

Lord of Winter: Beginning with Daily Intelligence
#Chapter 21: Has Sif Fled to Red Tide Territory? - Read
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The aroma of grilled fish permeated the air.

The women carried plates of freshly cooked fish.

The townspeople sat together, holding freshly grilled fish, eating and chatting, occasionally bursting into laughter.

"To our great lord!" someone shouted out.

Everyone raised their glasses excitedly, echoing, "To our great lord!"

Glasses clinked, and laughter filled the air.

Louis, sitting at the head, watched all of this, and couldn't help but smile.

Compared to the hidden battles at the nobles' banquets in the South, he preferred laughing, singing, and dancing around the bonfire with the common townspeople here.

Perhaps it was the influence of alcohol, Louis casually took the xylophone handed to him by a knight.

His slender fingers plucked the strings, releasing a series of clear notes, as he sang a simple tune from his homeland (Earth):

"Edelweiss, edelweiss, every morning you greet me... forever bless my homeland."

The square instantly fell silent, everyone held their breath to listen, as if transported to that faraway place.

When the last note fell, cheers erupted like a tidal wave!

"One more song!" someone led the shout.

"The Lord sings so well!"

"One more song!"

"A toast to the Lord!"

The whole square joined in the clamor, even the most reserved knights couldn't help but laugh.

Louis shook his head and chuckled, casually picking up a piece of grilled fish and taking a bite, letting the merriment and laughter drift through the night air.

.....

The next day, when Louis woke up, daylight had already spilled through the gap in the curtains, and the air still held the remnant smoke of last night's bonfire.

"... Probably drank a bit too much." He rubbed his temples and sighed tiredly.

He usually woke up before dawn to practice the breathing technique and cultivate fighting energy.

But last night was so joyous that it led to an unusually late morning today.

He instinctively reached out to the side to confirm the other half of the bed was empty before he sighed with relief.

Thankfully, no mistakes were made.

After washing up, Louis sat cross-legged on the bed, took a deep breath, and began to practice the "Tidal Breathing Technique."

The fighting energy flowed slowly through the veins, but Louis could clearly feel its stagnation.

Still at that bottleneck, a mid-tier Official Knight, unable to advance.

Dammit, when will I be able to break through?

Even though I've been training with the strictest regimen, my aptitude is too mediocre.

Relying solely on training to advance in rank is much harder for me than for others.

If only I could find something similar to the Northern Crystal Cod again...

Useless intelligence system, give me something good.

He thought helplessly, as he opened the intelligence system to see if there was anything noteworthy updated today.

[1: After the feast, the Agricultural Official Mike proposed to Tania and succeeded.]

[2: The Icefield young wolf, Leng Feng, defeated all the young wolves raised in Red Tide Territory and became their Alpha.]

[3: The former Cold Moon Tribe Little Princess, Sif, fled to Red Tide Territory. She is starving and freezing and unconscious on the prairie and will be attacked by a Frosty White Bear at 5 PM.]

The first piece of intelligence made him raise an eyebrow slightly, Mike, that old guy, actually found love again?!

This Agricultural Official spent his days with dirt, always thinking about optimizing land and increasing yield.

Who knew he would quietly handle such a big matter.

Tania, he remembered this woman, was a widow from the indigenous community, in her early thirties with three children, resilient and capable.

Mike managing to win her over was quite a surprise.

"Hmm, that's something to celebrate, looks like Red Tide Territory's population will be increasing by a few more." He shook his head with a light laugh, happy for his old comrade.

The second piece of news met his expectations.

Leng Feng lived up to expectations, standing out among the young wolves and becoming the Alpha!

Louis had confidence in him from the beginning.

After all, this young wolf naturally had a certain untamed regal demeanor.

Whether it was its physique, demeanor, or gaze, it was different from other young Icefield wolves, becoming the leader of the pack was almost inevitable.

"Very good." Louis nodded in satisfaction, "This is the war wolf I chose."

However, when his gaze fell on the third piece of intelligence, his smile vanished instantly.

The Cold Moon Tribe's Little Princess, Sif?

Fled to Red Tide Territory?

This piece of intelligence made Louis's heart sink.

Regarding intelligence about the Cold Moon Tribe, the Daily Intelligence System had always been sending him updates.

Since the old chieftain's death, the tribe had fallen into complete chaos.

The old chieftain's family was purged, the elder council lost its authority, and the leaders drew in their own forces, with factional fights worsening...

If one phrase could describe it, it would be:

The entire Cold Moon Tribe was in complete disarray.

But even so, Louis never thought the Cold Moon Tribe's Little Princess would flee to Red Tide Territory and end up unconscious.

The most pressing issue is, at 5 PM, she will be the Frosty White Bear's dinner!

"What to do with this mess?" Louis rubbed his brow and sighed.

Louis had only two choices before him—

To save her, or not to save her.

He pondered for a long time, gently tapping his fingers on the table.

Not save her?

After all, the matters of the Cold Moon Tribe are immensely complicated, and Sif's emergence could potentially bring a series of unknown troubles.

Besides, she's already unconscious on the prairie. By 5 PM, she'd become the Frosty White Bear's dinner, and there would be no further connections to deal with.

But in the end, Louis decided to step in.

Firstly, since Sif had already fled near Red Tide Territory, it meant she had distanced herself from the power struggles of the Cold Moon Tribe, reducing the risk in rescuing her.

Secondly, although he wasn't a saint, his genuine values wouldn't let him stand by.

An innocent little girl, regardless of her identity, if he had the ability to save her, he couldn't simply watch her die.

Otherwise, his conscience would never be at ease.

Thirdly, despite the idea being far-fetched and unrealistic.

What if one day his strength was sufficient, and he could use Sif's name to subdue the Cold Moon Tribe?

Of course, for now, considering these things was premature.

Overall, based on reason, kindness, and even a little bit of fantasy, Louis made the decision—to rescue her!

"Lambert." Louis called for his Guardian Knight.

Lambert quickly entered, respectfully lowering his head, "Lord?"

"I want to go hunting, have people prepare," Louis said casually.

Lambert froze slightly, looking surprised at the Lord.

Since coming to Red Tide Territory, this young lord had been busy with territorial affairs from morning till night.

Let alone hunting, he didn't even have time for a morning stroll, yet today he suddenly had a keen interest in going hunting?

As a qualified attendant, Lambert didn't ask much, just nodded and replied, "Understood, I'll arrange hunters and knights."

Chapter 22: Chapter 22: Hunting and Finding a Beautiful Maiden

Despite spring having descended upon the Northern Territory, the cold wind was still biting.

Sif's hands tightly gripped the reins, her fingertips long since numb.

The warhorse beneath her was panting heavily, its four hooves stumbling, and its sweat quickly frosting in the cold night.

Faster... just a bit faster...

Behind her was the burning fire of the Cold Moon Tribe, bought with her brother's life.

No turning back, no stopping...

"Run south, never return!"

Sigal's roar still echoed in her mind, like a nail driven deep into Sif's soul.

Sigal was dead, as were her father, mother, brothers, and sisters.

But she was still alive in disgrace, like an abandoned ghost, wandering this world with no place to call home.

Not knowing where to go, she just kept fleeing south.

The food had long been eaten up, and Sif could only quench her thirst with river water and barely stave off hunger with tree bark and some wild fruits.

After several days, the warhorse finally exhausted its strength, letting out a long neigh before collapsing.

Sif also tumbled down from the horse's back, heavily hitting the ground.

She wanted to stand up, but couldn't even move a finger.

Her consciousness gradually drifted, and Sigal's face appeared in her mind.

I'm sorry, brother... I can't go on...

Her vision gradually blurred, and Sif's consciousness sank into darkness.

.....

A mighty troop from the Red Tide was marching northward.

The hunters were focused, and the knights looked around vigilantly, all wanting to perform well in the hunt.

