

Ocean Lord 221

Chapter 221: He Will Make This Deal (2)

[Teleportation Necklace]

[Tier]: 4-star treasure

[Effect]: Allows the wearer to teleport to a designated location up to 5 kilometers away.

[Cooldown]: 72 hours

[One of the masterpieces by the Orleans Kingdom's master blacksmith, Samora Veil, possessing a powerful life-saving ability in spatial treasure]

[Samora Veil: No one understands blacksmithing better than me]

A 4-star spatial treasure?

Ji Chen was amazed for a moment. Anything related to spatial manipulation was certainly not something ordinary.

This teleportation necklace was clearly specialized in escaping and self-preservation.

A distance of five kilometers was enough to successfully escape in most situations.

Although it seemed very tempting, he didn't intend to accept the necklace that a father had given to his daughter.

"You can keep it. No need for such a gesture. This necklace was made by Samora Veil?"

Monica was taken aback, then nodded, saying, "Yes, Master Samora Veil has a good relationship with my father. So, he entrusted him to create this necklace as my coming-of-age gift."

"But why are you asking about this, Your Excellency?"

"Nothing much, I obtained an item made by Samora Veil as well. Just curious."

"I see... If Your Excellency wishes to commission Master Samora or have an artifact repaired, I might be able to convey the message for you."

Upon hearing this, Ji Chen's interest was immediately piqued.

This is something he needed!

Lizardmen excelled in forging, but they couldn't repair advanced artifacts like the Dragon Slayer Great Sword.

Someone capable of crafting a 4-star spatial treasure, this Master Samora might not be an ordinary person. Perhaps he could inquire whether the sword could be repaired.

With a smile, Ji Chen said, "That would be appreciated, Monica. I happen to have an item that needs repairing."

Monica smiled back, saying, "It would be my pleasure if I can assist Your Excellency."

To seek help from others, one must first offer help.

Monica's proactive assistance indicated that she had something that she needed his help with.

He couldn't believe that a woman born into the Grand Duke's family would be as innocent and naive as she seemed on the outside. Only Anina, the fool, would be easily deceived.

"Monica."

"Your Excellency, I'm here."

"I heard that your ship was attacked and ultimately sank in the Stormy Sea. Can you tell me who attacked you and for what reasons?"

Hearing this, Monica's face showed a trace of difficulty, "This..."

"Your ship has already sunk, and if you want to cross the ocean to return to the Lienhardt Grand Duchy, you definitely need my help to make it back."

Ji Chen squinted his eyes and continued, "However, obviously, I won't assist someone who might potentially bring unnecessary trouble to me without knowing the full story. You should understand this principle very well."

Monica contemplated for a while, a bitter smile forming on her face.

"Lord Ji Chen, this concerns the safety of the Lienhardt Grand Duchy. I implore you not to disclose this to anyone after hearing it."

"Please continue. I do understand the importance of keeping secrets."

Seeing this, Monica seemed to relax a bit and began to explain the situation.

On the northwest coast of the North Continent, there were four kingdoms and duchies in total, and one of them was the Lienhardt Grand Duchy.

However, due to maritime routes and the precious coastline, conflicts occasionally arose among the four kingdoms and duchies.

Not long ago, the Lienhardt Grand Duchy and its neighboring country had clashed once again over territorial disputes along the coastline.

The ambitious current Grand Duke of the Lienhardt Grand Duchy, who was also Monica's father, had lost all patience for the conflicts that had occurred for centuries. He resolved to solve such issues during his reign.

Up until this point, Ji Chen was still within his knowledge range.

Previously, from chat channels and forums, he had come across a fair amount of information about the Lienhardt Grand Duchy.

These were things that most players were aware of.

But what Monica said next was something not known to outsiders.

“But my father doesn’t know that, except for the kingdom that doesn’t border the Lienhardt Grand Duchy, the other two neighboring nations have secretly formed an alliance.

On the surface, they maintain control over conflicts just as they have done previously, but behind closed doors, they have been covertly reassigning fleets and troops, with the intention of annihilating the Lienhardt Grand Duchy’s naval forces in a single decisive strike. Their goal is to seize maritime dominance and subsequently lay claim to the coastal territories.

Even more concerning is their apparent alliance with a neighboring inland nation. Once the initial phase of their scheme is accomplished, these three nations will launch a coordinated assault on the Lienhardt Grand Duchy from the mainland, aiming to obliterate it entirely from existence.

