

W. Secret 951

Chapter 951: Death Notice II

The city walls of Cedar City were still draped with the flag of the Holy Dragon Empire, and soldiers were patrolling on top of the wall. People were moving in and out of the city gate. Nothing seemed out of the ordinary.

The merchant group slowly approached from a distance. After showing their identities, they headed directly toward the city center. However, Count Stanwin remained vigilant. He looked at the people behind the city gate and did not spot anything amiss, so he finally let down his guard.

“Very well, we’ll rest for a night in Cedar City. Tomorrow morning, we’ll depart for Holy Dragon City.”

“Boom.”

Suddenly, everyone turned their heads and realized that, unbeknownst to them, the massive city gate had been closed. To top it off, the soldiers who were guarding the city appeared to be watching the merchant group cautiously.

“This isn’t good. Leave Cedar City!”

Count Stanwin was the first to detect the anomaly. Immediately, he wielded his fourth-form shapeshifting and transformed into a ferocious Deinosuchus. He turned around and was about to force open the city gate.

“Count Stanwin, I heard that the Deinosuchus beast is incredibly powerful but my Golden Python is also immensely potent. I wonder, which one of us will prevail?”

A fourth-form shifter emerged from the group of soldiers guarding the city wall. He had shapeshifted into a massive python over thirty meters long. The python’s scales were covered in a golden shimmer, just like real gold.

“Golden Python? You’re Orsato. You’ve conquered Cedar City?”

Count Stanwin’s face changed dramatically. He was quite familiar with Orsato, who was a rebel army leader with the Golden Python bloodline. Now that Orsato had conquered Cedar City, he merely wanted to trick the merchant group into entering Cedar City.

“Count Stanwin, don’t be in such a hurry to leave. It was a great effort for us to trick you into the city. How can we allow you to leave so easily?”

Orsato appeared to be full of confidence. At the same time, the Python Army who was in the city swarmed out and surrounded the merchant group. As for Count Stanwin’s heavy knights, they could not wield their full abilities in such a small enclosed space. Suddenly, chaos ensued, resulting in several heavy knights falling to the ground.

“You can’t stop me!”

Count Stanwin growled in rage. Without hesitation, he rushed toward Orsato. He knew that only by breaking down the city gate, the merchants and the three hundred knights would be able to escape.

“Good, very good. Let me see how powerful the Deinosuchus beast is!”

Orsato was not the least intimidated. His huge body swayed like a whip before lashing out at Count Stanwin.

“Bam.”

Both opponents collided head-on. Count Stanwin’s enormous Deinosuchus body was shrouded in a layer of crimson glow and became even more formidable than before.

“Get lost!”

Count Stanwin roared. His solid body slammed against the Golden Python, and Orsato felt slightly overpowered and retreated a distance away.

“Good, good, good. It’s not surprising this is the Deinosuchus. However, this is merely the beginning. Deadly Constriction!”

Orsato was also a fourth-form shifter, not at all inferior to Count Stanwin. His Golden Python possessed incredible strength. Currently, Orsato had mobilized every last ounce of strength in every inch of his long body. As quick as a golden flash of light, he had constricted Count Stanwin’s movement.

“Crack.”

The Golden Python’s constriction was truly fearsome. Despite the Deinosuchus body’s impenetrable skin, he seemed unable to withstand the Golden Python’s constriction.

Count Stanwin’s body was being crushed slowly. The Deinosuchus could detonate a huge amount of power if stimulated with enough blood, but now that he was trapped in the Golden Python’s deadly constriction, it was impossible. He could not think of a way to tear apart the Golden Python’s body.

Thus, Count Stanwin began to lose, and gradually, every bone was being crushed by the Golden Python, bit by bit.

“Haha, so what if it’s the Deinosuchus bloodline? Die!”

Orsato’s eyes were filled with an insane streak. There had been more than one mid-tier almighty beast bloodline who died by his hand. He was the true top contender of all the fourth-form shifters among the mid-tier almighty beasts. Even Count Stanwin could not match up to him.

Sensing the gradual loss of life force from his body, Count Stanwin’s mind was filled only with Leon. Leon was his hope, and the heir of his bloodline.

“Leon, I can’t accompany you any more...”

Count Stanwin’s eyes turned bloodshot as he stared straight at Orsato. Although Count Stanwin was dying, that look gave Orsato a chill.

“Full-shift, Kiss of Death!”

Count Stanwin roared. Immediately, all the blood from his body gushed out and formed a crimson flame that seemed to be burning.

At the same time, the last part of Count Stanwin which was left unchanged – his forehead – finally began to shapeshift. This was forced shifting, which in return consumed his life force.

Normally, forced shifting did not guarantee any increase in ability. However, a peak fourth-form existence such as Count Stanwin would surely be able to achieve full-shift through forced shifting and bloodline incineration, even if it was just for a split second.

Count Stanwin’s vicious mouth curved into a smile.

“Snap.”

The Kiss of Death bit the Golden Python. There was a spray of blood and tissue. The Golden Python was almost completely severed. If that happened, Orsato would either be killed or sustain a grievous injury.

“Pity…”

However, a forced shifting was extremely short-lived, basically just a momentary triumph. Hence, a small portion of the Kiss of Death had only been wielded when Count Stanwin’s blood was rapidly incinerated and turned bright red. Finally, with a “tsss”, it sizzled, and the Deinosuchus body fell dead onto the ground.

Count Stanwin had lost all life force. He was dead!

“Honorable General, how are you faring?”

Orsato’s men had finally defeated the three hundred heavy knights and came to his rescue. Looking at his exhausted appearance, they were slightly anxious.

“Count Stanwin’s Deinosuchus bloodline was indeed fearsome. I almost died alongside him!”

Orsato’s face displayed a sneer but in his heart, he was extremely shaken. Previously, no matter how powerful his enemy, Orsato usually fought with confidence and emerged victorious.

This time, although he ultimately won the fight, the sensation of brushing so closely against death, unleashed by Count Stanwin at the final moment, was something he would never forget.

“Go, rip Count Stanwin’s body into eight and feed him to the dogs!”

Orsato’s tone was filled with cruelty. In the end, Count Stanwin gave him a heavy blow. Most probably, he would have to recuperate for a few months.

Thinking of that, Orsato felt a surge of anger in his heart. Since he could not vent it out, he would have to take it out on Count Stanwin’s body instead.

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“Splash.”

From the Nourishment Pond, an incomparably huge beast emerged.

“The third-form shift. The Blood-eye Dragon from the high-tier bloodlines is truly powerful. The natural order of this Latitude Cosmos is completely different from the Void Zone. Here, the destructive power is relatively limited. Nevertheless, my current strength should be enough to smash a mountain.”

This almighty beast was none other than Merlin in shapeshifting state. He had already brewed ten batches of the Hermani Nourishment Pond from the materials he had obtained. All of them had been used up.

He also had absorbed the ten Nourishment Pond formula given by Heroult, called the Solbar formula. However, even after so many Nourishment Pond formulas, Merlin had only managed to achieve the third-form of the Blood-eye Dragon.

Nevertheless, the Blood-eye Dragon was a high-tier almighty beast, so its third-form was sufficient to kill many other almighty beast bloodlines.

“Master Leon, there’s someone outside from Bay City Chamber of Commerce asking for you. It seems that he brings news about the Honorable Count.”

Suddenly, outside the basement door, Merlin heard the old butler’s voice.

Merlin was brewing the Nourishment Pond in the laboratory, thus, no one was allowed to disturb him except for important matters.

“News about Father? Please ask him to wait in the living room. I’ll come up immediately.”

Merlin had not heard anything from Count Stanwin for three months. Back then, Count Stanwin had mentioned that protecting the merchant group should only take three months, and they would return then.

However, after three months had passed, Count Stanwin still did not return. No one knew what had happened.

Merlin was not too worried. Not only did Count Stanwin have three hundred heavy knights to protect him but he also possessed the bloodline of a mid-tier almighty beast and had achieved peak fourth-form shifter.

Unless they had encountered someone close to a full-shifter or an onslaught of multiple shifters of the same level, otherwise, they could simply escape without injury.

With that, Merlin retracted his shapeshift form. He selected a set of black aristocratic clothes, exited the basement, and headed directly to the living room.

There was an old man with grayish-white hair in the living room. He held an elegant cane and fidgeted anxiously in the chair while waiting.

Merlin walked into the living room and asked curiously, “Who are you?”

“Master Leon, I’m Bartamath from Bay City Chamber of Commerce. We’ve just received news that Count Stanwin, who was protecting our merchant group, as well as his heavy knights and the merchants in the group, had perished. No one survived...”

