

God level 381

Chapter 381: The Mysterious Lake in the Black Forest

Da Fei activated the Blood Eagle Flute, and a magical eagle soared into the sky. The horizon widened, revealing an endless expanse of the withered Black Forest. The radar showed a red cloud—that was the countless noisy crows circling above the forest.

The forest had no path, at least not one wide enough for an elite Tree Spirit to pass through entirely. The key question was, even if they could pass, where exactly was their destination?

Da Fei continued to control the Blood Eagle, pushing forward. One minute, two minutes—the forest appeared endless, and Da Fei felt immensely frustrated. Even the Flying Eagle had to fly so long, so how long would it take his convoy to walk there? Is this just one space of the World Tree, meaning it's just a game instance? Is it really that vast? Well, considering it took half a day to switch scenes, it probably is. A map this large just for me, what a privilege!

Finally, a glimmer of water flashed on the very edge of the horizon—it's a lake! There was a discovery!

Da Fei's spirits lifted as he pursued further. He saw, deep within the forest, a vast red sandy area with a shimmering blue-black lake, like a mirror embedded in a red frame.

Such an unusual wonder must be the key to breaking the current dilemma—everyone knows this when playing games!

Da Fei excitedly said, "My reconnaissance eagle found a large lake deep in the forest. Mr. Tai Da, what do you think?"

Tai Da promptly said, "Such an unusual wonder must be the key to breaking the current dilemma!"

—Ah, pfft! Da Fei wiped the spit he sprayed and asked, "The forest is dense, how do we get over there?"

Tai Da sighed, "We have to unload our cargo first, then have our woodcutters chop out a path, and then turn around to transport again."

Da Fei was instantly dumbfounded! This whole thing is several times more frustrating than just having the convoy walk through! In that instant, Da Fei remembered that high school book, "How Steel Was Tempered," which featured a scene of chopping trees to build railways in Siberia's frigid forests. How frustrating could it get?

Alright, now I'm playing "How to Become a Master." There must be treasures in that lake, making this trip worthwhile!

Da Fei nodded, "Alright, let's unload the cargo first and rest to regain stamina." They had just fought a battle while carrying heavy loads, and the troop, especially the Tree Spirits, had depleted much of their stamina and needed a good rest.

"Yes, Lord City Lord!" Tai Da waved his hand, and all the woodcutter Tree Spirits put down their lumber, forming a small hill of rare wood.

Now, the target was set, and the method to create a path was also determined, leaving only the safety issue. According to the reconnaissance, the only enemies in this forest were the crows, and they were particularly tricky because, like mice, cockroaches, and soldier ants, they were annoyingly beyond level 0 creatures!

Da Fei had 39 elite Tree Spirits and a grandmaster-level crossbow cannon in hand and was confident against any regular troops, including level 7 soldiers, but was powerless against these tiny creatures! Cannons could hardly eliminate mosquitos! If only Selvia were here, she could clear the field with a Storm Attack. The problem is—well, never mind. Rats fear cats; the best way to deal with small creatures is using slightly larger small creatures. Should I follow through with the initial plan to use the Blood Eagle to train against the crows? The problem is that the Flying Eagle is only a level 1 troop, can it handle so many?

Da Fei asked, "What strategies do you have against these crows?"

Tai Da laughed, "Lord City Lord, I previously cast Thorns Skill, right? I believe the weak crows are surely courting death against it—" His face then grew somber: "However, the Thorns Skill doesn't last long, and this space is quite strange. These crows seem unusual; you must be cautious, my Lord."

Damn it! I want to be cautious, but without any cards to play, what can I do?

Test the crow's abilities! Better to risk the Flying Eagle than risking hundreds of team members. There seems to be no other choice. However, Da Fei immediately remembered Ranger Guild Master Jilrien's warning—if the Flying Eagle dies once, it could lead to lost morale, affecting its future growth.

Damn it, now they deliberately left me tangled here!?

Da Fei began checking the Flying Eagle's attributes:

—Growing Reconnaissance Spirit Eagle (Little Fei): Tiny Elite Spiritual Creature, Attack 4, Defense 0, Damage 1-2, Life Value 3, Command Value: 0, Attack Speed: 15, Stamina: 16/30. Special Skill: Flying Creature, God-level Reconnaissance Technique, Plane Surveillance.

Uh, its stamina was already down to half; it couldn't fly for much longer, let alone fight. In the end, it was too fragile to be of substantial use, similar to the match, but such little potential needed cultivation and experimentation. I couldn't believe it that every crow in the entire Black Forest would gang up against me once the battle started. How would players continue to play if that were the case?

Da Fei formulated a plan, began controlling the Flying Eagle to return, and then left the resting troops to move stealthily alone towards the forest, hiding under a withered tree. About two minutes later, the Flying Eagle reached the forest's edge and reunited with Da Fei, now with less than 3 stamina points remaining and on the verge of disappearing.

However, the Flying Eagle's attributes received Da Fei's hero enhancements! Yes, that's the desired effect!

Da Fei's current attributes read 61 strategic attack; with the newly acquired Spider Demon shoes and two-piece defensive bonus, the strategic defense reached 78. The Reconnaissance Spirit Eagle's attributes were:

—Attack 65 (+60)

—Defense 78 (+78)

—Damage 3-4 (Captain's Sword's land damage +1, War Maniac's demigod achievement +1)

—Life Value 14.9 (Lonely Brave Warrior's hundred-win-all-army life +2, Spider Demon two-piece set all-army life +4, Defense Skill Sub-skill Unlimited Vitality all-army life +2, "God Slayer" achievement +1, "Dancing with Gods" achievement +1, totally 13 points, plus three Plague Antibody achievements +15% total life)

—Attack Speed 18.4 (Captain's Sword land +1, Speed Cloak +10%, Corpse Poison Antibody achievement +5%)

—Stamina 7.5/34.5 (three Plague Antibody achievements boosted stamina by 15%)

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Incredible attack and defense! Approaching the Damage Value and Life Value of a level 3 soldier! This is the power of the hero—how strong the hero is determines how strong the troops are; the only limitation for Little Flying Eagle is stamina! Upgrading and growing might be the only way to enhance it.

Generally, the attack and damage of such small creatures like crows and mice, even more special than level 0 creatures, were not high, about 0-1 attack and 0-1 damage or so. An enormous attack-defense difference with nearly 80 points reduces the opposing damage value to just 20% through the damage formula. Then Da Fei's master-level Defense Skill cuts it by another 50%, leaving just 10%, that is, 0-0.1 damage.

Of course, even small damage could fill your body with ants nibbling like elephants, and the physical damage was secondary; the main threat was the disorderly mutate special skill they might have. That's where the "Extreme Survival" skill became essential. Yesterday's match server displayed its mighty effect, and having just leveled up, Da Fei obtained a skill point—damn, I got so carried away during the battle against the Spider Demon Army that I forgot I hadn't actually learned it yet! What we learned in the match server isn't applicable here!

No hassle—time for Extreme Survival to make its formal debut!

—System prompt: You spent 1 Skill Point learning the sailor "Extreme Survival" sub-skill.

—Extreme Survival: Greatly enhance your troop's survival under hunger, disease, and fatigue.

Now everything was ready. Let's fight!

—System prompt: You canceled Little Fei's Plane Surveillance state, and Little Fei appeared in the current plane!

With Little Fei's entire bloodied figure suddenly appearing, the crows in the trees screeched and flapped into the air!

—System prompt: The dark crow flock discovered your Reconnaissance Spirit Eagle troops, and you entered battle mode! Your Stealth State disappeared!

Damn! It really dragged me into battle too? Come on, just charge at me; help share Little Fei's pressure. If it really couldn't hold on, I would immediately run back to the main force and have Tai Da cast a large Thorns Skill to save the day.

At this moment, a dark cloud of crows swarmed toward Da Fei and Little Fei, engulfing them in an instant!

—System prompt: You fall into "Corpse Crow Mercury Poison" state; your Life Value, stamina, Move Speed, and Attack Speed start decreasing!

—System prompt: Little Fei's Spiritual Body is immune to toxin damage!

Da Fei was taken aback, indeed a nasty special skill! Then burst into joy, Little Fei was immune to their special skill! Great! Let them peck and poison all they want. It didn't matter as long as Little Fei remained unaffected! Moreover, it seemed only the crow-flock from the surrounding woods was coming, which meant he had the capacity to defeat them one by one!

At this point, Little Fei engaged in aerial melee with the crow flock, killing one, two, three, ten; with every attack, it surely annihilated a crow. Meanwhile, streams of "dodge" appeared on its body!

Yes, Little Fei was a high-speed flying creature. Creatures moving at high speeds have inherent evasive bonuses, combined with my match-obtained Evasion Talisman dodging 10%, plus God-level Luck Skill's "Luck Body" increasing skill chances by 15%, making Little Fei's dodge rate at least 25%. Theoretically, it completely handled hundreds on its own! Just a few more rounds of growth, and it certainly would become an airborne overlord, clearing the field without a sweat!

Haha! Good, I'll take this opportunity to train you up! While counting the crow corpses below, suddenly an idea hit Da Fei!

Right, why were these crows' skills named "Corpse Crow Mercury Poison"? Mercury? No way, could that lake really be the legendary Mercury Lake? Is that why the surroundings were barren and all the trees withered? Yes, it must be—the red sandy area by the lake was, in fact, cinnabar specifically used to refine mercury. Generally, mercury mines were just red sandy mines! And here, it had directly produced liquid mercury, poisoning the whole forest to death! This Mercury Lake should be grand and rare—could it be a rare resource of "Concentrated Mercury"?

Possible! Highly likely; the World Tree Space had many rare woods I'd never heard of, so finding a rich mercury mine isn't impossible!

Chapter 382: All Mercury Wood, Bleed!

The thought of a potential rich mine of Concentrated Mercury in this space made Da Fei extremely excited!

