

W. Secret 941

Chapter 941: The Three-layered Subspace

A carriage sped along the wide street. Within the carriage, Merlin started to speak but hesitated. After a long while, he could not help but ask, “Father, just now when we were in the manor, those subordinates of General Mungus could easily sneak into the Holy Dragon City? Shouldn’t it be that, since the royal family is the ruler of the Holy Dragon City, the armed rebellion would find it hard to breach this place?”

Merlin had thought that the Holy Dragon City was initially very secure, but at that moment, it looked like that was not the case. Those people were able to easily infiltrate the Holy Dragon City. What safety was there to speak of?

Count Stanwin looked at Merlin and seemed rather pleased. He felt that ever since they left Boulder City, Merlin had transformed significantly and no longer as “naïve” as he used to be. Now, he was able to support an entire clan.

Although Merlin was under constant potential danger due to his parasitism, this transformation still delighted Count Stanwin very much.

Thus, Count Stanwin explained in a low voice, “The royal family still has tremendous influence in the Holy Dragon City. It’s impossible for other rebellion forces to infiltrate the Holy Dragon City. However, the Holy Dragon City’s measures seem to only target contenders who are full-shifters. If anyone at that level enters the Holy Dragon City, the royal family would know at once. Moreover, even if there’s only one head of the Sacred Lion Beast left, it still possesses a frightening might. Those contenders who are full-shifters or higher won’t dare to enter the Holy Dragon City. As for those below the level of full-shifters, what use would they be even if more of them came in?”

Count Stanwin explained everything clearly and Merlin wore an expression of sudden realization. It turned out that the Holy Dragon City only targeted those who are full-shifters or higher.

Contenders like these, after shapeshifting and wantonly causing destruction, could easily destroy a city. Thus, they posed the greatest threat. As for those below full-shifters, they were

not much of a threat toward the royal family even if more of them came in. All that was needed was a little control. The royal family's greatest strength did not need to be mobilized.

As a result, Mungus' men were able to stealthily infiltrate the Holy Dragon City.

"Leon, I've put you out. If you really don't wish to marry Baratha, then return the Bead of Infamy. I'll handle Count Altadin."

After a moment of silent thought, Count Stanwin spoke in discursive tones. At that point, he treated Merlin as an equal. Merlin was no longer the youth of the past that needed protection.

Merlin looked up and smiled as he said, "How am I put out? Baratha is very pretty, and I think Lady Reese is sure to agree. Of course, Father will have to explain to her."

To Merlin, whether it was in the Void Zone or the Almighty Beast World, he had never felt much sentiment towards women. What he sought was the path to power, in order to surpass the Latitude Cosmos. The feelings between men and women were merely a passing memory of a few decades to him.

Moreover, he could sense the wildly snarling almighty beasts' will within this Bead of Infamy. Merlin could not bear to return it.

"Haha, as long as you're willing. When we return to the manor, I'll begin preparations for your wedding, selecting a good day for the wedding between you and Reese, and Baratha too. Then we may quickly continue the bloodline of our Hilderbrandt clan."

Count Stanwin seemed to be satisfied. Previously, he had only planned for Leon to live a peaceful life. Although he would pass on his countship, Count Stanwin never considered passing on the heavy responsibilities of the clan.

However, after Merlin was parasitized, he seemed to have transformed suddenly. The burdens of the clan could be handed over to Merlin. In this regard, Count Stanwin naturally felt very satisfied.

His only regret was that Merlin was a Host, liable to be devoured by the almighty beast's will at any time. This was the common plight of all Hosts.

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After returning to the Manor, Merlin did not bother with matters of the wedding. He pushed everything else to one side. Count Stanwin was there to worry about the wedding.

Later, Merlin instantly headed to the basement after a brief discussion with Count Stanwin. In this crude laboratory, the Nourishment Pond was still left with a moss green liquid. Still, Merlin knew that this water was no longer useful. He had to create the formula again.

Nonetheless, the number of gold coins Merlin currently possessed was insufficient to purchase the ingredients for another batch of Hermani formula.

Merlin had gone into the laboratory to inspect the Bead of Infamy he recently received. At first, he did not sense much, but after placing the Bead of Infamy on his skin, Merlin's keen senses could detect the terrifying almighty beasts' will within the Bead of Infamy that was roaring constantly.

"What powerful almighty beasts' will! As expected of the various almighty beasts' will collected by the full-shifting progenitor of the Leicester clan."

Even though Merlin had not actually merged with these almighty beasts' will, he could sense their immense power.

"I'll go in for a look first."

Merlin followed Count Altadin's instructions and began to focus his will into the Bead of Infamy. After a moment, his consciousness was even in an occasional numbness.

"Boom."

His consciousness had entered an indescribable subspace, which was pitch-dark all over. It must be the subspace within the Bead of Infamy.

Moreover, as Merlin's consciousness went in, a detailed introduction of the Bead of Infamy's characteristics swiftly surfaced in Merlin's mind.

It turned out that the Bead of Infamy was divided into three layers of subspace. The first layer contained the low-tier almighty beasts' will, while the second layer contained mid-tier almighty beasts' will.

As for the third and final layer, the sole high-tier almighty beast's will was sealed within. This high-tier of almighty beast's will was the same almighty beast bloodline that parasitized the progenitor of the Leicester clan.

"There's actually subspace-type treasures used to seal almighty beasts' will. It looks like this world isn't as simple as I thought. Those full-shifters and those beyond that level have more the just frightening destructive power."

Merlin stared at this subspace. Although it could only accommodate his consciousness, it was wondrous enough. After all, this world was not stronger than the Void Zone. It was rare for a subspace-type treasure like this to show up.

At a single thought from Merlin, his consciousness immediately drifted to the first layer in the Bead of Infamy. As soon as he went in, Merlin could hear the roaring of countless almighty beasts reverberating in his ears incessantly.

If he was an average person, his consciousness would be dazzled and he would have to exit the Bead of Infamy. Nevertheless, Merlin paid no attention to the snarling of these low-tier almighty beasts' will.

"Three-headed Dog? Green-patterned Python and the Gray-feathered Roc? Indeed, these are all the low-tier almighty beasts' will."

Merlin swept his consciousness over, finding that there were many low-tier almighty beasts' will in this subspace. Some of them were not inferior to his Two-headed Pterolycus in the slightest or were even more exceptional.

Being able to seal in so many low-tier almighty beasts' will, this Bead of Infamy's value to Hosts was practically incalculable.

However, Merlin was not that interested in the will of these low-tier almighty beasts, which was certain to have limited potential. Even at their limits, as Heroult pointed out, they were not that powerful.

Following that, Merlin resolutely stepped into the second layer subspace of the Bead of Infamy. Here, the number of almighty beasts' will were evidently fewer in number. In total, there were only eighteen almighty beasts' will.

When these will noticed the presence of Merlin's consciousness, they immediately erupted furiously. The onslaught from these will could even tear apart the consciousness of an ordinary person.

Therefore, Count Altadin reminded him not to simply enter the Bead of Infamy.

"Purple-eyed Polar Bear, Nightjar King... these are all powerful mid-tier almighty beasts. Some of the outstanding ones are even mightier than the Deinosuchus bloodline!"

Merlin was somewhat tempted. If he had not obtained the Bead of Infamy, any one of the almighty beasts' will within the second layer subspace would tempt Merlin because these all far surpassed the potential of the Two-headed Pterolycus.

Still, Merlin knew that there was a sealed third layer subspace, within which the will of a high-tier almighty beast. This was Merlin's true target.

"High-tier almighty beast... Even in the whole Holy Dragon Empire, those who possessed a high-tier almighty beast bloodline could be counted on one's fingers!"

Merlin's spirits soared. The high-tier almighty beast was definitely a dominant almighty beast within the Almighty Beast World.

"If one doesn't have a powerful will, entry to the third layer of the Bead of Infamy is forbidden!"

Just as Merlin was about to enter the third layer subspace, this message flashed across his mind. This must have been left behind by the progenitor of the Leicester clan.

This meant that the third layer subspace might very well contain great danger.