“Crash.”

There was a crisp sound as the glass of water in Merlin’s hand was instantly crushed into dust. From Merlin’s body, a chilling aura began to rise.

Chapter 952: Behind the Calm

“I understand.”

After a long pause, Merlin replied impassively. Merlin’s reaction stunned Bartamanth. Merlin was Count Stanwin’s only son, yet his reaction was not at all like a person who had just received his father’s death notice.

Nevertheless, Bartamanth was just a messenger. Now that Merlin had acknowledged the news, Bartamanth did not linger and left the manor.

“Master, the Honorable Count...”

The butler trembled all over. Count Stanwin was dead. This was equivalent to the collapse of the entire clan. Whether or not this manor could continue to be maintained, it was difficult to say.

“Prepare the carriage, I’m heading out.”

Merlin’s expression remained calm. Even his tone did not show the slightest inflection. However, those from the Void Zone who knew Merlin well would know that this was his most terrifying state.

The butler was about to say something but stopped. Finally, he did not say anything and went to prepare a carriage for Merlin. Merlin shrugged on a coat, climbed into the carriage, and headed directly for Phantom Headquarters.

“Father...”

Inside the carriage, Merlin whispered. He thought about Old Wilson and various memories of Count Stanwin. Count Stanwin and Old Wilson were very similar to one another. The only difference was Count Stanwin was more powerful than Old Wilson, and also showed more love for Merlin.

Merlin did not bother asking Bartamanth who had killed Count Stanwin. For a matter of such gravity, Merlin was certain that Phantom, the intelligence agency of the Holy Dragon royal family, would know more details. Therefore, Merlin immediately headed directly for Phantom Headquarters.

The carriage soon arrived at Phantom Headquarters. Merlin went to the Logistic Team. Belle was slightly surprised as she asked, “Leon, why did you come today?”

Today was Leon’s rest day, so he did not have to come to Phantom Headquarters. Compared to the other departments, only the Logistic Team had such a rotation system. For this reason, many of the other Teams were extremely envious of them.

“I want to check on some intelligence, should I ask the Investigation Team?”

Merlin replied briefly.

“Check on some intelligence?”

Belle looked up and was about to ask for more details when she saw the murderous glint behind Merlin’s deceptively calm eyes. Suddenly, this genial-looking young man seemed terrifying.

“You can ask for Linda from the Investigation Team. She and I are very close. As long as the information isn’t too confidential, it should be fine.”

Belle's voice seemed to tremble slightly. She did not know why this usually genial-looking young man would undergo such a major change today.

Merlin hesitated and then nodded. "Thank you."

Thus, Belle accompanied Merlin to the Investigation Team. Here, there were all sorts of information from the entire Holy Dragon Empire. Although the Investigation Team was small, their intelligence covered the entire Holy Dragon Empire. For the royal family to know what was going on everywhere, they relied almost fully on the Investigation Team.

Naturally, the Investigation Team was filled with people. Fortunately, with Belle's help, they had located a woman who was dressed very provocatively. Nonetheless, she was quite good-looking, so her choice of dressing was not revolting.

"Linda, this is Leon from the Logistics Team. He would like to check on some intelligence."

Linda looked up. When she spotted Belle and Merlin, the corners of her lips tugged into a faint smile. "Of course, Sister Belle. The next time your Logistics Team receive something good, you must tell me."

"Of course."

Belle paused and said to Merlin, "What do you want to check on, ask away."

Merlin's eyes narrowed to almost a thin line while his expression turned incredibly severe. Calmly, he said, "Some time ago, the Deinosuchus Mercenary Group founded by Count Stanwin was escorting a group of merchants but the entire group perished. I need details, every last one, and the more detailed, the better!"

Merlin's tone was not at all agitated, and the speed of his speech was very laid back as though he was talking about something insignificant that had nothing to do with him.

"Count Stanwin? Leon, that's your..."

Beside him, Belle's eyes widened. As a member of the Logistics Team and as a member of Phantom, no one was a simpleton. Merlin knew that even the weakest Logistics Team was

composed of elites. Placed anywhere, these people would be considered prodigies or icons, and were perhaps even nobler than some of the aristocrats.

This was the Phantom Organization. The most feared faction under the Holy Dragon royal family's control.

Therefore, Belle also knew Merlin's identity, which was Count Stanwin's son. However, she did not know how Merlin had managed to form connections with Deputy Commander Heroult and was ultimately arranged to join the Logistics Team by Deputy Commander Heroult.

"Can you find it?"

Merlin waved his hand without allowing Belle to continue her sentence. Nevertheless, Belle finally understood why Merlin came to the headquarters today and the reason for the scary glint in his eyes.

His father was dead. He was killed. Belle could not imagine how Merlin could remain so calm. However, the calmer he was, the more intimidating he appeared.

"Of course, this isn't considered a trivial matter. After all, Count Stanwin is a peak fourth-form contender with a mid-tier almighty beast bloodline. They went to Cedar City and encountered the Python Army. The leader of this Python Army is called Orsato. Orsato has the Python bloodline and he is slightly more powerful than Count Stanwin. He had already invaded Cedar City a long time ago but deceived the merchant group to enter the city. Finally, the merchant group was besieged and annihilated."

Linda gave all the details of Count Stanwin's death to Merlin. The information was so detailed that it was as if she was present on the battlefield. This also caused a jolt in Merlin's heart. The royal family's most mysterious faction, Phantom, was truly extraordinary. Since he was in the Logistics Team, he was still far away from the core groups such as the Investigation Team and the Combat Team. Hence, he did not know how fearsome Phantom was.

Now, seeing the detailed information that had been gathered by Phantom in just a few days, he finally witnessed Phantom's incredible prowess.

"Python Army, Orsato, I got it! Belle, let's go to the Mission Hall."

Merlin nodded to Linda in appreciation, and walked directly toward the Mission Hall.

“Mission Hall? Leon, have you gone crazy? That is a place that only the Investigation Team and the Combat Team would go. Those missions aren’t simple. In fact, how many missions issued by Phantom would be simple?”

Belle was stunned. She did not expect that Merlin would want to go to the Mission Hall. That was a place reserved for crazy people like the Investigation Team and the Combat Team.

Merlin did not explain nor did his footsteps faltered. He headed directly toward the Mission Hall ahead.

“Leon, you...”

Belle stomped her foot but finally followed him. She wanted to see what mission would Merlin accept in the Mission Hall. She did not believe that Merlin had gone crazy.

Chapter 953: Murderous Intentions

There were not many people in the Mission Hall. Although Phantom was the most powerful organization controlled by the royal family, its total headcount had never been very high as this was an organization of specialized elites.

The people who were coming and going wore fierce expressions on their faces. Upon spotting Merlin and Belle, they merely cast them a casual, uncaring glance. Nevertheless, some recognized Belle. After all, regardless of the Combat Team, the Intelligence Team or any other team, they had to go to Logistics to claim their reward or redeem their contribution points.

Upon arriving at the Mission Hall, Merlin glanced around, and immediately sauntered up to a middle-aged man who was buried deep in some kind of writing.

“I’d like to accept a mission.”

Merlin inquired calmly.

“There are many missions. Choose it yourself.”

The man replied without raising his head.

“Is there any mission relating to the Python Army or the Python Army leader Orsato?”

Merlin glanced at the massive pile of missions but he did not bother to search. Instead, he asked in a deep voice.

“The Python Army? Of course, there are. They’re one of the rebel armies, which is the most frequent type of missions issued by the royal family. The Python Army is considered relatively powerful. Their leader, Orsato, has achieved peak fourth-form shifter and is very close to becoming an almighty full-shifter. If you can destroy the Python Army and disband it, you’ll receive five hundred contribution points. However, if you only manage to kill Orsato, then you’ll only receive three hundred contribution points.”

“Three hundred contribution points?”

Merlin considered it carefully. In the Logistics Team, he only secured ten contribution points each month. Typically, ten contribution points would enable him to redeem one batch of materials for the Hermani Nourishment Pond formula.

Whereas killing Orsato would earn him three hundred contribution points. It appeared that the royal family was considerably concerned about the rebel armies, especially someone like Orsato, who was a fourth-form shifter and could develop into a full-shifter at any time. The royal family must be extremely wary of him, thus, the number of contribution points awarded was very generous.

“Very well. I accept the Python Army mission!”

“Huh? You alone? Which team are you from?”

At this moment, the middle-aged man finally lifted his head, revealing a high forehead and a slightly reddened nose. He looked quite comical.

“Logistics Team, Leon!”

