

## W. Secret 931

### Chapter 931: Nourishment Pond Formula

“Father, you probably knew a few things about Hosts. Currently, I need a Nourishment Pond formula. Do you know anything about this?”

Merlin did not expect Count Stanwin to have the Nourishment Pond formula. After all, this was the lifeline of every Host, so they certainly would not reveal it easily. Seeing how eager Heroult was to bring Merlin along with him and use him as a test subject, it showed how important this Nourishment Pond was.

Without a Nourishment Pond, the Hosts were completely unable to level-up and cannot enhance their abilities. This meant that they were forever inferior to those who possessed the almighty beast bloodline. Therefore, a true Host must have his own Nourishment Pond.

“Nourishment Pond? Of course, I’ve heard of it. The most important element for every Host is the Nourishment Pond. An almighty beast’s will and a Nourishment Pond – those two are essentials for every Host.”

After a pause, Count Stanwin appeared hesitant but seeing Merlin’s expectant look, he sighed. “Oh well, since you’re now a Host, you also want to have stronger abilities. If you don’t obtain a Nourishment Pond, it would be dangerous for you too. I might as well help you grow your abilities faster. I have the Nourishment Pond formula!”

“What? Father has the Nourishment Pond formula?”

Merlin was stunned. The Nourishment Pond formula was the most closely guarded secret of every Host. Heroult, for example, would not share it with anyone else. Unless Merlin was willing to become his test subject, only was he willing to share the formula with him.

Even as a fourth-form almighty beast, it would be difficult for Count Stanwin to obtain the Nourishment Pond formula.

“This happened many years ago. Back when I was a third-form shifter, I encountered a Host, perhaps around the level of a second-form shifter. I had to use many tactics but finally killed him. Hosts typically have a plethora of tactics. In the end, if not for the almighty beast’s will going berserk and taking over his body, it might be difficult to say who would’ve died that day. Hosts are truly terrifying... Leon, it was because I’ve seen a Host been taken over by an almighty beast’s will and become a living corpse, that’s why I vehemently objected you becoming a Host. I simply wanted you to have a peaceful life. I didn’t expect that you’d be corrupted by Heroult into becoming a Host.”

It turned out to be another long story. Merlin could not wait to get his hands on the Nourishment Pond formula. So, he hurriedly asked, “Father, can you still find the Nourishment Pond formula?”

“Of course, I can find it. Although I don’t need the Nourishment Pond formula nor do I know how to prepare it, I know how precious it is. It would be a great fortune if I used it to trade in the future. Therefore, I’ve kept it safe all this time. Come with me.”

As soon as he finished speaking, Count Stanwin led Merlin into the underground chamber of the manor.

This underground chamber was not very secretive. However, the entrance was made of an extremely heavy slab of stone. Once there was any danger, the stone door would fall shut. Only someone with a strength-type almighty beast bloodline, at least at fourth-form, could break through it. Otherwise, it was impossible to break open the stone door.

A chamber like this was quintessential in every aristocrat’s manor. The chamber also had a passage that connected the outside, and could be used to store important items.

Walking down the stairs, there was a musty smell. No one had been down here for a long time. Merlin followed behind Count Stanwin, and observed the chamber passageway carefully.

Soon, they descended the stairs, and lo and behold, the faint candlelight illuminated a spacious room. This was the underground basement. Count Stanwin lit the candles and the entire basement gradually glowed brightly.

The chamber furnishing was very bare. In a corner, there were a few big boxes with unknown contents.

At the forefront of the chamber was a stone table with a small exquisite box sitting on top. Count Stanwin retrieved the small box, and gently blew the thick layer of dust off. Then, he took out a key and opened the box.

“Creak.”

The small box opened. Inside was a layer of black cloth. It looked quite mysterious.

Count Stanwin took out the black cloth, and gently displayed it. A foul, moldy air crept into Merlin’s nostrils. Merlin frowned and looked closer. He discovered that it was not a piece of black cloth as he thought but an unidentified patch of black animal hide. Moreover, it seemed to have been treated with some sort of chemical to prevent it from decomposition.

This patch of animal hide was about the height of half a man, and was filled with some kind of writing. Merlin’s heart thumped. Was this the Nourishment Pond formula?

“Yes, that’s the Nourishment Pond formula that I took from the Host whom I killed. I’ve kept it all this time. Leon, I’m giving this formula to you in hopes that it’ll be of help to you.”

Count Stanwin handed the animal hide to Merlin, who excitedly began to examine it.

The animal hide was densely etched with almost two hundred exotic ingredients. Merlin had never even heard of most of them. They also needed to be precisely controlled, otherwise, the Nourishment Pond might lose its effectiveness.

After a brief look, Merlin had already committed the Nourishment Pond formula on the animal hide to memory. This particular Nourishment Pond formula was called “the Hermani formula”. It was created by a Host named Hermani who had slowly refined it from other Nourishment Pond formulas.

Nourishment Pond formulas were not the same. They could be refined over time. However, such refinement required a lot of experience and extreme familiarity with the effects of the formulas.

This was a very long and meticulous effort, which also entailed an immense workload. At Merlin’s current state, it would be impossible to refine it. Not only Merlin but even Heroult

would not be able to refine a Nourishment Pond formula. It was simply too difficult and amounted to a fool's dream.

“So, the Nourishment Pond formula can be refined?”

Merlin was unexpectedly overjoyed to discover that. Theoretically speaking, the Nourishment Pond formula could be refined, however, performing it was a massive feat. For example, the Hermani formula had more than two hundred ingredients. Merely gathering them was already an arduous task, not to mention handling and measuring each ingredient accurately.

Therefore, it was not at all easy to refine a formula.

“Great, this is indeed a Nourishment Pond formula. With this formula, I can quickly enhance my abilities.”

Merlin was very excited. The Nourishment Pond formula was essential for a Host. Without a Nourishment Pond formula, a Host could not be considered a true Host.

“Well, Leon, now that you've obtained the Nourishment Pond formula, you should prepare to leave Boulder City tomorrow!”

Count Stanwin had already made up his mind and would not be dissuaded. If they did not leave soon, it might be too late.

Merlin also knew the urgency of this matter, so he tucked away the formula. In a small place like Boulder City, it would be impossible for him to gather all the ingredients anyway. Therefore, he could only start pondering about the Nourishment Pond once when they arrive in Holy Dragon City.

Chapter 932: Deinosuchus Beast!

The Count's Manor was soon moving in full swing. Besides some necessities, Count Stanwin ordered for everything else to be left in the manor.

There were not that many things to bring with them. Some of the servants were completely dismissed. Only Count Stanwin's family members would be brought along as well as the heavy knights. Even then, he could not bring too many. Now that Count Stanwin would soon be losing his territory, he would not be able to afford so many people. So, he only brought along three hundred most elite heavy knights.

The more troublesome group was the Hilderbrandt clan. Many of the ancestors had lived in Boulder City their entire lives, and so they did not want to leave Boulder City. In that regard, Count Stanwin was powerless to object. Those who wanted to stay could stay, and those who wanted to leave could leave together. Even if the Blackbat Militia arrived in Boulder City, their focus should be on ruling the city, so hopefully, they would not kill civilians indiscriminately.

On the other hand, the barbarian tribe might not be as reasonable. Therefore, it was difficult to secure the fate of those who stayed behind.

Regardless of the chaos, the next day, a large group had departed from the Count's Manor in Boulder City. Their speed was not particularly fast since there was a large number of people. However, they still had some time before the Blackbat Militia would arrive at Boulder City, so they were not too anxious.

Merlin sat in the carriage. The road surface was bumpy, which made him feel slightly uncomfortable. This scene was uncannily similar to when he first landed in Blackwater City. Back then, didn't Old Wilson and he escape from Blackwater City in such a manner?

Unexpectedly, despite arriving in a new Latitude Cosmos, he still encountered such unfortunate circumstances.

"Commander Hanson, how many days will it take for us to arrive in Holy Dragon City?"

Merlin summoned Commander Hanson and inquired carefully.

"Master Leon, Holy Dragon City is very far away from Boulder City. It'll take us about three months to get there."

"Three months? That's a really long time..."

Merlin did not say any more. Their group consisted of many people. Even with the protection of three hundred elite heavy knights, the Holy Dragon Empire was not very safe at the moment.

Not only were there columns of smoke in every direction but also chaos reigned in every region. There were also multiple gangs of bandits that acted lawlessly. Hence, such a long journey would certainly include some dangerous encounters.