We learned of this plan while on a diplomatic mission to another country. Through certain channels, we found out about this. That’s why we were pursued by both nations on our way back and had to risk entering the Stormy Sea for refuge.”

Finishing her explanation, Monica’s expression was incredibly sincere as she continued, “Lord Ji Chen, I beseech you to send us back to the Grand Duchy on a ship. Only if I return in person will my father believe these claims.

Both I and everyone aboard the Radiant Envoy will be immensely grateful to you. The Lienhardt Grand Duchy will not forget anyone who extends their helping hand.”

Ji Chen took a deep breath, his expression serious.

At this moment, he was caught in unprecedented turmoil.

Kingdoms, duchies.

These powers at the tier of kingdoms and duchies weren’t comparable to the Hanseatic Chamber of Commerce, Bauhinia Alliance, and other small entities.

Even their weakest presence had a fleet of over a thousand ships.

These weren’t wooden vessels anymore, but ironclad ships forged from steel.

They were equipped not with ordinary cannons, but more powerful alchemical cannons.

The strength of the sailors and soldiers aboard was dozens of times greater than that of the Chamber of Commerce guards, and their numbers were in the tens of thousands.

Could he really intervene in conflicts and battles between nations?

Even if today he simply helped Monica and her companions return with ease, if two nations found out, they would certainly hold a grudge. Sending just one or two fleets could spell trouble for him.

Considering from a standpoint of interests, there were three options.

The first was to ignore Monica and keep her here, making it as if nothing had happened. After the dust settled outside, she could be released.

The second was to send them all to the hostile countries directly, which might earn goodwill from the two nations, but it wasn’t guaranteed.

The third was to send Monica back to the Lienhardt Grand Duchy. This would most likely win the gratitude of her father and the entire Grand Duchy.

After pondering for a moment, Ji Chen looked down at Monica with a serious expression, his voice low.

“If I help you, what kind of benefit can I gain from it?”

Upon hearing this, Monica’s expression turned equally serious and earnest. “If Lord Ji Chen can assist the Lienhardt Grand Duchy in overcoming this crisis, then for as long as my father and I live, the Lienhardt Grand Duchy will forever be your greatest friend.

Be it alchemical technology, resources, military aid, or any other thing, whatever the Lienhardt Grand Duchy possesses, we will support you to the best of our ability.

With the name of Valencia Family, the daughter of the Grand Duke of the Lienhardt Grand Duchy, and the guarantee of honor!”

Ji Chen looked at the resolute Monica, squinting his eyes slightly, contemplating.

Not helping her would result in neither gain nor loss.

But if he took the risk to help her, and as long as the information remained confidential, the potential gains in the future would be significant.

Setting aside the strength of a duchy, just the ironclad shipbuilding technology possessed by duchies and kingdoms alone was enough to pique his interest.

Not to mention the alchemical cannons and various advanced alchemical technologies.

Any one of these items would be enough to drive any player crazy due to their value.

The saying goes, “You won’t know if you don’t try.”

One of the reasons why Crown of the Ocean had grown so rapidly and outpaced most players was because Ji Chen was willing to take risks.

The greater the risk, the greater the reward.

This principle was understood by everyone, but only those who took actual steps could truly reap the rewards.

With this thought, Ji Chen’s brow furrowed.

He decided to make this deal!

Chapter 222: Aloof Alice, the Elven Race

Ji Chen closed his eyes, lost in contemplation for a moment. When he finally opened them, it was as if he was observing the stars in the night sky. His voice, calm and profound, resonated.

“Since that’s the case, the Crown of the Ocean is willing to help you. But please don’t forget the words you’ve spoken here.”

Upon hearing this, a hint of joy appeared on Monica's face, her expression resolute. "Please rest assured, Lord Ji Chen. The Valencia Family will surely uphold our promise, or else we shall incur the wrath of the divine beings!"

Ji Chen nodded. In a world that had seen the existence of divine beings, the weight of this oath could not be underestimated. He felt a slight ease in his heart.

He continued, "You recently sought refuge in the Stormy Sea. There might still be pursuers outside, so it's best for you to stay on the New Moon Islands for a few days until the turmoil settles. It will be safer that way.

The New Moon Islands have unique and rarely seen landscapes. Except for certain restricted areas, you are free to explore and enjoy the rest. I will provide you with a guide."

Though the situation was urgent, Monica understood that leaving hastily would make them more susceptible to being tracked by pursuers. Thus, she nodded obediently upon hearing Ji Chen's invitation.

"You are right, Your Excellency. In order to safely return and avoid causing you trouble, I know what I need to do. Please rest assured."