After all, this hunt was personally led by the Lord.

And Louis, wrapped in a thick wolf fur cloak, swayed slightly as he rode his warhorse.

A trail of chaotic animal tracks appeared on the wasteland.

An experienced hunter immediately squatted down to examine them, speaking in a low voice: "Lord, there are signs of rabbit activity ahead, and not just one."

Louis nodded gently, slowly drew the short bow from his waist, nocked an arrow, and squinted ahead.

Sure enough, beside a clump of withered grass not far away, a gray-white rabbit cautiously poked its head out.

"Whoosh——"

The arrow shot through the air, its speed nearly invisible, and instantly pierced through the rabbit's neck with precision!

The rabbit rolled over, twitched twice, and then lost all signs of life.

"Great shot!"

"As expected of the Lord!"

The hunters and knights immediately applauded and cheered, each trying to flatter.

"Indeed the Lord is skilled in both literature and martial arts, even hunting with such precision!"

"With such archery, even the Kingdom's Imperial Hunters may feel ashamed!"

"If our Northern Province had a hundred such sharpshooters, what would we fear of a Barbarian Race invasion?"

"Yes, yes! Truly a born warrior!"

Even a knight picked up the rabbit with both hands and ran to Louis, his face full of admiration: "Lord, could this rabbit be a descendant of the Beast King? Otherwise, how could it be so difficult to shoot?"

Louis's mouth slightly twitched.

This group... truly knows how to flatter.

However, he didn't mind, as the prestige and renown of a lord sometimes had to be built upon these little "legendary deeds."

Of course, this hunt was merely a cover.

The real target was the little princess about to be devoured by the Frosty White Bear.

Using hunting as an excuse to go north to find a person was Louis's way of not letting others know he had a prophetic-like ability.

Of course, Louis was also aware that some smart people around him had already started noticing the anomaly.

They were not foolish, long having sensed that their lord was "unusually lucky."

Since arriving from the south to the Northern Province, he could precisely predict all sorts of crises and opportunities.

To say this was merely coincidence, no one would believe it.

But in this fantastical worldview, even if Louis directly told them he had the "Daily Intelligence System,"

They wouldn't understand what those six words represented, as this world had no web fiction.

Thus, they attributed it all to the Dragon Ancestor's Divine Grace.

"This hunt is truly bountiful! Lord, your archery is practically divine."

"Indeed! Indeed! Even the Dragon Ancestor is blessing us today."

"Haha, we must certainly celebrate once we return."

And so, chatting and laughing, this troop made its way, yielding a plentiful harvest along the way.

The hunters killed several fat deer and even caught some rare cold-region fish by the ice river.

"Sometimes relaxing like this... doesn't seem too bad." Watching everyone in high spirits, Louis couldn't help but smile.

Suddenly, a scout hunter hurriedly rushed back to the troop, with a strange expression on his face.

"Lord! A girl has been found ahead!"

The hunter's words immediately silenced the entire hunting party, everyone looking at him in confusion.

"A girl?" Lambert frowned, "How could there be a girl in the wilderness?"

"Just not far, near the ice river." The hunter panted, with a look of lingering fear on his face, "She lay unconscious in the snow, looking like she's fainted."

Found her.

Louis's gaze subtly changed, but he maintained a calm expression: "Lead the way."

As they passed through a low forest and approached the ice river, they discovered the unconscious Sif.

The girl lay on her back in the cold snow, slightly curled up, her white short hair scattered messily with wind and snow.

The fur coat on her was worn out, with her shoulders and arms exposed to the air, frozen purple.

A few partially healed wounds showed her struggles over the past few days.

Yet her delicate face still bore a trace of stubbornness, showing not a hint of weakness, even in a faint.

An experienced hunter bent down to observe for a moment, his face changing: "Lord, she's from the Northern Tribe."

Another hunter carefully examined the patterns on her belt, softly supplementing: "Cold Moon Tribe."

The air fell silent for a few seconds.

The surrounding knights couldn't help exchanging several glances.

The Cold Moon Tribe was indeed a major enemy of the Northern Province.

But Louis only took a glance and made a decision: "Bring her back for treatment."

The knights didn't hesitate, quickly lifting the girl and cautiously placing her on a warhorse.

The hunters then led a cart full of game, and the group grandly set out on their return journey.

Upon returning to the Red Tide Territory, the girl was placed in an empty room and handed over to an indigenous healer with some medical knowledge.

Louis was silent for a moment, his gaze falling on the girl's face.

At this moment, her eyes were tightly closed, her lips cracked from the cold, her brows slightly furrowed as if fighting against death.

Louis took out a bottle of Life Potion from his family and handed it to the doctor: "Give this to her."

The doctor hesitated slightly but still slowly poured the liquid between the girl's lips.

After a while, her once pale face seemed to regain a bit of color, and her breathing steadied somewhat.

Although still unconscious, it seemed her life had been saved.

"A bottle of Life Potion is quite expensive, hope she wakes up," Louis said as he looked at the unconscious girl.

Chapter 23: Chapter 23: Identity Exposed

"Sigh, if only someone in our territory knew how to prepare Demon Soil."

Louis sat behind his desk, his fingers absentmindedly tapping on the surface, his tone sounding like a casual complaint.

But his gaze occasionally swept towards Hillco, who was sitting at the smaller desk beside him.

Hillco was engrossed in writing, documenting the fish catch and smoked fish production. The dark circles under his eyes were even more pronounced than they were last night.

Hearing Louis's complaint, he abruptly stopped writing, pressed his fingers against his temples, and tried hard to clear his mind.

Did he hear wrong?

No, it definitely wasn't an auditory hallucination.

Because this was already the fifth time he heard Louis say this today.

No matter how sleep-deprived he was, he couldn't possibly have hallucinated five times, right?

Hillco's hand paused slightly, finally confirming one thing.

This was a deliberate hint at him!

Making Demon Soil was an entry-level skill for every alchemist.

And of course, he, being an Alchemy Genius, knew how to do it.

But the problem was that he hadn't disclosed this layer of his identity to anyone, at least not in the Red Tide Territory.

So... how did Louis know?

His mind raced, trying to recall if he'd accidentally let something slip at some point.

Or maybe, he simply couldn't hide that aura of an Alchemy Genius?

In the midst of his thoughts, Louis spoke once more, still in that helpless tone: "If only we could make Demon Soil ourselves."

This was the sixth time!

Louis, like a monk chanting scriptures, and Hillco finally couldn't take it anymore.

He took a deep breath and feigned nonchalance, saying, "I know a bit, I learned some at the Church School."

As soon as the words left his mouth, Hillco wanted to smack himself.

Who was he kidding? A Church School would never teach how to make Demon Soil!

However, Louis seemed to believe this statement completely, even showing a look of sudden realization.

He asked with interest, "Oh? Is that so? Can you help me then?"

The air in the office fell into a subtle silence.

Did he really believe me?!

Hillco glanced at Louis without showing any emotions.

Louis's expression didn't look like he was fooled at all.

Instead, it looked like a gaze filled with anticipation, as if saying, "You finally admitted it, now hurry and make the Demon Soil."

Hillco: "..."

Of course, Louis knew about Hillco's identity as an Alchemy Apprentice.

The Frost Blood Redberry had to grow in highly acidic soil.

Only then could it efficiently absorb nutrients, making the fruit full and bright red, enhancing Fighting Energy better.

If the soil was neutral or alkaline, the nutrients would be tightly locked, causing the plant to grow poorly, with yellowing leaves, and even failing to bear fruit.

But the problem was, Louis only had a general idea about how to prepare acidic soil, not the specific ratios and methods.

However, he knew who did—Hillco, who was hiding his Alchemy Apprentice identity.

Louis originally wanted to wait for the other to come forward, but the current situation was special, and the cultivation of Frost Blood Redberry couldn't be delayed.

What a pity, today he would have to reveal himself.