Merlin glanced at Count Stanwin who was riding a horse calmly. With Count Stanwin around, perhaps they would be able to overcome those dangerous situations. Merlin felt slightly relieved. He retracted his head into the carriage, and began to familiarize himself with the Two-headed Pterolycus' powers.

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After more than a month, Merlin had become accustomed to this bumpy carriage. Additionally, he had mastered the Two-headed Pterolycus' powers.

The Two-headed Pterolycus' main strengths were its speed and razor-sharpness. Unfortunately, Merlin was still in the first stage of shapeshifting. While his physical condition was slightly enhanced, he still did not enjoy any increase in speed. In terms of razor-sharpness, however, the difference was prominent. Once he had shapeshifted, the sharp claws on his hands could easily pierce through even the thickest breastplates. It was quite formidable.

“Stop!”

Suddenly, Commander Hanson roared. The carriage formation was immediately jumbled up. The three hundred heavy knights immediately reacted and formed a protective circle around the carriages.

A situation must have occurred in front. Merlin opened the curtain, and after some hesitation, jumped off the carriage. Right now, he was slightly more able to protect himself.

“What happened?”

Merlin pulled a random heavy knight aside to ask.

“Master Leon, there’s a big gang of bandits in front. The Honorable Count and Commander Hanson have led some heavy knights to confront them.”

“Bandits? How many are there?”

Merlin asked as he was worried. The Holy Dragon Empire was strewn with chaos, so lawless bandits were quite common. Throughout the past month, their carriages had not been attacked. Most probably, the considerably large size of their convoy had deterred the smaller bandit gangs.

However, this time, a gang of bandits dared to attack them directly. This indirectly meant that these bandits were very powerful.

“I don’t know. It’s all a blur, so I don’t know exactly how many people there are.”

Merlin did not hesitate. He immediately told the heavy knight, “Give me your horse, I’m going to take a look.”

Soon, Merlin mounted the horse and galloped to the front.

Soon, Merlin saw his father and Commander Hanson leading about fifty heavy knights. They were confronting a large gang of bandits on the road. The bandits held an upper hand in terms of numbers, but they did not have a lot of horses. Nonetheless, the dark blurry crowd looked extremely frightening. There were at least two or three thousand people.

If they were in an open field, Count Stanwin’s three hundred elite heavy knights could easily defeat these two to three thousand motley crowd but right now they were trapped in a narrow path on a dangerous mountain road. These bandits were quite smart. They had set up a series of blockades, so it would be difficult for the heavy knights to rush through.

Consequently, it was difficult for the heavy knights to show their true prowess.

“Looks like there’s going to be some trouble.”

Merlin's heart sank. These bandits were well-prepared. Now that Holy Dragon Empire was extraordinarily chaotic, a large convoy like theirs was like a fattened sheep waiting for slaughter.

Merlin went nearer. He heard Count Stanwin sneered. "If you don't leave now, everyone will die!"

"Haha, you noble lords, do you think you're still in your territories? There are two to three thousand of us here. Do you think your measly three hundred knights, who cannot break past the blockades, can cause us any harm? You better hand over all your riches meekly, then we might allow you to survive."

The bandits laughed.

"Father."

Merlin hurried forward with a sunken expression. He whispered, "These bandits are tough to deal with. Why don't we take a detour instead?"

Taking a detour meant that they would first have to retreat, with the three hundred heavy knights stationed in front as a defense. It was not only troublesome but also time-consuming. They had to turn back on their current route to get to another route, and might encounter another gang of bandits at any time.

"Detour? Leon, it's not necessary. These are mere bandits. How tough can they be? Now that you're a Host and have the power of an almighty beast, you should take a good look at the power of the Hilderbrandt clan's Deinosuchus beast!"

With that, Count Stanwin dismounted from his horse. Hanson and the other heavy knights respectfully retreated a considerable distance back.

While Merlin was still at a loss, a gigantic roar rumbled from Count Stanwin's mouth. It resembled an almighty beast's cry.

"Rip."



Cracks appeared across Count Stanwin's body and his body began to expand rapidly. From the originally graceful aristocrat, he turned into a fearsome monstrous crocodile. This was shapeshifting, and a fourth-form shifter to boot.

Count Stanwin's height after shapeshifting was at least five meters tall. He had a short but stout tail, and was covered with tough armored skin. A terrifying aura leaked into the air, striking fear in every heart present.

This was the first time Merlin saw the full transformation of a person with an almighty beast bloodline. The last time he was attacked in the Count's Manor, his opponent was not a full-shifter, but only a partial one.

On the other hand, Count Stanwin was a fourth-form shifter. This meant that, besides his brain, he had completely shapeshifted. Hence, he could wield all its combat abilities.

“Bang.”

Count Stanwin leaped with both feet and instantly crossed more than ten meters. His bulky body slammed directly onto the blockades on the road. Whether they were huge rocks or gigantic trees, all of them were pulverized. Even the bandits were crushed to death.

His immense form rushed forward, impenetrable by any arrows or weapons. There was not a single cut on his body. No matter what attack the crowd threw at him, he was invincible.

“This... This is the power of an almighty beast?”

Even Merlin was quite shaken. The destructive powers of a fourth-form almighty beast, as shown by Count Stanwin, was almost comparable to a Seventh-level Spell Caster.

Moreover, this was merely a mid-tier almighty beast bloodline, one level above Merlin's Two-headed Pterolycus bloodline. If Count Stanwin had already demonstrated such formidable powers, how much more impressive would the high- or top-tier bloodlines or the legendary rare almighty beast bloodlines, be?

“It seems that although the will of this world is weaker than the Void Zone, it's not that insignificant. Any world that can become a Latitude Cosmos has its own strengths...”

At first, Merlin thought that this world was weaker and simpler, but it seemed that the power of the almighty beast bloodline caught Merlin by surprise.

It was important to note that according to this world's legends, the world used to be ruled by the almighty beasts. Therefore, there were almighty beasts which could destroy the heavens and the earth.

“Huh? He has a fourth-form almighty beast bloodline, flee now!”

“We can't kill him, there's no way. He's too horrifying. A fourth-form almighty beast, no matter how many people we have, it's going to be a massacre...”

Upon seeing the Deinosuchus' fierce and indestructible body, the bandits paled. Besides the advantage in numbers, they did not have any skills worth boasting. There was only a handful of them with the almighty beast bloodline, let alone capable of challenging a fourth-form almighty beast bloodline.

Therefore, after Count Stanwin had shapeshifted, the bandits fell into despair and escaped like lightning. In less than half an hour, neither hide nor hair of them could be seen, except for the mangled dead bodies on the ground.

## Chapter 933: Holy Dragon City

After getting rid of the bandits, Count Stanwin resumed his original form. His clothes had been damaged as a result of the shapeshifting, so his body was naked. However, the others seemed to be unperturbed. Immediately, a knight delivered a change of clothes to him.

“Father, was that the fourth-form shapeshifting?”

Merlin hesitated slightly before stepping forward to ask. Currently, he was not familiar with shapeshifting. He only knew the basics.

“Yes, that was fourth-form shapeshifting. The Hilderbrandt clan inherits the Deinosuchus bloodline, which is a mid-tier almighty beast bloodline. Unfortunately, only one of our

ancestors was a fifth-form full-shifter. Thereafter, no one else has achieved the full-shifter stage. Although I'm already a peak fourth-form shifter, I know that with my bloodline, it's difficult to push further and break past the final barrier..."

Count Stanwin was quite frustrated. The fifth-form shapeshift was very crucial where substantive transformation would take place. However, he could not achieve it. The peak fourth-form was his utmost limit. To be able to achieve the peak fourth-form shifter was a sufficiently formidable feat for Count Stanwin.

After all, the entire Hilderbrandt clan had only produced one almighty existence who had managed to achieve the fifth-form.

The power demonstrated by Count Stanwin's fourth-form was enough to demolish a small mountain. Such explosive power could not possibly be withstood by ordinary people. Moreover, the Deinosuchus' defensive abilities were also extraordinary. A fully-transformed Deinosuchus' most vulnerable part was its eyes, and yet, they could not be pierced even by a sharpened spear. That was the extent of its formidableness.

Therefore, regardless of how many bandits there were earlier, it was inconsequential. If time permitted, Count Stanwin alone would be able to kill all of them.

"Alright now, organize the formation. We're setting off again."

Count Stanwin's presence calmed everyone's hearts. With his powerful abilities, they did not have to fear anyone other than the full-shifters and high-tier bloodlines.