After speaking, Monica playfully blinked her eyes, portraying an understanding demeanor.

Observing this, Ji Chen looked at her with a hint of satisfaction and appreciation.

He enjoyed conversing with intelligent individuals. He didn't need to explain too much; just a few words were enough to make everything clear.

Indeed, she was the daughter of a grand duke. Her determination and intelligence matched her noble status.

At this moment, Monica inquired, "Lord Ji Chen, who will be our guide during these few days? Is it the girl from earlier?"

As she spoke, she looked around. After Anna brought her in, she disappeared.

"It's not Anina. She has some matters to attend to these days," Ji Chen shook his head, raising his voice slightly, "Alice."

"I'm here."

Alice emerged from a small door beside the hall and stood in line with Monica.

"For these few days, you'll be responsible for guiding our guests around the island," Ji Chen instructed.

"I understand." Alice nodded and saluted with a hand over her chest.

Ji Chen nodded and then turned to Monica. "Considering all you've been through today, you must be tired. Allow Alice to take you to your room for some rest. I'll ensure that your escorts are led to individual rooms for rest by my associates. There's no need for you to be concerned."

Upon hearing this, Monica quickly replied, "Of course, I'm very grateful for your hospitality, Your Excellency."

She then performed a noblewoman's curtsy before following Alice out.

Watching Alice and Monica disappear behind the closing door, Ji Chen's posture sagged, and he slumped back in his chair.

After a moment's thought, he instructed someone to summon Benbo.

He gave the orders with a serious expression.

"Increase the alert level of the Crown of the Ocean these few days. Expand the range of alertness and patrols beyond the Stormy Sea.

Especially, pay attention to any approaching enemy vessels outside. Report immediately if any are detected.

Take note that patrols and vigilance outside should not expose our presence. All activities should remain concealed beneath the surface."

Seeing the seriousness on his face, Benbo realized the gravity of the situation. He saluted promptly in response.

"Understood, My Lord."

With that command, the defensive measures on the New Moon Islands were significantly heightened.

Several patrols, composed of Naga Berserkers, Dragon Blood Murlocs, and Lobster Riders, ventured beyond the storm to patrol the seas.

Walking behind Alice, Monica gazed at the girl's flowing silver hair, like a waterfall, her perfect countenance that could stir the hearts of even women, and her delicate, almost ethereal skin, filling her with envy.

Particularly, the two blue fins on top of her ears piqued her curiosity even more. Could this girl named Alice not be human? Could she belong to some sort of aquatic race?

She was about to voice her question when she saw the ice-cold demeanor on Alice's face, a coldness that seemed to push people away by miles. It made her nervous.

After pondering for a while, she gathered her courage and wore a smile warm enough to melt ice and snow. She caught up and walked alongside Alice.

"Sister, your name is Alice? It's such a lovely name. Not only is the name beautiful, but you're also very pretty. Your flawless skin even makes me feel a bit jealous. Your hair reminds me of the Long River Waterfall outside the city of Terlins. It's breathtakingly beautiful..."

Alice merely glanced at her from the corner of her eye, her face devoid of any expression. Regardless of how Monica conversed, she showed no sign of acknowledgment.

In Alice's eyes, aside from her Lord, no one else was worth her attention. She treated colleagues with indifference, let alone this unfamiliar outsider, even if she was supposedly a grand duke's daughter.

Guiding her to her room was merely a task befitting a host.

Monica, who had been complimenting her all the way, felt disheartened seeing Alice's continued indifference. She began to doubt whether her cultivated affability and social skills from childhood were genuine.

Soon, the two arrived in front of a room.

Alice opened the door, indicating that it was her room..

Chapter 223: Aloof Alice, the Elven Race (2)

The room was incredibly spacious, with the floor covered in the fur of some exotic beast. Thoughtfully placed decorations adorned the surroundings, and a faint, elusive fragrance filled the air.

The large French windows with a balcony offered a panoramic view of towering peaks in the distance, cascading silver waterfalls, and an endless expanse of lush forests.

Another window provided a view of the sandy beach and the boundless sea stretching beyond the stone-paved plaza.

The time was midday, and sunlight streamed through the glass, casting scattered patterns of radiant light across the room, dispelling the lingering dimness brought by the castle's structure.

This picturesque scene immediately captured Monica's gaze, dissipating her previous gloom.

"Wow, this room is amazing! Thank you, sister!"

Monica briskly walked to the window, exclaiming as she looked outside. With a heart full of joy, she turned back to express her gratitude.