High-tier almighty beasts were distinct from mid-tier and low-tier almighty beasts. Even if it was just a will, it would be very fearsome.

However, Merlin did not care. After detecting the third layer subspace, his consciousness immediately drifted in.

Chapter 942: The Vipera Dragon Class

“Boom.”

As soon as Merlin drifted into the third layer subspace, blood-red light filled his vision. It was as if his consciousness was about to be ripped apart by an immense force.

Nonetheless, Merlin’s consciousness was unlike an ordinary person’s. This bit of power was naturally unable to cause his consciousness any harm. Therefore, he inspected with his consciousness and soon discovered that this crimson subspace only contained one colossal will.

“Someone has finally come in and with a decent consciousness too. It’s just a shame that it’s a tiny fellow who’s selected to merge with a puny Two-headed Pterolycus. With such a lowly bloodline, I, the great Blood-eye Dragon, won’t follow you!”

A deafening voice sounded in Merlin’s ears which rumbled unceasingly and was filled with a tyrannical presence.

This was the high-tier almighty beast’s will that was sealed within the third layer subspace – the Blood-eye Dragon!

The Blood-eye Dragon was a high-tier almighty beast. It had been a terrifying and formidable almighty beast, even in ancient times when almighty beasts ran amok. Furthermore, the Blood-eye Dragon had an obvious, unique advantage; it belonged to the Vipera Dragons class.

Vipera Dragons were descendants of the legendary Sacred Dragon, only their bloodline was thinner. Moreover, they had cross-bred with other almighty beasts. Naturally, their strength was far inferior to the legendary Sacred Dragon.

Nonetheless, they were still Vipera Dragons and possessed a trace of the Sacred Dragon's bloodline. Apparently, if one could stimulate a Vipera Dragon's bloodline to its limits, they might unleash the true Sacred Dragon bloodline.

Of course, myths were just myths. Sacred beasts were mythic beings in the first place. Who could actually possess the power of sacred beasts? This Blood-eye Dragon itself was already extraordinary enough. Even if only its will was left, it was still equipped with such immense strength. Furthermore, it maintained an intellect on par with an average person. Merlin was somewhat amazed.

"Blood-eye Dragon, a high-tier almighty beast's will. What, you don't wish to parasitize my body?" Merlin answered with a laugh.

This was not up to the Blood-eye Dragon. Perhaps others might be unable to handle the Blood-eye Dragon's will but Merlin had the Illusory World and powerful Mind Power. Only the will of the Blood-eye Dragon remained. To Merlin, this was no threat at all.

"For you to choose a mere Two-headed Pterolycus, you evidently possess no willpower nor intelligence. If I choose to parasitize you, won't I be forever unable to recover my peak strength? If that's the case, I'd rather stay sealed in this Bead of Infamy. Go away, I won't choose to parasitize your body. If you continue disturbing my sleep, I'll swallow your consciousness and turn you into an idiot!"

This Blood-eye Dragon's will was rather vicious and already started to threaten Merlin.

Merlin only gave a careless smile and did not take the Blood-eye Dragon's threat to heart. Still, he did not stay on in the Bead of Infamy and retracted his consciousness.

It was not that Merlin did not wish to immediately switch the Two-headed Pterolycus's will for the Blood-eye Dragon. One was a mere low-tier almighty beast's will, the other was a lofty, incomparably powerful high-tier almighty beast's will. It was also a Vipera Dragon that was a preeminent existence even amongst high-tier almighty beasts.

Nevertheless, Merlin could not switch his almighty beast's will so easily at that point.

In truth, Hosts had two methods in dealing with an almighty beast's will. The first was, they could switch immediately upon locating a stronger almighty beast's will. Even so, they must start from the beginning, slowly progressing from the first-form onwards.

This would take up vast amounts of resources which was what Merlin lacked now. He knew that the Blood-eye Dragon's will was indeed formidable but for him to reach the first-form required more materials for the Nourishment Pond than what it would need to take to reach the Two-headed Pterolycus's fourth-form. With Merlin's current financial ability, he was incapable of creating this Nourishment Pond.

Even if he requested this from Count Stanwin, it would be limited. Hosts used up a lot of resources, especially with a powerful almighty beast's will. The resources needed for that was inconceivable.

Of course, there was the second method which was to merge the almighty beasts' wills together. In that manner, one would not need to slowly progress from the first-form onwards.

However, that required a powerful almighty beast's will as the primary will first. Only then could one slowly attempt to merge other almighty beasts' wills into the first one, inducing mutations.

At that moment, Merlin only had the Two-headed Pterolycus which definitely could not act as the primary will. Conversely, if he merged with the Blood-eye Dragon in the future, he could try using this method. Still, merging with other almighty beasts' will and slowly upgrading the almighty beast's will was extremely dangerous. It would take a long time, many attempts, and Merlin was still very far from this stage.

Therefore, what he could do now was to solve the issue of Nourishment Pond's materials. Merlin could only smoothly merge with the Blood-eye Dragon with abundant resources and then rapidly advance it to its first-form or even beyond that.

"It's impossible to earn enough money in a short time span. Even if I did, preparing the materials of the Nourishment Pond won't be cheap. I'd only be able to use the Nourishment Pond once or twice, which isn't much help."

Countless thoughts zipped past Merlin's mind. He had many ideas but rejected each of them.

Suddenly, Merlin recalled Curator Heroult who had helped him merge with the Two-headed Pterolycus back in Boulder City. Back then, Heroult asked Merlin to follow him into Holy Dragon City but Merlin refused.

After that, Heroult left only an address for Brews Castle, so that Merlin could look him up at any time.

“It looks like it’s time to look for Heroult. With Brews Castle’s address, it won’t be hard to search.”

Merlin made up his mind and immediately left the laboratory, then boarded the carriage. After finding out the specific location of Brews Castle, he directed the carriage straight to this destination.

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A thin drizzle came down from the sky. The weather during the beginning of spring was still chilly. Raindrops felt icy as they landed on one’s face.

A carriage slowly stopped before an ancient castle. Merlin slowly disembarked from the carriage and looked up at this castle.

This here was Brews Castle, a rather ancient castle. There were no guards outside, and a quick glance into the castle revealed no human figures.

Nonetheless, the lawn within was well maintained, proving that this was not an abandoned castle but one that had residents.

Merlin instructed the coach driver to wait outside. He removed his gloves and draped himself with a black cloak. After a moment of hesitation, he pushed the iron gate open straightaway and walked towards the castle’s hall.

As soon as he entered the castle, Merlin detected an odd, unpleasant odor. Frowning, he looked upwards to the castle but discovered nothing out of the ordinary.

Soon, Merlin stood before the sturdy doors of the castle. Reaching out, he knocked sharply. The clear sound resounded within which sounded empty, giving him an eerie feeling.

“Creak.”

Under Merlin’s attentive gaze, the castle’s doors were slowly opened from within.

Chapter 943: Meeting Heroult Again

An old man with grizzled hair opened the door. When he saw Merlin, a puzzled look crossed his face as he asked softly, “Who are you looking for?”

“May I ask if Heroult stays here? I’m Mr. Heroult’s friend. My name is Leon. I believe Mr. Heroult knows me.”

Merlin declared his identity. This unfamiliar old man sized Merlin up and then said, “Please hold on a moment. I’ll ask for Sir Heroult.”

It looked like this Heroult had quite a status. After all, though this castle was relatively old, it was naturally quite impressive to own such a massive castle in the Holy Dragon City where land prices were steep.

After a moment, a booming laugh came from within the castle. “Haha, is that Master Leon? You’ve actually come to the Holy Dragon City.”

The doors opened. Heroult had changed into aristocratic apparel, exuding a noble, graceful temperament. This was not something most aristocrats could pull off. Even Count Stanwin did not have such a presence because this required an aristocratic clan with centuries of consolidation.

Heroult was always mysterious. Back in Boulder City, he had only opened the Fossil Museum, which was really strange. He had meticulous plans and was not just some aristocratic wastrel.

“Curator Heroult, we meet again!”

Although many thoughts flashed across Merlin's mind, he still remained outwardly calm.

"Master Leon, let's go in and talk."