Thus, their convoy continued their journey. This time, it was a lot safer. They did not encounter any more bandits and arrived in Holy Dragon City safely.

Holy Dragon City was the heart of the entire Holy Dragon Empire. Due to the sudden flare of conflict all over the Holy Dragon Empire, many people were also seeking refuge in Holy Dragon City.

The queue outside the city stretched beyond the furthest horizon.

Many people came with large groups, ranging from a few dozen people to a few hundred. The group where Count Stanwin and Merlin were in, was considered one of the bigger ones.

Nonetheless, Merlin's group was incredibly conspicuous due to the elite heavy knights. The heavy armor on their bodies, coupled with the numerous horses and carriages, immediately indicated that they were not ordinary folk, but some form of aristocrats.

Therefore, the guards at the city gate came to check on them very politely.

"Where did you come from? What's your purpose of entering Holy Dragon City?"

To enter Holy Dragon City, everyone had to be checked. After all, there was chaos everywhere and multitudes were seeking refuge in Holy Dragon City. Even the sprawling city was getting congested, so they had to set certain restrictions.

Count Stanwin immediately retrieved an identity card from his body and said sternly, "I'm the ruler of Boulder City, Count Stanwin! Does the Empire forbid me from entering Holy Dragon City?"

Upon seeing Count Stanwin's identity card, the guards of the city gate immediately straightened in respect. Historically, the aristocrats of the Holy Dragon Empire had been very well-respected. It was not like other countries where aristocrats were a dime in a dozen. Here, almost every single aristocrat owned a territory. Furthermore, Count Stanwin was a Count. An aristocrat of his position could not be trifled with by mere city gate guards such as them.

Therefore, the guard said respectfully, "Sir Count can certainly enter. All the aristocrats of the Empire can enter Holy Dragon City as they wish."

Count Stanwin nodded. Despite losing his territory, he still had his identity as a Count. He was a real aristocrat. As long as the Holy Dragon City did not collapse, his identity would be useful.

Thus, Merlin's convoy was given priority to enter. When the others saw the three hundred heavy knights, they stayed silent as they knew that it must be a respected aristocrat.

As soon as they entered Holy Dragon City, a warm breeze washed over them. Although it was slightly chilly outside, Holy Dragon City was bathed in the warmth of spring. Merlin felt puzzled.

“Don’t be surprised. This is the Sacred Lion Beast’s blood that protects the entire Holy Dragon City. Back then, the Holy Dragon royal family somehow obtained a Sacred Lion Beast’s head, and worshipped it day and night, so their bodies were blessed with the aura of the Sacred Lion Beast. Not only did it cleanse their blood but it also gave them the Sacred Lion Bloodline.”

“Thereafter, the Holy Dragon royal family used the Sacred Lion Beast’s head to rule over Holy Dragon City. As long as the head is unharmed, Holy Dragon City will not fall. That’s why, despite the mounting conflicts from every corner of the Holy Dragon Empire, Holy Dragon City is absolutely safe!”

Surprisingly, the Holy Dragon Empire royal family held such a staggering secret. Merlin had “Leon’s” memories, so he knew what a sacred beast signified. It was a legendary bloodline which surpassed the highest or top-tier bloodlines.

A sacred beast possessed inconceivable powers and was almost immortal. No one had ever seen a living sacred beast. As for how the Holy Dragon royal family got their hands on the Sacred Lion Beast’s head, no one knew. It was the greatest secret and ultimate weapon of the Holy Dragon royal family.

“If they have the Sacred Lion Beast’s head and can continuously be exposed to its aura, why would the royal family’s bloodline wither? How could the entire Empire descend into such an unstable state where conflict is erupting everywhere?”

Merlin asked confusedly. Right now, conflict was rampant throughout the Holy Dragon Empire because the royal family bloodline was running thin. There had not been anyone capable of suppressing the uprising.

“This involves the core secret of the highest echelons of the royal family. According to rumors, perhaps the Sacred Lion Beast’s head has started to decay... The supposed legend that a sacred beast never decays is just a legend. Plus, that only pertains to a living sacred beast. Since the Holy Dragon Empire has been established since such a long time ago, it’s not entirely impossible that the Sacred Lion Beast’s head has started to decay.”

Upon the mention of the decay of the sacred beast’s head, a strange glint flitted across Count Stanwin’s eyes. As a fourth-form shifter, Count Stanwin, of course, desired to see the legendary sacred beast.

However, this was the highest guarded secret of the royal family. Other than the innermost core members of the royal family, no one else was privy to see the Sacred Lion Beast’s head.

“Anyway, let’s not be concerned with such matters. Now, we must first find a place to settle down.”

Count Stanwin led some heavy knights to visit some old acquaintances in Holy Dragon City. To settle down properly in Holy Dragon City, they would need the help of these old acquaintances. Otherwise, it would be impossible to be settled within a short time.

Meanwhile, Merlin and the others were placed temporarily at a piece of empty land to wait.

#### Chapter 934: Nourishment Pond I

“Pretty lady, do a good deed...”

From the main street, a faint voice sounded. Merlin opened his eyes and saw a few youths dressed in tattered clothes begging on the streets. This scene made Merlin feel very puzzled.

The Holy Dragon Empire was very sparsely populated. In the territories, even the lowliest person could still do some odd jobs to survive. At worst, they could work as servants of the aristocrats. In general, most aristocrats were not overly harsh on their servants.

Therefore, it was impossible for anyone to starve, especially in the bustling Holy Dragon City. However, people begging on the streets.

“Who are they?”

Merlin asked with bewilderment.

“Master, they’re refugees! The Holy Dragon Empire is riddled with chaos and conflict inside and out. We’re not the only ones who are stranded. Even worse-off are these civilians. As refugees, they don’t have anything left to their names, so they have no choice but to beg.”

Commander Hanson’s tone was unperturbed. His facial expression remained indifferent as though it was a common scene.

Merlin's heart sunk. Yes, these people were refugees. The turmoil in the Holy Dragon Empire did not only affect the aristocrats but also the civilians. They were the largest group of victims. Many people became refugees.

The streets of Holy Dragon City were now filled with homeless refugees. This indirectly showed how severe the turmoil in the Holy Dragon Empire was.

Merlin sensed a grave danger as if Holy Dragon City was also unsafe. The origin of this prickling danger came from every direction. The intuition of someone like Merlin who could challenge a Latitude Cosmos certainly would not be mistaken.

“Abilities, I need to improve my abilities. The Nourishment Pond is essential!”

Merlin secretly made up his mind. Once Count Stanwin had settled down, Merlin must immediately begin to purchase the raw materials for the Nourishment Pond formula to enhance his abilities.

At dusk, Count Stanwin finally returned with good news. Through some acquaintances in Holy Dragon City, he had managed to buy an abandoned manor on the west side of the city.

Therefore, everyone continued their journey toward the abandoned manor.

After about an hour, the large convoy arrived at the manor on the west side of the city. This was an extremely vast but desolate manor. It used to belong to a Count but the Count's family had lost their riches, and moved out of the manor, which was subsequently purchased by a businessman.

Count Stanwin had spent a large fortune to purchase this manor. Despite its desolate condition, it was not easy to obtain a manor considering the current situation of Holy Dragon City. The only downside was that it was quite far from the city.

“Very well, everyone inside. Although it's a little worn out, we'll be able to restore it in no time.”

Under Count Stanwin's orders, the three hundred heavy knights moved to inspect the manor both inside and outside. Then only did the family members enter to clean the house.

It was not until late at night that they had managed to roughly clean up a few rooms. Although the rooms were relatively worn out, Merlin could see that everyone was relieved and satisfied with them.

After living in fear and uncertainty over the past couple of months, that experience had finally come to an end. Now that they had a new manor, things would be stable for a while.

Merlin was not in a hurry to rest. Instead, he sought out Count Stanwin alone.

"Father, I have a request."

Merlin said calmly.

"Oh? Leon, what's the matter?"

Count Stanwin was a bit surprised because Leon had never been so polite to him before.

"Father, I would like to start brewing the Nourishment Pond. However, the materials needed to brew the Nourishment Pond are all extremely precious. So, I'm afraid they will require a large amount of money."

Merlin's main purpose was to request some money from Count Stanwin. Based on Merlin's resourcefulness, he could probably accumulate some gold coins slowly but it could not be done in a short period.

Knowing that Count Stanwin was such a wealthy Count, Merlin certainly would not trouble himself unnecessarily.

Count Stanwin smiled. "The Nourishment Pond for Hosts is indeed costly. How about this, I'll give you a thousand gold coins first. If that's not enough, you can ask from me again."