Merlin replied coolly.

“Logistics Team? Interesting. A Logistics Team member is accepting a mission to annihilate a powerful rebel army...”

The funny-looking man gazed at Merlin with an intrigued expression.

“Why? Can’t someone from the Logistics Team accept a mission?”

Merlin countered.

In Phantom, any team could accept a mission. Even the research fanatics in the Research Team could accept a mission if they wished.

However, everyone knew that Logistics was the most “privileged” team. There was almost no danger associated with it. Many noble youths would join the Logistics Team as soon as they arrive in Phantom, just to collect gold. Since when have someone from the Logistics Team go on a mission?

However, this stereotype was about to be broken by Merlin.

“Of course not, the Logistics Team can also accept missions. Since you’re so sure about this, I’ll record it down. Once you kill Orsato or dismantle the Python Army, the contribution points will be awarded to you.”

The funny-looking middle-aged man explained briefly.

“How would you know that I’m the one who completed the task, and not someone else?”

Merlin felt that there should be a recorder of some sort.

“Never doubt Phantom’s intelligence abilities!”

The middle-aged man's expression grew stern. This startled Merlin but after some thoughts, he recalled that Phantom was able to collect such detailed information about Count Stanwin's death within a few days. Their intelligence gathering abilities were indeed impressive.

With that, Merlin nodded and left.

Truth was, the entire Mission Hall had already burst into a discussion. It was not because Merlin was exceptionally powerful or special, but merely the fact that someone from the Logistics Team had accepted a mission. This was a significant development in Phantom.

"Interesting. Leon from the Logistics Team should be watched closely."

In a corner of the Mission Hall, a middle-aged man cradling a liquor bottle. He looked drunk as he spoke softly. Beside him was a shadow-like person, who silently disappeared from the Mission Hall.

"Leon, are you really going to Cedar City to complete this mission?"

Walking behind Merlin, Belle quickly caught up and asked in astonishment. Not only was this the first time for someone from the Logistics Team to accept a mission but it was also a highly dangerous mission. Even the lunatics from the Investigation Team and the Combat Team would not dare to accept such a dangerous mission. The Python Army had many strong contenders. Once caught in their siege, the outcome would be devastating.

Not to mention, Orsato was a peak fourth-form shifter who was close to becoming a full-shifter. Most probably, other than a real full-shifter, no one would be able to defeat him. If Merlin were to go to Cedar City, it would be a death wish!

Although she had not known Merlin for a long time, she still did not wish for Merlin to die a pointless death.

Merlin halted his steps. In a deep voice, he said, "Please help me inform team leader Lotus. Don't worry, I'll be careful. I won't act recklessly."

With that, Merlin did not pay any further attention to Belle and left Phantom Headquarters.

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In the manor's laboratory, Merlin did not continue to brew the Nourishment Pond. He had joined Phantom Headquarters for three months, so he had thirty contribution points, but he did not exchange them for any Nourishment Pond materials.

Thirty contribution points could only redeem three sets of materials at most. For Merlin, three sets of materials were merely a drop in a bucket. They were of inconsequential value.

"Father, don't worry, Orsato won't be able to get away."

In Merlin's mind, he could still see Count Stanwin's well-built figure. Every time he appeared before Merlin, his expression was kind and affectionate.

However, now, Count Stanwin was dead. He was killed by Orsato, and according to intelligence reports, Count Stanwin's body was mutilated by Orsato and fed to the dogs.

"Rumble rumble."

Merlin was struggling to control his enormous Mind Power. The Illusory World threatened to leak out. At the same time, lightning and thunder flashed outside as if sensing something amiss.

In the end, Merlin managed to suppress the Illusory World. If he was discovered by the will of the Almighty Beast world at this time, he would be struck dead, and even his consciousness would completely dissipate. That meant that he would be irrevocably dead.

Currently, Merlin's Illusory World was recovering very slowly. It had only regained partial strength, so it was still incapable of defying the will of the Almighty Beast world.

Nevertheless, dealing with Orsato alone did not require mobilizing the Illusory World.

"It's time to leave!"

Merlin stood up. At this moment, his eyes were filled with a bone-chilling murderous glint.

Chapter 954: Fighting the Golden Python I

On a craggy road, a troop of horses hurtled forward.

It had been half a month since Merlin left Holy Dragon City. Every day, he hastened on his journey. Now, he could finally see Cedar City which was not far up ahead.

“I’m approaching Cedar City. I just don’t know if Orsato is still inside.”

Merlin growled to himself. Naturally, his current target was Orsato.

Merlin reached the top of a hill. This spot overlooked the entire Cedar City. It was merely a small town, not a prosperous city. Nonetheless, the Python Army could only occupy such a small town for now.

“Hmm? There’s someone?”

Merlin narrowed his eyes. His vision had spotted a few young men and women outside Cedar City, who seemed to be observing Cedar City as they suspiciously discussed something.

“It looks like I’m not the only enemy of the Python Army!”

A cold smirk gradually grew over Merlin’s lips, following which he released his horse while he sped down the slope, alone, toward Cedar City.

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In a grove outside of Cedar City, three young men and women had gathered, peering at Cedar City from time to time anxiously.

“Mary, with just the three of us, it’s dangerous to go into Cedar City and rescue your sister. Orsato is very formidable, and we...”

One of the young men appeared rather hesitant. The three of them were planning to rescue someone in Cedar City.

“Otara, if you don’t wish to go, you may leave now. No matter what, I must rescue my sister!”

This woman named Mary spoke in determined tones. Without liberating her sister, she would not leave Cedar City.

The other two men exchanged a glance before finally clenching their jaws. “Then we’ll give it a shot. If something goes wrong, we’ll withdraw immediately. After all, we mustn’t get trapped in Cedar City!”

Otara spoke through gritted teeth.

“Alright, we’ll go in now.”

Mary needed help too. Wanting to save her sister by herself was no different from a lunatic’s plan.

Therefore, the three of them disguised themselves as ordinary people, and walked out from the grove, heading toward Cedar City. They did not notice at all the figure behind them who was trailing them at a distance.

After entering Cedar City, Mary seemed to have figured out the situation in Cedar City in advance. Thus, she said softly, “As Orsato’s bloodline is the Golden Python, he requires an obscene number of women each month. Moreover, he’s built a place where he keeps the numerous women he’s captured. It’s in the west of the city. The security there is relatively lax, so we’ll go now.”

When Mary mentioned Orsato, she clenched her jaw. Her younger sister was also brought to Cedar City in such a manner.

Orsato liked his women indeed. Every day, he would have a few women waiting upon him. Nevertheless, his bloodline was the Golden Python, which was lascivious by nature, so a few women were nothing much.

Just as always, Orsato went to this castle in the afternoon where he had imprisoned many women.

The castle held no less than over three hundred and eighty women. The Python Army had captured these women from each city it had seized, to be offered to Orsato.

Orsato now stood before a few dozen women. In one sweep of his gaze, he instantly took a liking to a few of them who had full figures and gorgeous features. Thus, he offhandedly pointed at these few women and said, "Follow me."

These women exchanged a glance but dared not resist. Orsato was cruel indeed. He would immediately kill the women who had disobeyed him, and feed their corpses to the wild dogs. He was that heartless.

Therefore, these women dared not go against his command.

Orsato was feeling pleased and was about to leave with these women when his face suddenly changed as he barked out a cold laugh. "You want to assassinate me with just the few of you?"

"Roar..."

Orsato immediately shapeshifted, and his massive body viciously smacked a few trees in the distance.

"Crack."

These trees were snapped by Orsato directly. Three figures leaped out pathetically, wearing distressed expressions. It was Mary and the rest who had planned a rescue.

"Oh no, we've been noticed! Mary, let's flee quickly!"

Otara's heart jolted. Orsato's casual blow could contain such might. They were all third-form shifters but even though they had exceptional mid-tier almighty beast bloodlines, the disparity between Orsato and them was too huge.

"It's too late to run! Orsato, I'm here to rescue my sister. Since you've discovered us, there's nothing to do but fight. Shapeshift!"

Following that, Mary unleashed a mighty snarl. She instantly transformed into a colossal fox covered in blood vessels, which looked quite a beauty. As for the other two men, their almighty beast bloodline was the same – a black Giant Wolf King.

Giant Wolves were merely a low-tier bloodline but a Giant Wolf King could reach the mid-tier bloodline. All three of them had mid-tier almighty beast bloodlines, which surprised Orsato somewhat.

"They all have mid-tier almighty beast bloodlines. Since when were there so many mid-tier almighty beast bloodlines?"