Mines! In the Old World, nearly all known resource mines were controlled by NPC Kingdom forces. Player Lords were at best farm owners growing crops or foremen assisting in mining. To obtain a mine, one had to venture into the New World National War Zone to claim land and face competition from players worldwide. Competition for ordinary mines was fierce, to say nothing of rich mines, which even powerful BOSS monsters would contest for!

In short, the strategic significance of a player acquiring a mine before level 50 didn't need much elaboration, especially if it was likely a rich mine! However—given the system's nature, the richer the

mine, the more it wouldn't let players acquire it easily. Not to mention the development issues of this forest itself, the demonic destruction of the Epic Quest was not easy to handle, and it was very possible that players would go bankrupt before acquiring the mine.

So I had to stay calm! The pressing task now was finding a way to secure my transport team first.

Just as Da Fei's thoughts raced, the System Prompt sounded!

——System Prompt: Your Reconnaissance Blood Eagle's stamina is insufficient, unable to fight, and is about to disappear. It can be resummoned when stamina is fully restored.

Damn! Stamina was indeed the limit to Little Fei's power! Even if its strength could rival a thousand, with only 30 points of stamina, it couldn't kill that many, and I couldn't swiftly train it even if I wanted to. Did I have to wait for its stamina to fully restore before resummoning it each time?

Forget it, let's get rid of these crows first. Da Fei ran back to the team's resting place under a shower of crows and shouted, "Great Thorns Skill! Great Thorns Skill!"

Tai Da immediately responded, casting a golden light on Da Fei, and then the crows, like hitting a spike board, instantly died and formed a circle of Corpse Mountain around Da Fei.

Battle over! I must say, these Reflective Magic skills worked great against these small creatures. Could I be taught them?

Tai Da stepped forward and said, "Sir, you've cleared the crows in this forest, and our logging team can now commence work."

Da Fei immediately asked, "These crows are Undead Creatures, with a special skill of Corpse Crow Mercury Poison. I suspect the lake I saw was Mercury Lake. What's your take?"

Tai Da, taken aback, said, "The existence of Mercury Lake is unimaginable! But it does explain why the forest here is dead, and why the World Tree abandoned this space. The undead crows must be related to the Undead, and mercury is the most crucial resource for the Undead Race. Many powerful Undead

like to occupy Mercury Mines, so there might be a powerful Undead here. You must be careful, my lord!"

A powerful Undead! The system's nature indeed wouldn't make it easy for players. It seemed this advisor had value after all!

Da Fei continued to ask, "If it really is Mercury Lake, the closer we get, the denser the poison gas; wouldn't it be dangerous to log our way there?"

Tai Da frowned, "Judging by the forest's condition, this Mercury Lake must have appeared later, forcing the World Tree away, so it might lead to an entrance to another space. Besides, if you don't plan to go to Mercury Lake, then where do you intend to go?"

Da Fei laughed in surprise! Even the NPC could see it clearer than I could. Indeed, Mercury Lake was the only discovered target; if not going there, what else could I do? In any case, man would kill Gods, and ghosts if they stood in my way.

Da Fei said, "Alright, let's have our workers start, and have the Tree Elf Army on alert to prevent any incidents."

"Yes, Lord City Lord."

Now, the woodcutters began their work, the sound of chopping echoing in this dead-silent space. Although the battle had ended, the effects of mercury poison still lingered on Da Fei, with an unknown duration. Fortunately, mercury poison wasn't contagious, and to Da Fei, who had Nash's Tooth and Extreme Survival, it wasn't much of an issue. However, for the workers who had to overburden themselves with transport, it certainly had a significant impact. In short, I mustn't let the workers be attacked by crows; I needed to hurry up and clear the area.

Da Fei occasionally took out the Blood Eagle Flute to check Little Eagle's stamina recovery progress, 0, still 0! Damn, recovering so slowly? Wouldn't it be just like the Blood Eagle Flute that could only be used once a day? With this, how many days would it take me to finish this scene? And the next? My schedule was tight, and I still had to go to the Dwarf Kingdom to find the prince and repair the Divine Artifact!

Just as he was fretting, Tai Da excitedly ran over, clutching a piece of wood, "Sir! Sir, this wood is extraordinary; I've never seen anything like it before!"

Da Fei exclaimed, "Even you've never seen this wood?"

Tai Da excitedly said, "These trees absorbed a large amount of mercury and ultimately died, so the wood is filled with mercury, giving it a metallic attribute. As everyone knows, wood and metal are incompatible, leading to many shortcomings in magical equipment. The emergence of this type of wood will surely have a huge impact on the alchemy equipment industry, creating enormous wealth!"

Whoa! Enormous wealth? Semiconductors? Da Fei stared at the grayish wood, and looking around at the vast, endless Black Forest, exclaimed, "So, does this mean all the wood here is this Mercury Wood?"

Tai Da laughed heartily, "Good! Good name, then this wood shall be called Mercury Wood! And I'm certain the closer to Mercury Lake, the better the attributes of the wood!"

——System Prompt: You have discovered a new type of resource "Mercury Wood." You have achieved "Discoverer of Mercury Wood." Your World reputation +1000, knowledge +5, life +50, and you have gained Experience +200,000!

Haha! Hahaha! I not only found a Mercury Mine, this was my "Silicon Valley!" If I could secure it, adding a zero to my 20 million asset wouldn't be a dream!

In that instant, Da Fei was invigorated but also felt the urgency of time! Secure it! Time waits for no one! And what I could do now was clear the field as swiftly as possible.

Da Fei once again took out the Blood Eagle Flute and, looking at its frustrating special skill "Blood Sacrifice," laughed and sighed, "I never thought I'd use this annoying skill, but to add a zero to my assets, I have to go all out!"

Da Fei took out the two books of "Great Life Book" and three books of "Life Book" obtained in this competition.

——"Great Life Book": Use to gain 50 life points, can also be used on Vice Hero.

——"Life Book": Use to gain 20 life points, can also be used on Vice Hero.

Da Fei laughed heartily! The Life Books, estimated during public testing to be worth tens of thousands, even close to 100,000 with no market, and I wasn't even willing to use them myself! But now, to speed up Little Eagle's growth and clear the field quickly, for my 20 million-plus-zero assets, I'd take the hit!

——System Prompt: You used a Great Life Book, your life points +50!

Chapter 383: Little Fei Grows Through Blood Sacrifice and Battle

Now, with the achievements from eating the books just now, Da Fei's Life Value had soared by 210 points, reaching an awe-inspiring total of over 500 points, which was an incredible amount whether as a commander of the legion or as a solo adventurer. However, Life Value that doesn't generate enormous value was quite useless, right?

The Blood Sacrifice began!

——System Prompt: You used the special skill "Blood Sacrifice" from the Reconnaissance Spirit Eagle Flute. You sacrificed a certain amount of your Life Limit to enhance the strength of the Spirit Eagle. The current optimal amount for the Blood Sacrifice is 50 Life Value. Would you like to proceed with the optimal Blood Sacrifice?

Exchanging 50 Life Points would make ordinary players spit blood and jump off a building, but for me, it's nothing—confirm!

A flash of blood light from the Blood Eagle Flute, and Da Fei's Life Limit dropped by 50 points, then the Blood Eagle Flute flashed with white light!

——System Prompt: Congratulations! With your Blood Sacrifice, your Reconnaissance Spirit Eagle Little Fei has grown! Little Fei's Attack +1, Life +5, Stamina +5, Mana +5. Gained 1 Growth Skill Point.

—Growth Skill Point: Your Reconnaissance Eagle is connected with your heroic bloodline, possessing the potential for free growth. You can spend 1 Growth Skill Point to teach it a hero skill or magic. Growth Skill Points can only be obtained through Blood Sacrifice.

—Growing Reconnaissance Spirit Eagle (Little Fei): Small-sized Spiritual Elite Creature, Attack 5, Defense 0, Damage 1-2, Life 8, Mana +5, Command Value: 0, Attack Speed: 15, Stamina: 35/35. Special Skill: Flying Creature, God-level Reconnaissance Technique, Plane Surveillance.

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Da Fei was caught in a huge shock!

Growth Skill Point! I've never heard of this before! Damn it! Although I've also trained Banshee Elites and taught them bombardment, their growth relied on innate talent, acquired understanding, and my awesome skills, which were extremely difficult to replicate! But this Spirit Eagle directly gets a skill point, and I can teach it whatever I want?

So this is it! This is the benefit of Blood Sacrifice! It's a surprising reward from a scam skill; it's totally like having a favored son! In other words, this is also a Tycoon Skill. If you're not a tycoon eating books and bleeding to raise it, who could afford it?

Great! Very good, I haven't decided what skill it should learn, and I'm not satisfied with the attributes it gained from this growth, but the biggest benefit is full stamina, so let's start clearing the field!

Da Fei delved into the woods and summoned Little Fei again far away from the logging team!

Come on, the last battle wasn't satisfying because reconnaissance left little stamina, but this time, with full stamina in battle, let's fight to our heart's content!

As Little Fei appeared, the whole forest's crows took flight, and a huge black cloud of crows once again surrounded Da Fei and Little Fei, and the battle began!

Da Fei, needless to say, was as stable as a mountain amidst the crow swarm. Little Fei's eagle claws flashed, dodging expertly, and one crow after another fell. This time, Little Fei didn't disappoint Da Fei. When the crows piled into a small mountain, its stamina finally faltered. No worries, I still have blood for Blood Sacrifice, then resume the fight with full stamina, haha!

And just then, a flash of white light in the sky!

—System Prompt: Congratulations! Your Reconnaissance Spirit Eagle Little Fei grew during battle! Attack +1, Life +1, Stamina +1. Grasped new special skill: Long Sky Eagle Strike.

—Long Sky Eagle Strike: A raptor flaps its powerful wings to cause area damage to multiple targets in aerial combat, with Damage Value shared among targets.

Da Fei was suddenly taken aback, then wildly ecstatic! So that's how it is! Through battles, it grows to perceive its biological special skill, adding fewer attributes, and naturally, no Skill Points, which is the biggest difference from Blood Sacrifice!