"A thousand gold coins? That should be enough!"



Merlin nodded. These were gold coins. One gold coin was equivalent to a hundred silver coins. This entire manor probably did not cost as much as a thousand gold coins.

As the master of Boulder City, Count Stanwin had indeed accumulated immense wealth over the years.

After receiving a thousand gold coins, Merlin also retired to his room. He then remembered the Two-headed Pterolycus' will in his Awareness.

After the Two-headed Pterolycus' will was suppressed by Merlin's Illusory World, it had been very well-behaved. Faced against Merlin's natural order which was previously capable of defying a Latitude Cosmos, it was inconsequential whether the Two-headed Pterolycus was a thousand or ten thousand times more powerful.

Perhaps due to its instinctive fear, until now, the Two-headed Pterolycus' ferocious will had been very quiet. It did not cause any trouble for Merlin. Everything was calm.

However, Merlin did not relax his vigilance. If he had detected any anomaly, he would immediately use the natural order of the Illusory World to suppress it. Unfortunately, Merlin's Illusory World had not recovered. Otherwise, he would simply control the Two-headed Pterolycus' will. Then, it would not be so troublesome for him to stay vigilant all the time.

"Tomorrow, I'll look around Holy Dragon City to see if I can gather all the raw materials for the Nourishment Pond."

Merlin made up his mind.

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Early the next day, Merlin left the manor. He was accompanied by two heavy knights. They were the bodyguards Count Stanwin had specifically arranged for Merlin to keep him safe.

These two knights were not at all simple. Both possessed the almighty beast bloodline. Although they only had the lowest-tier almighty beast bloodline, they had achieved the

second-form, which was quite impressive. They were Count Stanwin's very dependable assistants.

The fact that Count Stanwin sent his dependable assistants to protect Merlin spoke volumes of his concern for him. In a foreign place such as this, Count Stanwin was of course, very cautious.

Although Merlin felt that their presence was an inconvenience, he did not refuse. After all, the current situation was truly chaotic. Even Holy Dragon City was not safe. With these two extraordinary-looking bodyguards, there should be less trouble for him.

Merlin inquired about the few biggest shops in Holy Dragon City, and came to the nearest shop. It looked like it did not have many customers.

Upon seeing Merlin, the shopkeeper's eyes brightened and hurriedly welcomed him inside.

"What will sir be needing today?"

Merlin did not waste any words. He took out a list containing some materials.

Of course, this was not the entire Nourishment Pond formula but only a small portion. Merlin would not show the formula to anyone easily.

"Do you have everything on the list?"

Merlin asked in a deep voice. The Nourishment Pond formula was extremely important as it would determine whether he could enhance his abilities further. Just by having the formula but unable to brew the Nourishment Pond was completely useless.

"This..."

The shopkeeper looked at Merlin with some hesitation in his eyes.

Chapter 935: Nourishment Pond II

“Why? Is there a problem?”

Merlin frowned. He grew slightly worried at the shop owner’s expression.

“There are no difficulties. It’s just that some of these materials are very precious...”

The shopkeeper didn’t continue. He secretly glanced at Merlin and felt odd. These materials were strange. If his shop was not large, and had a variety of goods, he would not be able to provide everything. Furthermore, he did not have a large quantity of most of the materials on the list.

“The price... Just be blunt. How much is the total?”

Merlin was glad. There were no problems as long as there were enough materials. Even if the price was a little steep, he had more than a thousand gold coins, so he should be able to afford it.

The shopkeeper made a rough estimation and gnashed his teeth. “This is a big deal. Some materials are too precious. Moreover, the situation in the Holy Dragon Empire isn’t very good now, so it’s very troublesome to transport them to the Holy Dragon Empire... How about this, one unit of each material for one hundred and thirty gold coins.”

“One hundred and thirty gold coins?”

Although Merlin knew the price might be a little steep, he did not expect it to be so expensive. His expression immediately sank. One hundred and thirty gold coins were not a small sum.

The shopkeeper’s face grew bitter as he cautioned, “Sir, this is already a discounted price. Some of these materials are too precious. If you want others, we can recommend them to you. The price would be lower as well.”

Merlin stared at the shopkeeper carefully. It did not seem like he was extorting him. These raw materials were indeed very expensive.

“Alright, give me one of each for One hundred and thirty gold coins!”

Merlin took out a small bag of gold coins. The shopkeeper’s eyes immediately brightened as he sent someone to prepare what Merlin had requested.

Soon, Merlin got the raw materials he needed, and left the shop. Although he still had eight hundred and seventy gold coins, what he just bought was only a fraction of the materials he needed.

The Hermani formula required more than two hundred kinds of materials, each of which was important and indispensable. If one material was missing, the Nourishment Pond formula would not be effective.

Therefore, he needed to continue to purchase other materials. It was likely that there would be very little of the one thousand gold coins left. Merlin originally wanted to purchase some materials in bulk but it seemed that he could only buy one for each.

“Let’s go to other shops.”

Along with two heavy knights, Merlin visited several other shops in the Holy Dragon Empire. Merlin was very lucky and managed to buy all the raw materials for the Hermani Nourishment Pond. However, the price was relatively high, and he had spent six hundred and seventy gold coins.

In addition to the one hundred and thirty gold coins from before, there were only two hundred gold coins left from Merlin’s original one thousand gold coins. The rate of spending left the two heavy knights beside him stunned and surprised.

However, they were only bodyguards protecting Merlin, and would not interfere with Merlin’s affairs.

“Almost done. There are only two hundred gold coins left so it’s impossible to buy another set of materials. We’ll go back first.”

Merlin hesitated before making a decision. He would first return to prepare the Nourishment Pond formula. From Boulder City to the Holy Dragon Empire, he had delayed a few months’

worth of time. However, he had been looking forward to preparing the Nourishment Pond so he was quite excited now.

Returning to the mansion, Merlin did not see Count Stanwin but he did not enquire either. Instead, he went directly to the basement of the mansion. Every noble's manor had a secret basement, and this basement had been abandoned and hence, unused for a long time. Merlin had allowed some people to clean it up last night, and temporarily used it as his laboratory.

Each Host had his own laboratory as unlike those who had inherited the almighty beast bloodlines, Hosts had to constantly strengthen their bloodline with Nourishment Ponds and targeted improvements after Nourishment Ponds became ineffective.

This required the use of a laboratory. The basement was only relatively quiet, and was still far from a real laboratory.

However, it could still be used now. A suitable laboratory would be built later.

In the middle of the laboratory was an oval pond that had been filled with a dark green juice that looked very viscous. It was a beast bone soup that Merlin had ordered the guards to brew all night. Added with some special materials, it was the most basic liquid of a Nourishment Pond.

Later, one by one, he added more than two hundred kinds of raw materials into the Nourishment Pond according to the dosage stated in the Hermani formula. Immediately, the entire Nourishment Pond started to boil and bubble, emitting a strange and unpleasant odor.

It took Merlin more than two hours to add the two hundred or so materials into the Nourishment Pond. The Nourishment Pond that was dark green had turned black, and was almost ready.

"It should be ready. Let's try the effect."

Merlin muttered lowly. He turned from the basement and took out a large dog that had been prepared in advance.

This large dog looked ferocious and held a fierce gleam in its eyes but it was firmly caught by Merlin and could not struggle.

“Go.”

Merlin threw the large dog into the inky Nourishment Pond.

“Splash.”

The large dog fell into the Nourishment Pond and splattered droplets around. The dog struggled desperately in the Nourishment Pond, and its body could be seen gradually growing and becoming stronger at a rate visible to the naked eye.

“It’s effective?”

Merlin knew the Nourishment Pond was extraordinary but he did not expect the effect to be so good. He naturally needed to test it with a large dog to be safe.

Seeing that it worked, he grabbed the large dog. He did not want to waste all the precious materials on the dog.

The large dog which was thrown to the ground pounced on Merlin furiously. However, Merlin now had the almighty beast’s will and his physical quality had improved greatly, and kicked the large dog into the distance with one foot. Despite that, the large dog immediately turned over and stood up without any injuries.

Just as Merlin was watching the dog carefully, the canine suddenly trembled, and let out shrill shrieks. Then, the dog’s blood vessels burst one after another, reducing it to a bloody lump of meat. The entire laboratory was filled with the strong scent of blood.

“It’s dead?”

Merlin frowned as he approached to take a closer look. From his preliminary judgment, the cause should be due to too much power contained in the dog’s body which caused it to burst and die. As for why it contained so much power, Merlin had some predictions.