Alice merely nodded and stated, "When it's time for meals, someone will bring you food.

Rest well tonight. I'll come to find you tomorrow morning."

Perhaps having spent considerable time with Ji Chen, Alice's tone had transitioned from initial indifference to an elevated form of detachment.

Her words often carried an authoritative undertone, resembling the demeanor of a queen. This abrupt change left Monica momentarily stunned. She instinctively nodded and replied, "Understood."

With that, Alice refrained from further words and turned to leave.

Watching her departing figure, Monica's face suddenly turned red. Her heart raced, and she covered her chest while muttering, "So domineering..."

Naturally, Ji Chen was unaware of the peculiar thoughts that this young female guest had about his subordinate.

At this moment, he was planning to survey his territory when a sudden commotion reached his ears from outside.

Soon enough, a guard came in to report.

“My Lord, Master Raymond and Master Sparrow have returned.”

Hearing this, Ji Chen’s brow furrowed. After some consideration, he realized it had been about half a month since Raymond’s departure. Their return now seemed fitting.

“Where are they now?”

“Master Raymond and Master Sparrow are both at the harbor.”

“Summon them to my presence... Actually, I'll go there myself.” Ji Chen shook his head, rose from his seat, and exited the Lord Manor, making his way to the harbor.

At a glance, he spotted four ships with shallow drafts being unloaded – merchant vessels and warships alike.

Raymond’s plump figure stood out conspicuously on the pier.

As if sensing something, he suddenly turned his head, and upon spotting Ji Chen, his eyes lit up. His two short legs seemed to have gained motors as he hurriedly dashed over.

Running and waving his hand, he shouted loudly, “My Lord!!!”

Seeing his bulky figure charging towards him, Ji Chen’s brow twitched, and he almost considered manipulating the water to send him flying.

However, Raymond, knowing his own weight, promptly halted in front of Ji Chen.

With an excited expression, Raymond exclaimed, “My Lord, I’m back!”

Seeing the noticeable signs of aging on Raymond compared to when he had left, Ji Chen couldn’t help but let out a sigh.

He patted Raymond’s shoulder and said, “You’ve worked hard this time.”

“Not hard at all!” Raymond chuckled. “You can’t imagine what happened to me in the Northern Continent!”

“We’ve hit it big this time!”

Seeing the excitement on his face, Ji Chen couldn’t help but feel curious.

What could make this seasoned merchant so thrilled?

“After receiving your orders to set sail, the journey to the Northern Continent was smooth. Except for a few small pirate ships with poor judgment, there were no dangers.

Upon reaching the Northern Continent's port, I immediately sought out buyers for our cargo. Initially, things went quite smoothly, and we quickly sold a quarter of our goods.

But suddenly, for some unknown reason, conflicts and frictions erupted among several Northern Continent countries. This hindered the transportation of our products inland, and our buyers significantly decreased."

At this point, Raymond's face revealed excitement. "Just when I thought we'd face a surplus, a buyer unexpectedly came knocking. They bought up the rest of our products in one go!

That buyer... you definitely won't guess who it is!"

Seeing Raymond suddenly stop speaking, adopting a teasing manner, Ji Chen playfully scolded, "Spill it already, or I might just throw you into the sea!"

In response, Raymond chuckled and leaned in, whispering to Ji Chen, "The buyer is from the Elven race!"

Elven race?

Ji Chen was somewhat surprised.

This Elven race wasn't the same as the player-recruited elves; they were the indigenous elves of this world. Similar to the concept of fantasy worlds, the Elven race was a powerful and well-known species.

Apart from their extended lifespans, they were also known for their dual cultivation in both physical and magical arts. Every adult elf possessed a strength of at least Tier Four.

But how could the Elves take the initiative to come looking for them?

Seemingly sensing his confusion, Raymond continued, "My Lord, you might be aware that the Elven race excels in archery, nearly every Elf is skilled in archery, and their archery skills are unmatched.

So, they have a significant demand for materials to make bows."

At this point, Ji Chen already had a guess.

Excitedly, Raymond continued, "Those Elves said that the quality of our wood is exceptional, particularly suitable for crafting bows and arrows. Our wood is even more enchantment-friendly than other types.

They also mentioned that if you agree, they are willing to establish a long-term supply channel with us. They'll buy as much as we have! And the price they're offering is over 100% higher than the market rate. Payment can be made in gold coins or other rare resources!"

Whew-

Such generosity?

A direct premium of 100% for purchase?

When did Elves become so generous!?