These three who popped out from nowhere possessed mid-tier almighty beast bloodlines as if such bloodlines were of little value. However, it was not easy to possess a mid-tier almighty beast bloodline. One must at least be a descendant of some aristocratic lord.

Nevertheless, after the Holy Dragon Empire had descended into chaos, many lords and aristocrats had died in the scuffle. Naturally, the later generations of these bloodlines fell into abjection. Therefore, it appeared as if mid-tier almighty beast bloodlines could pop up at any time.

"Kill!"

The three of them followed Mary's furious cry. The two Giant Wolf Kings were the fastest, dashing directly toward Orsato like lightning. Furthermore, the gigantic fox behind them lightly swayed its tail, and a peculiar perfume drifted into Orsato's nose, causing him to feel dizzy.

"Poison?"

Orsato's expression finally turned serious. Poisonous almighty beasts were difficult to deal with. It was not that their strength was immense but the invisible poison was very troublesome. Even if one had defeated his opponent, one might die from being unable to neutralize the poison.

“Stamp!”

Orsato gave a deafening roar. His snake body, thick as a bucket, jerked forward abruptly. The entire castle seemed to tremble as the massive snake swept forward.

“Bang bang.”

Orsato violently whipped the two Giant Wolf Kings. No matter how fast they were, they could not dodge the blows from Orsato's snake body. They were beaten back, and could not get up due to their heavy injuries.

Mary's face paled. Orsato's battle powers had far exceeded her imagination, and hence, she unleashed her poison more frantically.

Orsato felt that his dizziness had grown more intense, and fury flashed in his eyes as he laughed icily. “You're asking for it!”

“Swoosh.”

Orsato's speed was incredible. There was only a golden flash of light, and he was in front of Mary. Just as before, the snake's tail whipped forward viciously.

This time, he had used his full strength to whip at Mary. She would soon be smashed to a pulp.

Mary's eyes revealed her despair. She could only watch helplessly as Orsato's tail swung forward ruthlessly.

“Roar...”

Suddenly, there was a thunderous cry as if an ancient almighty beast had awakened. A dark shadow had emerged behind Orsato at an unknown time, causing Orsato to feel overwhelmed by acute uneasiness.

Chapter 955: Fighting the Golden Python II

“Who’s there?”

Orsato felt an intense sense of threat, so he immediately gave up on killing Mary. His immense body quickly lashed backward. The Golden Python he had shifted into was most agile.

“Bang.”

Force met force but Orsato’s heavy blow seemed to have met an incomparably sturdy wall, having no effect at all.

By the time he turned back, he found that behind him was an almighty beast of unparalleled size, whose body exuded a powerful force, faintly suppressive in terms of its bloodline.

“A high-tier almighty beast bloodline?”

Orsato was widely knowledgeable and immediately recognized that Merlin had a high-tier almighty beast bloodline. Orsato was astounded to his core. This was a high-tier almighty beast bloodline. Even among those leaders of the rebel armies who had become full-shifters, none of them had a high-tier almighty beast bloodline.

If an existence with high-tier almighty beast bloodline reached the point of full-shift, that could truly be called terrifying.

“How is this high-tier almighty beast bloodline possible? Who are you really?”

Orsato wore a look of precaution. Although he could tell that his opponent was merely a third-form shifter, the fearsomeness of high-tier almighty beast bloodlines had always existed in legends. He had never experienced it for himself, so naturally, he was extremely wary.

“Count Stanwin was my father!”

Merlin’s voice sounded calm. He had followed Mary and the rest into Cedar City and watched them being exposed, right up until Orsato’s attack. He had hoped to catch Orsato off guard.

However, it was merely a surprise move for Orsato’s Golden Python was extremely agile. Merlin’s sneak attack did not give him much advantage.

Nonetheless, since this ambush had failed, he would defeat Orsato head-on. Merlin was intending to kill Orsato.

“Boom.”

Merlin raised his massive claws. The Blood-eye Dragon had claws as well, vigorous and robust ones, which were frightening.

“Pow.”

Merlin’s swipe threw the Golden Python to one side, crashing heavily into the ground. Orsato was rather incredulous. Strength was his Golden Python’s forte, but now in this match of force, he could not even withstand one blow from Merlin, who was merely a third-form shifter.

“This high-tier bloodline is powerful indeed. Even so, it’s not so easy to kill me. You’ll end up like your father. I’ll rip your body into eight pieces and throw it to the wild dogs for food!”

A savage look appeared on Orsato’s face, following which his colossal body turned into a golden ray that sped toward Merlin.

“Deadly Constriction!”

The golden ray that Orsato had turned into swiftly wound around Merlin’s large frame. This was the Golden Python’s strongest technique. Back then, Count Stanwin was killed by Deadly Constriction.

“Dragon’s Roar!”

Merlin unleashed a booming roar. Although the Blood-eye Dragon was only a Vipera Dragon, it was equipped with some characteristics of the sacred-level almighty beast such as the Dragon’s Roar. With one roar, Orsato felt his mind sinking as he became limp and powerless as if he was about to fall apart. He could not help but feel dumbstruck.

As for Merlin’s Blood-eye Dragon, it seized this opportunity to explode with immense strength. The claws grabbed the Golden Python and ruthlessly tore it apart.

“Rip.”

The Golden Python’s Deadly Constriction was formidable, and most tricks would be useless in getting out of the struggle. However, Merlin had utilized the high-tier almighty beast’s special technique to escape the Golden Python’s hold and even injured the Golden Python grievously.

“Die!”

Merlin’s gigantic mass surged forward as he lifted a huge paw, stamping down furiously.

“Boom.”

The entire castle floor was quaking, and cracks even appeared over the walls as if on the verge of collapse. This frightened Mary so much that she dashed into the castle, wanting to save her younger sister.

“D*mn it, how is it so strong?”

It was the first time Orsato had felt so sullen. No matter what tricks he had used, he could not handle Merlin. In this current situation, Merlin would crush Orsato completely. Even though Merlin was only a mere third-form shifter, he had come infinitely close to those full-shift contenders with mid-tier bloodlines.

Merlin began galloping once again. His height had reached eight meters, and he looked like a small hill. As he raced forward at full strength, the entire ground was shaking.

“Flee, flee! Corner it and kill it, you all must kill this monster!”

Orsato was finally afraid. Merlin’s Blood-eye Dragon would completely crush his Golden Python. His only advantage over Merlin might just be his speed.

Nonetheless, his speed was not that fast either, and he was caught firmly in Merlin’s jaws.

“Trying to escape? Orsato, you’ll never escape!”

Merlin’s gigantic body immediately gave chase wildly, wrecking all obstacles in its path.

“Rumble rumble rumble.”

Orsato purposefully wriggled into some of the back rooms, but Merlin did not have such an agile body. His Blood-eye Dragon crashed through any part of the castle directly and destroyed anything in its path with brute force. Faced with his powerful claws, even a castle could be easily demolished.

“D*mn it, Python Army, kill him, kill this monster!”

Orsato was fleeing madly. Scars had emerged over his body, leaving behind bloodstains. He was already significantly injured, so he frantically shouted to his Python Army.

“Honorable General, what’s going on?”

Soon, the members of the Python Army under Orsato’s command had arrived, but when they spotted Merlin’s terrifying body, they revealed looks of dread.

“Go on, go and stop him.”

Orsato still maintained his authority. Therefore, although the members of the Python Army were rather frightened, they still shapeshifted and rushed out. These members, especially Orsato’s personal guards, were second-form shifters at least. Although they had low-tier bloodlines, there were many of them. Holding off Merlin momentarily was not a problem.

Thus, when he saw that his subordinates had rushed out, Orsato no longer delayed and immediately fled. He dared not get too close to Merlin. Otherwise, that feeling of constant danger would drive him insane.

Ever since Orsato had established the Python Army, though he had not won every battle, he was never as pathetic as he was now, nearly dying in Merlin's hands.

“Roar...”

Merlin did not hesitate at all, immediately wielding his roar. The thunderous roar could be heard by all in Cedar City. Just the sound of it alone was enough to strike fear into those with low-tier almighty beast bloodlines.

Moreover, Merlin was equipped with such powerful strength. After the Dragon's Roar, his body immediately dashed straight ahead. The crowd of personal guards could not block him at all.

“D*mn it, this guy is Count Stanwin's son. He's so powerful... Hold on, didn't Count Stanwin have the Deinosuchus bloodline? His son ought to have inherited the Deinosuchus bloodline but this person before us possesses a high-tier bloodline. Is he a Host?”