Heroult invited Merlin into the living room, then examined Merlin all over. There was a strange glint in his eyes as he said quietly, "Not long ago, I had gotten word that Marshal Kerry was defeated by the Blackbat Militia and the barbarian tribe, and Boulder City had fallen to the Blackbat Militia. I was even worried about you, Master Leon but didn't expect that you had already arrived at the Holy Dragon City. I wonder, what is the purpose of you paying me a visit?"

Heroult was vaguely expectant, even impatient. He had been waiting for Merlin's news. After all, Merlin was a rare Host, one whose parasitism Heroult had carried out successfully. Although Heroult had obtained his data already, as someone who studied Hosts, this data was far from enough.

Merlin contemplated silently, then suddenly stood up. Since he wanted to obtain the formula and resources for the Nourishment Pond from Heroult, Heroult would discover that he had become a third-form shifter sooner or later. Merlin might as well tell Heroult first. He could even tempt Heroult more.

After all, a Host who was a first-form shifter could not be placed on par with a third-form shifter no matter what. Many people had succeeded in parasitism in the beginning, but as the shifter grew stronger, the almighty beast's will grew more powerful too. Ultimately, when they reached the second or third-form, they died from the repercussion of the almighty beast's will.

However, Merlin was now standing there within the hall in a healthy condition. Just this aspect alone was enough to fascinate Heroult.

"Swish."

Merlin rapidly shapeshifted. The aristocratic clothes he wore were torn apart as his frame enlarged swiftly. At last, he was no less than two meters tall. Furthermore, other than his upper body and his head, all parts of him were covered in a thick layer of black fur. His body had turned into a gigantic wolf.

“Third-form shifter?”

Heroult appeared astounded and almost shouted himself hoarse. It had only been a few months since he left Boulder City. Plus, Merlin was a Host who could be in danger at any time, yet he had become a third-form shifter. This was a terrifying pace of progress.

“That’s right, a third-form shifter!”

Merlin slowly resumed his original appearance, only his upper half was naked, which was somewhat awkward. Heroult waved one hand and commanded someone to bring Merlin a set of clothes.

After a long while, Heroult slowly spoke, “You’ve obtained the Nourishment Pond formula?”

Hosts could only rely on Nourishment Ponds to improve their strength. Therefore, Heroult immediately caught onto the key point, which was that Merlin had obtained the Nourishment Pond formula.

“That’s right, Curator Heroult. Don’t forget that my father is a formidable peak fourth-form shifter! Although it wasn’t easy to obtain this Nourishment Pond formula, it wasn’t too difficult either.”

Heroult nodded. Even though he had faith in his own abilities, he was still apprehensive towards Merlin’s father Count Stanwin. The Deinosuchus bloodline was a mid-tier bloodline. To be able to cultivate this to the peak of the fourth-form shifter, one could be considered a contender at any place.

“Since you already have the Nourishment Pond formula, why have you come here today?”

Heroult initially thought that Merlin had come for the Nourishment Pond formula. After all, a Host would find it hard to advance without the Nourishment Pond. However, Heroult was somewhat at a loss now.

Merlin did not conceal his intentions and replied directly, “Who would complain about too many Nourishment Pond formulas? Moreover, the Nourishment Pond formula I have will eventually become ineffective. At that point, Mr. Heroult’s Nourishment Pond formula would

be extremely valuable. Plus, the materials of the Nourishment Pond formula aren't something everyone can afford."

Heroult was momentarily taken aback before he burst into loud laughter.

"Haha, not bad, not bad. Who would complain about too many Nourishment Pond formulas? Furthermore, the Holy Dragon Empire is in chaos everywhere now. Some of the traders' supplies are affected too. Thus, some materials of the Nourishment Pond formula are extremely costly. In addition, Master Leon, you should know by now that for a Host to increase their strength, the required materials for the Nourishment Pond alone are not something most aristocrats can afford by far."

Heroult already understood Merlin's intentions. In fact, he had come for the Nourishment Pond formula indeed. More importantly, however, was that Merlin had no way of obtaining more of those expensive materials for the Nourishment Pond formula.

Heroult knew full well of the material's costliness. Fortunately, he had special means and the problem of the materials was resolved long ago. He had his own reasons for devoting himself to researching Hosts.

Although Heroult was secretive and mysterious, Merlin could generally sense that Heroult was a contender with an almighty beast bloodline. His capabilities were probably not inferior to Count Stanwin, and he must have become a fourth-form shifter already.

However, this was seemingly Heroult's limit. It was nearly impossible for him to progress further with his almighty beast bloodline and break through this point. The peak of fourth-form shifting was his limit.

Therefore, Heroult might only have hope through the parasitism of an almighty beast's will. Nonetheless, being a Host was too dangerous, so Heroult wanted to study other Hosts thoroughly. He set a solid foundation for when he would use the parasitism of an almighty beast's will to break through to a full-shifting form.

Both of their needs were not in conflict.

"Master Leon, I can give you the Nourishment Pond formula, and I can even prepare the relevant materials for you, provided that you stay here under my study at each and every moment, so that I may record the data of a Host. All that you require shall be fulfilled!"

Now Heroult wished to know, how was Merlin still able to withstand the repercussion of the almighty beast's will despite becoming a third-form shifter.

Merlin was actually rather shocked. Heroult was talking big indeed. These materials were not that simple; they were very expensive and supplies were limited. Heroult actually promised this right away. If this was real, this meant that Heroult was supported by a massive organization.

Still, this suited Merlin's plans just fine.

"Only for a month. You can't possibly study me forever. One month and you'll prepare ten batches of the materials I need. Moreover, you must hand over your Nourishment Pond formula and prepare ten batches of materials for that as well. How's that?"

These were Merlin's conditions.

"So, twenty batches of materials in total. That's not a problem, but one month is too short. Three months at least!"

At this point, Heroult and Merlin started to haggle, finally settling on two months.

Within those two months, Merlin would allow Heroult to study him as he wished with no conditions except that Merlin was not harmed.

On the other hand, Heroult had to hand over a batch of materials after a period of time, until all twenty batches had been delivered in full.

Chapter 944: The Mercenary Group

It was already evening when Merlin returned to the manor.

The light pattering of rain still had not stopped completely. Light water drops wafted through the air and it was incomparably chilly. Upon Merlin's return, he found that Count Stanwin was

not there. In this period, Count Stanwin was rushing around preparing for Merlin's wedding. Every day he would leave early and return late as if there were things to constantly keep him busy.

"The honorable count has returned."

After a while, a maid reported softly to Merlin. Soon, Count Stanwin came in from outside and looked travel-worn.

"Leon, preparations for your wedding are nearly complete. At first, I'd planned to hold the ceremony next month but during this time, the Deinosuchus Mercenary Group I've set up has received a huge gig, escorting a caravan for a long period. I'll only return after three months. Thus, after Count Altadin and I discussed the matter, we finally decided to wait half a year before holding the wedding ceremony for you and Baratha."

Once Count Stanwin entered the hall, he explained this to Merlin. It turned out that in this period, Count Stanwin had gone out early and returned late not just for Merlin's wedding but more for the sake of the mercenary group he had established.

In truth, although Count Stanwin had been an overlord with generous savings, he could not just spend his fortune without making any money. He still had three hundred heavy knights under him and due to the fact that this was not a small force, it was a huge responsibility.

Moreover, Count Stanwin could not possibly go into business. The various businesses of the Holy Dragon City were responsible for massive chambers of commerce. Ordinary people could not get involved at all.

As for serving the empire, that was out of the question. Currently, whether the whole Holy Dragon Empire could be preserved was a problem in itself. Even if he put in more effort, what territory would he gain?

Therefore, Count Stanwin only had one option which was to establish a mercenary group. Fortunately, he had three hundred heavy knights under him; and this was not a small force. Hence, under the leadership of a peak fourth-form shifter like Count Stanwin, the mercenary group became a formidable one upon its establishment.

This time, Count Stanwin had received a mission to escort a business guild's caravan that was going to pass through numerous cities in chaos. The rewards were high even though this would be dangerous.