What Ji Chen didn't know was that unlike other fantasy worlds, in this world, the Elven race was one of the most powerful species.

In contrast to other worlds, where Elves often lived reclusive lives and were squeezed for living space, in this world, Elves had close interactions with outsiders. They had established a formidable Elven kingdom, which held a vast territory through their strength.

In otherworlds, Elves typically wore minimal clothing, seemed delicate, and had been captured and enslaved by other races.

In this world, Elves confidently took on human countries and brawled with Orcs. They can kill an enemy with each punch. They taught others how to behave through their mastery of enchantment techniques.

In other worlds, Elves possessed potent technologies but refrained from using them, taking pride in frugality.

In this world, their exceptional enchantment, alchemical, forging, and cultivation skills, coupled with the bountiful resources within their territory, enabled them to continuously produce various military equipment, alchemical products, and advanced agricultural goods. They exported these products worldwide and reaped vast wealth and resources.

Their lives were lavish and opulent, indulging in extravagant delicacies, fine wines, and luxurious rides. They somewhat resembled a certain oil-rich nation on Earth.

Hence, the Elven race was incredibly affluent and had a grand demeanor.

Hearing that the Elves were willing to pay twice the market price, Ji Chen even started to doubt.

He asked multiple times, “Did the Elves really say this? You’re not fooling me, are you?”

“How could I dare to deceive you, my Lord!” Raymond became anxious in an instant. Then, as if he remembered something, he pulled out a jade-green wooden plaque from his bag and handed it over. “This is what those Elves gave me. They said that as long as you present this plaque at any Elven embassy, you’ll be treated as a VIP!”

Ji Chen took the wooden plaque and examined it closely.

About the size of his palm, the plaque was covered in intricate patterns emitting a misty energy. In the center was an Elven script.

[Elven Ambassador’s Plaque]

[Explanation]: A special wooden plaque with significant meaning. Presenting this at any Elven embassy will grant you VIP treatment.

[As they say, a wealthy wife dispels worry. If you can hitch a ride with the Elven race, you won’t have to worry about money for your entire life.]

Was it really true?

The Crown of the Ocean, was this forming a connection with the Elven race?

Chapter 224: Arms Trade and Island Tour

Merely engaging in sales had unexpectedly established a connection with the Elven race. This can be genuinely described as a delightful surprise.

Fortune has truly smiled upon them, and its momentum is uncontrollable.

Raymond seemed to recall something and continued, "Oh, by the way, those Elves also mentioned that they really like the coffee made from our premium coffee beans. If we can provide a stable supply, they are willing to buy all of it at twice the market price."

Ji Chen wasn't surprised by this. After all, the value of premium coffee beans was evident. While maintaining their flavor, they could enhance magical power and accelerate its recovery effects. He believed there were not many similar items in the outside world.

Seeing that Raymond wanted to say more, Ji Chen smiled and waved his hand. "Let's discuss this further back at the Lord Manor. This isn't the right place for a lengthy conversation."

Raymond hesitated for a moment, then quickly nodded.

The two of them walked side by side.

On their way to the Lord Manor, Raymond looked around left and right, amazed by the significant changes in the Crown of the Ocean.

He remembered that when he left before, it wasn't as prosperous.

The harbor and water forts hadn't been built yet. Between the territory and those structures was nothing but jungle and a few dirt roads. The housing in the residential area consisted of just a few dozen buildings, housing less than two thousand people.

The number of warships and merchant ships was only six, and he had taken away most of them on a single voyage.

It was nothing like now. It resembled a military overseas base of some kingdom or duchy. There were dozens of powerful warships, a continuous array of buildings, a pleasing town environment, and a dense flow of residents.

In various functional buildings, residents were busy at work, showing a bustling scene.

This prompted him to exclaim in amazement, "I've only been gone for half a month, and the territory has changed so much. There are also so many more people. It's truly incredible."

Hearing this, Ji Chen also smiled. Half a month wasn't a short time. Who could have predicted that after half a month, the Crown of the Ocean would have developed to this extent?

Raymond looked at a pair of fierce-looking Half-Orcs and lizardmen passing by, curious as he asked, "My lord, why are there so many Half-Orcs and lizardmen in the territory? Where did they come from?"

"The Half-Orcs were tamed from a sea voyage mishap I had previously. Their combat strength is quite impressive. As for the lizardmen..." Ji Chen gestured towards the ground. "In a cave beneath the Kobold den, there are several

lizardmen kingdoms. I recently managed to conquer them. There are quite a number of lizardmen there.”