How terrifying were the nutrients in the Nourishment Pond? It could only be used by Hosts because they could use the almighty beast's will to guide this force into the bloodline, and strengthen the bloodline to make the degree of shifting higher.

However, the large dog did not have the almighty beast's will and could not guide the power of the Nourishment Pond. Therefore, it could only explode and die.

Knowing the key, Merlin had nothing to worry about. He had prepared the Nourishment Pond for a long time. Today, he finally succeeded and could try it.

"Now, I have both the almighty beast's will and the Nourishment Pond. Let's see what changes will happen."

Merlin took off his robe and jumped into the inky Nourishment Pond naked.

When he jumped in, he did not feel hot and dry. Instead, a cool and refreshing feeling circulated in his body.

"Tss-tss-tss."

Soon, the cool and refreshing feeling became spikes pricking Merlin's entire body, making him feel very uncomfortable. He could not help but shout.

"Roar..."

It was a beast's roar. The wolf-like howl came directly from Merlin's mouth. The Two-headed Pterolycus which was quiet in his Awareness had finally awakened.

The Two-headed Pterolycus in his Awareness seemed to have become bigger and more solid. The almighty beast's will grew stronger, which directly led to changes in Merlin's body.

"Morph!"

This shapeshifting was now controlled by Merlin. His hands immediately turned into furry wolf claws, sharp and glinting coldly, striking fear into others.

This was first-form of shapeshifting. Merlin was used to this form but with the help of the Nourishment Pond, the degree of morphing grew much elaborate.

Merlin's legs also immediately cracked and grew black fur. They quickly became strong and full of strength. It seemed that they could jump out of the Nourishment Pond with a single leap.

He had reached second-form shifter!

With just this much, the miracle of the Nourishment Pond had not been reflected yet. After Merlin's legs had morphed, he felt a powerful force. Second-form shifter had enabled Merlin to fully utilize the Two-headed Pterolycus' characteristics, which was speed.

However, the explosive force in his body was still far from enough as his body had not morphed yet.

Third-form shifter was changing rapidly as well. From his legs to his thighs, rear, and abdomen – all of them began to grow tight muscles. Meanwhile, Merlin's body rose to nearly two meters.

Third-form!

Currently, apart from his head and upper body, Merlin was already a living and terrifying giant black wolf!

Merlin felt his strength had increased exponentially while the color in the Nourishment Pond faded rapidly. It gradually changed from black back to green.

Merlin's shapeshifting stopped at his lower abdomen. His upper body and head did not morph at all, and he only had reached third-form.

Even so, Merlin was overjoyed. The effect of the Hermani Nourishment Pond was far beyond Merlin's expectation.



“Third-form!”

Merlin jumped out of the Nourishment Pond. He looked very strange now, and could be called terrifying. Only his upper body and head were of a human's while all other areas were covered in thick black fur. His claws extended, sharp like blades.

His legs were built with strong muscles and contained a terrifying explosive force. Oddly, Merlin was still standing now but he seemed to have an instinctive habit of lying down.

Now that he had transformed into the Two-headed Pterolycus, an inborn fighting gift appeared in his mind. He could easily use the frightening power despite not being familiar with it.

“Swoosh.”

Merlin braced his legs and his huge figure instantly turned into an afterimage, flashing around the entire laboratory. His speed was incredible. If it were nighttime, one would only feel the movement of air, and be unable to see any shadow.

“How swift!”

Merlin was overjoyed. Although he knew long ago that the greatest characteristic of a Two-headed Pterolycus was its speed, he did not expect it to be so fast that a shadow would not be left behind.

With this speed, even if he could not beat an enemy, he could run away.

It seemed that choosing the Two-headed Pterolycus was not without benefits. This was just the third-form. If he could fully morph and grow two wings, his speed would increase multiple times, and it would be horrifying.

“Not bad. The speed is very quick. As for strength...”

Merlin forcefully swept his claws. A white light flashed, and the laboratory's wall was directly gouged.

“Crack.”

Merlin’s sharp claws had easily sunk into the hard wall almost effortlessly. Third-form shifting of the Two-headed Pterolycus had now demonstrated its powerful ability.

Now, Merlin had finally had the strength to protect himself.

After all, someone who had inherited an almighty beast bloodline needed at least twenty years to reach the third-form. Even Count Stanwin, who was a genius, only had a breakthrough to the third-form of his Deinosuchus bloodline when he was twenty-six years old.

This was the advantage of Hosts. As long as there was a Nourishment Pool, and as long as one could suppress the almighty beast’s will, one’s strength could be rapidly improved. There was no need to accumulate power for a long time and slowly train to purify the almighty beast bloodline.

Of course, not everyone was as lucky as Merlin. The instability of the almighty beast’s will had always been the greatest problem to Hosts because once their strength improved, and their shapeshifting level increased, the almighty beast’s will would also become stronger and pose a threat to the Host.

However, Merlin did not have to worry about that at all. Even if the Two-headed Pterolycus’ will was a hundred times stronger, it would not pose a threat to him. Therefore, the most unstable factor for Hosts was no trouble for Merlin at all.

Merlin quickly reversed the shapeshifting. He was naked, and he had fair skin and few muscles but it did not mean that he was weak.

On the contrary, it seemed that the Nourishment Pond had not only enhanced the strength of the bloodline and his strength after morphing but it also subtly enhanced Merlin’s physical quality. Now, Merlin’s physical quality was no inferior to a heavy knight’s.

“Merlin.”

Suddenly, Titus’ voice rang in Merlin’s mind. There seemed to be hidden joy in his voice.

Merlin was surprised. Titus usually did not take the initiative to speak. Could it be that there were changes in the Illusory World?

Thus, he immediately immersed his consciousness in his Awareness and saw that his Illusory World was still a general framework and had not recovered much. There did not seem to be any changes.

“Titus, what’s the matter?”

Merlin asked while frowning.

“Merlin, didn’t you feel it? The Illusory World had changed.”

“The Illusory World had changed?”

Merlin felt carefully. It seemed that the Illusory World did not change but he only gave it a cursory glance and did not observe it carefully.

Now, Merlin focused his attention and felt the changes in the Illusory World. As the creator of the Illusory World, Merlin naturally felt the changes quickly.

“It became stable again?”

Merlin was somewhat startled. Previously, his Illusory World continuously expanded while he was still in the Void Zone, and finally expanded to one-tenth the size of the Void Zone. That was already very horrifying.

However, it was only the expansion of the world, and there seemed to be no progress in the stability of the world. Before, Merlin had felt that it was because the natural order in the Illusory World was not strong enough, which caused his Illusory World to be unstable. As long as the natural order of the world was constantly strengthened, the Illusory World would gradually become stable.

The stability of a world was also very important to a Latitude Cosmos. Just like in the Void Zone before, Merlin’s power had grown so strong that even the Void Zone could not destroy him but Merlin was also unable to break the Void Zone, and had to leave it instead.

In the end, the Void Zone took the initiative to “abandon” Merlin. If not for that, Merlin would not have been able to break away from the Void Zone by relying on his own strength.

This was because the Void Zone was too stable.

“Is it because of... The body?”

Merlin’s heart jumped. He had never thought of this possibility. Was the body related to the Illusory World?

In the beginning, when Merlin had accomplished his Illusory World, his body was not essential. Eventually, he had abandoned his body and lived purely as Mind Power. As long as the Illusory World was not destroyed, he would not die.

However, up until the final battle with the will of the Void Zone, Merlin’s Illusory World was never able to turn illusions into reality, and he had never found the reason why.

The Illusory World had a will that was comparable to that of a Latitude Cosmos. However, it had reached one-tenth of the Void Zone but was still unable to turn illusions into reality. It seemed like something was missing.

Merlin never had any ideas. However, now, his mind flashed and he seemed to have grasped something.

The Illusory World was not stable enough and could not rival a Latitude Cosmos at all. Perhaps this was why Merlin had never been able to use the Illusory World to turn illusion into reality.

The stability of the Illusory World seemed to have some connection with the strength of the body but whether that was true or not was still beyond Merlin’s conclusion. He could only slowly observe it.

If there was a connection, then Merlin’s previous practice of abandoning his body was completely wrong. However, this world had given Merlin a chance to use the Illusory World to turn illusion into reality.

“It seems coming to this Almighty Beast World isn’t completely fruitless...”

Merlin felt for the first time that it was not a mistake for him to come to this Latitude Cosmos.