Silence spread between the two, the firewood in the fireplace crackling.

Hillco looked down at the ledger on his desk, weighing the pros and cons.

Finally, he sighed slowly, as if finally resigning himself: "I can, but I have one condition, let me rest one day a week."

This time, it was Louis's turn to be silent.

In the current manpower shortage in the Red Tide Territory, it did seem like a bit of a waste of talent, as he hadn't taken a day off all month.

But then again, if Hillco continued working at this intensity, he might suddenly drop dead.

Louis sighed, "Alright, deal."

Hillco then wrote down a list of Demon Soil ingredients for Louis.

Most of the materials could be bought at the market in Frost Halberd City.

But one name caused Louis's gaze to linger for a moment.

Demon Marrow.

"You really dare to ask, don't you?" Louis laughed, looking up at Hillco.

"I just listed according to the most standard proportions," Hillco shrugged, "Of course, you can use substitutes, but the effect might..."

"Without Demon Marrow, the effectiveness of the Demon Soil will be greatly reduced, right?" Louis directly pointed out.

Hillco spread his hands, saying nothing.

Louis rubbed his brow; Demon Marrow was indeed a bit pricey.

The Red Tide Territory did have it, in the mines to the northwest.

But there were some minor difficulties in extracting it.

The technique of extraction was manageable; even with the most basic method, having the locals use pickaxes to knock on the veins could at least get some to make Demon Soil.

However, that wasn't the real problem.

The real issue was, according to the intelligence system, several Frost Giants had been frequently roaming near the mining area since spring.

Frost Giants, one of the most troublesome demons in the Northern Territory!

They usually inhabit extremely cold regions, with huge bodies, immense strength, and skin as hard as ice, making it difficult for ordinary weapons to inflict effective damage.

What's more troublesome is that they can manipulate cold air, creating chilling storms that slow enemies and even freeze them to death.

Previously, Louis hadn't hurried to deal with this issue.

On one hand, Red Tide Territory was in the development phase, focusing on agriculture and production, leaving no time to deal with the mines.

On the other hand, the mining area was far from residential areas, and the giants posed no real threat to the territory.

Additionally, at that time, they had little understanding of Frost Giants, and acting rashly would have been too risky.

So he only dispatched a few knights to observe them in hiding to gather more intelligence.

But now, the situation was different.

In recent months, the intelligence system had gradually provided some information about the weaknesses of Frost Giants.

And the territory's development had entered a stable phase; it was time to actively resolve this hidden threat.

Since they had to extract Demon Marrow anyway, they might as well clear out the mining area, bringing this resource fully under Red Tide Territory's control!

After pondering for a moment, Louis promptly took action.

He first summoned two knights, handed them Hillco's list, and said, "Go to Frost Halberd City and purchase the alchemy materials on this list, as quickly as possible."

"Yes!" The knights took the list and hurriedly left.

Next, he summoned Knight Captain Lambert and instructed, "Lambert, gather all the knights and prepare for battle."

Lambert was slightly taken aback but asked no questions, immediately responding, "As you command, my Lord."

"The target is the Northwest Mountain Range, to subdue the Frost Giants," Louis stated firmly, continuing, "Gather everyone, no mistakes allowed."

"Yes!" Lambert replied decisively, then stood up and left with large strides.

Soon, the knights of Red Tide Territory quickly assembled, horses neighing, charging towards the mines in the northwest of Red Tide Territory.

Chapter 24: Chapter 24: Slaughter of the Frost Giants

Louis stood on a concealed rock on the mountain, overlooking an open area in the valley below.

Four Frost Giants were throwing boulders, then using their enormous Ice Rock Staffs to hit them, playing joyfully.

"Are they playing baseball?" Louis quipped, but remained vigilant.

These colossal creatures averaged a height of 5.2 meters, their bodies covered in natural armor interwoven with ice crystals and rock fragments.

Just looking at the knotted texture of their muscles is enough to evoke thoughts of terrifying brute strength.

The casually swung Ice Rock Staff was a full six meters long and could leave a deep crevice in the ground when it struck.

Even more frightening is the layer of pale blue frost mist that surrounds the Frost Giants, their realm of extreme cold.

If a regular person got too close, their blood circulation would stall, and they might even be frozen into an ice statue.

Thankfully, there were only four; if there were forty, Louis would be fleeing the Red Tide Territory overnight.

Nervous? Not exactly.

He had already grasped the Frost Giants' weaknesses and had set traps in advance.

On top of that, he had brought along most of the Red Tide Territory's knights and hundreds of soldiers this time.

Fifty-three knights against four Frost Giants, the advantage is ours.

"Is everyone ready?" Louis asked softly.

"Yes, sir, everyone is in position," the officer responded.

"Good." Louis nodded slightly, "Execute the plan, let these big guys taste our Red Tide Territory's methods."

He slowly raised his right hand, fingers closed: "Action!"

The officer waved the large flag, and the knights ambushed at various points sprang into action simultaneously.

"Whoosh——!"

A whistling arrow tore through the sky, dragging a fiery red trail, striking the body of the Frost Giants.

Disrupted by the sudden attack, the four Frost Giants, who were happily playing, paused briefly, then let out a deafening roar. Their giant feet stomped the ground, angrily advancing towards the flames.

"Separate them!" Lambert shouted.

The knights divided into four groups, harassing the giants from different directions, using their spears to provoke them.

Every attack precisely hit the giants' most sensitive parts: knees, faces, between fingers, underarms...

The giants roared, raising their Ice Rock Staffs to sweep across, intending to crush these insect-like enemies.

But the knights were prepared, quickly retreating, using the terrain and their speed to delay, guiding the giants into the ambush zones.

A few minutes later, the four giants had been fully separated, entering different trap areas.

"Release!"

The ambush team that had been lying in wait suddenly threw the specially prepared weighty nets.

The heavy ropes accurately entangled the giants' legs.

The giants' steps faltered as they struggled to tear the restraints.

The hidden knights on the flanks rapidly advanced, their sharp spear tips or longswords thrusting into the weak points behind the giants' knees!

Puff!

The spears pierced their cold flesh, where the Ice Armor was at its thinnest.

Each stab made the giants let out earth-shattering roars, staggering back in pain.

"Retreat, switch positions!"

The warriors, unwilling to get bogged down in the fight, quickly spread out in different directions, leaving no chance for the giants to counterattack.

The giants let out painful wails, kneeling on one knee, their struggles becoming sluggish.

On the other side, the soldiers waiting in ambush hurled torches, the flames licking at the giants' sturdy Ice Armor.

Soon, their extreme cold aura began to waver, and the surface of the Ice Armor started to crack under the heat.

Whoosh whoosh whoosh!

The archers took their chance, shooting flaming arrows, the arrows slicing through the night, directly targeting the giants' faces.

Several arrows accurately struck the giants' eyes and cheeks, the flames searing their flesh.

"Roar——!!"

The giants clutched their faces in agony, struggling violently.

"Knights, prepare! Target the heart and throat!"

"Kill!!!"

The knights activated their Fighting Energy, the red Fighting Energy blazing on their longswords and spears.

They spurred their horses forward, like piercing red blades, ruthlessly stabbing at the giants' hearts and throats!

Blood sprayed, and the first giant let out one final wail before its body crashed to the ground.

Of course, the other teams didn't have it all as smooth.

From one trap area came a deafening giant roar!

"Roar——!!"

It was an especially ferocious Frost Giant, its massive body breaking free of the rope net.

Merely a slight press from its sturdy leg shook the trap-filled ground, sending stones flying.

"Damn it! This trap can't hold it!"

The lead knight's face changed, just as he was about to order the team to re-encircle, the giant had gone completely berserk!

It suddenly spread its arms wide, roaring towards the sky, the cold aura surging!

A wild frost storm violently swept in all directions!

Boom——!