“I see.” Raymond nodded in realization. “So, how many lizardmen are there in that location?”

“Not many, just over a hundred thousand.”

“Just over a hundred thousand...? Over a hundred thousand!?”

Raymond’s expression seemed like he had seen a ghost as if he was questioning if Ji Chen was joking.

“Oh, I forgot to mention. Apart from those lizardmen, the population of the Crown of the Ocean is nearly ten thousand now.”

Over a hundred thousand and ten thousand.

Raymond’s lips twitched. He felt that he needed to reevaluate the Crown of the Ocean and the person he pledged allegiance to.

When he first arrived at the New Moon Islands, the place was still desolate. The number of troops was only around a hundred, and the territory had just a few houses and a few dozen residents.

Apart from being able to produce a few unique specialties, there’s not much difference between my territory and the territories of other Lords of Glory.

Honestly, at that time, he still held a certain level of disdain in his heart.

But after more than half a month had passed, when he was once again bound here, it seemed that quite a few things had changed.

The Lord, who easily defeated hundreds of elite Chamber of Commerce guards, now possessed several warships, greatly increasing the military power. Even the territory had become much more prosperous, displaying a lively and thriving appearance.

And then, after some more time had passed, until today when he returned, even greater changes had occurred.

The military power had expanded by dozens of times, the population of residents had reached nearly ten thousand, and he was commanding over a hundred thousand underground lizardmen.

The level of prosperity was more than just tenfold compared to before.

Considering all these changes that happened in such a short span of time – a little over a month, to be precise – it had already developed to this extent. If it continued developing at this pace, wouldn’t it be almost god-like?

Even the prospect of it evolving into a kingdom didn’t appear to be an unattainable notion...

If someday it truly developed to such a stage, wouldn’t he, as the Trade Envoy of the Crown of the Ocean, have played a significant role?

A Trade Envoy could potentially transform into a Trade Minister.

A Trade Minister of a kingdom...

Thinking to this point, Raymond's excitement surged. This was far better than being a mere member of the Hanseatic Chamber of Commerce!

Seeing Raymond suddenly become excited, his face brimming with determination and passion, Ji Chen was a bit puzzled, but he also smiled.

Having determination and passion was a good thing.

The two of them quickly returned to the Lord Manor, where Raymond continued to report on the gains from his journey to the Northern Continent.

"This time, the cargo from the two ships was sold for a total of 193,200 gold coins. Following your instructions, everything has already been exchanged for various resources locally. This includes skilled labor forces, mithril...

During the journey, Master Sparrow also seized the opportunity to plunder two merchant ships, resulting in substantial gains."

Ji Chen understood and asked, "Did the plundering and handling of the loot expose our identity?"

"No, everything was carried out in secret. There are many people on the continent who specialize in dealing with these sea loots. Additionally, we are extremely cautious and careful, so the chances of exposure are nearly close to zero.."

Chapter 225: Arms Trade and Island Tour (2)

Despite the significant growth in the strength of the Crown of the Ocean and its lack of fear towards conventional power attacks, involving itself in piracy continued to be a less respectable pursuit. Therefore, it was advisable to maintain secrecy.

After all, he had become quite famous among players by now. If news got out, it could have led to a tarnished reputation.

However, in the near future, he would need to completely give up this undertaking and undergo a complete transformation of his image.

Once they had passed the initial capital accumulation phase, they could continue to develop using more sophisticated means, such as trade or military escort services, without the need to risk their reputation as pirates and engage in plunder for resources.

Ji Chen suddenly realized that his strategy resembled certain modern-day practices of certain countries on Earth.

My apologies, truly.

"Lord? Are you alright, my lord?"

Raymond's voice snapped him back to reality, and he cleared his throat before signaling to continue.

“Oh, right, we were discussing the conflict between several duchies and kingdoms in the Northern Continent... It’s causing our previous products to be unable to enter those regions, resulting in poor sales. After all, with the outbreak of the war, the nobles had little interest in purchasing these luxurious wood materials. Fortunately, the appearance of the Elves resolved our concerns.”

War?

At the mention of it, Ji Chen’s interest was piqued, and he inquired, “You said that there’s a war between those duchies and kingdoms? How intense is the fighting?”

“Although it only started a few days ago, I’ve heard it’s becoming incredibly intense, with millions of soldiers engaging in battle.”

“And due to the war, the most lucrative business in the Northern Continent has become arms trading. Merchants from other places are buying weaponry and transporting them in shiploads.”

Smack!