#### Chapter 937: Visit

Merlin withdrew his consciousness from the Illusory World. He picked up the clothes he had prepared beforehand and put them on before turning to check on the Nourishment Pond.

At this time, the Nourishment Pond had become a deep moss green and did not emit any unpleasant odor. The two hundred or so materials that Merlin had added earlier must have been absorbed by him.

He faintly felt that if he wanted to raise the grade of shifting, he would need more materials to prepare the Nourishment Pond, and that amount would be quite terrifying.

“I need more money. A thousand gold coins or even two or three thousand gold coins are far from enough.”

Merlin knew that the Nourishment Ponds for Hosts were expensive but he did not expect that it would be so expensive. Although Count Stanwin doted on him very much and gave him everything he asked for, it was the first time he needed so much money after coming to an unfamiliar place.

Furthermore, the three hundred heavy knights who had followed Count Stanwin were a big expense. It was already good that Merlin was given one thousand gold coins. It would be unrealistic to ask Count Stanwin for more.

However, for a while after Merlin had arrived in the Holy Dragon Empire, he could not think of any other ways.

Nothing would come out of staying in the laboratory, so Merlin simply left and locked it up. This laboratory was his secret that only Count Stanwin could know about.

After returning to the hall, he saw Count Stanwin who seemed to be looking for Merlin.

“Leon, you’ve come at the right time. Come visit Count Altadin with me.”

Count Stanwin said to Merlin with a smile.

“Count Altadin?”

Merlin looked puzzled.

“We’ll talk in the carriage.”

Thus, Merlin could only follow Count Stanwin into the carriage.

In the carriage, Count Stanwin explained before Merlin could ask, “Count Altadin is my good friend. I saved his life in the past before, so I asked him for help after coming to the Holy Dragon City this time. This manor was found with the help of Count Altadin. I’m bringing you along to visit Count Altadin and introduce him to you.”

Merlin nodded. It was not surprising that Count Stanwin was able to find such a large manor so quickly. Although it was deserted, it was not something that anyone could simply buy.

Count Altadin must have contributed greatly.

After understanding the reason, Merlin did not ask anything else and instead, silently stayed in the carriage, listening to the sound of the carriage wheels as if dazed.

After a while, the carriage came to a gradual stop. Count Stanwin lifted the curtain of the carriage and looked back at Merlin before saying, “Leon, we’ve reached Count Altadin’s manor. Let’s go.”

Merlin followed Count Stanwin out of the carriage and looked in front. A huge manor that looked relatively old appeared in front of him. There were also some guards patrolling outside.

These guards became even more courteous upon seeing Merlin and the others.

“I’m Count Stanwin. I’ve come to visit Count Altadin.”

Count Stanwin directly revealed his identity, and all the guards saluted at once.

“Honorable Count Stanwin, please wait a moment while we report your arrival.”

The guards immediately went to report the matter, and soon, a middle-aged attractive and plump woman of about forty years old appeared.

“Count Stanwin, I’m Nathalian, Count Altadin’s housekeeper. Count Altadin is delighted to know of your arrival. Please, follow me.”

Although the lady housekeeper, Nathalian, was in her forties, she still looked like she was in her thirties. She possessed a full figure, and was especially plump on her bosom, inciting the imagination of others.

Under the guidance of this charming housekeeper, Merlin and Count Stanwin entered the manor.

The environment of the manor was very beautiful with bursts of flowers. Merlin had not expected flowers to bloom in such cold weather. It must have taken a lot of effort to make them bloom.

Arriving in the drawing room, there was already a middle-aged man dressed in an aristocratic attire who was around the same age as Count Stanwin, waiting. Seeing Count Stanwin, he immediately stood up with a smile and said hoarsely, “Count Stanwin, welcome to my manor.”

“Count Altadin, I’ve come to thank you for your help last time. This is my son, Leon.”

Merlin stepped forward and saluted slightly, “Count Altadin.”

Count Altadin's eyes brightened as he carefully looked at Merlin while Merlin was somewhat confused. Count Altadin was acting inconsistently with aristocratic manners.

He also looked at Count Altadin from the corner of his eye. The other party was slightly plump, with a mustache on his upper lip. His clothes were very neat and even his nails were neatly trimmed. He seemed to be an aristocrat who paid great attention to his own image.

"Leon, this is the first time I've met you. You're very much like the Count Stanwin of the past."

Count Altadin's gaze seemed to have a deeper meaning.

"Baratha, this is Count Stanwin."

Merlin then saw a petite lady on one side of the hall. She wore a long white dress and had a round face, as beautiful as jade. She looked incredibly lovely.

"Count Stanwin."

Baratha bowed slightly and then looked at Merlin, which was rather bold.

"Good, Baratha has grown up well. I remember when I saw her more than ten years ago, she was just a little girl."

Count Stanwin said emotionally but there was a smile on his face. Count Altadin also nodded secretly.

Seeing this, Merlin finally felt that something was wrong.

"Father, did you bring me here to meet Baratha?"

How could Merlin still be ignorant of the Count Stanwin and Count Altadin's meaning? The purpose of their visit was supposedly to visit Count Altadin but it was to let Baratha and Merlin meet each other.



Merlin was somewhat helpless. No matter if he was in the Void Zone or the Almighty Beast World, some problems could not be gotten rid of.

Then, Count Stanwin chatted with Count Altadin, and talked about the recent situation of the Holy Dragon Empire.

“The situation in the Holy Dragon Empire isn’t good. Many nobles have given up their territories and came to the Holy Dragon City. They regard this as the final place to take refuge.”

Count Altadin felt very helpless as he mentioned this.

Count Stanwin and Merlin were the same. They gave up their territories and escaped to the Holy Dragon City. After all, the Holy Dragon City had the suppression of the legendary sacred beast Regulus’ skull. Even if the Holy Dragon Empire began to fall into chaos, the Holy Dragon City would be very safe.

Therefore, many nobles regarded the Holy Dragon City as their first choice of refuge.

“Hasn’t the royal family done anything at present?”

Count Stanwin asked in a heavy voice.

“What can the royal family do? The royal family has far less control than it had hundreds of years ago. Some nobles don’t even obey the royal family’s orders anymore. The royal family’s influence is still very strong in the Holy Dragon City. However, outside the city, their influence is even less than that of the nobles in some territories.”

Count Altadin seemed to be very concerned and helpless about the situation in the Holy Dragon Empire. The weakening of the royal family was the root cause of the chaos in the Holy Dragon Empire.

However, the decline of the royal family was due to the thin bloodline of the royal family and the absence of descendants with a strong Regulus bloodline. As a result, the entire Holy Dragon Empire had started to collapse.

Just as Count Altadin was feeling helpless, Count Stanwin suddenly stood up. His entire body immediately began to morph as he snorted coldly, “Who’s there?”

“Bang.”

Count Altadin’s dressing room door crashed into pieces following a loud noise. The entire manor seemed to be shaking.

## Chapter 938: Ambush

Without anyone noticing, several strange men in black appeared in the shadows under the trees outside Count Altadin’s manor.

“Sir Pero, everything is ready but something happened.”

The man in the middle called “Sir Pero” was a burly man with dark skin. He looked rather fierce with a huge earring in his ear.

“Earlier, a carriage arrived outside the manor. It seems that an aristocrat has come to visit Count Altadin.”

“An aristocrat?”

Pero frowned. They had painstakingly lurked in the Holy Dragon City for the sake of the Bead of Infamy in Count Altadin’s hands, which General Mungus had always yearned for. If they were not successful this time, they no longer needed to run go back. Instead, they should just run for their lives. Otherwise, they would surely be executed by General Mungus.

“Maybe it’s just some friends of Count Altadin. They shouldn’t be much trouble. We need to hurry. After all, this is the Holy Dragon City. If the royal guards find us, we won’t be able to leave the city.”

Pero understood clearly. Although the Holy Dragon Empire was full of confusion now, in the Holy Dragon City, the royal family still did not allow the provocation of anyone. In the Holy Dragon City, the real master was the royal family.

Pero took a deep breath as a determined glint flashed in his eyes, and commanded, “Now!”

Immediately, the shadows dived into the manor.

...

“Who’s there?”

Following Count Stanwin’s shout, the gate of the hall crashed into pieces, and several giant spiders appeared in the hall.

“Haha, Count Altadin, hand over the Bead of Infamy or all of you will die!”

These giant spiders were third-form shifters. The man who was leading them had reached the fourth-form and was blocking the entrance of the hall while staring at Count Altadin coldly.

“The Bead of Infamy? Who are you? How do you know about the Bead of Infamy?”