The storm carried countless sharp ice blades, instantly covering the entire region.

The wind tore through the earth, catching the knights off guard, flipping them over with the strong gust!

"Ah!!"

Two Apprentice Knights were caught in the storm, their armor instantly coated with a thick layer of frost, freezing them stiff.

They were then swept by the wind, thrown hard against the rock walls, losing their ability to fight.

Another Official Knight, yet to react, was hit by the giant's sweeping staff.

He flew like a kite with a broken string dozens of meters away, crashing to the ground, blood spilling profusely from his mouth.

The scene plunged into chaos at once!

Just as the Frost Giant was about to sweep its staff again, a red Fighting Energy suddenly sliced through the blizzard, slashing straight at the giant's wrist!

Puff!

The scorching Sword Energy tore a long, narrow wound on the giant's cold iron muscles, with dark blue blood spraying out, quickly freezing into ice crystals as it hit the snow.

"Cut its leg!"

Lambert shouted angrily, raising his Giant Sword high, enveloped in intense Fighting Energy, aiming at the giant's knee!

Two Elite Knights followed closely, forming a triangular attack formation, charging the giant.

"Ha—!"

Lambert's Giant Sword slashed down fiercely, targeting the joint behind the giant's knee!

Crack!

The sword embedded deeply into the Ice Armor, cutting into the tendons, the giant's immense body shuddered violently, nearly kneeling.

Another Elite Knight took the opportunity to leap, his longsword burning with Flame Fighting Energy, thrusting into the giant's ribs!

The last knight struck at the giant's ankle, trying to completely destroy its balance!

Three swords landed together, the intense pain driving the giant into a furious rage, letting out a sky-rending roar, intending to counterattack with its staff once more!

"Stop it!"

Lambert roared, stomping the ground fiercely, leaping up again.

The Giant Sword reversed, slicing horizontally, the blade targeting the giant's wrist joint precisely!

Crack——!

The sound of bone cracking was clearly audible.

The giant's grasp on the staff slackened as the massive Ice Rock Staff slipped from its fingers, crashing to the ground, sending ice splinters flying!

"Now!!!"

Behind him, the knights raised their spears, accompanied by thunderous roars, all weapons simultaneously thrusting into the giant's vital points.

Puff! Puff! Puff! Puff!

The icy blood splattered, staining the snow red. This frenzied giant could no longer sustain itself, its massive body crashing down, completely lifeless.

Chapter 25: Chapter 25: Aftermath of Battle

The corpse of the Frost Giant lay sprawled on the ground, its massive body devoid of life, and the air was thick with the stench of blood.

Soldiers busied themselves cleaning the battlefield, while knights tended to their comrades' injuries.

Fortunately, we had adequate preparation, so the casualties were not too severe.

Most people only suffered minor frostbite or scratches, which could be treated with the ointments and bandages they carried with them.

A few physicians were busy nearby, bandaging wounds and applying warm ointment to prevent the cold from penetrating the body.

But only the knight who was flung by the rampaging Frost Giant was gravely injured.

He was pale, blood trickling from the corner of his mouth, and his armor had been shattered by the giant, leaving a deep indentation in his chest.

It was clear that his ribs were broken, and his internal organs were likely seriously damaged as well.

Though he still had faint breathing, whether he could make it through was unknown.

A physician knelt by his side, his expression grave: "The injuries are too severe, conventional treatment won't work."

The surrounding knights looked uneasy; after all, he was their comrade.

Just moments ago, they had fought side by side, and now, he lay here on the brink of death.

"He cannot die." Everyone looked up to see Louis already standing nearby.

He slowly retrieved a deep green crystal bottle from his bosom, the liquid inside emitting a faint glow.

It was an extremely precious Life Potion, capable of quickly healing wounds and even pulling a severely injured person back from the brink of death.

This kind of potion was so cherished by the nobility that it would not be used unless absolutely necessary.

Without saying much, Louis knelt on one knee and personally poured the potion into the wounded man's mouth.

As the potion entered, a miracle slowly unfolded.

The previously shallow breathing became steady, and a touch of color returned to his pale cheeks.

The sunken chest gently expanded, the broken bones began to heal, and the torn internal tissues gradually restored.

His nearly stagnant heartbeat regained strength.

The breath of life returned to the brink-of-death knight.

"His life is no longer in danger." The physician breathed a sigh of relief, "But as to how well he will recover, that depends on his fate."

The knights watched the scene, their gazes complex.

They looked at Louis, their eyes full of reverence, astounded that Louis would use such a precious potion on a knight.

Their loyalty to Louis increased: +1, +1, +1...

"Lord..." Lambert said softly, "Such a potion shouldn't be wasted on him."

Louis got up, smiling calmly: "He fought for me, for Red Tide Territory. How is it a waste to use it on him?"

His gaze swept across everyone present, his voice firm: "Those who are loyal to me, I will never easily abandon."

For a moment, all the knights straightened their backs in silence.

They pressed their hands over their hearts, responding with a knight's salute, saying nothing but expressing more than any oath.

Truthfully, Louis felt a pang of regret for the potion as well.

This was a life-saving potion his full-blooded sister secretly gave him before heading to the Northern Territory, and he had only three bottles.

The first bottle was used on the unconscious Sif.

The second on this severely injured knight.

Now, only one bottle remained in his possession.

The thought filled him with conflicting emotions.

It would be a lie to say he didn't feel a pang of regret, as this was something that could save a life, and in a critical moment, it might just save his own life.

Yet, he used it like that, though he had no regrets.

He saved Sif, and perhaps in the future, this little princess of the Cold Moon Tribe might bring some value.

He saved this knight too, making the soldiers of Red Tide Territory aware that their lord won't easily forsake them, gathering cohesion.

"Never mind, I'll leave the last bottle for myself." Louis sighed softly, casually storing the empty bottle back into his bosom.

Next, came the awarding of merits and rewards.

Louis solemnly stood before everyone as a lord, personally bestowing rewards on everyone who had earned merit.

"In this campaign, we exterminated four Frost Giants; everyone made contributions!

Perhaps other lords might not specially host a ceremony to award achievements, but I am different; merit should be rewarded."

He paused, noticing the expectant eyes of those in front of him, his mouth twitching slightly.

"However, ahem, I suppose you are aware—I am truly poor."

The soldiers exchanged looks, then burst into laughter.

Louis shrugged helplessly: "But since you've achieved merit, there must be some benefits."

After saying this, cheers and applause erupted on site.

The rewards were simple—fresh fish, game, grain, and a small amount of gold coins, yet no one showed a hint of dissatisfaction.

Because in their hearts, they knew Louis had done enough.

He wasn't a lord who merely promised empty words; he was willing to save his soldiers.

Even after they fought bloodily, despite being strapped for cash, he would do his utmost to give them rewards.

Moreover, the vast majority of lords would not bother giving achievements and rewards when dispatching troops to eradicate aliens or demons.

Once the battle was over, sending troops back for rest was considered a favor.

But Louis was different.

Their lord would personally stand and acknowledge their achievements, pledging more rewards in the future.

This is what they valued most.

"It's our honor to serve the lord!"

"May the Dragon Ancestor bless Red Tide Territory!"

All the soldiers and knights bore no grievances and even felt grateful.

They happily accepted the not-so-lavish rewards, wearing satisfied smiles.

The question of how to deal with the giant corpses arose.

The Northern Territory lacked food, every piece of meat was precious. If these were ordinary game, they would have been skinned and processed into jerky for preservation.

But Frost Giants, after all, were humanoid creatures.

Looking at those massive corpses, Louis felt some resistance.

Moreover, even though the Red Tide Territory's resources were limited, it hadn't reached the point where such means were necessary to fill stomachs.

"Don't eat them, take them all back for processing." He decisively ordered.

The knights had no objections, as their lord always acted with principles.

But abandoning the corpses seemed like a waste.

