew a thick layer of gray fur, and a sharp claw appeared, exuding a vicious aura.

"Shifter?"

Count Stanwin seemed to come to a realization. His face changed dramatically as he said hoarsely, "Leon, you chose parasitism?"

Merlin was Count Stanwin's son. Naturally, he knew that Merlin did not inherit his Deinosuchus bloodline. Now that Merlin was able to shift, there was no doubt that Merlin chose parasitism and succeeded.

"Yes, Father, I chose parasitism. It's the Two-headed Pterolycus' will, and I've succeeded!"

Merlin said matter-of-factly. Following that, he gazed at Count Stanwin calmly.

“Did Heroult help you with the parasitism?”

Instantly, a flash of anger appeared on Count Stanwin’s face as he growled madly. Parasitism, his only son had allowed an almighty beast’s will to attach as a parasite. This was a road of no return.

Certainly, parasitism had its benefits but its drawbacks were even greater and more conspicuous. The slightest lapse in attention could result in death. In addition, this danger could not be removed. It would follow Merlin for the rest of his life. Count Stanwin did not want Merlin to choose parasitism. For this reason, he did not care about offending Heroult and sent him away.

Unexpectedly, it was still too late.

“Father, please don’t blame Curator Heroult. I did it willingly. Moreover, I think Curator Heroult has already left Boulder City.”

Merlin saw the furious expression on Count Stanwin’s face and could not help but feel warm in his heart. The sincere concern he showed was similar to Old Wilson, and it made Merlin feel loved.

After a moment, Count Stanwin seemed to calm down, and accepted the fact.

“Leon, you’ve grown up now and have your own opinion. Parasitism is very dangerous but since it’s your decision, you’ll have to live with it. So, tell me, why did you choose to tell me? What do you want to know from me?”

Count Stanwin calmed down. There was a different glint in his eyes. Previously, Leon had always been protected by him. No matter what the decision, he had always chosen on behalf of Leon.

This time, however, Leon had personally made a choice. Although Count Stanwin did not agree with it, Leon still made a very significant decision. Leon was no longer the obedient boy he used to be but had gradually matured. As a father, Count Stanwin still felt quite gratified.