At this moment, a flabbergasted look came into Orsato's eyes. A Host who dared to merge with a high-tier almighty beast's will was certainly a lunatic.

“A lunatic, a lunatic, this guy's a lunatic. Does he dare to host a high-tier almighty beast's will? Sooner or later he'd be devoured by the almighty beast's will. I'd better escape, the further the better!”

After Orsato understood Merlin's identity as a Host, he did not hesitate in the slightest. He was even willing to abandon the Python Army, immediately escaping from the city. He wanted to distance himself from this “lunatic” Merlin.

Chapter 956: Hunt 1

“He’s escaped?”

Merlin charged forward recklessly, just like an ancient almighty beast, crushing all of the guards. Currently, a shadow was cast over the hearts of these guards even as they watched Merlin.

With Merlin’s frightening destructive power, he could easily wipe out a city.

“You can’t run!”

Merlin’s eyes narrowed slightly, following which his legs coiled powerfully. His massive body instantly shot out with no concern for anything. No matter what was in front, Merlin barged forward. There was nothing that could stop him.

This violent force that gave chase was incomparably astonishing. After this battle, the Python Army could be considered to be defeated. Even Orsato had fled. The Python Army immediately fell to pieces.

“Sister, how are you?”

Mary, who had rather bold nerves, finally rescued a young girl who seemed to be breathing her last as she appeared to be in a poor state. This girl was not doing so great mentally, and fortunately, there were no significant issues.

“That person is so powerful. Who’s that?”

Mary mumbled softly. She had only heard Orsato mentioning “Count Stanwin”, so this person must be linked to Count Stanwin.

“Sister, let’s go. We’ll leave this place while Cedar City is still in chaos.”

Mary shot a long, hard look at a distant point. That figure was now deeply imprinted into her mind.

...

“Rumble.”

The earth trembled as a lake was instantly smashed by an almighty beast of unparalleled magnitude. The wildlife within the lake was turned into mincemeat, and the surface of the lake was filled with a thick, bloody stench.

“You lunatic. You’ve been hunting me down for twenty-eight days. How long will you keep this up?”

A gigantic Golden Python suddenly sprang out of the lake in one swift motion. Its eyes were bloodshot and filled with endless fury. This Golden Python was, of course, Orsato who had fled from Cedar City.

Based on his advantage in terms of speed, Orsato thought that he could escape Merlin’s grasp. However, he did not expect that his opponent would pursue him so madly, stopping at nothing. Moreover, the regenerative powers of the Blood-eye Dragon were terrifying as well. It could go on without any rest. If it were hungry, it would swallow an entire lake directly to maintain its formidable fighting strength.

This was a true ancient almighty beast, fearsome to the extreme. Therefore, Orsato could not shake off Merlin. He was nearly captured by Merlin a few times. With great difficulty, he had summoned the courage to confront Merlin, but ended up with an incomparably miserable outcome – he nearly died at Merlin’s hands.

Thus, that courage to confront Merlin subsequently vanished without a trace.

“Swoosh.”

Orsato once again slipped out of Merlin’s grasp, swiftly fleeing into the distant mountain woods. Nonetheless, he felt an unprecedented level of dejection, not knowing when days like these would finally end. Being hunted down for a thousand miles was an experience he was unwilling to go through again.

However, there was no other option but to run. The Blood-eye Dragon hot on his heels was too frightening. Even though Merlin was merely a third-form shifter, he was powerful to a perverse extent. Other than those true full-shifters, no one was a match for Merlin.

“Rumble rumble.”

A colossal almighty beast raced out from the mountain woods. It was Merlin, who cast a glance forward. He could still vaguely make out the Golden Python’s figure.

After chasing for so many days, he still had not slain Orsato. This was rather troublesome for Merlin. The Golden Python’s speed was greater than his. Furthermore, the Blood-eye Dragon could only shapeshift into the third-form for now, so some of the Blood-eye Dragon’s unique, natural abilities were not yet unleashed. Therefore, he could only resort to the simplest method – to continue giving chase.

As for giving up, this was something Merlin had never considered.

Even so, Orsato’s manner indicated that he would not hold on for long. Almighty beasts were formidable, but the disparity between different grades of bloodlines was still immense. The Golden Python’s recovery was far inferior to the Blood-eye Dragon’s, so after many days of relentless pursuit, the Golden Python was exhausted to the core.

By continuing the chase, Orsato would be caught by Merlin sooner or later thanks to his growing exhaustion.

Therefore, Merlin did not delay further. His gigantic body instantly started galloping. The entire mountain forest trembled under his thudding steps, causing a huge disturbance.

One day, two days... One month!

Orsato who had transformed into the Golden Python no longer wished to run. He could feel the exhaustion of the bloodline’s power within his body. Despite the almighty beast’s power, it had its limits.

Usually, Orsato would not be fearful at all, but Merlin was trailing him too closely. Orsato did not even have the chance to eat. Therefore, during this period, he was practically holding on through sheer will.

“This won’t do. I definitely can’t go on running like this. I must think of a plan.”

As Orsato rapidly fled forward, he tried to come up with a plan. During this period, he had been slithering deeper into the dense mountain woods. The denser or larger the forest was, the better.

He wanted to rely on the mountain woods' complicated terrain to hinder Merlin's pursuit. However, after some time of testing this out, he had discovered that though this would slow Merlin down initially, Merlin would give chase once more. In truth, Orsato's speed in the mountain woods was diminishing too.

Therefore, after traversing the forest for a very long time, Orsato came up with a new idea.

"I can't continue escaping through the mountain forest. I must lure that freak to some other place. It's best if a powerful existence who's a full-shifter can get involved."

At this thought, Orsato's eyes brightened. It was true. Currently, only contenders who were full-shifters could handle the Blood-eye Dragon chasing after him.

"That's right, the Blackbat Militia! Isn't he Count Stanwin's son? Hehe, Boulder City has been seized by the Blackbat Militia, and General Blackbat himself is a full-shifter. Although the barbarians had left, a full-shifting contender like him should be enough to deal with that freak."

Orsato felt that this plan was increasingly reliable. The Blackbat Militia had taken over Boulder City, so they would surely have paid extra attention to Count Stanwin. At this point, if Count Stanwin's son barged into Boulder City, it would surely rouse the Blackbat Militia's anger.

This was Orsato's plan. At worst, he could count on the Blackbat Militia temporarily, then think of a plan to escape. However, he must first slip out of Merlin's pursuit for sure. Otherwise, he might die in Merlin's hands.

With this in mind, Orsato clenched his jaw and abruptly switched direction, heading away from the unending swathe of mountain woods as he fled.

"Huh? He's changed direction?"

Merlin noticed that Orsato had changed direction, so he drew in a deep breath, and immediately followed behind without any hesitation, speeding away from the mountain forest.

Chapter 957: Hunt 2

Orsato was as quick as lightning throughout the entire journey. When he pushed on at full speed, all one could see was a blur. Besides that, Orsato no longer went through remote areas but sped along with all his might on the main road.

This went against Merlin's expectations. On the road, his massive frame was too eye-catching but if he had reversed his shifted state, he would be unable to catch up to Orsato.

This was a problem indeed, but merely a small one.

"Trying to lure me into the crowds?"

Merlin immediately discerned Orsato's intentions. Nonetheless, once they joined the crowds, Merlin would indeed be attacked, but would Orsato not suffer a similar fate?

Therefore, the danger faced by both parties was the same.

"Bong bong bong."

In the nearest city to their left, someone had already noticed the commotion outside the city, instantly sounding the alarm. Many contenders started to shapeshift.

However, Orsato was too fast. Moreover, he was a peak fourth-form shifter – who could stop him? Therefore, he swiftly entered the city, and occasionally checked upon Merlin's movements.

They could not stop Orsato, but Merlin's size alone was enough to overwhelm them with terror. Thus, this small city did not even dare to obstruct Merlin, allowing the Blood-eye Dragon to rush into the city, knocking down the city walls, making his way through as if there were no obstacles.

“D*mn it, these cowardly fools.”

When Orsato noticed this, he could not stop himself from cursing. If someone could stop Merlin, then he could escape further. If this happened a few times, he might be free from Merlin’s pursuit.

Nonetheless, his plan had fallen through completely. The inhabitants of this small city had almighty beast bloodlines – mid-tier almighty beast bloodlines at best. Most of them were second-form shifters, and even third-form shifters were very rare. Thus, after seeing Merlin’s shapeshifting, with such a terrifying bulk that emanated such a formidable force, who would dare to stop him? It would be a suicide mission. This was why, even after Merlin rushed into the city, no one stopped him.