Now Little Fei's stamina was full again, a true warrior. Most importantly, it learned the eagle's signature aerial combat skill, turning battles from single target kills into area attacks! How much does that improve field-clearing efficiency?

Sure enough, instead of one crow falling at a time, the crow swarm became mass falling like rain!

Da Fei laughed aloud! This realization was indeed a qualitative leap! If it were one-on-one single attacks, with Attack 60, Damage 3-4, plus Little Fei's Advanced Attack Skill against a crow with 0 Defense and one or two Life Points, what would the damage be? 1 Attack adds 5% Damage, so 60 Attack means 300%, equaling 12-16, plus Advanced Attack Skill increases by 30% to 15-20, that's overkill!

Now with the new special skill, as long as there are 10 crows in front of Little Fei, it can fan them all dead, increasing efficiency tenfold! This is necessary; dealing with such swarm creatures demands area attacks! Following this trend of growth, clearing the entire forest of crows is no dream! Haha, wahaha! Let the crow swarm come more fiercely!

Now the battle wasn't a problem, Da Fei started thinking leisurely about Little Fei's future growth direction, that is, the Growth Skill Point matter.

Clearly, learning this Skill Point is very similar to Vice Heroes. But Little Fei's main function was long-distance reconnaissance; Reconnaissance Skill was already learned, so what other skill should it learn? A speed-enhancing Logistics Skill? But wait! Isn't Logistics Skill for "land" movement? This guy flies in the air! And it's already flying, isn't it already fast?

Or maybe a Defense Skill to enhance survival? Even more unreliable! The Flying Eagle's growth was clearly meant for attacking, right? So, an Attack Skill? Jilrien boasted that when it grows up, it could launch aerial attacks on discovered targets, meaning the Ranger's position for the Flying Eagle was an offensive assassin, so teaching it Attack Skill seemed the most reliable plan.

However, such a badass Flying Eagle learning such a mundane skill did indeed leave Da Fei dissatisfied. At the very least, in situations like joint combat now, the main hero's skill directly covers the whole team, learning Attack Skill rendered it useless. In other words, its skill should best complement Da Fei. The problem was, it wasn't a hero, so skills could only affect itself, making it impossible to complement each other.

This meant, learning ordinary hero skills wasn't worthy of it; it must learn something extraordinary? Like the whole set of orc-exclusive passive skills "Anti-Light Magic," "Anti-Dark Magic," "Anti-Destruction Magic," but could these skills be learned by an eagle? Plus, they seemed even more unreliable than Defense Skills!

How about the Bloodsucking Skill? Damn! It's already been sold, and my Little Fei isn't Demon Blood.

Looking at the skill training matter, careful consideration was still necessary, and certainly, a legendary hidden Divine Skill should be learned to live up to all this effort on Da Fei's part.

Just as Da Fei pondered, another System Prompt appeared.

—System Prompt: Your Reconnaissance Blood Eagle has insufficient stamina and cannot fight, disappearing soon...

Oh? Out of stamina? Not leveled up yet? Come on, my Blood Sacrifice is ready! After the Blood Sacrifice, it should level up soon and regain full stamina for another fight, right? Very well, next time, I'm going big, I'll attract all the crows from this large forest here!

Chapter 384: The Abandoned Village Deep in the Forest

The second blood sacrifice began.

— System Prompt: You used the "Blood Sacrifice" special skill of the Spiritual Eagle Flute, contributing a certain amount of Life Limit to enhance the strength of the Spiritual Eagle. The current optimal blood sacrifice amount is 100 Life Value points. Would you like to proceed with the optimal blood sacrifice?

Ah, damn! Da Fei spat out old blood! Can't you tell me what the hell is optimal blood sacrifice amount? 100 Life Value, that's half of a normal gamer's life! How much blood to draw next time? I'm not playing this game again! Don't tell me 100 points of blood only exchange for one Skill Point and some Life Physical Strength!

Da Fei took a deep breath, endured it! Time is money, progress decides success or failure, for this large industry of mine, and Little Fei is really worth nurturing. I'm going all out!

Blood sacrifice!

After the blood light, a white light flashed.

— System Prompt: Congratulations! Under your blood sacrifice, your reconnaissance spirit eagle, Little Fei, has grown! Little Fei's Attack +1, Defense +1, Damage +1, Life +10, Stamina +10, Mana +10. Obtained 1 growth Skill Point.

— Growing Reconnaissance Spirit Eagle (Little Fei): Tiny Spiritual Elite Creature, Attack 7, Defense 1, Damage 2-3, Life 19, Mana +15, Command Value: 0, Attack Speed: 15, Stamina: 46/46. Special Skills: Flying Creature, God-level Reconnaissance Technique, Plane Surveillance, Long Sky Eagle Strike.

At this moment, Da Fei's face was full of tears!

What the hell! It really only gave me 1 Skill Point and a few points of blood! How many 100 Life Value points does a person have in their life? This is seriously a game only a tycoon can afford to play! I get it, this is clearly telling me that the skills Little Fei learns must be Divine Skills! Must be that one Skill Point equals a normal skill at Master Level! Otherwise, it doesn't justify this heart-wrenching effort!

Nothing more to say, this time I'm going to sweep the entire field!

Little Fei soared into the sky again, and this time, Da Fei clearly felt its size seemed to have increased a little bit! Yes, definitely a bit larger! Good, bigger is better! Larger target area, the eagle strike skill can strike more at once!

Now, Little Fei circled the field, the surrounding woods' crows erupted with deafening noise and rose into the sky, the entire deadwood forest's sky seemed covered by a massive black cloud. And Little Fei was like a scarlet phantom flashing through the black cloud, where it passed countless crows fell like raindrops!

This was the power of Little Fei after being enhanced by the hero, in front of these crows with 0 attack and defense and less than 1 damage, it was like a super BOSS, only it could kill tirelessly without being swarmed and can't hold up.

In the end, in the Heroic Creation Era, the existence of Stamina made it possible for the weak to defeat the strong. Especially in the national war battlefield during public beta, the Chinese players' overwhelming army tactics and fatigue fortress defense strategy often left the opponent's main heroes exhausted and returning with nothing. This was a game balance measure, to prevent a super hero from easily razing and destroying the opponent's cities and nations.

And now, Da Fei quietly watched Little Fei slaughtering, supremely anticipating its growth in battle. Now it could only be hoped to grow in battle, blood sacrifices and such, Da Fei couldn't genuinely afford it anymore. Even if it didn't grow, it was fine, as long as this vast flock of crows was cleared, it also ensured the logging team's safety for a period. At worst, just battle again tomorrow.

And Little Fei didn't disappoint Da Fei, just as the crow cloud above the forest was thinning out, a flash of white light, and Little Fei grew again!

—— System Prompt: Congratulations! Your reconnaissance spirit eagle, Little Fei, grew in battle! Attack +1, Life +2, Stamina +2. Comprehended new special skill: Gliding.

—— Gliding: reduces reconnaissance spirit eagle's speed by 50%, while also reducing stamina consumption by 50%.

Da Fei burst into laughter! I was just worried about Stamina, it really came just when I needed it! What is this called? Testing the need in actual combat! Reducing stamina consumption by 50% means reconnaissance range, battle time increases by 50%, now this feels like a real eagle!

Nothing more to say now, Little Fei's small potential is formed, the remaining crows aren't enough for it to level up, keep going deeper, keep pulling monsters, keep clearing the field!

Wait a minute! Just as Da Fei was about to proceed deeper, he suddenly felt something was amiss. Moving forward meant getting further and further away from the logging team at the rear. If an unexpected situation arose, like more crows than imagined, or a BOSS appearing, wouldn't I be left alone like an idiot?

Moreover, didn't I say I wanted to clear this entire forest? Clearing straight ahead would surely miss out on the experience from the crow groups on both sides. So, the correct field-clearing order should be starting from the sides, maintaining a distance with the main force while ensuring it's all taken out in one go, yes, start from the left.

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Now, the ordinary crow groups posed no threat at all, the remaining threat was the BOSS. So now Da Fei began considering the BOSS.

According to the game's usual style, the BOSS was either a giant crow, or a Mercury Lake Monster, or perhaps one or even a group of Undead Wizards, any situation would be tough to handle, no, it was likely not possible to handle at all!

After all, my Tree Elf Army was all defense-centric, and moved slowly. If encountering something like an Undead Wizard who could launch long-range attacks, they'd definitely be sitting ducks, maybe even directly burning to death in the woods. If the BOSS was a lake Water Monster, then even less hope.

What to do if it couldn't be dealt with? Could this scene be passed without fighting the BOSS? Hold on, wasn't this scene considered as the new Epic Quest scene newly received?

If it was an Epic Quest scene, the difficulty would surely be extraordinary, unlikely for just my current forces to breeze through all at once, right? That wouldn't fit the system's nature of not letting players take advantage. Meaning, I might have to make the most frustrating yet most reliable plan, which was just being a pathfinder, then going back to shout to the NPC main force to clear the field. If that was the case, surely the NPC Kingdom forces would take the lead, and the player lord would become just a laborer again? What the heck! Isn't this screwing me over!

No no no! Who's to say there might not be something even more frustrating, maybe in the future this place would become the main battlefield for the Elf Kingdom and the Hell Race, rain of fire and Doomsday Judgment everywhere, so many trees directly burned away, and players couldn't even get a single one! If that really was the case, it wouldn't just be frustrating, but heart-shattering!

No, both situations must be avoided with all effort. If unavoidable, must seize the time and think of ways to reap enough benefits, like, organizing a large logging transport team to come over and chop down as much as possible when I get back!

Just as Da Fei's thoughts spun rapidly in his mind, he suddenly noticed a clearing at the edge of Little Fei's vision.

A clearing? Da Fei's brow twitched, what could a clearing in such dense woods mean? Isn't it obvious, even a novice gamer knows it's a new discovery!

Ah, so that's how it is, I said such a large map being just forest and Mercury Lake seemed too plain.