“That’s fantastic!” Ji Chen clapped his chair’s armrest and suddenly stood up.

Raymond was startled by the abrupt noise. “My lord, what’s so good about this?”

“Of course, it’s this war!”

“This war?”

The chubby man was utterly bewildered, scratching his head in confusion.

The war nearly obstructed the sales of the territory’s goods, so how could it be seen as something good?

Seeing Raymond’s confusion, Ji Chen chuckled and explained, “Did I mention before that I conquered an underground lizardmen kingdom?”

The lizardmen have exceptional skill in forging iron equipment. Our warehouse is stocked with a massive quantity of high-quality weapons and armor. Since there’s increased demand for arms due to the war, why not clear out this inventory?”

At these words, Raymond also grew excited, his mind racing and ideas falling into place. “If that’s the case, we should quickly sell them during this period. Otherwise, it might be difficult to sell them after the war ends.”

Ji Chen nodded in agreement. He had considered selling these weapon and armor stockpiles to players earlier, given their vast numbers and extensive market. However, he eventually dismissed the idea.

The reason was simple: players were scattered far and wide, resulting in a highly fragmented market due to geographical distance. The efficiency of buying and selling was remarkably low.

But this war provided the perfect opportunity to transport dozens of ships at once, sending them directly to the warring kingdoms and duchies. I was incredibly convenient.

Such a great money-making opportunity shouldn't be missed!

The moment Raymond spotted the opportunity for significant earnings, his excitement surged, almost boiling within him. Without hesitation, he promptly sought permission.

"My lord, I request to have these weapons and equipment loaded onto ships in the next few days. Please allow me to head to the Northern Continent as soon as possible. The larger the cargo, the better!"

Seeing this, Ji Chen didn't hesitate either, raising his hand and giving his approval.

"I grant permission. You'll be in charge of this matter."

"Understood!!"

After saluting, Raymond, moving at a speed incongruous with his body, rushed out.

Ji Chen's orders were absolute.

Soon, from top to bottom, a large number of unused weapons and equipment stored in the warehouse were transported in batches from the underground lizardmen world. They were stacked in the port, sorted, packaged by specialized individuals, and then loaded into the cargo holds.

Numerous warships had their cannons removed to create more space for cargo.

The Crown of the Ocean operated at high speed, astonishingly efficient. In just two days, over thirty ships were packed with goods, causing them to sit much lower in the water.

And yet, despite all this effort, only about a third of the weapons and equipment from the underground lizardmen world had been transported out.

This showed just how abundant their inventory was.

On the third day at noon, Raymond, who hadn't been away for long, once again boarded the ship. Under the watchful eyes of an attentive crew, he set off with a massive trade fleet.

The fleet consisted of thirty-two cargo ships and eight escort warships.

The New Moon Islands left fewer than ten warships as a defensive fleet.

To evade the pursuit of Monica and her followers, Ji Chen specifically had the fleet depart from the western side of the Stormy Sea and enter the shipping lanes directly.

By the harbor's edge, as the trade fleet gradually disappeared on the horizon, he turned and headed back.

Returning to the Lord Manor, he waited in the hall for a while.

Soon, accompanied by the rhythmic sound of boots, Monica's figure appeared by the side entrance.

Watching her attire, a hint of astonishment flashed in Ji Chen's eyes.

Today, Monica seemed to have dressed up especially. Her shining golden hair, even brighter than the sun, was tied into a neat and elegant long ponytail, giving her a heroic and gallant air.

She wore a set of hunting clothes suitable for traversing mountains and valleys. A brown vest and checkered shirt highlighted her graceful upper body curves, and the contours of her chest were particularly alluring.

Ji Chen glanced at her equestrian pants and boots below her waist, silently marveling. How did he not notice before that this young lady had such captivating and alluring long legs?

Seeing Ji Chen scrutinizing her, Monica's eyes revealed a barely noticeable sense of delight and pride.

She was indeed very beautiful; previously, she had appeared disheveled due to the escape.

But then, does Lord Ji Chen have a thing for legs?

Monica squinted her eyes, suddenly recalling that both Alice and the girl named Anina, as well as the castle's maids, all had remarkably long legs. Thinking this, she became even more convinced of her idea.

With that in mind, she confidently walked over, her long legs moving gracefully, and greeted Ji Chen with a charming smile.

"Lord Ji Chen, I'm ready. Shall we depart now?"

Ji Chen came back to his senses, smiling and saying, "Of course."

Due to some circumstances, Alice had been urgently sent elsewhere. Therefore, it fell upon him to receive the daughter of the Grand Duke and accompany her in exploring the New Moon Islands.