After all, the bodies of these Frost Giants contained vast Cold Energy. Even in death, their flesh was rich with special nutrients.

With this thought, inspiration struck Louis: "If we can't eat them, let's put them to good use; they can be made into fertilizer."

"Fertilizer?" Lambert was briefly stunned, then nodded thoughtfully.

This was indeed a good idea; the giant's flesh, rich with Magic Essence, could significantly improve the land scarcity issue of the Red Tide Territory if processed appropriately.

"Take them back and hand them over to the Agricultural Official, Mike."

So, the soldiers began to clean the battlefield, loading the giant corpses onto makeshift wooden frames and slowly transporting them back to the Red Tide Territory with horses.

Chapter 26: Chapter 26: Fertilizer and Seeds

As the Frost Giant's corpse was dragged away, the bloody aura on the battlefield finally began to dissipate slowly.

But for Louis, the true goal of this operation was just beginning, which was to mine the Demon Marrow Ore.

Demon Marrow, as the core material of Explosive Alchemy Object, is extremely rare.

Even in the entire Northern Territory, or even throughout the Ironblood Empire, such deposits are a rarity.

Fortunately, this deposit is buried very deep, so it has always gone undiscovered, otherwise, it wouldn't have been Louis's turn.

Moreover, without the guidance of the Daily Intelligence System, Louis would never have been able to find it.

The knights were stationed outside, as a team of villagers, equipped with pickaxes, gloves, and simple protective gear, slowly entered the mining area and began to cautiously excavate.

Shovelfuls of rubble were dug up, accompanied by a crisp "clang," a hint of deep purple crystal finally emerged from beneath the strata.

It was a mineral that emitted a faint glow, exuding a mysterious energy wave.

"First take a small portion and, according to Hillco's suggestion, adjust the Demon Soil formula," Louis ordered, "Store the rest for now."

He didn't rush to order large-scale mining.

After all, this requires professional personnel, tunnel reinforcement, mining techniques, and alchemical extraction—each one not easily resolved.

In the letter he previously sent to his father, he specifically mentioned the need for support in this area.

If his father is willing to send help, that would naturally be the best case scenario.

Otherwise, Louis would have to think of ways to recruit experienced craftsmen from the outside.

.....

The spring sunlight sprinkled over the farmlands of Red Tide Territory, with a breeze carrying the fresh scent of new sprouts.

Louis stood on high ground, overlooking the land gradually stirring back to life.

A few weeks ago, this place was still a barren field sown with seeds.

Now, the rye has broken the soil, potato sprouts are peeking through the surface, and turnip seedlings are gently swaying with the wind.

"It seems this year's harvest shouldn't be too bad." A satisfied smile appeared on his lips.

Just then, urgent footsteps sounded in the distance.

Mike came running, carrying a bit of unease.

Though he had successfully proposed, he had not formally reported to the Lord yet.

As a former slave, Mike's heart still harbored some fear towards his master.

Even though he was now a freedman, he still believed that a marriage proposal required his master's approval.

What if Louis was unwilling? What if he disapproved?

These thoughts swirled in Mike's mind, making his steps heavier than usual.

However, before he could speak, Louis flashed a faint smile and said aloud, "Mike, congratulations on your successful proposal."

Mike was completely stunned.

He hadn't said anything yet! How did the Lord know?!

Shock, fear, disbelief—all kinds of emotions surged in his heart, and he almost instinctively wanted to kneel.

However, a fair hand supported him.

Louis frowned slightly, his tone brooking no argument, "Mike, you're now the Chief of Agriculture. Quit that kneeling business."

Mike suddenly came to his senses, with slightly reddened eyes, lips moving as if he wanted to say something.

But he was interrupted by a gift Louis handed over.

It was two strips of smoked fish.

They were tied with a thin string, even in a crooked little bow.

Mike was dumbfounded.

"This is a wedding gift," Louis said calmly, "Though I'm a bit tight on money lately, I thought it's important to give some gift."

"..."

Mike tightly grasped the gift, his lips trembling, and finally couldn't help it, tears pattered down.

He never thought he would receive such a blessing from the Lord.

He had thought he would have to cautiously seek the Lord's approval, maybe get reprimanded, or even be asked to pay a price.

"Stop crying," Louis patted Mike's shoulder, "Isn't this a good thing?"

Mike sniffled, nodding vigorously, trying to calm himself down.

"Alright, get your emotions in check, I have official business to discuss with you."

Hearing this, Mike took a deep breath, wiped away his tears, and stood straight: "At your command!"

Louis tilted his head slightly, signaling Mike to look back.

Mike instinctively followed the gaze, then his eyes widened, sucking in a breath of cold air.

Four massive bodies lay at the edge of the field, their ravaged torsos a patchwork of wounds, the frost covering their skin beginning to melt and revealing dark blue flesh.

"This... such huge corpses..." Mike's Adam's apple bobbed, regaining his voice after a long pause.

"Don't just stand there, I want you to process these corpses into fertilizer," Louis said with a smile.

"Fertil-fertilizer?" Mike was so astonished, he almost bit his tongue.

He had never heard of using Frost Giant's corpses to make fertilizer!

Yet Louis's tone was matter-of-fact, "The muscles of a Frost Giant are rich in minerals; used properly, they might produce a miraculous effect on crops."

Mike's mouth twitched slightly, but his mind began racing, thinking about how to handle these four "mountains of fertilizer."

But before his shock could fully fade, Louis's next words tightened his nerves once again.

"There's also this." Louis took a small cloth bag from his pocket, solemnly handing it to Mike.

Inside were half of the Frost Blood Redberry seeds. Being so precious, Louis dared not take risks and could only cultivate a part test-wise.

He entrusted them to Mike because the Intelligence System once noted that Mike has an astonishing talent for planting.

Louis believed that, given proper guidance, Mike would cultivate them several times better than himself.

Mike quickly reached out to take them, carefully opening it to see what looked like ordinary fruit seeds.

"This... this is..."

"Frost Blood Redberry seeds," Louis did not delve into details, "Anyway, they are extremely precious. Each seed is worth hundreds of gold coins."

Mike's eyes widened abruptly, his breathing becoming labored.

One seed could buy hundreds of slaves like himself!

"These... you want me to handle these?" Mike's hands trembled slightly, afraid that a mishap would ruin these valuable seeds.

Louis nodded, "This batch of seeds is very rare and requires meticulous cultivation. If there are any problems, you can come to me at any time.

I've already had someone research a suitable Demon Soil formula, but it still needs time. So your task now is to bury these seeds in ice to activate them."

"Al-Alright!" Mike carefully cradled the seeds, "I'll take good care of them and won't let a single one get damaged!"

Just then, a guard hurried over and said to Louis, "My lord, the girl we rescued earlier has woken up."

Chapter 27: Chapter 27: Sif Awakens

Consciousness drifted between chaos and reality, like sinking into the deep sea, then slowly being pulled back to the surface.

Sif slowly opened her eyes as her blurry vision gradually became clear.

What appeared before her was an unfamiliar wooden ceiling, and the air was filled with a faint scent of smoke and fire.

Her body was enveloped in warm bedding, her skin clearly feeling the comfort of the temperature.

Instinctive vigilance made her quickly survey her surroundings.

This was a wooden hut, its walls and beams were simple yet tidy, with a few basic wooden tables and chairs, and a fireplace burning warmly.

Thankfully, there were no imprisoning chains or obvious weapons.

Sif tried to turn over, but she immediately felt her body was unresponsive, so weak that even a slight movement was extremely exhausting.

Terrible! This body can't move at all!

This made her heart sink involuntarily.

Then the tragic memories surged like the tide.

The annihilation of the Cold Moon Tribe.

Brothers and sisters, parents all died miserably due to betrayal.

The last elder brother perished along with the enemy to cover her escape.

She closed her eyes, grief welled in her heart, her chest felt as though it was weighed down by a boulder, making it hard to breathe.