Da Fei hurriedly adjusted Little Fei's direction to check it out, the field of vision grew clearer, he saw it, a wooden house in the forest, a village!

Da Fei's brow twitched with amazement! What the heck, there were actually people living here? Why did Tai Da say this is an unknown space? Wait, this village looks obviously abandoned, clearly deserted, right? And why are these houses so tiny? Not a human village, nor an Elf village, must be the indigenous people here! So where did these indigenous people go? All died under mercury poisoning like these trees?

Without a doubt, such a large map wouldn't place a village here without reason, this is an important scene hint, maybe related to how to pass! Seriously, this system is really sneaky, putting this village in such a remote place. If I didn't have the Flying Eagle, who could discover it so quickly? Even with the Flying Eagle, if I hadn't decided to clear monsters in this direction, I wouldn't have found this village!

Hurry up and ask Tai Da, he should know something.

Now Da Fei didn't continue to lure more monsters, after quickly clearing the scene, he rushed back to the logging camp.

By now the logging team had already opened a small path in the forest, the felled timber piled up along the roadside forming a small hill, Da Fei's heart shattered to pieces! All these are my properties! Can't be moved!

Seeing Da Fei return, Tai Da immediately cast a Regeneration Technique: "Master, you worked hard!"

Da Fei hurriedly said: "I discovered an abandoned village in the forest, do you know what's going on?"

Tai Da suddenly froze: "An abandoned village? There were people living in this unknown World Tree space? Master, if convenient, please take me to have a look!"

Da Fei quickly said: "There are no crows on this route now, let's hurry!"

Although there were no more crows, it didn't mean no danger, so to be cautious, Da Fei took Tai Da using Phantom March through the dense forest. Seriously, wasn't this the rhythm of playing recklessly with just the two of us? Hope no monsters jump out in the village. Impossible! My eagle shares the God-level Reconnaissance Technique with me, if low-altitude reconnaissance didn't find anything, there definitely wouldn't be monsters!

Flying Eagle flew for a while, walking took half a day. Finally, Da Fei arrived at the outskirts of the village.

Before Da Fei could ask, Tai Da immediately responded: "This is a village of the Forest Dwarfs! Also known as Half-Elves, or Hobbits!"

Da Fei was surprised: "Hobbits?" What the heck! You really are worthy as a consultant! Hobbits are the race of that Fodo from "Lord of the Rings," aren't they? Truly renowned!

Tai Da continued: "Exactly! Forest Dwarfs are a physically small race, they are very clever, friendly, curious, enthusiastic about collecting and exploring, and love cooking. Their dwellings are very delicately neat. They also possess very agile escape skills allowing them to avoid dangers in exploration. However, this race eventually was too weak, too lazy, after the Hell Race's large-scale invasion of the surface world a thousand years ago, we seldom encounter them, we even thought they were extinct!"

—— System Prompt: You obtained "Forest Dwarf" information!

Da Fei's brow twitched, giving out information means they aren't extinct, right? What's the system's intention behind offering this scene? Need to use even fingers to think?

Da Fei immediately said: "I think they aren't extinct, the Hobbits in this village must be hiding somewhere!"

Tai Da nodded: "Master is perfectly right, let's search for clues in the village!"

Chapter 385: Searching for Hobbits

Da Fei and Tai Da entered this exquisitely charming village.

At first glance, the layout of the streets and houses struck one as harmoniously rounded as well as ancient and time-worn. Each house here had round doors, round windows, and round roofs, a perfect replica of the Habbit Village seen in movies.

Da Fei and Tai Da had to stoop to step into a cottage, and were immediately taken aback!

Not a single piece of furniture! Completely empty! Damn, had it been robbed? Or had they taken everything with them when they fled? Or did the system just not bother to set up the interior scenes? The last possibility was absolutely impossible!

The two entered another house, finding it just as bare.

Tai Da, stroking the door frame, said in a heavy voice, "You're right, sir. The Habbits haven't been wiped out, nor have they been attacked. They've clearly moved out systematically and calmly. This scrape on the door frame must have been left during the move, and the mark is about 200 years old, which means they moved 200 years ago."

Da Fei was stunned and wide-eyed! Holy crap, are you Detective Conan? You can even deduce the date; having you as my advisor suits a Bright Lord like me!

Da Fei hurriedly asked, "Where could they have possibly moved all their stuff?"

Tai Da frowned, "Perhaps to another World Tree Space. It shouldn't be too far. Otherwise, it's hard to imagine the Habbits making such a long-distance move with all their belongings given their limited stamina."

Da Fei's brow twitched, "Are you saying there is definitely an exit to another space nearby?"

Tai Da nodded, "Indeed, your words make sense. There are often multiple entrances and exits to World Tree Spaces. Although there's a high probability there's an exit at Mercury Lake, it's unlikely that such a small and weak creature as the Habbit would pass through there with large items. Maybe if we search outside the village for their moving tracks, we'll be able to find the exit!"

This was the key to solving the puzzle!

"We must go search immediately!" exclaimed Da Fei.

Tai Da promptly said, "I saw some broken pottery fragments on the street earlier; they must have been left behind during their move. Let's follow those pieces!"

"That makes sense! That makes sense!" replied Da Fei, eagerly.

Haha, having an advisor by your side really feels good. It's like having a caring guide for the player! If it were up to me alone, how much wisdom would it take to solve the puzzles in the game?

Now, the two followed the trail of fragments and entered the forest outside the village, where there appeared to be a faintly discernible path!

Da Fei became excited! If he really found the legendarily "friendly" and "weak" Habbits, what could possibly happen? Damn, isn't that obvious? I am their savior! With just a tremble, they'd all flock to join me!

After more than ten minutes of searching, Da Fei and Tai Da reached a wide clearing in the forest, where suddenly an undulating, twisted Space Gate appeared. Found it!

Da Fei laughed out loud, "So it's here!"

Tai Da was even more moved, "It's a natural teleportation channel that doesn't need a space password to open, indicating that the connected space nearby is extremely large!"

Isn't this just something like an instance entrance? Da Fei asked in surprise, "By the way, I always hear you talk about space passwords, what are those?"

Tai Da replied seriously, "Sir, the World Tree has many spaces, big and small. Under normal circumstances, these spaces are independent and unconnected. But we Druids have mastered some of the World Tree's operating principles and can appear in various World Tree Spaces. This is the World Tree's space password, which differs from the Demon's space laws. That's why Demons always find it difficult to break through the World Tree's spaces. However, some World Tree Spaces are very stable and large, forming these kinds of stable, bidirectional channels. Currently, all known large space channels have fortresses heavily guarded by the Kingdom. As for this place, it seems to have never been discovered before."

— System Prompt: You have obtained information about the World Tree!

Da Fei suddenly had an epiphany, "I see!" My insights have grown again. If this keeps up, will you guys crown me as a Human Race Druid too?

Tai Da, with a serious expression, asked, "Shall we proceed, sir?"

Da Fei took a deep breath, "Let's go."

As the scene changed, the surroundings suddenly became clear. Da Fei and Tai Da found themselves on a riverbank. On the bank was a dense, tall forest, while on the other side was a boundless swamp jungle, with a red nebula spreading magnificently across the sky.

Da Fei exclaimed in surprise, "Is this the next space?"

Tai Da shook his head, "My lord, this is the space passage, the junction of two spaces. What my lord sees is merely the mirrored projection of both spaces. Normally, our transport team would have to walk through many such passages to return. My lord, just follow the riverbed forward, and that will lead to the exit."

No wonder the scenery seemed so disjointed! Da Fei nodded and said, "So you mean to say, the connected space is a swamp?"

Tai Da nodded, "Exactly. It seems that the Forest Dwarves must have moved to live in the swamp. It's hard to imagine how they, with their leisurely lifestyle, could tolerate living in a place filled with poisonous insects and miasmatic air."

Da Fei couldn't help but laugh! It's better if they can't tolerate it – perfect for me to take them under my wing! But before I do, they have got to show some enthusiasm and loyalty. Not asking for much – just help me transport all of my timber, wahahaha!

As Da Fei was planning how to make use of these Hobbits, a barricade of logs appeared in front, and several red dots popped up on the radar!

What the hell, why are there red dots? Weren't the Hobbits supposed to be friendly? Da Fei asked anxiously, "We've spotted the others, but they seem to be hostile?"

Tai Da furrowed his brows, "Living in such a harsh and enclosed environment, it's quite normal to be cautious of outsiders. My lord, what should we do?"

Dammit! Now it's my turn to be asked what to do! How would I know what to do? Damn it – it's either conquer or leave! But even a noob in a game wouldn't just leave. But with just the two of us? Or should we go back and call for reinforcements? Problem is, the reinforcements that can come are those crappy Woodcutters, while the strong Tree Spirits are blocked and can't come over!

However, it seems to be just a few people on the other side. Sentinels on watch? Should we talk to them? Can we talk? Let's give it a try! This is obviously a quest scenario; there's no way they wouldn't even give us a chance to talk!

Da Fei took a deep breath, "Alright, I'll go forward and talk to them. Just in case, you stay behind, and if things go south—"

Tai Da interrupted with a shake of his head, "My lord, I am your advisor, your right-hand man, and will never shrink back in such situations. Moreover, such an action will appear weak and untrustworthy to the other side, which is not conducive to building trust."

That's an advisor for you! Aside from gaming, where could I ever find such a person in my life? Brother, I'm touched!

Da Fei nodded solemnly, "Okay then, let's go up!"

The two strode confidently towards the barricade, and the sentinels behind it immediately panicked, drawing their bows and hiding.

Da Fei called out from a distance, "Dear Hobbit friends, I am a hero of the Bright Alliance. The Demon army is coming to destroy all spaces of the World Tree, I've come to rescue you!" Since this is an Epic Quest scenario, best to get straight to the point.

And right then, a voice like that of a child's cried out excitedly from behind the barricade, "Are you the hero foretold by the elder who would come to rescue us?"