These chambers of commerce urgently needed to ensure an unrestricted flow of supplies. Naturally, they would hire a mercenary group at a high price.

"I'll go along with everything you've arranged, Father."

Merlin knew that Count Stanwin had already prepared everything. Even though Count Stanwin had lost his territory, a mercenary group established with his capabilities was still a powerful one. As long as they did not encounter mighty existences who were full-shifters, there would not be much danger.

"Half a year it is then. Tomorrow, I'll be leading the heavy knights and leave the Holy Dragon City. Leon, all matters of the manor will be passed over to you from tomorrow onwards! I shall return in three months."

Count Stanwin was handing the authority over the whole manor to Merlin. If this was the previous Leon, Count Stanwin surely would not do such a thing but at that point, he was rather pleased with this current Leon. Slowly, he would pass on all matters of the clan to Merlin.

Merlin knew this well but he did not refuse. At that moment, Count Stanwin needed to be free from lingering worries.

"Father, rest assured. I'll carefully take care of manor's matters."

After Merlin promised, Count Stanwin was able to stop worrying at last.

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Early morning the next day, the heavy knights of the manor followed Count Stanwin in exiting the Holy Dragon City. The entire manor appeared rather empty and desolate.

Merlin rode the carriage straight to Curator Heroult's residence, Brews Castle!

“Curator Heroult.”

When Merlin entered Brews Castle, he saw that Curator Heroult was already waiting for him.

“Leon, you’re finally here. Come along, we’ll go straight to the laboratory. I cannot wait any longer.”

Heroult did not hide his eagerness at all.

Merlin nodded. He did not know why Curator Heroult was so impatient but since he had come here, Merlin was already prepared for this long ago.

Thus, he followed Curator Heroult to the laboratory. This was a true laboratory that consisted of all the instruments and facilities a laboratory should have. Merlin’s crude laboratory could not compare to this at all.

At the center, there was a gigantic Nourishment Pond. This was the same Nourishment Pond formula Merlin had used when he first started parasitism.

Curator Heroult did not give Merlin the Nourishment Pond formula right away. Only after a few days, he handed over the Nourishment Pond formula to Merlin, bit by bit. As for the materials, he would give Merlin a batch nearly every day after his research was completed.

“Alright, Leon, unleash your shifted form.”

Heroult had to research a Host comprehensively. Therefore, the condition of a Host’s shifted form was of utmost importance and required meticulous study.

Merlin obeyed Heroult’s request and started to shapeshift. Thick black fur sprouted all over his body. The third-form of the Two-headed Pterolycus made Merlin feel very powerful.

After Merlin had demonstrated his shapeshifting, Heroult recorded some data changes in detail. It was not easy to encounter a Host like Merlin who could reach the third-form. This was the crucial reason Heroult could pay such a heavy price. If Merlin was merely at the first-

form, Heroult would need to consider further but this was the third-form. Heroult had never studied a Host who was a third-form shifter.

In the laboratory, there were many apparatuses. Heroult recorded Merlin's physical condition in detail but the crucial issue of the almighty beast's will could not be measured. He could only have Merlin carefully describe the state of the almighty beast's will.

A Host's biggest fear was the backlash of the almighty beast's will. If one could solve the problem of this backlash, Hosts would hold a complete advantage, far surpassing those who inherited almighty beast bloodlines.

Time rushed by in a blur. Soon, it was evening. Heroult carried out his research for a full day and only stopped when he saw that the sky had gotten dark.

"Leon, not bad. A Host who's a third-form shifter is really far more valuable than a first-form Host. We still have two months, so I might actually gain a thorough understanding of a Host's shifted form and its various aspects. Today's research is about done. Here are the Nourishment Pond materials you need."

From the laboratory, Heroult immediately took out a batch of materials that Merlin needed for the Hermani Nourishment Pond formula. This was the first batch, with nine more to come. Heroult was keeping to his promise.

Of course, Heroult would not hand over his Nourishment Pond formula to Merlin for now. He would only give the Nourishment Pond formula to Merlin after some time.

After receiving this batch of materials for the Hermani Nourishment Pond formula, Merlin nodded slightly which indicated his satisfaction. Following that, he put on the clothes he prepared in advance and left Heroult's place.

Back in the manor, Merlin inspected the Hermani formula that Heroult gave him.

There were more than two hundred types of materials. Merlin examined each one carefully. Indeed, they were materials for the Hermani Nourishment Pond formula. Merlin, who had brewed the Nourishment Pond himself before would not be mistaken.

These materials were all very costly. Merlin had even expressly made inquiries at some shops in the Holy Dragon City. Even if they emptied out their stock, they could put together a few batches at most. However, Heroult could hand over no less than ten batches.

This meant that Heroult had his own special channels since he was able to constantly obtain materials for the Nourishment Pond instead of having to purchase them from shops.

“I must gain control of these channels too.”

Merlin secretly made this decision. Heroult was a mysterious figure who controlled channels that ordinary people, or even people with powerful almighty beast bloodlines, could not access. He was certainly someone extraordinary.

While Heroult urgently needed to study him, Merlin had to seize the chance to slowly uncover the secrets behind Heroult. Most importantly, he had to gain control over these channels of Nourishment Pond formula materials. These were Merlin’s objectives.

After receiving one batch of materials for the Hermani Nourishment Pond formula, Merlin did not concoct the Nourishment Pond right away because it would not serve many purposes in doing so.

Merlin was currently a third-form shifter but his potential was limited. The Two-headed Pterolycus would be switched for something else soon enough. Thus, using these materials would be a total waste.

Nonetheless, Merlin could not change his almighty beast’s will to the Blood-eye Dragon for now. After all, at that point, Heroult was still going to study him for two more months, so the fewer the people who knew about the Blood-eye Dragon, the better.

Therefore, Merlin had already made a plan. After the two months were up, he would change his almighty beast’s will to the Blood-eye Dragon when he had received both the ten batches of Hermani Nourishment Pond materials, as well as Heroult’s Nourishment Pond formula and materials.

With twenty full batches of Nourishment Pond materials, Merlin could rapidly increase the level of his shapeshifting even if he allowed the Blood-eye Dragon to parasitize him from scratch.

In the following month or so, Merlin's life was routine. He would wake up at first light and head to Heroult's castle and only come back in the evening. There were no exceptions.

However, some bad news was received during this period. Some important cities of the Holy Dragon Empire were subjugated and were completely taken over by armed rebellions.

Currently, only the Holy Dragon City was directly under the royal family's control within the Holy Dragon Empire. It seemed that the sun was setting over this empire. It was at its last gasp. At any time, when the Holy Dragon City had descended into chaos as well, the royal family's rule over the Holy Dragon Empire would be thoroughly terminated.

Nonetheless, all this had nothing to do with Merlin. He took care of the manor in an organized manner. Everything was calm. Even so, Merlin thought of finding out Heroult's true identity but had no clues. Heroult's identity was like a riddle.

Still, Heroult was able to hand over the materials for the Hermani Nourishment Pond formula each time. By now, Merlin had obtained all ten batches of the materials.

In the following twenty days or so, Heroult began to give to Merlin his Nourishment Pond formula along with ten batches of materials.

Today, as soon as Merlin entered Brews Castle, he felt that something was wrong.

This was because another stranger was in the castle. This was a lovely young woman with a full figure. Nevertheless, this young lady wore a grave expression and discussed something with Heroult in low tones.

After seeing Merlin come in, the young woman stopped talking and cast a blazing gaze as she sized up Merlin.

Heroult's expression was rather awkward. After he saw Merlin, he said quietly, "Leon, I'm afraid I'll have to go out for some time."

"If you're going out for some time, what about your Nourishment Pond formula and materials that I need?"

Merlin was somewhat surprised. However, he saw that this young woman seemed close to Heroult who also understood Heroult's research of Hosts very well. Therefore, Merlin had no apprehensions about directly expressing his concerns.

Heroult was silent for a moment before he said, "In truth, after a month or so of research, I've completely grasped the various data variations regarding a Host's third-form shifting. What I lack is the aspect of the almighty beast's will. However, the almighty beast's will is difficult to grasp. Only the Host himself can feel it, and others can't clearly grasp it at all. Therefore, this will require a long time of steady research. It's not something that can be completed in one day."