Count Altadin’s face paled. The treasure his family passed down had been found out.

“We work under General Mungus. The Bead of Infamy is wasted in your worthless hands. If you dedicate it to our General Mungus, we’ll spare your lives.”

Hearing what the shifter said, Count Stanwin’s expression became solemn. General Mungus was one of the most powerful leaders of those rebelling against the Holy Dragon Empire. He was a powerful Host that had become a full-shifter, and was extremely terrifying.

Count Altadin looked pale. He could not shift, and had neither an almighty beast bloodline nor the courage to become a Host. Therefore, in the face of Mungus’ men, his heart was already in despair.

However, the Bead of Infamy was a treasure passed down in Altadin's family, and must not be handed over to these people.

"You're quite bold to sneak into the Holy Dragon City. When the royal family finds out, will you be able to escape?"

Count Stanwin shouted, and took a step forward to protect Count Altadin.

Perot frowned and sneered. "What's so scary about the Holy Dragon City? Even the Regulus enchantment set up by the royal family is only a strong obstruction to shifters. We aren't full-shifters, so it's easy to get into the Holy Dragon City. Unfortunately, you two are here today. Today is the day you die. Don't let anyone escape! Kill!"

Pero saw that Count Altadin did not intend to hand over the Bead of Infamy, and did not waste any more time. He led the five shifters and lunged toward Count Altadin.

"Roar..."

Suddenly, Count Stanwin began to morph. He grew more than five meters tall and was covered with blood-red scales, and his limbs contained terrifying power.

The ferocious aura spread around. This was the fourth-form of the Deinosuchus bloodline. At this time, the huge pressure shrouded the men in black.

"The Deinosuchus bloodline?"

A few of the men were surprised. The Deinosuchus bloodline belonged to a mid-tier almighty beast bloodline and was extremely strong. Even they had heard of it before.

Count Stanwin was not courteous at all. His huge body rushed forward and his stubby tail swung hard.

"Bang."

The stout and powerful tail swept a man dressed in black in front of him. Although the other party was also a shifter, before a fourth-form shifter like Count Stanwin, he was completely defeated and beaten directly to the ground into a bloody pulp.

With one move, one of the third-form shifters died. However, besides the men in black, even Merlin felt extremely surprised.

This was the strength of a mid-tier almighty beast bloodline!

However, it was not over. Count Stanwin, in the form of a Deinosuchus, rushed forward with great power, and the fourth-form man in black was also sent flying.

Like that, one was dead and one was injured. The remaining three men in black all looked at each other but did not dare to attack.

“D\*mn it, it’s a fourth-form shifter! The two of us will stop the Deinosuchus while the last one catches Count Altadin and force him to hand over the Bead of Infamy. If we don’t get the Bead of Infamy this time, we’ll all die!”

Pero, the leader, gnashed his teeth as he spoke. They were sent by General Mungus this time for one purpose only, and could only succeed. If they failed, they would die.

“Swoosh swoosh swoosh.”

Pero and the two other men in black morphed into giant spiders. In terms of strength, they were far inferior to Count Stanwin but they used their white silk thread.

These silk threads were extremely tough and firm. They shot at Count Stanwin from all directions. However, Count Stanwin could not dodge them all as he was not swift enough. Soon, he was bound firmly.

Despite Count Stanwin’s strength and constant struggle, it was impossible to escape in a short amount of time. At that moment, both sides were in a deadlock.

The remaining man in black rushed toward Count Altadin and spat out a white silk thread, ready to capture him.

Count Altadin's face went white. Beside him, Baratha was also pale and bit her lips. Although she was acting strong now, she could do nothing in the face of a third-form shifter.

Merlin took a deep breath. He knew that he had to expose his hands at this time, otherwise, Count Altadin and Baratha would be captured.

“Shift!”

Black fur rapidly began to grow all over Merlin's body. His hands turned into sharp claws and his height soared to nearly two meters. Immediately, his entire body was filled with powerful strength.

“Swoosh.”

Merlin put force in his legs and his speed reached the limit. The entire hall could only see a black figure flashing by before appearing in front of Count Altadin before the man in black did.

“Go!”

Merlin grabbed Count Altadin and Baratha in each hand and rushed to the outside of the hall. Although he was pulling them along, his speed was still terrifying as he rushed out of the hall in the blink of an eye.

Chapter 939: Bead of Infamy I

“What? There's still an almighty beast bloodline? How fast!”

The man in black was shocked. He did not even see the figure, and lost sight of Count Altadin's presence. He did not manage to see who had acted.

However, their goal this time was Count Altadin, so they naturally would not give up easily. The man in black quickly jumped, and directly rushed out of the hall.

“Swoosh.”

Outside the hall, Merlin showed himself. By his side, his left and right hands grabbed one person each. Currently, after shapeshifting, it was easy to grab two people.

However, Count Altadin was shocked and almost lost his voice, and said, “Leon, I thought you didn’t inherit the Deinosuchus bloodline? No, this isn’t the Deinosuchus bloodline. Could it be...?”

Count Altadin seemed to think of a possibility as his expression turned odd.

Merlin also knew that he could not hide it anymore, and nodded, “Yes, I’m a Host!”

“A Host!!!”

Count Altadin shivered as his eyes shined. Other aristocrats might only show respect from a distance toward Hosts, but Count Altadin was different. This was because Count Altadin’s ancestor was a powerful Host who left behind the treasure known as the Bead of Infamy.

“Stay here. I’ll deal with them.”

Merlin’s eyes darkened. He saw the morphed man in black rush out of the hall and knew that running away would not solve the problem. Besides, he was eager to test his abilities. After all, the man in black was a third-form shifter, and although Merlin was a Host, he was also a third-form shifter.

The time had come to test his real strength!

The man in black had shapeshifted into a ferocious-looking giant spider that gave others an oppressive feeling. However, Merlin knew that it was only a low-tier almighty beast bloodline. It was no match for his Two-headed Pterolycus, so he had nothing to fear.

“Hoo...”

Merlin did not hesitate. His figure turned into an afterimage as he charged toward the man in black.

Merlin's speed was so fast that he could not be seen with the naked eye. Although the man in black could not spot Merlin's exact location, his senses were very sharp, which allowed him to sense Merlin's general location.

From the body of the spider, the man in black viciously spit out strands of white silk that spread out, forming a large net and blocking Merlin's way forward.

No matter how fast Merlin was, he would not be able to escape the net. However, Merlin's Two-headed Pterolycus did not merely have speed. His figure stopped, and the glint of two claws flashed.

"Skrr-skrr-skrr."

The sharp wolf claws easily cut off the sturdy white silk and quickly approached the man in black. Immediately after the collision, the man became disadvantaged. Merlin's Two-headed Pterolycus' speed, coupled with the razor-sharp wolf claws, were extraordinary and impossible to defend against.

"Slash."

Merlin's sharp claws swiped viciously, and the man in black immediately let out a scream as one of his legs were chopped off. Their speed had been very fast, and the confrontation was over in a flash.

Merlin's strength gave him the advantage, and it was thanks to his Two-headed Pterolycus that he managed to restrain the other party. The man's spider form was a forbidden almighty beast bloodline, but in the face of Merlin's Two-headed Pterolycus and its speed and sharp claws, he did not stand a chance. He naturally was no match against Merlin.

In a battle between almighty beasts, if one's ability could be restrained, it would be a one-sided massacre. The current situation was very bad for the man in black.



A glint flashed in Merlin's eyes. He was not an ordinary young man but someone who stood on the top of a Latitude Cosmos. He had experienced countless battles, so how would he miss such an opportunity?

Seeing that the other party was injured, Merlin's speed exploded again. He instantly appeared in front of the man in black, and his claws glinted coldly in the light.

"Slash."

The sharp wolf claws cut off the man's head without any hindrance and blood immediately gushed out, filling the air with a pungent smell.

Merlin watched the man lying in a pool of blood. His beast form had been lifted. Although the man's current state looked very terrifying, Merlin was not fazed at all. He was still thinking about the gains and losses from the battle earlier.

The Two-headed Pterolycus' characteristics were its speed and sharp claws, so there was no problem when dealing with giant spiders like these. However, if he had to encounter Count Stanwin's Deinosuchus bloodline, which had terrifying defenses, even his claws would not work. At that time, Merlin would be helpless.

The Two-headed Pterolycus had its advantages, but its disadvantages were also obvious. However, this was also a common failing of low-tier almighty beasts. They were doomed to have many weaknesses, and unable to reach the point of perfection.