"At least I'm still alive, and have the chance for revenge!"

She gritted her teeth, forced herself to endure the soreness in her eyes, and tried to calm her emotions.

At that moment, the wooden door creaked open.

Sif suddenly opened her eyes, looking warily toward the door.

She thought she would see unknown soldiers, the nobility, or the murderers who slaughtered her tribe.

Yet it was a frail middle-aged woman who came in, appearing to be in her forties, with wrinkles on her face.

She was dressed in simple cotton clothing, holding a tray with a bowl of porridge and a cup of warm water, the steaming heat carrying a hint of food fragrance.

Seeing Sif awake, a flash of delight passed through the woman's eyes: "Oh, finally awake, you have such a big life, child."

The middle-aged woman gently lifted Sif's upper body, letting her lean against a soft pillow.

Then she picked up a cup of warm water, slowly brought it to Sif's lips, saying gently, "Have some water first, moisten your throat, you've been asleep for several days."

After hesitating for a moment, Sif eventually slightly parted her lips, allowing the woman to bring the cup closer to her lips.

Warm water slowly flowed into her mouth, finally somewhat relieving the fiery burn in her throat.

Sif couldn't help but swallow gently, her awareness slowly becoming clearer with the nourishment of the water.

"Slow down, don't rush," the woman spoke with some heartbreak in her tone, "Poor child, you've definitely suffered a lot..."

Sif's eyelids lightly fluttered, a faint shadow passing through her eyes, yet she didn't respond to the woman's words.

"If it weren't for the Lord sending people to save you, you'd probably have been carried off by wild beasts!" The woman patted her back lightly and started babbling to herself.

Upon hearing this, Sif faintly lowered her gaze, her fingertips quietly tightening.

The Lord?

Is he a Southern noble?!

Vigilance rose in her heart, yet her face continued to show silence.

The woman didn't notice her psychological change, continuing her chatter: "Don't be afraid. Although our Lord is young, he's an impressive person with a kind heart, who can't bear to see others suffer.

You might not know, he even rescues injured slaves, and we displaced people have received a lot of care from him."

She spoke easily, but Sif became increasingly uneasy inside.

She had been picked up by a Southern Barbarian noble!

Since childhood, she heard countless rumors about the Empire.

They were cunning invaders, each cold-blooded and ruthless, who liked to deceive the weak with lies, then mercilessly devour everything.

And now she had fallen into the hands of such people, Sif became increasingly uneasy.

Above all, she absolutely must not let them know her true identity.

Though her family was now exterminated, her former identity as a Cold Moon Tribe princess still held great value.

For those in power, she was a useful political pawn.

Might even be sent to the Empire's Royal Court, becoming some noble's plaything.

Sif could never accept such a fate.

So, what should she do now?

Her fingers curled slightly, her heart beating uneasily.

Escape directly?

Sif quickly dismissed the idea.

Currently, her body couldn't move, let alone her lack of understanding of the terrain here.

Running away recklessly would result in either dying on the road or being captured again, worsening her situation.

Pretend to comply?

Perhaps that was an option.

She could pretend to be obedient, secretly observing everything here, then find a suitable chance to escape.

But doing so would require cautious actions, never letting them know her identity, nor revealing her intention to flee.

Most importantly, she must learn who this "Lord" really was.

If he truly was as the woman described, a kind-hearted person, perhaps she could find some breathing space.

But if he was only superficially kind, while actually cold and cruel inside, then she must plan for the worst.

Regardless, she couldn't sit and wait for her doom.

While she pondered wildly, footsteps suddenly came from outside, accompanied by a guard's announcement: "The Lord is here."

Sif's body instinctively tensed up, fingertips gripping the bedding, holding her breath.

She was ready to face an overweight, leering, heavily perfumed Imperial noble.

She had even rehearsed numerous times in her mind the upcoming scenario.

If he humiliated her, she'd pretend to comply, waiting for a chance to escape.

Yet when the door opened, the reality completely caught her off guard.

Who walked in was a young man with dark hair and handsome features.

He seemed to be just over twenty years old, tall and straight, dressed neatly and elegantly, neither overly luxurious nor too plain, everything just right.

He had no intense pungent perfume scent, no exaggerated flashy jewelry, nor any aura of brutality or bloodthirstiness, even carrying a touch of refreshing neatness.

His gaze carried scrutiny, but not the kind of disdain from above, even with a hint of warmth in his eyes?

Sif was stunned for a moment.

This is... an Ironblood Empire noble?

This was entirely inconsistent with the education she received since childhood!

In her understanding, Imperial nobles were either fat, greedy buffoons or cold-blooded and ruthless butchers, bloodthirsty, arrogant, seeing Northern Alien Races as beasts.

Yet this young man in front of her looked nothing like that.

But she quickly pulled herself together, alarm bells ringing in her mind.

Don't be deceived by appearances!

This man perhaps was just more adept at disguising than other Southern Barbarians.

His appearance was clean, manners graceful, but that didn't mean he lacked ambition or schemes.

So she must be extra cautious!

Sif suppressed her doubts, lowered her gaze, discreetly observing the young man's every move.

Chapter 28: Chapter 28: White-Haired Beauty

The room was silent, with only the soft crackling of the burning wood in the fireplace.

Louis stood by the bed, looking at the frail girl in front of him.

Her skin was paler than that of the Imperial People, with a cool northern hue.

Her short silver hair was slightly disheveled, her eyes a deep blue with an air of mystery.

Though slender, she had muscle lines hidden beneath her taut skin, like a leopard ready to pounce.

Even in such a predicament, her gaze was neither servile nor overbearing, with an almost imperceptible sense of vigilance.

Louis asked, "What's your name?"

Sif looked at him quietly, not answering.

"Where are you from?"

Still silent.

"Where are you going?"

The firelight reflected on the girl's serene face, as if she hadn't heard him, she remained silent.

Beside her, the kind-hearted aunt sighed and gently patted Sif's hand.

Her tone carried a trace of pity, "Poor child, don't be afraid, we're all good people here. The Lord saved you, he won't harm you."

Yet Sif's mind was racing.

She was well aware that if she fabricated an identity, it could easily be exposed.

And if she tried to avoid the questions, it might arouse suspicion.

The best solution she could think of was to play dumb, answering nothing.

She didn't want to expose her identity, so she tacitly chose silence.

Unexpectedly, the response from the other side was more understanding than she had imagined.

Louis pretended to be deep in thought as he looked at her.

After a moment, as if he had come to some conclusion, he mildly said, "It seems you've lost your memory?"

Sif was slightly taken aback, not expecting Louis to offer such an explanation on his own.

She slightly lowered her gaze, neither confirming nor denying, accepting this assumption by default.

Louis looked at her silver hair and nonchalantly said, "Since you've lost your memory, you might as well stay here for now."

Then, he thought for a moment, a vague smile appearing at the corner of his mouth: "Your hair is white, so let's call you 'Xiaobai' from now on."

In an instant, Sif's pupils contracted slightly, fury rising within her heart.

Xiaobai?!

She was a princess of the Cold Moon Tribe, educated in the ways of royalty from a young age, taught by her father about the noble bloodline, and the future of the clan on her shoulders.

Now she was casually given a pet-like name by a Southern Barbarian?!

Her nails dug deeply into her palms, struggling to contain her anger.

Sif told herself not to reveal emotions, not to let him notice her true identity.

So she remained silent, gritting her teeth, not saying a word.

But in her heart, she had already secretly remembered this Southern Barbarian who insulted her.

"Can you read?" Louis asked casually, as if simply mentioning it.

While trying to control her anger, Sif instinctively nodded.

But almost at the same time, she realized she had made a mistake.

This reaction was too quick, too natural.

In the Cold Moon Tribe, only the nobility had the opportunity to learn the words and language of the Southern people.