"Naturally, I'll live up to my initial promise. Today, I'll give you the detailed formulation for the Ofu Nourishment Pond, along with ten batches of materials. Consider our agreement fulfilled."

Heroult's decision caused Merlin to become somewhat flabbergasted. Although Heroult spoke casually, Merlin could detect a trace of solemnity from his voice.

Merlin did not know what Heroult had encountered, that he would directly end his agreement with Merlin.

"Curator Heroult, what happened? If I'm needed, I'll surely help as best as I can!"

Merlin knew that something must have happened to Heroult, something very urgent. Otherwise, Heroult would not have hurriedly ended his agreement with Merlin.

"You can't help me for now..."

Curator Heroult's voice was quite despondent. After a pause, he continued, "Leon, I know that you've been investigating my identity secretly, as well as my secrets. In fact, if you have more time, you'll discover certain clues and deduce my identity from them. However, I'll offer you an opportunity. It's true that I'm backed by a massive organization. If you're willing to join us, you'll easily get all the Nourishment Pond formulas you need within this organization. All you need is a certain amount of contribution points."

"A massive organization?"

Merlin fell into deep thought. Previously, he had guessed that Heroult was surely supported by a huge organization. Otherwise, obtaining Nourishment Pond materials would not be so easy.

Merlin also wished to access this channel. If he did not after he left Brews Castle and lost contact with Heroult, would he not be cut off from his stable access of Nourishment Pond materials?

Therefore, Merlin felt a rush of excitement at Heroult's suggestion but he was still cautious as he asked softly, "What organization is this?"

If Heroult belonged to an external organization that had infiltrated the Holy Dragon City, Merlin would have to think twice before joining.

As if he sensed Merlin's misgivings, Heroult laughed as he said, "Phantom! You must not have heard of it. Don't worry, Phantom is not an enemy faction to the Holy Dragon Empire. Conversely, Phantom is an intelligence agency that the royal family relies greatly upon; tasked with finding out all news within the Holy Dragon Empire."

"Phantom?"

Merlin was rather astonished. He did not think that Heroult's identity would be a conductor within the royal family's intelligence agency, which was an impressive status. The Nourishment Pond materials he had given Merlin were all obtained through Phantom.

Chapter 946: Headquarters

"What are the benefits of joining Phantom?"

Merlin hesitated before asking.

Heroult pointed at the young woman and laughed, "That's the reason why I called Lotus here. She's Phantom's Logistics Team's leader."

Lotus glanced at Merlin and said in a cold voice, “All the Nourishment Pond materials you need, including the formula, can be obtained in the Logistics Team! However, you need contribution points. If it weren’t for Deputy Commander Heroult’s recommendation, someone like you who has never been in an intelligence department would never enter the Logistics Team.”

Merlin’s heart moved. He finally knew where the Nourishment Pond materials Heroult gave him came from. It was most likely obtained from Lotus.

Furthermore, Lotus and Heroult had a close relationship. It was not something simple as a superficial superior-subordinate relationship.

However, Merlin did not wish to know the details. He only needed to know how to access the Nourishment Pond materials. Joining Phantom seemed to be a good choice.

After all, even if the Holy Dragon Empire fell apart, the royal family would not fall as long as they had the Holy Dragon City and the head of the Sacred Lion.

Therefore, the royal family did not have to worry about resources for the time being. By relying on the royal family, there was no need to worry about obtaining Nourishment Pond materials.

“Alright, I’ll join Phantom!”

Merlin quickly made a decision to join Phantom. He may have been restricted and not as free as before, but as long as he could get the Nourishment Pond materials, it was worth it even if he was restricted.

“Very good. Lotus, I’ll leave Leon to you.”

It seemed like Heroult would be leaving the Holy Dragon City for a while. Otherwise, he would not introduce Merlin to Lotus.

“Come with me.”

Lotus nodded before saying coldly to Merlin.

Merlin glanced at Heroult who nodded and followed after Lotus without any hesitation. He could not use the mansion's carriage, so he could only follow Lotus to the carriage that was prepared beforehand.

“Team leader Lotus, is Heroult leaving the Holy Dragon City?”

Although Merlin had his guesses, he was not clear on the real reason.

“The Deputy Commander has a secret mission. To obtain contribution points, you need to perform missions. Otherwise, the royal family will not provide the Nourishment Pond materials for no reason.”

Lotus seemed to know Merlin's true purpose in joining Phantom. Nourishment Pond materials and formulae were all provided by the royal family. The power of the royal family was great, and these mere resources were nothing to them.

However, since a reward and penalty system was established, it had to be implemented without hesitation. Contribution points were the most important method. Only with contribution points could one obtain the various resources in Phantom.

“It's somewhat similar to the practices of some major forces in the past.”

Merlin was not surprised. Since the materials were so precious, the royal family could not give them to many people for no reason.

“How do you obtain contribution points? Do we have to do missions too? What tasks does the Logistics Teams usually do?”

Merlin asked many questions in succession which caused Lotus to frown.

“You ask too many questions. You'll naturally learn when you reach Phantom. I'll explain later.”

Then, Lotus leaned on the carriage, closed her eyes, and stopped moving.

Merlin let out a sigh. Seeing Lotus remain silent, he also closed his eyes and quietly waited until the carriage reached Phantom.

After about an hour or so, the carriage gradually stopped. The Holy Dragon City was large, but the carriage spent a full hour's time. It showed that Phantom was located close to the border of the Holy Dragon Empire.

When Merlin and Lotus got off the carriage, Merlin only saw a deserted castle in front of them. It did not seem like there were any figures around.

"This is Phantom?"

Merlin followed Lotus into the dilapidated castle and saw Lotus walking directly to a corner of the living room where there was an old broken vase.

Just as Merlin was wondering, Lotus put her hand into the broken case and seemed to activate a mechanism.

"Rumble."

A huge dark passage immediately opened up in the manor, and a ladder that was seemingly bottomless was revealed at a closer look as if danger lurked below.

Just as Merlin was about to descend, Lotus waved her hand and sneered. "If you go down that path, you'll die. Even full-shifters will be trapped inside!"

Merlin was shocked. This path was a trap?

"Don't be surprised. Phantom is an intelligence department; how can someone easily find the entrance? Those who aren't truly from Phantom will never find the entrance. Even if they find this manor, they'll be misled and enter a dangerous path."

Saying that, Lotus seemed to feel for something in the vase, and another passage soon appeared in the castle. However, Lotus still did not enter this passage.

There was no doubt that this was also a fake path. If one did not pay attention, they would enter the fake channel, and the situation would become very dangerous.

“Rumble.”

When Lotus opened the third path, she finally walked into it. It turned out that the first two paths were both traps and only the third path was the correct one leading to Phantom Headquarters.

“How secretive.”

Merlin secretly nodded. As expected from the royal family’s intelligence department. Those that wanted to find Phantom would suffer a great loss just from the traps arranged at the entrance.

Even if someone was followed into the abandoned dilapidated castle, they would not find the correct path into Phantom Headquarters.

Merlin followed Lotus onto the path. Although it was very dark, Lotus seemed to be very familiar with it. There was no light at all as they walked towards the depths in darkness.

After a short while, Merlin found that there seemed to be an exit ahead, and it was gradually becoming brighter.

“We’ve reached Headquarters! Remember, you’re now a member of our Logistics Team, and the necessary ceremonies must still be carried out. You must first swear allegiance to the royal family. Of course, this oath is only symbolic, but our Logistics Department places great importance on relationships, and we can’t let other teams find any faults.”

Lotus gave Merlin a few words of warning and took him through the channel. A huge underground square appeared in front of them.

The square was divided into many areas and many people came and went constantly which created a busy scene.

“This is Headquarters?”

Merlin watched carefully. From what he could see alone, Phantom Headquarters seemed to have two to three hundred people. There was no sunshine in the underground square, and the lighting depended on colored glass lights on the top of the underground square. The light emitted was very soft and bright, making the entire square shine as if it was daytime.