Orsato understood that these tiny cities would be no threat to Merlin, so he could only go to Boulder City. He had previously received news that the headquarters of the Blackbat Militia was in Boulder City. Blackbat who was a full-shifter was sure to be in Boulder City too.

Merlin kept on chasing behind Orsato, ceaselessly in pursuit. Gradually, he noticed that the surrounding environment was somewhat familiar as they flitted past his mind incessantly.

“Hold on, this direction... Boulder City?”

A flash of realization lit up Merlin’s mind. He finally understood the destination of Orsato’s escape. This direction would lead straight to Boulder City, where Merlin had possessed Leon after first arriving at the Almighty Beast World.

Boulder City was presently occupied by the Blackbat Militia, and the Blackbat Militia’s leader, Blackbat, was a full-shifting contender. As Orsato was speeding off in this direction, his objective could not be any clearer.

“Blackbat...”

Merlin mumbled softly to himself. Boulder City had been the territory of his father Count Stanwin back then. It was because of the Blackbat Militia’s acts of devastation that Count Stanwin had no choice but to turn his back against his home and bring Merlin and the rest to Holy Dragon City.

“The legendary high-tier almighty beast could easily destroy a city, being the overlord of almighty beasts... How powerful is a full-shifter?”

An odd smile tugged at the corner of Merlin’s lips. He did not slacken his pace at all but instead, increased his speed in chasing after Orsato.

As more time passed, Orsato could feel himself weakening. His speed was much slower than before, and he could even sense the intense danger closing behind him. He knew that Merlin had not given up on killing him.

“D*mn it, hurry up a little. I’m almost at Boulder City!”

Orsato began to burn with irritation. He could already see towering ramparts in front. This was Boulder City but Merlin’s figure behind him was fast approaching.

“Just hurry a little more...”

Orsato did not stop praying while simultaneously using all his strength to disregard those thick ramparts, leaping forward in one move.

“Swish.”

In one leap, he had made it into Boulder City. The strange thing was, Boulder City had spotted him and Merlin long ago. After all, one of them was chasing after the other, which caused quite a disturbance. Nonetheless, there were no movements in Boulder City.

“Boulder City!”

Merlin drew in a deep breath. He was already so close to Orsato. As Orsato made that leap, Merlin’s gigantic body released a mighty roar.

“Roar...”

The deafening Dragon's Roar reverberated throughout Boulder City. As Merlin had given such an unexpected roar after Orsato had fled for such a long time, especially when he was already weary to his bones, Merlin's roar immediately caused Orsato to fall to the ground.

"Bang."

Merlin instantly used the most brutal method to enter Boulder City. The ramparts that looked so solid and sturdy were so fragile in Merlin's eyes. He easily broke down the walls and entered the city.

"Orsato, you can't run anymore!"

Merlin took large strides as his immense body ran toward Orsato who was on the ground.

Orsato's eyes were filled with a despairing look as he cried out, "Blackbat, this person is Count Stanwin's son, the true master of Boulder City. Can you still act so indifferently?"

"Of course not. Orsato, as someone from the Python Army, you dare to enter my Boulder City without permission, only to lure this person in. No matter what your motives are, you must die!"

Suddenly, a terrifying, savage presence erupted, just like a genuine ancient almighty beast. A gigantic shadow appeared in the sky.

Merlin looked up and saw a gigantic bat over thirty meters wide, whose wings practically blocked the sky when it extended. This was a true almighty beast. Regardless of the body or the mind, everything had shapeshifted, transforming into an ancient almighty beast that could unleash frightening powers.

This was a full-shifter, able to wield the bloodline's strength to its greatest limits. The bloodline's power exhibited by first to fourth-form shifters was relatively limited.

Only by becoming a full-shifter could only explode with the greatest power contained within the bloodline!

This massive bat in the sky was the true ruler of Boulder City, the leader of the Blackbat Militia – Blackbat who had achieved full-shifting.

Merlin narrowed his eyes slightly but did not decelerate in his movements at all. His colossal body immediately hurtled toward Orsato.

“Die!”

The Blood-eye Dragon gave a hoarse roar. Merlin raised one foot up high, following which he stamped it viciously.

“Bang.”

There was a resounding crash. Orsato’s Golden Python twisted and struggled constantly, but it was of no use. That large body was crushed into a mangled pulp under the Blood-eye Dragon’s foot, snapping into two in the middle.

This Python Army’s leader of brilliant fame, Orsato, the fourth-form shifter, finally died by Merlin’s hands.

Merlin had avenged Count Stanwin at last. Moreover, he had also completed the mission he had taken from Phantom. Nevertheless, he was suddenly in a hazardous situation.

This was because, up in the sky, there was a stronger, more troublesome Blackbat, brimming with dangerous force!

Chapter 958: An Almighty Beast Full-Shifter!

The gigantic black bat in the sky glared coldly at Merlin.

“That idiot Orsato. Did he think I won’t see through his purpose in luring you here? D*mn that fool. Since you’re Count Stanwin’s son, barging into Boulder City again is a display of contempt toward me! I’m more curious about the Blood-eye Dragon’s will you’ve merged with. I wonder how you suppress it?”

Blackbat's words caused Merlin to reappraise this powerful existence who was a full-shifter. Any full-shifting existence, even if they shifted into a low-tier almighty beast, was very powerful.

This was because only through a full-shift, one could unleash the complete strength contained within the bloodline. Without achieving a full-shift, the bloodline's power that was unleashed would not even be a tenth of the full amount.

Consequently, only full-shifters could be called a contender who could rule over an area by force as this was a power that was two levels above the rest.

Blackbat could tell that Merlin was a Host in one glance, and he knew that Merlin's current shifted form was the Blood-eye Dragon. Merlin was not puzzled about this. After all, the Blood-eye Dragon was a high-tier almighty beast bloodline. Those who were widely knowledgeable would usually have a deeper impression of it.

"Stamp."

Merlin snarled furiously, following which his body immediately bolted out of Boulder City. Nonetheless, Blackbat was not an ordinary shifter. He would not be stunned by the Dragon's Roar Merlin had unleashed.

"You can't run away..."

Blackbat spread both his wings and flapped them lightly. Like a dark cloud in the sky, he swiftly chased after Merlin.

Merlin raised his head and spotted the mass of shadow in the sky. He knew that escape was unlikely, so he could only fight.

"Full-shifter... I want to see how powerful you are."

Merlin drew in a deep breath and stopped fleeing. He had some understanding of Blackbat. This sort of almighty beast bloodline was not that formidable, being merely a low-tier bloodline.

Nonetheless, once an almighty beast of a low-tier bloodline had achieved a full-shift, they would be rather terrifying. In particular, after full-shifting, most almighty beasts could wield their natural abilities.

“Oh, a high-tier almighty beast bloodline. However, I didn’t share your courage. Back then, I didn’t choose parasitism but continued to train the Blackbat bloodline. Haven’t I become a full-shifter now? You’ll never know how powerful a full-shifter can be.”

Blackbat did not seem dismayed over his low-tier almighty beast bloodline. Conversely, he took pride in it. Even among those who chose a mid-tier almighty beast bloodline, how many of them could become a full-shifter?

Therefore, if one could reach a full-shift, one was then a contender. Even toward a high-tier almighty beast bloodline like Merlin’s, Blackbat could treat it in a patronizing manner. This was his level of confidence.

“Hoo...”

A hurricane appeared as the black bat’s wings flapped lightly. Following that, its massive bulk swooped down directly toward Merlin.

Although Blackbat had never been an almighty beast that excelled in strength, mainly using its agility and soundwave attacks, a full-shifted Blackbat could unleash the total strength of the bloodline. Therefore, compared to Merlin who could not even exhibit a tenth of the power from the Blood-eye Dragon’s bloodline, naturally, Blackbat had nothing to fear.

Merlin sucked in a gulp of air. He could sense that the Blood-eye Dragon’s will in his Awareness was enraged.

“A mere, puny bat dares to look down upon the great Blood-eye Dragon?”

The Blood-eye Dragon’s will was ultimately very haughty, but it knew that Merlin was merely a third-shifter at the moment. Although it was furious, it could not do anything.

“Whiz.”

Merlin's thick tail violently lashed toward the sky. This was a stiff blow. He wanted to see how powerful Blackbat truly was.

"Bang."

There was a heavy crash as two almighty beasts ruthlessly collided. There were no flashy tricks here for this was a brute force against another brute force. Merlin's tail whipped Blackbat's body, and he felt that his opponent was like a huge mountain.