Therefore, even though Sif's father was extremely hostile to the southern people, he still hired a southern teacher to teach her language and writing.

Now it had become a potential flaw that could betray her identity.

Sif subtly observed Louis's expression, trying to judge if he had noticed anything.

But Louis seemed unaware of her mistake, thoughtfully nodding, "Then you can be my secretary from now on."

"Secretary?"

Sif didn't react for a moment, as she had never heard this term before.

Louis explained, "It's just to help me jot down some things and handle some trivial matters. Don't worry, it's nothing difficult, and you won't need to do anything dangerous."

Sif lowered her gaze, lost in thought.

A secretary didn't sound like a slave or prisoner, nor like any dangerous occupation.

At least compared to being imprisoned, tortured, or even executed, this arrangement was much better.

Moreover, she seemed to have no better choice.

So Sif gently nodded, which was considered as consenting to this arrangement.

This wasn't submission, but endurance. Sif told herself.

Seeing this, Louis's mouth curled into a slight smile, then he stood up: "You've just woken up, rest well for now, and we'll talk when you've recovered."

After saying that, he didn't say more, striding towards the door.

Sif watched Louis's back as he left, her fingers slightly tightening on the bedding, her eyes complex.

This man hadn't shown any obvious malice, but he couldn't be considered truly benevolent either.

What exactly was he thinking?

For now, she couldn't determine and dared not draw conclusions recklessly.

But one thing she was very clear about, no matter what, her ultimate goal wouldn't change.

Survive, then revenge!

On the other side, Louis walked out of the room, a faint smile on his lips, as if he was in a good mood.

Making Sif a secretary was indeed a good idea.

Louis didn't care about Sif concealing her identity.

He had already understood the basics of Sif's identity through the intelligence system.

Who she was didn't matter, what mattered was she was nothing now.

Even if the time came when he could utilize Sif's identity, he wouldn't need her consent.

As long as Sif was now in his domain, under his control, that was enough.

Louis even found Sif's deliberate concealment somewhat charming.

Like a stray dog picked up, too afraid to bark, constantly wary in her eyes, her tail slightly tucked.

Unwilling to get close, afraid to act rashly, terrified of being slaughtered and eaten if not careful.

As for her ability to write, this was an unexpected delight.

With this, Hillco's workload pressure could be greatly reduced, and he wouldn't have to constantly complain about being buried under paperwork.

Moreover, having a white-haired beautiful girl around would undoubtedly improve one's work mood, right?

In high spirits, he stepped forward, turning to the craftsman workshop to discuss the castle construction with Mike.

The construction in Red Tide Territory was in full swing.

Thanks to the ease of building semi-subterranean communal dwellings and the hard work of the slaves, rows of neat houses sprang up, and the semi-subterranean communal dwellings had already taken shape.

It could be called a miracle in the history of construction in the Northern Territory.

Now knights each had independent rooms, soldiers two to a room, free citizens three to a room, and slaves six to a room, with households even able to apply for independent residences.

Such housing arrangements were a huge boon in the barren northern domains.

At least when winter came, no one would be homeless and freeze to death in the snow.

This was almost unimaginable in other territories, but under Louis's governance, all of this had become a reality.

However, simply accommodating the people wasn't enough.

Now that the foundations of Red Tide Territory were gradually stabilizing, it was time to allocate half the craftspeople and labor force to start building a true lord's castle.

Chapter 29: Chapter 29: Mike the Foolish Old Man

The workshop was filled with the scent of sweat, and various clanging sounds echoed in the air.

Craftsmen of all kinds were working tensely and orderly at their respective positions.

Even the apprentices were thrown into the busy work.

The entire workshop was like a precision machine in operation, with every part working in close sync.

The industrial prototype of the Red Tide Territory was quietly taking shape!

Louis watched all of this, nodding with satisfaction.

This time, he had a clear goal, and he went straight to the depths of the workshop to find the head of the craftsmen—Mike.

Mike was holding a hammer, pounding on the planks, pretending to be busy to cover up the fact that he was slacking off just a moment ago.

It wasn't until Louis approached that he put down his tools, showing an excited expression: "Lord, what brought you here?"

"It's time to build the castle." Louis cut straight to the point with no unnecessary talk.

"Build a castle?!" Mike was instantly excited, he had been waiting for this day for a long time.

"Lord, give me fifty years! I'll definitely build you the largest and most majestic castle of the Ironblood Empire in the Northern Territory!"

"Fifty years? I'm already seventy, you'd probably be in a coffin." Louis was speechless.

He suspected Mike was a wonder enthusiast.

Mike laughed heartily: "When I die, my apprentice will build it, and when the apprentice dies, my apprentice's apprentice will build it!"

Louis twitched his mouth slightly and couldn't help but retort: "Are you Yu Gong? Planning for countless generations."

Mike scratched his head: "Who is Yu Gong?"

Louis waved his hand helplessly: "Not important, let's be realistic, we don't have much time. The castle needs to be built quickly. It must be quick and functional, with defense as the priority."

As he spoke, he retrieved a castle design drawing he had made from his pocket and handed it to Mike.

The blueprint detailed the functions of each area of the castle very clearly.

"The castle must balance defensive effectiveness, functional integration, and aesthetics, but most importantly, defense. 80% of the focus is on defense, 20% on livability. We must not weaken the defense for the sake of comfort."

Louis pointed to the detailed annotations above and introduced them.

Mike glanced at the drawing, his expression subtle, finally spoke with difficulty:

"Lord, this design is great... but for this kind of stone castle, it would take at least ten years. With this complexity, it might take thirty or forty years to complete."

Louis was dumbfounded: "Ten years? Thirty to forty years?"

He thought he had thoroughly considered efficiency, but he realized his plan was entirely unrealistic.

He originally planned to build a sufficiently sturdy castle as quickly as possible, not expecting that even thirty or forty years wouldn't be enough.

Mike looked at him with a somewhat awkward smile: "To tell the truth, with our technology and number of workers, achieving this level would indeed require time."

Louis furrowed his brows, weighing his options in his mind.

The Red Tide Territory has now had some scale, but against external threats, it remains fragile.

A castle is not for a luxurious life, but a barrier for survival.

The Cold Moon Tribe is in turmoil now, but once united, they will surely come south.

And the Northern Territory is not just facing this danger, there are also the Glacial Orcs to the north, and the rebel factions from the Snow Country.

These crises are like a runaway truck quickly heading towards the Red Tide Territory.

Louis doesn't have the luxury of waiting ten, thirty years.

Nor can he wait until he's old to move into this ideal castle.

He changed his question: "Is there a faster alternative?"

Mike was stunned for a moment, hesitantly started: "Um... well..."

He looked at the hammer in his hand, then at the busy craftsmen around him, seemingly trying to come up with a reasonable solution, but all he could do was shake his head helplessly.

"I haven't studied much, don't have much of an innovative mind." Mike said with a bitter smile.

Louis sighed helplessly, waved his hand: "Forget it, I'll figure something out myself."

Afterward, Louis closed his eyes, recalling in his mind those classic architectural forms he had seen in his previous life.

The tall walls of castles, the sturdiness of watchtowers, the heaviness of fortresses, each building revolving in his mind, but they all required a lot of time and resources to build.

"Not good enough, not fast enough..." he muttered.

Suddenly, a thought flashed through Louis's mind, like a lightning bolt tearing through the silent darkness.

"Earth Tower!" he blurted out.

Earth Tower, he remembered those buildings from his hometown in his previous life.

They were unique dwellings built by the Hakka to avoid chaos, surrounded by walls, sturdy, durable, and capable of accommodating hundreds of people.

Revered as "oriental ancient castles."

Most importantly, Earth Towers are quick to build!

"Yes! This is what I need!"

He quickly picked up the pen beside him and rapidly modified the original complex castle design into a large cylindrical structure on the blueprint.