"Leon, how's Count Stanwin?"

Count Altadin also calmed down and expressed worry for Count Stanwin who was in the hall.

Merlin smiled and said, "Father should be fine."

Merlin's foresight was good. The three men were only able to temporarily pin down his father. They were naturally no match for Count Stanwin in the long run.

"Boom."

Just as Merlin finished speaking, the entire manor seemed to shake. Then, the wall of the hall was blown into pieces. A few figures flew out from the rubble and fell heavily to the ground. It was the three other men in black.

However, at this moment, the three men looked miserable. Although they were not dead, they were seriously injured and could not even stand properly.

“Swoosh.”

The giant Deinosuchus slowly walked out of the hall. Currently, Count Stanwin’s body emitted a layer of blood-red light, increasing his might.

“Everything’s fine now. Capture those three and interrogate them thoroughly.”

Count Stanwin said in a low voice. He had not killed them so he could interrogate them properly.

“There’s no need. Just kill them!”

Count Altadin had already called his guards. With a wave of his hand, the guards swiftly stepped forward and killed the three men.

Count Altadin’s actions greatly stunned Count Stanwin. He did not understand why Count Altadin wanted to kill them.

“Count Stanwin, Leon, you have my thanks. If it weren’t for you, I’m afraid that a river of blood would have started to flow in my manor.”

Now that Count Altadin thought about it, he felt some fear. Ultimately, it was because no one in his family inherited an almighty beast bloodline. As for being a Host, it was also incredibly risky. Count Altadin did not have the courage to become a Host, which led to such a catastrophe today.

After hesitating for a moment, Count Altadin seemed to have decided and said, “Count Stanwin, Leon, these men were Mungus’ subordinates. I believe you’re also very curious about the Bead of Infamy they were after. Please come with me. This is the greatest secret of my Leicester clan.”

Count Stanwin and Merlin cast a glance at each other. They were indeed curious about the Bead of Infamy. It must be extraordinary if Mungus would send his men all this way to rob it.

Since Count Altadin was willing to tell them, they followed behind him and entered the hall.

## Chapter 940: The Bead of Infamy II

The guards in the hall withdrew, leaving just Count Stanwin, Merlin, and Count Altadin’s daughter, Baratha. The atmosphere was solemn.

“Count Stanwin, these people had come after the Leicester clan’s greatest secret – the Bead of Infamy! The noble progenitor of our Leicester clan was a full-shifting Host with powerful capabilities. Back then, he had accompanied the royal family in establishing the Holy Dragon Empire. Moreover, he was dubbed with the highest title of duke. It’s a shame that in so many years, no one else in the clan had an exceptional almighty beast bloodline. As for some ancestors who’d chosen parasitism, they had failed and died. Therefore, our title dwindled bit by bit, becoming the current countship.

“As for the Bead of Infamy – back when our progenitor was powerful, he purposefully gathered some almighty beasts’ wills from various dangerous places. Some of these almighty beasts’ wills are terrifying, which became an inherited treasure in our Leicester clan. However, the later generations did not succeed in parasitism. Even if they did, they soon died, overwhelmed by the almighty beast’s will. As for myself, I didn’t have the courage to become a Host. By now, my Leicester clan suffers from a lack of heirs – I only have my daughter, Baratha. The Bead of Infamy is now in Mungus’ sight. I believe he’ll send more people to seize it. I’m far from being able to save this Bead of Infamy. Therefore, Count Stanwin, I have a request.”

With that, Count Altadin looked toward Merlin meaningfully.

Count Stanwin had already guessed where Count Altadin was going, and he glanced at Merlin too.

“Leon, would you be willing to marry Baratha? Earlier, I’ve seen that you’re a Host, and your almighty beast’s will must be a Two-headed Pterolycus. Although this almighty beast isn’t too shabby, it’s ultimately a low-tier almighty beast with limited potential. Our Leicester clan’s Bead of Infamy has even sealed in a high-tier almighty beast’s will, which had parasitized our ancestors once. Naturally, its potential far exceeds the Two-headed Pterolycus. If you’re willing to marry Baratha, I’ll pass on the Bead of Infamy to you, and you may select any almighty beast’s will within the Bead of Infamy to parasitize you as you wish. Provided that, in the future, one of the children born by you and Baratha will become the heir of my Leicester clan.”

Indeed, Count Altadin had intended for Baratha to see Merlin for herself. Furthermore, after Merlin had exposed his strength and his identity as a Host, Count Altadin was even more pleased with Merlin.

A treasure like the Bead of Infamy was an incredible temptation for a Host, nearly irresistible. Merlin knew that it would be difficult to look for more powerful almighty beasts’ wills in other places. Otherwise, if an almighty beast’s will was so easily found, then the full-shifter General Mungus would not have his heart set on the Bead of Infamy.

“Any thoughts, Count Stanwin?”

Count Altadin then immediately took out a black, opaque bead that did not look special. Nonetheless, Merlin could detect bursts of astonishing, berserk wills, which must be the almighty beasts’ wills sealed within.

These almighty beasts’ wills could be sealed, many of which were mid-tier or even high-tier almighty beasts’ wills. That progenitor of Count Altadin’s clan was truly impressive. He must have far surpassed most full-shifters.

Still, Count Stanwin cast his gaze at Merlin, asking softly, “Leon, what do you think?”

Merlin was indeed tempted about the Bead of Infamy. After all, it was challenging for him to locate other, more formidable almighty beasts’ wills, just as it was challenging to search for other Nourishment Pond formulas.

Although Curator Heroult seemed enigmatic, he must have plenty of almighty beasts' wills. Heroult had even promised that if Merlin followed him to Holy Dragon City, he would give Merlin a mid-tier almighty beast's will to parasitize Merlin.

Nevertheless, even the almighty beasts' wills that Heroult possessed might not measure up to the almighty beasts' wills sealed within this Bead of Infamy.

However, Merlin thought about Lady Reese, the fiancée he was engaged to as soon as he came to the Almighty Beast World.

"Count Altadin, I already have a fiancée."

Merlin only spoke after a long moment. On one side, Baratha's face stiffened slightly as she wrung her dainty hands, appearing rather nervous.

Count Stanwin knitted his brow. He was not too concerned about Reese. Among the aristocrats, having a few women were not a big deal. Although Merlin and Reese had gotten engaged before the aristocrats of Boulder City, the city had fallen to the enemy by now. Count Stanwin had lost his territory, with Reese following them to Holy Dragon City.

"Haha, Count Stanwin had mentioned this to me long before. Leon, I know that you have a fiancée but as an aristocrat, what are a few more wives? Moreover, Baratha won't take issue with this."

Count Altadin felt that Merlin's fiancée was no great obstacle.

Merlin appeared rather hesitant. In his previous life, he did not share much affection with two women. Now, in the Almighty Beast World, he had to go through the same scenario.

"Leon, I'll personally talk to Lady Reese. She won't mind."

Count Stanwin spoke at last. He was very pleased with Baratha, but he was even happier that Count Altadin was willing to hand over the Bead of Infamy. This was an inherited treasure of the Leicester clan, which was very precious. Even the full-shifter General Mungus would stop at nothing to get this bead.

If Leon could obtain this Bead of Infamy, this would undoubtedly be an immense help for Leon's parasitism.

Seeing that Merlin was still bewildered and uncertain, Count Stanwin said immediately, "Alright, Leon. We'll do this then!"

Marriage between aristocrats was sometimes this simple. Count Altadin needed someone powerful to support the entire Leicester clan while Count Stanwin needed the backing of a reliable ally in Holy Dragon City. Only then could he establish himself.

Everyone got what they wanted. As for Merlin, he would benefit as well. In the eyes of aristocrats, feelings were not worth a mention, as long as one remained loyal to one's clan.

As if to express his sincerity, and also because he seemed fond of Merlin, Count Altadin gave the Bead of Infamy to Merlin in a precursory manner.

"Let's pick a good day for Leon and Baratha to get married. I'll give this Bead of Infamy to Leon first. Still, I hope that before you're married, Leon, you won't switch your almighty beast's will."

Altadin's expression was rather somber. Though he did not choose parasitism, the Leicester clan's progenitor was a formidable full-shifting Host. Thus, he had an unparalleled understanding of parasitism.

He knew about the dangers that plagued a Host. One might die at any moment. In particular, changing to host a different almighty beast's will was a matter of both risk and luck. If Merlin got married first, he could still leave behind an heir.

To aristocrats, the lineage of their bloodline was always the most important aspect. All other matters could be set aside first.