Chapter 947: Logistics Team

“Headquarters is divided into the Combat Team, Logistics Team, Research Team, and Investigation Team! The Logistics Team and the Research Team stay in the headquarters all year round, while the Combat Team and the Investigation Team perform their tasks outside.”

Lotus explained the headquarters situation to Merlin. Phantom Headquarters comprised of the four teams, and the ones in charge of battles were the Combat Team and the Investigation Team.

As for the Logistics Team and the Research Team, they never faced danger as they always stayed in headquarters. For the Logistics Team, they mainly received all kinds of resources from the royal family. They were quite lax, but they held real authority.

It was no wonder that Heroult recommended Merlin to join the Logistics Team. Merlin’s current state was considered strong as a third-form Host. His parasite was only a mere low-grade almighty beast will, so it would be very dangerous if he went to the Combat Team.

Soon, Lotus and Merlin reached the Logistics Team. The entire Logistics Team did not have many members and only comprised of a dozen people or so. However, most of them were female and they were all slim and charming. Seeing Lotus entering with Merlin, they all had shocked looks on their faces.

“Team leader, this is?”

A woman wearing a large red robe asked while looking at Merlin.

“His name is Leon. From today onwards, he has officially joined our Logistics Team. Belle, go input Leon’s information into our Logistics Team and submit it to headquarters tomorrow.”

As the team leader, Lotus had unquestionable authority in the Logistics Team.

“Understood, team leader. My my, Master Leon, what family did you come from? You’re so young but you have managed to join the Logistics Team directly. Call me Belle. Just ask me if there’s anything you don’t understand!”

Belle charmingly flirted with Merlin, but Merlin turned a blind eye and merely nodded politely.

“Leon, come with me.”

Lotus looked at Merlin coldly. She seemed to have some hostility towards him which Merlin found puzzling. Did it have something to do with Heroult?

Following Lotus to a small room, the smell of her perfume wafted into Merlin’s nose. Although he always disliked strong perfume, he liked faint and light scents. However, he did not find the smell of Lotus’s rich perfume objectionable and felt that it had a strange lure instead.

“Leon, Heroult left for a secret mission. It’s very dangerous and we can’t be sure if he’ll return. Before he left, he specifically told me to bring you into Phantom, but I really don’t understand. You’re just an experiment to him, so why does he care so much about you? However, I’ll carry out what Heroult entrusted me to do in any case, but whether or not you can gain contribution points in Phantom will depend on your own skill. I won’t be helping you. Do you understand?”

After listening to Lotus’s words, Merlin finally understood. Lotus did have an unknown relationship with Heroult. As Deputy Commander, Heroult had to perform a dangerous task, which showed that this mission was very important.

Lotus was merely displacing her anger at Heroult for bringing danger to Merlin.

“How do I earn contribution points? How can I exchange contribution points for resources?” Merlin asked in a low voice. This was his greatest concern.

“The Logistics Team is the lowest with only ten contribution points per month. If something goes wrong, a deduction of contribution points is possible. The team with the highest contribution points is the Combat Team. They get a hefty amount of contribution points for each task they perform but the death rate is also very high. If you enter the Combat Team, you’re seeking your own death!”

Lotus said that coldly without paying heed to Merlin’s feelings. In her opinion, Merlin’s current strength of being a third-form shifter, but his almighty beast’s grade was too low. He would be at the bottom rung even if he went to the Combat Team.

“Alright, you can ask Belle for the details.”

Lotus waved her hand and let Merlin leave.

Merlin could not get any specific information from Lotus, so he went straight to Belle. This charming woman clearly regarded him as the child of a prominent aristocrat in Bay City.

It seems that it was not easy to join the Logistics Team. Without a prominent status and a strong background, it was impossible to enter the Logistics Team.

“Miss Belle,” Merlin called out calmly.

“Master Leon, how may I help you?”

Belle’s eyes brightened. She was well endowed and her skin was very fair with a very rich scent of perfume. However, it was not as sensual as the smell on Lotus’s body, so Merlin disliked it instead.

“Miss Belle, I’d like to know about contribution points and exchanging them for resources.”

“Oh? Contribution points you say... Aristocrats like you usually come to Phantom for resources. After all, the various resources in Phantom are directly provided by the royal family.”

Merlin's heart moved. It was no wonder many aristocrats wanted to enter Phantom. It turned out that all these resources were provided by the royal family.

Although the royal family of the Holy Dragon Empire was no longer able to control the entire empire due to bloodline issues, their connections were something that no other force could compete against. Over the centuries, the various resources accumulated by the royal family were countless.

Even if it was the Nourishment Pond formula materials that Merlin needed, they were not even worth mentioning to the royal family. It was also because of these huge resources that there were still many aristocrats that supported the royal family in the Holy Dragon City, despite the confusion of war in the empire.

"It's no wonder Heroult could produce 20 portions of Nourishment Pond materials in one fell swoop. It turns out that all these materials were provided by the royal family."

Many people still regarded the royal family as an unconquerable giant. With the royal family's collection, it was not necessary to purchase materials from thousands of miles away like some business guilds do. The stock in the royal family's treasure was almost inexhaustible.

"How many contribution points are needed to exchange a set of these materials?"

Merlin listed some of the ingredients in the Hermani Nourishment Pond formula and showed it to Belle.

Belle gave it a cursory glance and hesitated for a moment before she said, "This is a Nourishment Pond formula, right? There are some Hosts in Phantom. There are none in the Logistics Team, but there are many in the Combat Team. They also often exchange Nourishment Pond materials. These materials of yours can be exchanged with only ten contribution points. Even if there are some inconsistencies, the estimation won't be too far off."

"Only ten contribution points are needed?"

Merlin's heart was filled with joy. He did not expect one set of materials to only cost ten contribution points. Although he hid a portion of the materials, the final amount most likely would not exceed too much.

“Of course. In fact, the materials the royal family provides are almost one-tenth of the market price, or perhaps even lower. However, they can only be exchanged using contribution points. This is the royal family’s way of winning the hearts of the people. As for resources, the royal family doesn’t have any lack of them.”

Belle was very calm at Merlin’s surprise. It seemed that this was not the first time she experienced such a situation. Many people who came to Phantom for the first time were shocked by how ‘cheap’ the exchange was.

Chapter 948: Suppressing an Almighty Beast’s Will!

Next, Merlin’s assignment was to look at logistics resources records but he took the job seriously and recorded every resource received in logistics.

From there, Merlin could roughly guess how rich the resources the royal family gave Phantom were.

“The amount the royal family had accumulated over hundreds of years isn’t ordinary at all!”

Seeing the various resources exchanged from the records, Merlin sighed emotionally. No matter how weak the royal family was, they were still a giant. These resources alone would be enough to stabilize the entire Holy Dragon City.

The Holy Dragon City was the core of the entire Holy Dragon Empire. As long as the Holy Dragon City remained safe, the royal family would always hold the greatest power.

...

Merlin stayed in Phantom till the evening before leaving and returning to the manor.

The manor was calm as usual, and everything seemed in an orderly manner.

Only in the crude laboratory in the basement were there bouts of noises.

“It’s finally ready.”

Merlin looked at the murky water in the Nourishment Pond and revealed a smile. He had been busy for most of the night preparing the Hermani formula.

The Nourishment Pond this time was prepared for Merlin to replace the almighty beast's will. It was extremely tough to change almighty beast's will because it was in the Host's Awareness.

If he lost the almighty beast's will, he would lose the ability to transform and become mediocre. This was the real reason why many people did not dare to change it.

If they failed, they would lose everything and be left with nothing!

However, Merlin was not afraid. His Mind Power and Illusory World could suppress the almighty beast's will. It would be easy even if he wanted to erase the Two-headed Pterolycus' will.

"First, wipe out the Two-headed Pterolycus' will!"

The Illusory World in Merlin's Awareness suddenly expanded. The Two-headed Pterolycus seemed to sense danger and struggled frantically, causing Merlin's body to suddenly morph.

However, it was useless. Merlin's colossal Mind Power had suppressed it firmly, and the Two-headed Pterolycus' will was immediately crushed by the pressure, and gradually dissipated in the Awareness.