Aha? You guys have a prophecy from an elder? Ha! Is it that easy to match up? Then why the hell are your names red, trying to scare me on purpose?

Da Fei hurriedly responded, "Yes, yes, yes, I'm here to rescue you!"

At that moment, another voice shouted, "Do not trust strangers so easily! Nobody knows we are here, or else someone would have come to rescue us by now—don't come any closer, or we'll attack!"

What the hell? Are you just looking to annoy the hell out of me?

Da Fei replied urgently, "Please believe me! I really am—without any ill intentions!"

"Don't come any closer! We do not believe you!"

Damn it! I say I'm here to rescue you, you don't believe me, and when I say I have no ill intentions, you don't believe that either—alright then, even I wouldn't believe it; does the system think it's dealing with the intellect of a 3-year-old? Fine, then I'll act like I'm 4!

Da Fei gritted his teeth, "I truly am the hero tasked with saving the World Tree space, but now I've entered the space where you once lived, and I've encountered great trouble, I need help! Dear Hobbit friends, will you help me?"

Bloody hell, I'm not here to rescue you; you're supposed to be rescuing me, will that do it? If not, I'll call over 300 terrible Axemen to tear down this shabby barricade, will that suffice?

Finally, the other side responded, "Wait, we'll call the elder over!"

Finally, something sensible.

Chapter 386: Timber Development Plan

While Da Fei was pacing impatiently back and forth in the passageway, a commotion finally erupted from the opposite side, as a large group of raggedly dressed Habbit wielding crossbow arrows, slingshots, and flying forks appeared, numbering no less than 500!

Da Fei, surprised, couldn't help feeling delighted inside; so many people and they're poor! If he could recruit them all, he'd hit the jackpot!

The barrier gate was opened, and dozens of Habbit Warriors clad in slightly more decent leather armor and wielding unusual short swords escorted an elder Habbit holding a magic wand before Da Fei. This elder Habbit was actually standing on an unknown white halo, clearly a hero! And beside him was a small, young fellow, also with a wooden shield, standing on a dim white halo - another hero! Damn it, dual heroes from the start!

The fantasy of recruitment burst like a soap bubble, and Da Fei was utterly deflated on the spot.

As everyone knows, it's extremely difficult for player lords to recruit heroes' forces. The reason is simple; even if a player wants to recruit an ordinary hero in the tavern, they have to fuss over one or two quests, not to mention those epic heroes with story backgrounds, for which the difficulty is so high that few players worldwide have recruited epic heroes. As for legendary heroes, who hold high office and military power within a kingdom, that's even more unthinkable.

And these two Habbit Heroes, with their own soldiers, lands, and populations, could be considered overlords of their domain; even if they're not legendary heroes, they are the ironclad equivalents of village chiefs and should not be underestimated. To think of recruiting them, along with all their property and people? The twisted difficulty of that is even more troublesome than directly declaring war and fighting them head-on.

However, with the other side having "walls" and ranged warfare, the strength of their main hero, who seemed to be a mage, was unknown, and the strength of their troops with peculiar weapons was unclear, it seemed that war was not something Da Fei's mediocre woodcutters could handle.

After all, the best approach in such a situation is cooperation. Even if the other party is just a small village chief, they still stand on equal footing with a player, and they deserve presidential-level treatment. In fact, in the Beastman swamps of orcish territory, there are quite a few indigenous forces that can tame Petrified Giant Lizards, Death Barbaric Bulls, and even Two-legged Flying Dragons as formidable troops, and even the NPC Beastman Kingdom engages with them in a relationship of equals, affording them the status of a state within a state.

In any case, harmony is valuable! Even if they can't be recruited, developing a trade partner or even a military alliance is not a bad idea. At the very least, hero forces have decent combat capabilities.

No, I can't resign to this! They're so weak and poor, possibly the weakest hero force since the beginning of the game's open beta, I must aim to achieve the grand goal of recruitment on the foundation of cooperation and alliance!

Da Fei, having made up his mind, politely greeted the advancing village chief with a chuckle, "Hello, elder sir, I am Lord Da Fei of the Elf Kingdom, from the Radiant City of the World Tree. My mission is to prevent the Hell Army from invading the different spaces of the World Tree. While exploring, I stumbled upon this place by chance, and only then did I realize there was a Habbit village here. My mission compels me to save any residents of the World Tree Space, but, I'm very sorry to say, I have encountered some big trouble myself and don't even know how to get out. Thus, I must seek help from the elder sir!"

I'm sincere, right? I've given away all the favors, isn't that enough face for you?

At this moment, the elder, wearing a dim and old mage robe, stroked his long beard and quietly listened to Da Fei's speech, then nodded with a faint smile, "For 1000 years, you are the first person to appear here, and moreover, a hero from the Light Camp. You could very well be the hero prophesied to save us; however, we still can't fully trust you. Our exile here is also because we were abandoned by a former ally."

Damn it! With a formidable enemy at your doorstep and death imminent, what other option besides trust in me do you have? Could it be trust in the Hell Race? Damn it, not impossible, they could just surrender to them!

Da Fei hastily said, "Although I don't know your story, I will prove myself through my actions."

The elder nodded, "Good, let me introduce myself. I am Pangbo Oak Shield, the last leader of the Habbits. Lord, are there only two people left with you?"

Crap! Turns out he's the ultimate leader of a race! Damn, the stakes are raised again!

Da Fei hastily said, "My transport team— is still in the Black Forest." Originally wanting to say 'troops,' but feeling that the term was inappropriate, as it might agitate the other party, it's better to call it a transport team—after all, it was indeed a team with a certain combat capability.

Pangbo, the elder, was shocked, "This is bad, get your team to hide here quickly. Every day, the fire from the Abyss Furnace will cause the Mercury Lake in the Black Forest to boil and steam, at that time, the entire forest will be filled with mercury fog, and no living spirit can survive in such fog!"

Da Fei was startled, "Abyss Furnace?"

Pangbo shook his head, "It's a long story. I suppose, sir, you have spent considerable time discovering this place, you don't have much time left. Quickly go and arrange your team."

So there was such a lethal aspect to the Mercury Lake! Da Fei exclaimed, "My regular workers can come here, but my Tree Spirits are blocked by the trees and cannot make it through!"

Pangbo sighed, "Then there's nothing to be done, but Tree Spirits have strong vitality; they should be able to hold out for a day, right? Wait until the mercury fog settles, and then, Lord, think of a way to go and rescue."

Chapter 387: Lumber Development Plan_2

It seems that this is the only way to go. His meaning is that ordinary Tree Spirits can hold on for a day, and since mine are Elite Tree Spirits, they should have even less of a problem.

Da Fei had no choice but to say, "Thank you, elder sir, for taking us in. I'll go out immediately to meet up with the troops!"

...

Now, Da Fei and Tai Da hurried back to the Black Forest, heading straight for the lumberyard. In fact, Da Fei still had an advantage, as it hadn't taken him long to discover this place, and there should be enough time.

Da Fei then asked, "If we directly cut a path to this place, will we have enough time?"

Tai Da shook his head. "Not possible. It's impossible to do it in a day. We can only have the Tree Elf Army stand guard in place to protect our lumber. I don't know how powerful the Mercury Fog is, but Tree Spirits are not plants; they're essentially Spiritual Creatures and should be able to resist the corrosion of Mercury Fog."

Da Fei sighed, "Then that's the only way!"

Although these Tree Spirits were not his soldiers, if this damn Mercury Fog affected their combat power or even caused losses, it would definitely have a big impact on his subsequent journey. Therefore, the only remedial measure was to try to get along with these Hobbits and hope they could lend him a helping hand.

As the two approached the lumberyard, the sound of wood chopping was no longer heard.

Da Fei's complexion changed drastically, "Not good! There's a situation!"

Could it be that not a day could go by in an army without a commander? Just after leaving for a while, did the troops immediately run into trouble? Da Fei was incredibly anxious, but he had to actuate Phantom March to sneak up slowly. Soon, the map displayed the green dots of the woodcutters.

Da Fei was taken aback. What's going on? There's no enemy? Although he didn't know what exactly had happened, as long as no one died, everything was negotiable.

As they got closer, they saw the woodcutters lying haphazardly on the ground. Da Fei couldn't help but shake from head to toe, a chill running down his spine. Poisoned? No way!

But Tai Da immediately reacted, roaring, "You lazy ghosts, all of you get up!"

In that moment, the workers scrambled to their feet, grabbing their axes and rushing to their positions, resuming their clattering tree cutting!

Da Fei was stunned!

Tai Da said angrily, "Workers, they just fall asleep if you don't keep an eye on them all the time! Lord, do we retreat now, or have them also transport some of the lumber?"

Damn it, you scared the hell out of me! Da Fei finally snapped back to his senses and said furiously, "Transport the lumber! I want them overloaded! One person carrying two units!"

Tai Da immediately shouted, "All of you slept enough, right? All of you, transport the lumber!"

Now, Da Fei left the remaining 39 elite Tree Spirits to guard the lumber pile. As for the Crossbow Cannons, they were also unable to pass through the forest, so they were left behind as well.

The so-called guarding is actually just stationing. The difference is, stationing happens when there are building facilities, and as long as there is enough food left, troops will not desert, and they don't occupy the player's Command Power. However, guarding in the wild without any building support is different; troops still use up the player's Command Power, and if left unattended for a long time, they could desert or turn into wild creatures. To that extent, guarding is equal to disbanding.

Then came 300 workers, carrying 600 units of lumber, slowly starting on their way. 600 units, that's as much as one full load on a large ship. But unlike the ship, this journey was truly sluggish! Da Fei finally got a real sense of what overloaded speed meant! Compared to it, the Crossbow Cannon's one-meter-per-second marching speed seemed fast! Does that mean I have to lead such a tortoisely slow troop through various unknown spaces, facing various unknown dangers, like that Abyss Furnace the elder spoke of, and then back to Radiant City?

Damn, that's totally unreliable! Let's not even mention that my current troop configuration is too poor to sweep through everything; just how much time would it take to make stops on this journey? A day? Two days? Three days? I still have a Divine Artifact mission to take on the day after tomorrow at noon!