Nonetheless, Merlin was not dejected. Conversely, he gained some hope from this. Although Merlin's opponent had gained the upper hand in this match of force, he was not undefeatable. The disparity between Merlin and a full-shifter was not as immense as Merlin had thought.

Moreover, Blackbat was somewhat astonished as well. This was the first time he faced a high-tier almighty beast. Although Merlin was merely a third-form shifter, his strength was impressive to an extent that fourth-form shifters with mid-tier almighty beast bloodlines could not compare to.

Therefore, his full-shifter's strength only lent him a slight advantage. It should be known that the tail was not Merlin's strongest strike. Merlin still had not unleashed his greatest force.

"A high-tier almighty beast is extraordinary indeed."

While Blackbat was still reeling from his shock, Merlin had already made his move. His Blood-eye Dragon roared ferociously to the sky, gathering energy from its entire body.

"Crush!"

Merlin's tremendous body was like a hefty grinder as he lunged directly toward Blackbat. Perhaps this was the only aspect in which Merlin could surpass Blackbat. After all, a high-tier almighty beast was much stronger than a low-tier almighty beast. If Merlin could become a fourth-form shifter, his current strength would be much greater. He would not need to stake everything in one move as he was doing now.

"Whoosh."

As if he sensed the fearsomeness of Merlin's "crushing", Blackbat chose to dodge for the first time. His true forte was his speed and soundwaves. If he did not wish to resort to brute force, Merlin could do nothing about it.

Furthermore, Blackbat had wings. When he flew into the sky, Merlin was helpless.

The only exception was if Merlin could attain a full-shift. Nonetheless, a full-shift of a high-tier almighty beast would be frightening to an inconceivable extent. Blackbat would not even dare to come near and would have already escaped without leaving any trace.

"Screech screech screech screech."

Suddenly, a strange sound rang in Merlin's brain. This sound was pervasive and inescapable. After it entered Merlin's body, it stirred up Merlin's blood, causing it to surge in madness as if it would explode at any time.

At that point, no matter how formidable Merlin's physical defenses were, he would be blown up into bloody pieces.

"A natural ability – soundwave attacks?"

Merlin looked up and saw that Blackbat was circling above his head. His opponent had finally demonstrated a natural ability that only full-shifters could wield. Blackbat's natural ability was his very mysterious soundwave attacks. They penetrated every pore and were impossible to guard against.

"I can't go on like this."

Merlin pondered this matter. Compared to a full-shifted almighty beast, he was still somewhat lacking. Of course, if he could reach the fourth-form, this disparity would be rapidly reduced or he could even overcome it.

This was the fortitude of top-tier almighty beasts. Nonetheless, the difference in ability between both sides was not something Merlin's third-form shifting could overcome.

Even so, Merlin's expression showed no trace of fear.

"A full-shifter... So what? Die!"

Finally, Merlin mobilized his Mind Power. His Illusory World was now in tatters. He would not dare to display it in the Almighty Beast World at all. Otherwise, the will of the Almighty Beast World would descend.

Therefore, Merlin could only utilize what little Mind Power he was left with. As the foremost Mind Power Master in his previous life, a powerful existence who had started to materialize illusions as reality, he was formidable to be scary even just using his Mind Power!

At once, the vast Mind Power wildly surged from Merlin's Awareness toward Blackbat who was circling ceaselessly in the sky. The smile on his opponent's face seemed to stop like time itself, coming to an abrupt end!

Chapter 959: Returning to the Manor

In a corner of Boulder City, two ordinary-looking men dressed in black observed the battle between Blackbat and Merlin which was not too far away. They shook their heads powerlessly. "It looks like there's no hope. What a pity. Leon had killed Orsato and disbanded the entire Python Army. Initially, he had finished his mission but had provoked Blackbat. He's a goner for sure. Come on, let's return to Headquarters to report the situation."

These two men were members of Phantom's Investigation Team who had infiltrated Boulder City. Indeed, Phantom's members were everywhere. Every single thing that Merlin had done in this period was unequivocally known to Phantom.

Even the almighty beast's will that parasitized Merlin, the high-tier almighty beast Blood-eye Dragon, its origin was known to Phantom. Phantom was extremely scary. It was not surprising that they were the sharpest sword wielded by the royal family.

These two people had witnessed the entire process of Merlin and Blackbat's fight. Merlin had no hope of winning at all. The disparity was too immense. Furthermore, Blackbat was currently restraining Merlin. After all, once Blackbat took flight, Merlin could do nothing.

“Boom.”

Suddenly, just as both of them were about to leave, the situation was reversed. Blackbat’s massive body was suddenly caught by Merlin’s claws and dragged to the ground. He crashed heavily, causing a loud thud.

“How could this be?”

The two members of the Investigation Team exchanged a glance, noticing the look of shock in each other’s eyes.

...

Merlin’s Mind Power exploded instantly. Although one could not see anything on the outside, Blackbat felt fear from the depths of his soul. When the boundless Mind Power enveloped him, he erupted with all his might to resist it. However, it was futile. Mind Power was shapeless and soundless, pervading through every pore.

Therefore, despite Blackbat’s valiant struggle, it was of no use. Merlin’s Mind Power had already controlled Blackbat. Following that, Blackbat was just like a puppet, and his movements halted. Merlin seized this chance and grabbed with his claws.

“Bang.”

Merlin’s claws tore Blackbat down as his eyes flashed with a cold glint. Even the consciousness of the Blood-eye Dragon in Merlin’s mind was unprecedentedly overjoyed.

This was a formidable full-shifter, yet he was beaten by Merlin and sent crashing heavily into the ground.

Nonetheless, it was not over yet. Merlin was already itching to kill. Anyone who knew about the secret of his Mind Power must die. Thus, his claws seized the Blackbat’s colossal body and strained with effort.

“Roar...”

Merlin unleashed a thunderous Dragon's Roar. With strength coursing through his claws, he forcibly tore Blackbat's body into two halves.

Dark red blood splattered all over Merlin, emitting an overpowering, bloody stench, causing one to shudder with fear.

"Dead...."

"Commander Blackbat is dead..."

At this moment, those who were watching the battle between Blackbat and Merlin were rather incredulous. The full-shifter, Commander Blackbat, had died at the hands of a mere third-form shifter like Merlin. Furthermore, he had died in such a miserable manner, torn in half instantly.

Currently, in their eyes, Merlin was a symbol of cruelty and terror. Some of the higher-ups of the Blackbat Militia had decided to flee at once. They had been coerced into joining the militia by Blackbat. Now that Blackbat was dead, naturally, no one would stick their necks out for him. With their subordinates in tow, they had swiftly fled from Boulder City.

Naturally, Merlin knew that many observers were surrounding him, but he no longer cared. Killing Blackbat would likely make many people fearful. At the same time, exposing his high-tier almighty beast's will would induce covetous desires in other powerful Hosts.

Even so, Merlin was unafraid because if he returned to Phantom this time, he would obtain many contribution points to exchange for many batches of the Nourishment Pond formula. At that point, the Blood-eye Dragon's bloodline would reach the peak of the fourth-form shifting. With a high-tier almighty beast's strength, Merlin could then truly contend against those full-shifting fighters.

"Boulder City... That's the manor where I once lived!"

Merlin looked up toward the Count's Manor in the distance. However, the present Count's Manor was already used by Blackbat as his residence. Thus, Merlin acted as if no one else was around and headed directly to the Count's Manor.

The two intelligence agents from Phantom who were hiding in a corner of Boulder City finally recovered from their shock. Although they were still somewhat in disbelief that Merlin could kill Blackbat, the truth was right before their eyes. Blackbat was directly torn into two halves.

They knew that from today onward, Merlin would truly catch the attention of the empire's higher-ups. Any contender comparable to a full-shifter would receive the focused interest of the royal family.

Furthermore, Merlin was loyal to the royal family, a member of Phantom which the royal family heavily relied upon.

"You stay here and watch Leon closely. I'll report to Headquarters!"

The two men in black broke out into smiles. With such important intelligence, the awarded contribution points would not be insignificant. It would be comparable to a few months of missions.

Thus, one of the black-clothed person's figure flashed slightly. Just like a shadow, inconspicuously, he noiselessly drifted out of Boulder City.

...

In the Count's Manor, Merlin had resumed his ordinary appearance, no longer exhibiting his shifted form. Nonetheless, no one dared to underestimate him anymore. The people in the manor had received the news and each made their escape. Currently, the manor was empty.

Some of them had not left but instead, knelt in the manor, not even daring to lift their heads. They were welcoming their new master.

Merlin came to a woman with a graceful figure, who looked to be thirty years old, and asked coldly, "Why didn't you run?"