Merlin's morphed body also swiftly turned back to normal. He could no longer shapeshift.

"The previous portion of the Nourishment Pond was wasted."

Merlin frowned. Changing the almighty beast's will was too much trouble, and the loss was too large. He had achieved the third-form for his Two-headed Pterolycus, but now there was nothing left.

It was not surprising that even though Hosts knew powerful almighty beasts' wills could greatly enhance their strength, the number of people who would try to change their almighty beast's will was very few.

As for those who had merged almighty beasts' wills, it was even rarer and could be counted on one's fingers. It was not something that an ordinary Host could achieve.

Merlin still did not understand what merging almighty beasts' wills were, so he did not dare to act rashly. He could only choose to replace a powerful almighty beast's will first before slowly studying it later.

"It's time to find the Blood-eye Dragon's will..."

Merlin thought about the attitude of the Blood-eye Dragon from before. It had completely looked down on Merlin. High-tier almighty beast wills like that were extremely prideful.

Unfortunately, Merlin was not an ordinary person and did not need the almighty beast's will to be willing. As long as he chose the almighty beast's will, he could forcibly integrate it.

"Swoosh."

Merlin once again entered the space in the Bead of Infamy and went straight to the third layer.

"Boom."

Within the third layer of the Bead of Infamy, the Blood-eye Dragon sensed Merlin's arrival.

"You again? You chose the Two-headed Pterolycus that has no potential. I won't be parasitized in your body. You better leave before I swallow you up!"

The Blood-eye Dragon was as fierce as usual.

However, Merlin did not care and smiled instead. "I've erased the Two-headed Pterolycus' will. I'm here today to take you, Blood-eye Dragon, a high-tier almighty beast's will!"

“Hm? Did you give up the Two-headed Pterolycus? It seems your foolishness isn’t beyond redemption. However, I won’t follow you. You’re not worthy of being my Host. Begone.”

The Blood-eye Dragon was still disdainful.

“You don’t have a choice!”

Merlin did not leave and instead controlled the Bead of Infamy. Using the power of the Bead of Infamy, he instantly pulled the Blood-eye Dragon into his Awareness.

This was the role of the Bead of Infamy. However, once entering the Awareness, it would be a direct confrontation between the Host and the almighty beast’s will. The Bead of Infamy would no longer play a role.

“Roar...”

The Blood-eye Dragon immediately let out a huge roar after entering the Awareness, and a storm seemed to break out in Merlin’s Awareness.

“Foolish human. How dare you try to force the integration? You’ll pay for this!”

There did not seem to be anything in the Awareness that could stop the Blood-eye Dragon. It opened its mouth wide to swallow Merlin’s consciousness.

“Suppress!”

Merlin did not dare to relax before a powerful high-tier almighty beast’s will. If he was careless, it would cause some damage to his Awareness.

Therefore, Merlin directly used the power of the Illusory World, especially the natural order, which was Merlin’s strongest power now. In his Awareness, even a legendary almighty beast’s will was unable to compete with the power of the natural order in the Illusory World.

“Boom.”

Therefore, Merlin's Illusory World severely suppressed the Blood-eye Dragon, rendering it unable to struggle.

Even the Blood-eye Dragon had a strong feeling that Merlin could easily wipe out its will if he so wished.

"Who the hell are you? Ordinary people don't have Awareness as strong as yours."

The Blood-eye Dragon struggled continuously to no avail. Even if the Blood-eye Dragon was ten times stronger than it was now, it could not break free from the suppression of the Illusory World.

"I'm just a Host. However, Blood-eye Dragon, you've also felt that I'm not an ordinary Host. Being parasitized in my body isn't a humiliation to you. Besides, your will would become even stronger when my grade increases in the future!"

Merlin believed that the Blood-eye Dragon was wise and would be able to choose under this scenario.

Agree, and it would be parasitized by Merlin. Disagree, and Merlin would completely wipe out the Blood-eye Dragon's will. The Blood-eye Dragon had a very strong premonition that it would happen.

"I can feel that you have an otherworldly aura. Perhaps, you've obtained a forbidden item. However, do I really have a choice? Unless I want to be wiped out... Very well. To be able to choose a Host is also the best outcome for almighty beast wills like us."

The Blood-eye Dragon had finally agreed to be parasitized!

Chapter 949: The Gap Between Shifters!

The Blood-eye Dragon had finally agreed to be parasitized!

Merlin took a deep breath. This was the strongest force he had encountered since he entered this world. High-tier almighty beasts were extremely powerful, and they were the strongest besides the rare top-level almighty beast bloodlines.

There were some legendary sacred beast bloodlines above top-level bloodlines but they were only legends, and no one has heard of anyone possessing such a bloodline. The royal family's Sacred Lion bloodline was not a sacred beast bloodline. It was influenced by the Sacred Lion bloodline and possessed a portion of the Sacred Lion beast's power, so it could be regarded as a top-level bloodline.

It was precisely because of this top-level bloodline that the Holy Dragon royal family was able to build such a huge empire that had been passed on for hundreds of years.

“Alright, let's get started.”

Merlin's naked body looked thin but contained a powerful force. Although the Two-headed Pterolycus' will was directly wiped out by Merlin, the increased physical quality he had obtained over a long period was not affected.

However, this mere physical quality could not compare with the physical quality after shapeshifting.

“Roar...”

When Merlin finished speaking, the Blood-eye Dragon gave a large roar in Merlin's Awareness. It immediately turned into a crimson light, like a bloody meteor, and mercilessly blasted into Merlin's Awareness.

“Boom.”

Merlin's Awareness shook severely, going blank. As a high-tier almighty beast, the Blood-eye Dragon was extremely powerful. Although it had willingly integrated with Merlin, if Merlin's Awareness could not suppress the Blood-eye Dragon, there would be an accident sooner or later.

The moment the Blood-eye Dragon had completely integrated into Merlin's Awareness, Merlin immediately felt his entire body grow hot as if something was about to split apart. A powerful force in his body ran rampant.

“Ah...”

Even Merlin could not help but let out a groan.

“Crash.”

Following Merlin’s cry, his skin rapidly cracked like old bark. Fresh blood swiftly filled Merlin’s body, dying him in a red hue.

“Morph!”

Merlin growled. He knew that this was the first-form of shapeshifting. Therefore, he jumped into the murky Nourishment Pond without any hesitation.

“Bubble-bubble.”

In the Nourishment Pond, bubbles burst one by one and reappeared again, like boiling water. Moreover, Merlin’s fresh blood quickly seeped into the Nourishment Pond, turning it blood red and causing it to look like a pool of blood. It was extremely horrifying.

However, Merlin knew that the first-form was rapidly completing. As a high-tier almighty beast, the nourishment the Blood-eye Dragon needed even in the first-form was terrifying.

“Not enough. More!”

Merlin suddenly stood up. At this point, his hands had already half turned into thick, short legs. This was the Blood-eye Dragon first-form. However, the Nourishment Pond that Merlin prepared was not enough, so he needed to prepare a second Nourishment Pond.

Although he had not prepared it, he had all the materials beforehand, so the preparation became much simpler. It only took some time before the second Nourishment Pond was completed.

Merlin’s body began to rapidly absorb the nutrients in the Nourishment Pond, and his shapeshifting speed also increased. First, it was his hands that were turned into thick, short legs that contained a strong power.

Then, Merlin's body swelled quickly until he was more than eight meters tall. He looked like a small hill. His form after shapeshifting was much more shocking than Count Stanwin's Deinosuchus bloodline.

However, Merlin knew that this was nothing at all. If he had fully shifted into the Blood-eye Dragon, his body would be nearly a hundred meters in length and thirty meters in height. Merlin could be called a huge monster in that body. At that time, he would be able to easily destroy a small hill with one foot, and cities would be annihilated if he used his power casually.

This was the terrifying power of a high-tier almighty beast. Of course, he needed to be a full-shifter, and completely transform into the Blood-eye Dragon. Presently, Merlin was nowhere near becoming a full-shifter.

Currently, Merlin had only reached the first-form where his hands turned into short and stout legs. His feet did not seem to have sharp claws as he did for the Two-headed Pterolycus' first-form.