In any case, long-distance transportation back home just isn't feasible, at least not without a heavy military escort at present. It's essential to think long-term, and this Habbit Village is the only entity I can rely on.

That means, I must establish a solid relationship with them, then store supplies and even workers here, yes! Keep the workers here too, and when there's nothing else to do, organize these slackers to chop down trees. When they've cleared out this vast woodland, it will be about time for me to bring an army over to take over!

Yes! That's the way it should be. The more Da Fei thought about it, the more he felt this was the only reliable method, and clearer became the overall development strategy in his mind.

Having made his decision, Da Fei declared seriously, "Mr. Tai Da, I believe that this last Habbit Tribe is critical to our World Tree's defense. I wish to establish a friendly, no, a military alliance with this Habbit Village. I plan to station you in their village as our city's ambassador. All the workers will also be left to you, and the main task would be logging, storing all the timber in their village. Then, when I assemble an army to come and receive it, what do you think?"

Tai Da bowed deeply, "Lord City Lord is wise. The discovery of this Habbit Remnant is not only a stroke of luck for you but also for our Elf Kingdom. I am honored to accept this glorious mission!"

Da Fei was immensely relieved, "Then I'll leave it to you, Mr. Tai Da!"

Tai Da then remembered something, "My Lord, if my main task is logging, there might be conflicts with the Hobbits, as they might claim the Black Forest as their territory."

Da Fei frowned, "That is a problem. They might not realize the difference with these Mercury Trees, right?"

Tai Da frowned, "For a druid like me, who majored in World Tree studies, it's quite easy to discern the attributes of wood. But for the cooking-and-collecting enthusiasts like the Hobbits, perhaps it's not that easy?"

Da Fei's eyebrows twitched, World Tree major? Damn, no wonder you were sent to my Pool of Radiance, a perfect match in expertise?

Da Fei hurriedly asked, "So, not every druid can differentiate the attributes of wood?"

Tai Da smiled confidently, "Ordinary druids can still tell good wood from bad, but an expert like me who can categorize wood is on another level!"

So that's how it is! Da Fei already had a plan, "Bet on it! Bet that the old Habbit gent is clueless and doesn't recognize these Mercury Trees, let's just buy them! Buy at the price of ordinary wood! Maybe they'll be so pleased they won't just agree to our logging but even help us out?"

Tai Da nodded, "Makes sense. If they do mistake them for deadwood, the quality might even be worse than ordinary wood, meaning they would price it even lower. It's just that, I don't have money."

Money an issue? I almost forgot to deposit the 2.4 million I got from yesterday's competition at the bank! Damn, imagine how much I'd lose if I died! Right now, during the fundraising period for city-building, city funds are the same as personal funds. Time to spend money quickly!

Da Fei waved his hand generously, "Take this 2.4 million Gold Coins and use it freely, spend it to show off our city's style!"

——System Prompt: You have issued 2.4 million Gold Coins as an operational fund to your resource collection advisor Tai Da.

Tai Da trembled with excitement, "Rest assured, my Lord, I will use it well! But, But if we're so fixated on this forest, they might still become suspicious, right? If they do, it might not be conducive to establishing a cooperative relationship based on mutual trust."

Damn it! After seeing my style and the support of the Elf Kingdom, what choices do they have? Can't really spoil them rotten!

Da Fei chuckled, "Just say that this Black Forest will be the main battlefield between our army and the Hell Army. All the obstructing timber must be cut down and repurposed. Once they hear a great battle is about to take place next door, they'll surely cooperate obediently and honestly!"

Tai Da gave a thumbs up, "Lord City Lord is brilliant!"

Haha, Wahahaha!

Chapter 388: Multi-headed Snake in the Swamp

Fortunately, Da Fei had ample time indeed. Even though the logging team moved slowly and took a rest en route, they still arrived at the Space Gate before any incidents occurred.

The elder was still there to greet them in the space pathway: "Welcome, welcome, you've worked hard. Lord, please have your team rest here, I will immediately prepare our local specialties—swamp fish soup and a mushroom feast to entertain your team. Lord, would you like to visit our village?"

Da Fei chuckled: "Thank you for the hospitality, I'm truly honored!" Although it is not the most hospitable to station his troops here, the elder's attitude was still similar to the wary red name status they encountered on Pirate Island, so it was not exceedingly inappropriate. Besides, the game's rule was that troops are not allowed in cities, so they really did have the airs of a big city, didn't they?

Da Fei then turned back and said: "Unload the goods and take a rest!"

In no time, the entire passage was piled high with mountains of timber.

The elder was startled but did not ask further, simply saying: "Lord, please!"

Da Fei politely responded: "Elder first!"

Da Fei and Tai Da, guided by the elder and his entourage, exited the pathway and the scene changed immediately. Before them lay a vast, dimly lit swamp with dense shrubbery, their own location being a small isolated island. The only structure on the island was a wooden watchtower, surrounded by simple rafts.

The elder pointed at a large wooden raft by the water: "Our village is deep in Swamp Lake, Lord, please!"

Da Fei couldn't help but praise: "This is truly remarkable, such terrain forms a natural fortress. I believe even if the Hell Army discovered this place, it wouldn't fall easily."

The elder shook his head, chuckling with a sigh: "A thousand years ago, during the Solar Eclipse, the Hell Race used the power of the eclipse to unleash their large army, invading the surface world with an unstoppable momentum and bringing all living creatures to suffering. Our last surviving Hobbits gathered in the Earth Tree, Alena City, waiting for rescue. Although we Hobbits are small and possibly not worth saving, surely the Arena Alliance should not have abandoned us so easily? But on the day the city fell, no reinforcements arrived, so we were transported here using the final power of Alena..."

Tai Da coughed slightly and said: "My apologies, Elder, but the situation was indeed such that during the Solar Eclipse War a thousand years ago, the power of the Hell Race was unimaginably huge. All avatars of the Great Demon Kings were deployed, and even the Divine Realm's Angel Army was pushed back step by step. All surface forces and citizens were squeezed into the last few fortresses, lacking the strength for rescue. In fact, if it were not for the legendary hero Gru emerging from seclusion, the surface world would have been devoured!"

—System Prompt: You have acquired information about "Solar Eclipse War."

Da Fei's eyebrows jumped, more knowledge gained! And here was that frustrating information about Gru! Crap, gaining knowledge usually precedes an Epic Quest, right? Come on, is it an Epic Quest to lead your Hobbits to prosperity and flourish? Fear not, I'll take it!

The elder oh'd: "So that was the case! With the situation back then, perhaps only Gru could have turned the tide. We've lived a secluded life here for 1000 years, completely unaware of what happened afterward, it seems I misunderstood our allies."

Da Fei's eyebrows twitched, it seems this old man knew of Gru's information? Fine, once the relationship is more solidified we'll inquire further, I've almost forgotten the existence of this frustrating Gru Inheritance.

Da Fei then asked: "Elder, having been here for 1000 years, you must be quite familiar with the surroundings?"

The elder nodded: "Indeed, after our Hobbits have explored for 1000 years, there are three connected spaces in this area. One is the swamp, the Black Forest is another, which a hundred years ago was still a green paradise. And then there's the Abyss Furnace I just mentioned, the entrance to that space is over by Mercury Lake."

Da Fei exclaimed in astonishment: "So there really is a Space Gate by Mercury Lake!"

The elder sighed again: "100 years ago, there was no Mercury Lake. Later, something happened, and the entire space experienced a violent earthquake, and then a huge red Mercury Chen Sha mine appeared at the entrance of the space. Then, perhaps due to the high temperature from the adjacent space, the mine started to melt into Mercury Lake, and mercury vapor filled the area—it was a disaster! We only survived by running into this swamp. Luckily, we had already developed this swamp as a fishing spot, and our housing and equipment were sufficient for making a living, so we settled in the swamp. From time to time, when Mercury Lake cooled down, we would go back to our old village to move living supplies here, but ultimately, life was not as good as before."

Da Fei nodded: "I see! So, there is no way out from the side of Mercury Lake?"

The elder shook his head and sighed: "We're not very clear about the situation over there. It's a world of lava, and it's active with various fire element creatures of unknown strength. The temperature in the space is extremely high, not a place where ordinary creatures can survive for long."

Da Fei was suddenly astounded! Damn! So that side is Lava Land, would my team just drop dead if we went there? Is this Epic Quest screwing me over, or did I miss the timing to retreat and screw myself over? Am I going to be so frustrated that I might as well die here?

Tai Da expressed his doubts: "According to the balance principle of the World Tree Space and the spatial network distribution principles, the World Tree doesn't have an absolutely enclosed independent space."

Each space should at least be connected with two other spaces. If it's difficult to pass through on the Mercury Lake side, there should be at least one other space connected to this swamp. I wonder if the elder has discovered it?"

The elder exclaimed in admiration: "You truly are a scholar from a great country. Although I don't understand the balance distribution principle, we have also always believed that this swamp should also be connected to another unknown space, and what's certain is that the entrance to that space has been occupied by a powerful creature! Although we have been operating this fishing swamp for nearly a thousand years, we dare not get close to that powerful creature! If Lord City Lord wishes to fully explore or leave this place, there will be an insurmountable barrier over there!"

Da Fei raised his eyebrows: "What powerful creature?"

The elder spoke seriously: "The Multi-headed Snake Hydra! To my knowledge, the strength of this creature has reached at least the Demigod level! It currently has eight heads and has been half-asleep in hibernation for nearly a thousand years since we found this place. I can assure you, it's definitely conserving energy to evolve its ninth head, and once it fully awakens, it will certainly evolve into a nine-headed Hydra! According to myths, once the Multi-headed snake grows its ninth head, it becomes a god! What would happen then is unimaginable! Perhaps then, the Hell Army wouldn't even have to come here to destroy, the nine-headed Hydra alone would obliterate everything here!"