This woman wore the clothes of aristocrats and appeared to live a noble life. She was not a servant, and her features were beautiful too.

The woman's body was trembling somewhat, but she still answered, "We were captured by Blackbat, who also destroyed our clans. We have no home to return to. In this chaotic world, where can we run to? We're better off asking for Master's mercy, allowing us to stay in this manor. We're even willing to be Master's maidservants."

Other than this woman, several other women also knelt on the ground. Some of them were slaves, and they were unafraid while others were like the first woman, having been seized from the surrounding aristocratic homes by Blackbat. Their clans had been destroyed, and they were homeless now. In this world of chaos, leaving the manor was a death wish, resulting in an even more tragic outcome.

Merlin had seen many cases like this, but he said slowly, "All of you can stay. However, you must tell me, what did Blackbat leave behind?"

The woman replied hurriedly, "I know Blackbat likes collecting treasures the most, so he's hidden them in the manor's basement. I'll bring you there, Master."

"There's no need. I'm more familiar with this manor than you are. This place was initially mine!"

With that, Merlin paid no more mind to these women, immediately striding toward the basement.

Chapter 960: The Secret Chamber

Merlin strode toward the basement. Regarding this manor, Merlin was undoubtedly familiar. This was his home when he first entered this world.

"Most probably, Count Stanwin would be happy to see that I've managed to reclaim the manor in Boulder City, right?"

The thought flashed unbidden in Merlin's mind. He held great respect toward Count Stanwin. Of course, a great existence like Merlin, who could challenge a Latitude Cosmos, would not think of Count Stanwin as a father. Rather, Count Stanwin gave him a sense of nostalgia. After all, Merlin had not felt such a warm feeling for a very long time.

Shaking his head, Merlin continued to walk. Count Stanwin was dead. Merlin had not only killed Orsato but had also slain Blackbat who had previously invaded Boulder City. Now that Merlin had reclaimed Boulder City, Count Stanwin had been properly avenged.

Arriving in the basement, Merlin scanned his surroundings. He discovered that there were now many large boxes, which turned out to contain gold coins. These were the financial underpinnings that supported the entire Blackbat Militia.

In the other large boxes, there were some strange and peculiar items that Blackbat must have collected from somewhere. Merlin studied them for a long time but did not discover anything important.

“Is that all Blackbat had collected?”

Merlin had a strong gut feeling that a full-shifter such as Blackbat would not place much importance on these items. Even if the Blackbat Militia was destroyed, it did not matter to Blackbat because as long as he lived, the Blackbat Militia would eventually be rebuilt.

Therefore, Blackbat would surely treasure his own life above all. He would surely keep many precious items that would help increase his abilities. After all, once a low-tier almighty beast bloodline had achieved full-shift, there was very little room left for further enhancements.

However, the entire basement did not contain any such item. There were only some gold coins and “souvenirs” of unknown origins. How could Merlin not be suspicious?

Merlin walked around the entire basement and inspected every inch. Suddenly, he noticed some dirt scattered on the floor of the basement. Although quite unremarkable at first glance, there was some odd dirt in the corner.

“Dirt? The basement had been built a long time ago. Why would there be fresh dirt? Unless Blackbat expanded the basement?”

A flash of realization struck Merlin. Yes, while he might be irrevocably familiar with the basement, he would not know if Blackbat had remodeled the basement.

“Hmph, nothing can hide from my Mind Power.”

Merlin did not want to mobilize his Mind Power. When he fought against Blackbat, he had mobilized almost his full arsenal. So now, his Mind Power had diminished considerably. It would be impossible for him to defeat another strong contender on par with Blackbat.

The only abilities Merlin could mobilize right now were the abilities of the Blood-eye Dragon, which meant that currently, Merlin was at his weakest. Nevertheless, no one would find out.

To kill Blackbat, Merlin had exhausted a large portion of his Mind Power. Hence, he lost the last bit of his safety net. From now onward, Merlin would have to tread carefully.

“I better level-up the Blood-eye Dragon quickly. Otherwise, the powerful strength of a high-tier almighty beast like the Blood-eye Dragon cannot be unleashed.”

Merlin had a plan, which was to return to Phantom Headquarters as soon as possible, then use the contribution points he had earned to exchange for enough portions of the Nourishment Pond formula to achieve a fourth-form shift. Once he had accomplished that, he would be able to leverage the Blood-eye Dragon’s power to challenge the full-shift strong contenders.

Of course, that would only be enough to defeat full-shifters from the low-tier almighty beast bloodlines. As for the mid-tier almighty beast bloodlines, there was still a large gap that even Merlin could not possibly bridge.

Merlin used his Mind Power to scan the entire basement. Immediately, everything in the basement was covered with his Mind Power. Even the smallest speck of dust could be detected by Merlin.

Needless to say, the secret hidden doors were easily found by Merlin.

“It’s here.”

Merlin saw that behind one of the walls, there was a dark and empty hollow. That should be Blackbat’s expansion of the basement. Thus, Merlin walked right up to a thick, solid wall of the basement. Without Mind Power, it would have been extremely difficult to find.

Merlin did not know the mechanism of this structure but he did not intend to locate it. He immediately wielded his shapeshift form, and a huge beast rammed violently through the wall.

“Boom.”

The wall immediately crumbled, revealing a dark, gaping pit. Merlin was not at all concerned. Blackbat would not bother to set up any silly mechanisms in such a place, and even if he did, it would not be able to harm a powerful shapeshifter.

In the dark pit, there was a set of descending stairs. Merlin lit a candle from the basement and slowly made his way downward. The lower he went, Merlin could sense the dampness in the air.

Soon, a stone door came into view at the bottom of the stairs. It was tightly shut and covered with a thick layer of dust. It seemed like no one had been down here for some time.

Merlin came before the stone door. Without any hesitation, he shapeshifted into the third-form almighty beast and rammed brutishly against the door. Once again, the solid stone door was smashed into pieces.

Behind the smashed stone door was a medium-sized chamber. Some delicate glass cabinets displayed some precious materials.

However, the sight Merlin was most familiar with was situated right in the middle of the chamber. There was a small pond. There was nothing in it currently but Merlin was able to tell with a single glance. This was a Nourishment Pond.

This chamber was a laboratory, which was commonly used by Hosts. The materials in the glass cabinet, on the other hand, were Nourishment Pond materials which Blackbat had been collecting over the years.

There was no doubt that Blackbat also had a Nourishment Pond formula, and had intended to become a Host at some point. However, perhaps due to the risk associated with parasitism or the reluctance to let go of his current full-shifter abilities, he did not take the plunge.

Another possibility was that Blackbat merely wanted to study about Hosts. This was so that if anything were to happen to him, he could still choose to become a Host. Nonetheless, the

reason was obvious. If it was not for the risk associated with parasitism, it would certainly surpass the cultivation method of the almighty beast bloodline. How would it be possible for Blackbat to find a breakthrough?

This laboratory represented Blackbat's hope or rather, the inner conflict in his heart. Blackbat simply could not bear to relinquish his powerful full-shifter abilities, and now, it would be to Merlin's benefit.

Merlin was ecstatic. Just as he was feeling frustrated over insufficient Nourishment Pond formulas and materials, Blackbat had left him with numerous items.

Therefore, Merlin began to search hurriedly in the drawers. Soon, he found five different Nourishment Pond formulas. All of them had been obtained by Blackbat either through killing the Hosts or forcing descendants of Hosts to hand it over to him. In total, there were five formulas.

The materials on the glass cabinets constituted the requisite materials for these five Nourishment Pond formulas, so Merlin could brew them immediately.

Merlin did not hesitate. Boulder City would be peaceful for a while. His forceful tearing of Blackbat would have shocked all the surrounding factions. After all, Blackbat was a powerful full-shifter.

Hence, Merlin had nothing to fear during this period. He could brew the Nourishment Pond without any worries.

"If I can achieve the fourth-form within this period, then I'll be much safer. At the very least, I'll be able to protect myself!"

Only contenders who were on par with the full-shifters were considered self-sufficient in this world. Merlin knew very well that his main objective was to enhance his abilities to a level comparable to the full-shifters.

Otherwise, without any more Mind Power to mobilize, Merlin would be in trouble once he encountered a full-shifter.

With that in mind, Merlin quickly brewed the first Nourishment Pond according to the formula. Since he already had considerable experience brewing Nourishment Ponds, his attempt was very quick. In just two hours, he had completed the brew.

Looking at the freshly brewed Nourishment Pond, Merlin took a deep breath, wielded his beast form, and dived into the Nourishment Pond.