The only advantage the first-form gave Merlin was unparalleled power! As a Vipera Dragon, it was naturally extremely powerful. Just the first-form already endowed Merlin with unimaginable power.

"Let's see."

Merlin took a deep breath and stepped down with his huge body.

"Boom."

Merlin had only taken a casual step but the entire basement started to shake. Even the manor above was shaking. Merlin could hear the voices of some maids who thought that it was an earthquake panicking in the manor.

"What terrible power. It's comparable to the Giant Tribe in the Void Zone!"

Merlin was slightly surprised. A high-tier almighty beast's power had far exceeded his imagination. Since this Almighty Beast World only had one huge space, it was completely different from the Void Zone which had numerous dimensions.

However, the Almighty Beast World was not weak. As a Latitude Cosmos, the Almighty Beast was naturally not weak. Even if it could not be compared with the Void Zone, the difference was not that large.

The space in this world was much stronger. Even the Legends in the Void Zone might only be able to tear a small part of the space, and perhaps some would be unable to do so at all.

As for power, Merlin had seen the Giant Tribe's strength in the Void Zone. The giants in the Giant Tribe were born with great power, and even babies could lift extremely heavy objects.

The Blood-eye Dragon was also very powerful. Merlin had only tried to step lightly earlier but even the thickest rampart would end up getting trampled. Furthermore, this was only the Blood-eye Dragon's first-form.

"Such power! It's only the first-form but it can almost completely crush the Two-headed Pterolycus!"

Merlin looked at the skin on his body. Although he had not shapeshifted completely, the skin that morphed became tough as keratin. Not even the Two-headed Pterolycus' sharp claws would be able to tear the tough skin.

With Merlin's current strength, he could easily destroy the third-form Two-headed Pterolycus. This was the gap between the grades of a bloodline. It was like a chasm that could not be crossed.

However, the first-form was far from enough. Merlin looked at the Nourishment Pond materials prepared in the laboratory. There were still eight portions of Hermani formula materials as well as ten portions of the Nourishment Pond formula that Heroult had given.

Merlin would not put these precious materials to waste. He saved these materials to see just what grade he could increase his Blood-eye Dragon in one go.

Thus, Merlin turned around and frantically started to prepare the Nourishment Pond again.

Chapter 950: Death Notice I

Cedar City had been occupied by the powerful rebel army, and the leader of this rebel army was called Orsato.

Orsato was considered strong but he was not a full-shifter. He was at the peak of the fourth-form, and his bloodline was the mid-tier almighty beast – the Golden Python. Among the mid-tier almighty beasts, it was considered very powerful and was not inferior to Count Stanwin's Deinosuchus bloodline. It might be even more powerful.

Orsato took advantage of the chaos in the Holy Dragon Empire to quickly gather a group of people to capture several cities. With the rapid growth of his forces, he soon led an extremely powerful rebel army.

At this point, Orsato was standing on the ramparts of Cedar City. In the skies were special reconnaissance scouts comprised of soldiers with flying almighty beast bloodlines. Scouts like them had a higher status in the Python Army.

“Swoosh.”

A reconnaissance soldier in the sky flew down to the ramparts and said respectfully, “Honorable General, we've found a merchant group ahead.”

“A merchant group?”

Orsato's eyes brightened. His army had spent a lot of money and captured several cities, but there was not much that was replenished. Their supplies were almost exhausted.

Merchant groups happened to be very rich. Occasionally posing as bandits was nothing new for these rebels.

“Did you see how many people were in that merchant group?”

“There are around five hundred people. Three hundred of them were wearing armor and riding horses. They’re heavy knights and are likely hired by the merchant group.”

The scouts were very detailed in their reconnaissance. Orsato hesitated for a moment before asking, “Did you see the flags they used? Most famous mercenaries have flags, and that’s even more so for powerful mercenaries.”

Orsato was very cautious. Mercenaries hired by large merchant groups were often not ordinary, and were usually a standing army. Furthermore, the Python Army only had a few strong rebels and were no match for them. Orsato himself had failed to become a full-shifter, and could not be compared with the most powerful rebel armies, so he naturally had to be careful.

“Honorable General, we saw a huge red crocodile.”

“A red crocodile? Could it be the Deinosuchus?”

Countless thoughts flashed in Orsato’s mind. He had heard of the Deinosuchus bloodline before. It was also a mid-tier almighty beast bloodline, similar to his Golden Python bloodline.

Moreover, the Deinosuchus bloodline rarely appeared on the continent. In the Holy Dragon Empire, the relatively powerful one was the Hilderbrandt clan from Boulder City.

Particularly, Count Stanwin of the Hilderbrandt clan was a fourth-form shifter and was not inferior to Orsato. If Boulder City had not colluded with the barbarians, some difficulties might have risen there.

“It should be Count Stanwin. Hehe, rumor has it that Count Stanwin’s Deinosuchus bloodline is extremely strong. This is a good time to find out if it’s true. He’s here to escort the merchant group, so he shouldn’t know about our situation and thinks that Cedar City hasn’t fallen. Alright, we’ll let them in and then capture them all in one go!”

Orsato had made the decision. Although his twenty thousand strong Python Army soldiers did not undergo strict training, they had all experienced battles and were all elite.

Of course, Stanwin’s cavalry was superior. However, when they entered the city and were ambushed in advance, then even elite cavalry would be useless.

“Pass the order to all members of the Python Army. Hide well and let this merchant group into the city. Make sure the residents of Cedar City cooperate or kill them all!”

A cruel smile appeared on Orsato’s face.

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On the wide road, a merchant group slowly moved along the continent. This merchant group seemed to have many goods, so the perimeter was protected by heavily armed heavy knights.

“Count Stanwin, Cedar City is just ahead. At present, Cedar City is still in the hands of the empire, so we can enter the city and have a good rest to recuperate. After all, we’ve been traveling for half a month now.”

The one who spoke was the head of the merchant group. He had paid a large sum to hire Count Stanwin along with the powerful mercenaries.

At first, some people had doubts. After all, although Count Stanwin’s mercenaries looked strong and powerful, who knew how they would fare in actual combat? The current Holy Dragon Empire was not peaceful, and they had to deal with bandits, refugees, and even some rebels along the way. Weaker mercenaries would not be able to protect the merchant group at all, and Count Stanwin’s mercenaries had only just been established.

After a final discussion, it was agreed upon to hire Count Stanwin. Along the way, Count Stanwin and his three hundred heavy knights had driven away countless bandits, and the merchant group was safely escorted to their destination. With a full inventory of goods, they were ready to return to the Holy Dragon City.

As for Count Stanwin and the mercenaries, the merchant group was very satisfied.

Count Stanwin did not listen to the merchant group head’s suggestion but instead, sent several heavy knights to investigate the situation in Cedar City. He had to be careful regarding everything.

“Mr. Gir, let’s stop for now and rest. We’ll enter after the scouts have ensured that nothing has changed in Cedar City.”

Count Stanwin was still very cautious, preferring to reach Cedar City later than take the risk now.

Although the merchant group’s head, Mr. Gir, felt that Count Stanwin was being too cautious, he nodded as there was no harm to the suggestion. “Alright, take a look first.”

After a long moment, the scouts returned and reported to Count Stanwin, “There doesn’t seem to be anything unusual in Cedar City. The imperial flag is still flying on the towers, and many people are going back and forth. There’s no sign of a rebel army occupying the city.”

“Haha, Count Stanwin, you worry too much. There’s nothing wrong with Cedar City. Let’s go. We should hurry and get to Cedar City so we can rest earlier.”

Mr. Gir glanced behind him. Many people were already exhausted. Not everyone was able to travel for half a month like Count Stanwin and still be in high spirits.

Count Stanwin also believed in his heavy knights. Since there were no problems during the scouting, he nodded and said, “Alright, everyone has worked hard. We’ll go to Cedar City and rest. After half a month, we’ll reach the Holy Dragon City.”

Then, under Count Stanwin’s escort and his three hundred heavy guards, the entire group quickly moved toward the nearby Cedar City.