Da Fei spat out a mouthful of old blood! Why does a half-god appear in a map scene again? Did I get ahead of myself and screw up? If Lava Land is impassable and the swamp side is also blocked, is this really going to end me?

Just then, the elder pointed ahead: "We've arrived at our village!"

I have no interest in your crappy village! Da Fei looked in the direction pointed by the elder and saw a large island in the lake ahead, crowded with stilt houses supported by wood both on the island and in the water around it, looking exactly like a fishing village from the Southeast Asia, Thai-Burma area.

Tai Da couldn't help but sigh: "It really does have a swamp-style architecture."

The elder spoke seriously: "In order to survive, we have no other choice. There are powerful crocodiles, giant pythons, venomous lizards here; our dwellings must be far from the ground and water surface to

avoid threats, and we also have to contend with poisonous flies, giant mosquitoes, and miasma. Our living environment is extremely harsh! But because of the presence of that powerful creature, we can't leave. If Lord City Lord wants to rescue us, he could consider eliminating it, or finding another way out. Of course, I believe this is not a task for just Lord City Lord alone, nor for the strength of our entire tribe alone. We can try our best, but first, we need trust and understanding."

So that's it! In the end, it's all about beating monsters to gain favor!

Da Fei immediately understood: "Elder, if there are any difficulties or help you need, just tell me. I'll do my utmost to help you!"

The elder nodded: "We indeed need help. First, we need to eliminate a Croc Monster that's been harassing

Chapter 389: Success Can Be Replicated

Da Fei stepped onto the fishing village supported by wooden beams over the water. Although primitive, it was not lacking in finesse, with intricate carved patterns everywhere on the wooden railings and floors. Unfamiliar floral wreaths hung alongside dried fish. Children from the village, sitting on the railings and fishing, watched Da Fei with intrigued eyes.

Indeed, they appreciated the arts and had children. This was a species with taste and a future. If they were truly assimilated, it would greatly enhance the cultural rating of his city. However, the so-called Demigod Eight-Headed Snake was quite troublesome. For someone like him, who had toppled powerful bosses multiple times, it seemed like no boss was unconquerable, but the key was preparation time! How much time did this scene leave him?

Under the elder's enthusiastic invitation, Da Fei arrived at the village chief's wooden house, a room filled with various beast bones, bottles, jars, and herbs. A steaming pot of soup emitting green smoke was already placed on the table.

Da Fei and Tai Da were momentarily stunned.

The elder smiled and said, "This is our specialty dish, Swamp Fresh Fish Mushroom Soup. Consuming it instantly recovers fatigue, raises Life Value and Stamina limits by 15% within a day, and increases Poison Resistance by 50%. Although it doesn't look impressive or taste great, it is an exceptionally powerful

cuisine I've never encountered in the surface world. With full ingredients, its attribute boosts would further improve, as would its taste and fragrance."

Da Fei was startled, "It truly is a powerful dish! I've never heard of such a thing in the surface world either!"

Cooking, along with mining, forging, tailoring, alchemy, fishing, etc., were considered life skills. Life skills did not possess the "leadership" and "influence" attributes of hero skills, affecting only the player individually. Therefore, they did not consume the player's hero Skill Points and had a traditional proficiency upgrading model, divided into beginner, intermediate, advanced, expert, Grandmaster, and God-level. Skill Leveling was lengthy in the late stages, not as relaxed as hero skills, which could be upgraded to Master Level as long as there were enough Skill Points.

Generally speaking, life skills often appeared in non-combat NPCs, like doctors, chefs, and barbers. Lord Players recruited these high Skill Level NPCs with hefty sums to enhance their territory's comprehensive scores. Among life skills, cooking was undoubtedly the most popular, offering affordable and good-quality military rations. Meanwhile, players could open taverns in the city to make money.

Da Fei's immediate reaction was, of course, to open a tavern in the city for profit! Hobbits were indeed a culinary race. To create such an amazing meal in such a harsh place, what could they achieve upon leaving the mountains?

While in shock, another Attendant brought up a large pot of red, smoky meat. Tai Da wrinkled his nose involuntarily.

The elder smiled and said, "Braised Croc Monster Meat from the swamp, consuming it increases damage by 2 points within a day! Of course, it still smells unpleasant due to the shortage of ingredients. I'm very sorry."

Da Fei was dumbfounded, shocked on the spot! Raising damage by 2 points! There's no need to say what that means for level 1, 2, and 3 soldiers, right? Impressive! These Hobbits are truly impressive, indirectly boasting about their prowess with a table feast! I salute you!

Tai Da couldn't help but praise, "I haven't seen such a powerful recipe across the entire Elf Kingdom!"

The elder shook his head with a smile, "You're too kind, sir. The primary reason is this swamp is unlike an ordinary swamp; it's the space of the World Tree, capable of producing very special ingredients. In short, although this place is harsh, it's actually a land of wealth. We are reluctant to leave."

Ah, so that's it! Leaving this swamp would greatly reduce their value, so assimilating them might not be as beneficial as cooperation? Sure, cooperation is easy; assimilation is hard. I already have too many things giving me a headache and no reason to increase my difficulty. Of course, if cooperation becomes intimate and they plead to join me, I'd certainly not oppose it.

Da Fei then laughed and said, "I understand the elder's meaning. Although it's temporarily difficult, connecting trade with the outside world will naturally improve everyone's living standards. All right, I can't wait to cooperate with you. Please, elder, tell me more about the Croc Monster!"

The elder laughed heartily, "Great! The Lord is decisive and straightforward. Please look at the map—" the elder placed an animal hide map filled with red, yellow, blue, and green on the table.

Such a map was unheard of for Da Fei and Tai Da, leaving them dumbfounded.

The elder smiled and said, "At the center of this map is our village. The blue area is the deep water lake district, requiring a raft to navigate. The green areas are the shallow water regions, where one can wade. The red zones are extremely dangerous areas. The monster strength here is compared to the Kingdom's army strength from 1,000 years ago in the surface world. The yellow zones are manageable by us Hobbits. The Croc Monster is in the wadeable shallow area, and our fishing grounds are nearby..."

With the elder's explanations, Da Fei gained a considerable understanding of the swamp's geography. The red zone is vast, taking up at least half the map, showing that the Hobbits cannot develop half of this territory. Conversely, the more dangerous areas are, the higher their value, making this swamp's value unimaginable!

Moreover, the blue deep water lake areas were ample, appearing to have significant winds, suitable for large ships. Could he invite a massive group of mages from the Elf Kingdom to teleport his large ship here, just like with the Epic Quest back then? It's not impossible since he's triggered another annoying Epic Quest. As long as he had a big ship, even if he couldn't deal with the Demigod Eight-Headed Snake, clearing this red zone might not be impossible!

The elder started detailing the Croc Monster: "This Croc Monster is enormous. Once full, it rests on this small island. It's the perfect opportunity to kill it. However, its Attack and Defense are incredibly high, its speed astonishingly quick, and it's immune to all swamp toxins. We Hobbits are helpless against it. Once it goes underwater, it's an invincible presence that can easily demolish our largest raft. The trickier part is that since we attacked it once, it's become very cunning and alert, even tracking us to the vicinity of our village. If it goes on a rampage, our village will be in great danger..."

Da Fei began to realize the complexity of the problem as he listened to the elder's description. Though he'd slain many crocodiles on Pirate Island, even gaining the Lonely Hero Hundred Victories achievement thanks to them, that situation was extraordinary; they overate and couldn't move. Otherwise, even an NPC would fear them, let alone a single player?

"Lord, what do you think?" the elder inquired, staring intently into Da Fei's eyes after finishing the introduction.

Da Fei felt a jolt in his heart! Damn, the elder's expression was too serious! He had casually agreed earlier—what if he failed and they called him a liar?

Da Fei gritted his teeth, determined! Some of his successes couldn't be replicated, but others could, like killing a crocodile! Last time, didn't the crocodiles get overfed? Then, this time, he'll do the same to this crocodile. How simple!

Da Fei pulled out a card with information about the killer crocs from Pirate Island: "Elder, this is about the large crocodiles I encountered on the surface world, and I single-handedly killed nearly a hundred of them. How does the crocodile you mentioned compare?"

Seeing such a detailed information card, the elder was also startled, respectfully saying, "Lord City Lord, no wonder you've taken up the mission to save the World Tree at such a young age. But this Croc Monster's attributes are far stronger. The key is, it's very cunning!"

Da Fei said earnestly, "No matter how cunning, a crocodile remains a crocodile. Its insatiable nature won't change. I killed so many back then because I baited them with numerous giant lizards, which made them unable to move once swallowed whole. So here's my strategy: feed this crocodile until it's overfed, then finish it with my Crossbow Cannon!"

The elder's expression changed, "Impossible! This crocodile could eat half our fishing grounds' yield and still not be full. Moreover, we're already food scarce. How can we feed it? If we fail, wouldn't we strengthen it further?"

Da Fei hurriedly pointed to other red zones on the map, "What monsters are in these areas? You mentioned giant lizards and pythons? We could start by hunting weaker monsters. Wouldn't that work?"

The elder's face darkened, "Is this the only strategy Lord City Lord can offer? If you can accomplish this, we have no objections!"

Damn! I've only got a few troops! Fine! I'll show you!

Da Fei gritted his teeth and said, "I have 39 elite Tree Spirits in the Black Forest. As soon as today's mercury vapor clears, we can open a path to bring them over. As long as it's in the shallow regions, their powerful combat abilities will ensure our safety. Then, the elder can assign people to assist in hunting, and we can definitely clear them out. How about it?"

The elder's face grew even more sullen.

The young hero beside him, who had remained silent, suddenly exclaimed angrily, "If you let those 39 elites into our village, what of our village's safety?"

Da Fei was greatly shaken!

The elder sternly rebuked, "Billbo, watch your manners!"

Da Fei sighed quietly, realizing that the issue was the lack of trust due to the "red name" status. Of course, if he did let his troops into the village and got annoyed, he might beat them into submission and make them sing "Conquer" on their knees, couldn't he?