Mike, standing aside, frowned: "This bare thing has no aesthetic at all."

Louis rolled his eyes directly: "Aesthetic? What use is aesthetics, practicality is what matters! It can block enemies and accommodate everyone; that's the crucial point!"

He tapped the paper with the pen, explaining: "Look, this circular structure can disperse external pressure to the greatest extent, providing strong defense.

And using earth materials, it's cost-effective, fast, and doesn't require too much time or resources!"

Mike helplessly rubbed his hair, starting to carefully observe Louis' "castle" design.

But he quickly realized Louis was indeed making sense.

Though this "Earth Tower" looked simple and rugged, it was undoubtedly a practical and efficient choice.

Louis stood at the center of the craftsmen's workshop, waving the blueprint in his hand, and began explaining his construction plan to the craftsmen one by one.

"Firstly, location selection is important," he pointed to a marked spot on the blueprint.

"The castle is best near hot springs, but not too close, as the geothermal energy from hot springs can provide natural heating for the building.

Also, we can channel hot spring water under the floor through pipes in winter; the floor will retain heat, keeping it warm in winter, akin to a natural underfloor heating.

This way, there's no need to worry about the cold in winter."

The craftsmen widened their eyes, never expecting such an operation.

Seeing their reactions, Louis revealed a smug smile and continued, "Next is the defensive outer wall. We will use a 1-meter-thick stone wall to form a circular structure and add hot spring clay to form a central earthen wall, making it robust and highly defensive.

The inner circle consists of wooden frame housing, with huge wooden pillars as uprights, reinforced beams, split into multi-layer living areas.

The ground floor for storage, the second, third, and fourth floors for living, with wooden ladders made from trimmed tree trunks, both simple and practical."

He sketched a simple internal structure on the blueprint.

Chapter 30: Chapter 30: A Letter from the Northern Territory

Louis continued to explain his design concept: "In terms of defense, the main gate will be covered with thick iron, which not only guards against cutting but also counters fire attacks.

The top of the stone wall can have arrow slits designed, allowing our archers to engage the enemy from within at any time.

Concealed spots on the roof will have openings for boiling oil; if enemies attempt to climb, we can pour scalding oil directly on them to burn them alive.

These cunning tricks can greatly enhance the defensive capability of the Earth Tower."

In the end, he patted the blueprint and summarized: "A circle of stones, mud plastered with grass, the wood frame for the interior, hot spring water as a stove, Earth Tower castle complete!"

The craftsmen listened in awe, completely stunned by such a simple yet practical design.

What surprised them even more was that Louis was able to design such a complete structure in a short time.

Some even couldn't help but murmur in admiration: "Lord, you're simply a genius!"

Mike pondered for a moment, slowly nodding: "It is indeed feasible; the construction period might be shortened to within half a year, perhaps even faster..."

but I can't guarantee success, for this is something new, unprecedented."

"You all study the specific techniques, and do your best." Louis patted him on the shoulder.

Hearing Louis's words, the craftsmen started discussing in low voices, excitement spreading through the workshop.

If this bold plan succeeds, it will not only provide stronger defense for the Red Tide Territory but also further enhance its reputation in the Northern Territory.

And so, the Earth Tower plan of the Red Tide Territory officially commenced.

.....

Duke Calvin, as usual, did his favorite exercise after waking up, stretching his muscles.

Then he washed, dressed, and finally sat in the study to begin reading the piles of letters.

Most of the letters were about mundane affairs, land management, economic maneuvers, marriages between nobility, dispute mediation...

Suddenly, his gaze fell upon a particular letter.

The sender was Louis Calvin.

The name made Duke Calvin pause slightly; it was somewhat familiar.

After a moment's thought, he finally remembered Louis was his eighth son, the one whose mother died early and had terrible talent.

Just a few months ago, to comply with the Emperor's expansion decree, he had casually sent him to the Northern Territory to develop the wasteland.

"Alas, having too many children makes even remembering them a difficult task," Duke Calvin sighed in a Versailles manner.

He now had ten daughters, twelve sons, and two concubines currently pregnant.

Regarding child-rearing, he always adhered to the strategy of winning by numbers: as long as there are enough born, a few would eventually succeed.

And this tactic indeed proved effective.

For instance, his eldest son Gaius was now the deputy commander of the Empire's Imperial Guard Dragon Blood Knight Order.

The next Calvin Clan Leader would most likely be him.

The Duke looked at the envelope stamped with the Calvin Family crest, feeling slightly impatient.

This was probably a letter pleading to return to the South.

But since it had been sent, he might as well have a look.

The letter's content began with Louis's simple well-wishes, stating he had safely arrived at the Northern Territory fief, and all affairs were on track.

Then it mentioned a surprising piece of information.

Louis discovered that the fief contained a large amount of Cold Iron Ore, and even came across the extremely rare Demon Marrow Ore.

Seeing this, Duke Calvin couldn't help but chuckle.

Demon Marrow Ore, only the Jade Federation had such abundant mines, while the Ironblood Empire had very few Demon Marrow Ore mines.

He thought Louis had hit a stroke of luck and completely didn't believe this child discovered such valuable resources through his own insight.

But regardless, the value of this territory indeed increased greatly, worth investing more resources for development.

Yet what the letter continued to say surprised Duke Calvin even more.

Initially, he expected Louis to request indulgences, like fine food, wine, beauties... the luxuries of life.

However, Louis's requests were completely different from what the Duke anticipated.

He proposed a series of practical and pragmatic requests:

Craftsmen in construction and mining to improve the basic infrastructure of the territory, especially mining operations and castle building.

Secondly, he requested the provision of food, various seeds, and livestock.

Finally, he particularly mentioned Blood Stone, a mysterious mineral capable of testing if people possess the potential to become knights.

"Looks like this kid is much smarter than I imagined."

The Duke slightly raised his eyebrows, feeling a hint of interest in this nearly forgotten son.

Having finished reading the letter, Duke Calvin thoughtfully tapped the table.

Recent dilemmas quietly emerged in his mind.

The Emperor's measures against the old nobility had become increasingly harsh, gradually weakening the power of the Eight Great Clans.

Meanwhile, new nobles were continuously emerging, intensifying the struggle for interests.

The political landscape of the Ironblood Empire was now more unpredictable than ever, and he too began to feel unprecedented pressure.

Perhaps expanding into the Northern Territory was a viable path, he mused.

Of course, devoting substantial support to the Northern Territory was impossible.

But using the territory under Louis to plant a seed in the North was not a bad choice.

Having figured it all out, Duke Calvin commanded his guard: "Have Bradley come over."

Moments later, an old butler walked into the study.

Duke Calvin gestured for him to sit, then picked up the letter from Louis on the table, slowly placing it in front of Bradley.

"This is a letter from Louis..." Duke Calvin paused slightly, "He requested talent and resources from me. I thought it over and decided to give him some support."

Bradley nodded seriously and quickly perused the letter.

Duke Calvin continued: "You go with the team to the Northern Territory, investigate the situation of the Demon Marrow Ore, and see if what Louis said is true. You understand that the Demon Marrow Ore must not be easily exposed."

"Yes, my Lord." Bradley responded, showing no complaints about being sent to such a remote place.

"Moreover, I will provide him with limited support. Assign a few experienced craftsmen and architects to help him improve the town's infrastructure.

A squad of knights will bolster Louis's combat strength. Additionally, bring some funds, food, tools, seeds, and livestock as support.

These are not much, just an opportunity for him."

Duke Calvin deliberated for a while, then added: "If he manages the territory well, the family will make additional investments. However, should he display any incompetence, the family will immediately withdraw all support.

Bradley, you are responsible for secretly monitoring, ensuring everything is under control."

"Understood." The old butler Bradley slightly bowed his head in reply.

The Duke stood up, slowly walked to the window, gazing northward.

"Louis, I hope you won't disappoint me," he said softly.