In other words, the mission demanded him to single-handedly and ingeniously solve the problem without the help of any loyal troops? Damn! Collaborating with you people is so aggravating; it'd be less hassle to just fight! But the problem is, I'm outmatched!

At this moment, Tai Da suddenly exclaimed, "Lord City Lord, crows! Dead crow bodies all over the Black Forest!"

Chapter 390: The Long-Lost Minstrel?

Crows? Having heard Tai Da's reminder, Da Fei suddenly came to a realization. That's right! The crows from the Black Forest have been slaughtered by my Little Fei into piles after piles, and there are still so many left unslain. If we were to collect all these crows, heavens knows how many rafts would be needed?

Da Fei immediately said, "I have another method. I've killed a lot of crows in the Black Forest. The elders can send someone to help me collect the bodies of these crows!"

The elder was shocked: "Crows transformed from the corpses in the forest? How could Lord possibly kill them?"

Psh, never seen it, have you? Scared, huh? I'm in a bad mood now, too lazy to explain to you.

Da Fei lamented, "Whether it's flying in the sky, running on the ground, or swimming in water, there's nothing this City Lord can't handle!"

The elder twitched his brow: "The origins of these crows are unclear, but anyhow, Lord's method should be viable. Tomorrow, I'll send someone to collect the bodies of the crows. A scavenger like a crocodile certainly wouldn't refuse."

Da Fei wondered, "The elder doesn't know where these crows came from?"

The elder sighed, "I don't know. It's very likely a product of some Evil Wizard attracted by the Mercury Mine. Anyway, even in what seems to be the enclosed World Tree Space, it's still full of crises."

It seems it's similar to Tai Da's guess; whatever, just solving problems one after another. It's a good chance to continue training Little Fei.

Da Fei chuckled, "Then I'll continue killing crows tomorrow, ensuring no one gets even a scratch from the crows."

The elder coughed and said, "Then we'll have to trouble Lord for this. Billbo was quite impolite to Lord just now; I hope Lord won't take it to heart. He was born and raised here, hasn't seen the outside world, and doesn't know the proper manners."

You neurotic, it's all your teaching!

Da Fei laughed heartily, "How could I mind? It's his cautious and defensive attitude that I admire the most."

The elder chuckled, "Right, to show my apology, let me give Lord a meeting gift!" With that, he pointed to the map, "Here there is a Witch Spirit Altar. Heroes can gain insights by visiting there. Billbo, to show our apology, why don't you take Lord there!"

The young hero whispered: "Understood, Grandfather."

Da Fei's brow raised! Witch Spirit Altar! A random structure! This is like the Wisdom Ancient Tree and the Mermaid I met at sea last time, a random encounter that can give players attributes, upgrade skills, and so on! Things players can't seek but can only come across by chance. If you miss this chance, there's no other shop quite like it! Damn, despite being hostile, they are willing to give me such a big gift! Fine, I'll be 'generous' to you guys in the future!

Da Fei was overjoyed, "Many thanks to the elder for the hospitality, it's something I've been longing for!"

The elder laughed, "Then I'll prepare tomorrow's collection manpower and tools."

Da Fei said with a smile, "Then the elder better prepare a lot. It's going to be way more than you could ever imagine."

...

Now, Da Fei is on a large raft, lead by Billbo, and is being rowed towards the depths of the swamp by a dozen young Habbit youths with slingshots and panpipes at their waists.

On the way, this young Habbit hero, who only reaches up to my waist, doesn't say a word. But hey, if you don't want to talk because you're naive, I can't afford to not talk, right? Even though I'm not particularly interested in talking to kids, given the game's nature, this kid is very likely to become the village chief in the future. It's essential to start building relations from a young age and to be there first at turning someone to your side.

Da Fei cleared his throat and said, "Mr. Billbo, I heard the elder say you were born and raised here. Do you yearn for the outside world?"

Billbo was silent for a moment before he popped out a sentence, "Not really. Just call me Billbo."

Damn! Aren't Hobbits characterized by their natural curiosity, love for adventure and collecting? How did you become a shut-in here? That's impossible. It's like a dog can't change its habit of eating feces; you must still be wary of me! Love collecting, huh? Everything else from my sea journey has been addressed, except that pile of junk antiques I picked up from the Vortex Sea Demon's mouth that I haven't had the chance to deal with. I have an idea!

Da Fei chuckled, "I know, the outside world is perilous, but it's also fascinating. I have a subordinate; she's not an official hero, but she fights tooth and nail to become one. Billbo, you're so young to be a hero, in my opinion, you're a genius. If your village represents the last of the Habbits, then you are the hope of the Habbit people. You have a bright future, a heavy responsibility, and so much to learn. If there's an opportunity, like now and in the near future, once we open this space's exit, I suggest you go out and explore."

Billbo's expression shifted.

Haha! Youngsters can't hide anything on their faces. Alright, time for my trump card!

Saying that, Da Fei took out a pile of antiques from his bag and hehe laughed at the young Habbit people: "Come take a look. These treasures are what I picked up from the mouth of a Vortex Sea Demon at sea. I've been too busy to deal with them. If you're interested, feel free to take them."

In that instant, all the youngsters' eyes sparkled brightly at Da Fei's pile of brightly colored, glistening trinkets, yet no one spoke, nor did anyone step forward.

Da Fei smiled, "I have no other intentions, just as a way to reciprocate the elder's hospitality. Reciprocity is the rule of the outside world."

Billbo stirred, finally giving a chuckle, "Since it's Lord's kindness, we'll accept. Everyone, pick something."

The youngsters cheered in unison and crowded forward!

Da Fei laughed heartily: "That's what a leader looks like! Billbo, you really have a knack for this. I'm rooting for you!"

Billbo smiled shyly: "Thank you for the compliment, Lord!"

— System Prompt: Your prestige among the Hobbits has become "Magnanimous"!

Prestige increase? Da Fei's eyebrows twitched! Magnanimous is also a type of prestige? It seems that despite still being a red name, it doesn't affect hostile perceptions, right? Although being "magnanimous" means being a sucker in the eyes of friends and a fat sheep in the eyes of enemies, as long as the relationship is improving, it's good enough. These treasures of mine are genuinely valuable, not just trinkets to fool children with. It's only natural to be magnanimous! But, just how much are these treasures worth? They can't be worth millions, right?

Now the youth had divided up all the antiques, as they built rafts and sang songs joyfully. The atmosphere was indeed significantly different. When it comes down to it, this is the power of treasure — more than enough to recruit heroes, let alone to win over the hearts of a small tribe with ease!

And it was at this moment that several big red blips suddenly appeared on Da Fei's radar, making him exclaim in alarm: "There's danger in the water ahead!"

Billbo asked in surprise: "Lord, you knew that?"

Oh? It seems he knew as well? Da Fei calmed down: "Of course, it's just that I can't deal with them myself."

Billbo couldn't help but admire: "You have some skills, and you're not boasting!"

The youngsters chirped excitedly: "Leave it to us!"

Psh! Does brother look like someone with no skills, having made it this far? Fine, this could be the chance to see the Hobbits' fighting power, and besides, I still don't know what type of hero Billbo is with his feet on this white halo. Da Fei watched with great interest.

Approaching closer, the water beneath the raft churned, and several creatures resembling crocodiles swam around.

Billbo waved his hand, and the youth pulled out flutes from their waists and began to play a monotonous and prolonged melody.

Da Fei was suddenly startled. Attacking with music, the legendary Minstrels?

And at that moment, the Water Monsters swirling beneath the water scattered, quickly disappearing from the radar's field of view!

"They've been driven off!" the youngsters laughed heartily and started singing joyful songs anew.

"How about that? Impressive, right?" Billbo winked boastfully at Da Fei.

Da Fei exclaimed: "Your Hero profession is the long-lost Minstrel of legend?"

Billbo was stunned for a moment, then shook his head: "I don't really know what it is, maybe my grandfather does."

Da Fei eagerly asked: "What other abilities does your profession have?"

Billbo shook his head with a smile: "There's a story in my grandfather's books. A human town was plagued with rats, and then a mysterious piper came. He said he could help rid the town of the rats. That night, he played his flute, and all the rats followed the sound of his flute and drowned in the sea."

That's the famous tale of "The Pied Piper" from Andersen's fairytales!

Da Fei was shocked: "Then the townspeople refused to pay him, and he played his flute again, leading all the children away with him!"

Billbo laughed heartily: "I'm not quite that powerful!"

Suddenly it dawned on Da Fei! Minstrels, it must be so! The Hobbits lacked strength in magic and physical combat, making it unlikely for them to produce heroes in the conventional sense. However, with their ability to sing and dance, this race was highly likely to preserve a purely supportive bard-type Hero profession! And these youngsters, of course, would be a troop type possessing ranged (slingshot) and music abilities, and judging from their intelligence, they were certainly Elite!

Brother has truly stumbled upon a treasure! My gift wasn't in vain—time for in-depth cooperation! Strengthen development!

The further they ventured ahead, the more Water Monsters they encountered, both in and on the water, including various lizards, pythons, crocodiles, and even unidentified giant creatures like rhinoceroses and hippos!

With the guidance of the youngsters' flute sounds, these giant Water Monsters made way for them!

Da Fei was impressed! If it were an ordinary army trudging through this water, who knows how many would be lost? That is the power of the Minstrel! This is achieving submission without fighting—truly the highest realm of warfare! No wonder the seemingly frail Hobbits could survive here. However, this region seemed to be only the yellow-marked area on the elder's map, which meant that over half the swamp territory was beyond the reach of the Minstrels. After all, the profession had its limitations.

At last, ahead of them appeared a small island overgrown with shrubs and swarming with pythons, and with the sound of the flutes driving them away, Da Fei safely reached the shore.

On the island was a massive, unknown beast's skull shimmering with a mysterious glow.

Billbo said with immense reverence: "This is the Ancient Witch Spirit. It was under its guidance that I became a Hero. Lord, the Witch Spirit can grant you one wish!"