As Ji Chen pondered where to go first, he suddenly felt his arm being held tightly.

Looking down, he saw Monica casually linking her arm with his. Seeing the surprise in his eyes, she blinked her large eyes and gave him a sweet smile. "Let's go."

This woman's skills were quite advanced!

As a lord of the land, he couldn't be intimidated by such a small gesture.

Ji Chen's mind stirred, and he nodded with a smile.

This time, it was just the two of them traveling together. Their first stop was the most common sight on the island—the jungle.

For him, he had seen this jungle countless times and found it rather dull, even if it was beautiful.

But for Monica, everything here was so novel.

The towering and dense trees, the impenetrable vegetation, the small insects hidden among the leaves, the birds gliding low through the forest, and the meandering streams—all of it was a captivating experience for her.

Growing up in the palace, she found it all incredibly refreshing.

Having only taken a few steps into the jungle, she was already captivated by various sights, hopping around to observe everything, occasionally letting out excited exclamations.

“Your Excellency, look, it’s a seven-spot ladybird!”

“Your Excellency, it’s a dragonfly!”

“Your Excellency, there’s a snake!!”

“Your Excellency, there’s a butterfly!!”

Watching Monica jump in alarm as a harmless snake passed by, only to chase after a beautiful butterfly with a childlike expression of joy on her face, Ji Chen couldn’t tell if she was acting or being genuine.

If it was an act, her acting skills were truly extraordinary..

Chapter 226: Farewell, Entering the Skeleton Realm

When Monica came back with a delighted expression on her face and showed him a butterfly perched on her finger, a creature as common as could be in the jungle, as if presenting him with a precious treasure, Ji Chen couldn’t resist asking, “Monica, have you never seen a place like this before?”

Monica gently shook her head. With a wave of her hand, she released the butterfly and placed her hands behind her, looking around with a touch of melancholy. “I grew up within the palace, where my studies were filled with etiquette and various skills. My father protected me well, and I seldom ventured beyond the palace walls.

The only view I could see every day was the garden outside my window and the high walls that I couldn’t climb.

I always stood on my tiptoes by the top-floor window, yearning to catch a glimpse of the world outside.

As I grew older and had the chance to venture out, there were guards and attendants surrounding me like mountains, except when I slept or picked flowers.

Until now...” At this point, the sadness on Monica’s face suddenly vanished, replaced by a mischievous twinkle in her eye. “I suppose I can finally relax a little.”

Ji Chen looked at the girl who had undergone such a sudden change in demeanor, feeling slightly taken aback before breaking into a smile.

“Then let’s cherish this precious time that has come.”

Monica playfully pointed toward the deeper parts of the island, her eyes brimming with anticipation.

“Lord Ji Chen, I’d like to continue further into the island. Oh, by the way, I saw a towering mountain peak with a magnificent waterfall near your castle!” “That place? According to the legends here, a dragon once lived on that mountain peak...”

Over the next two days, Ji Chen accompanied the Grand Duke's daughter on a tour of the island, exploring its various highlights. Initially, he had the idea of simply passing the time, but as they interacted, he found himself increasingly influenced by Monica's lively and cheerful demeanor. Their interactions gradually changed his perspective, and he grew more attuned to her presence, gaining a deeper understanding of her in the process.

The seemingly strong and mature young woman had, during her unexpected stay on the New Moon Islands, gradually shed her inhibitions and left her cheerful laughter echoing in various places.

But as the saying goes, all good things must come to an end. With the arrival of a piece of news, Monica and her entourage had to prepare for departure.

In the Lord Manor's grand hall...

"Based on the reports from the patrol units, it seems that the pursuers have abandoned their search for you. They left the stormy sea area yesterday afternoon and headed northwest, so you can leave at any time."

Upon hearing this, Monica and her companions couldn't help but smile with relief. Their stay on the New Moon Islands had lasted for approximately five to six days, and factoring in the time required for the return journey, almost half a month had been spent, making their schedule quite tight.

Monica exchanged a glance with the ship's captain and others before stepping forward.

"Lord Ji Chen, we still don't know the current situation in the duchy. Every day of delay increases the danger. So, if possible, we'd like to depart this afternoon."

Ji Chen nodded in understanding. "I completely understand your situation, and I'm more than willing to honor our agreement."

One of the ships is already loading the supplies you'll need for your journey. It's estimated that you can set sail this afternoon on schedule.

Additionally, I'll dispatch another warship and an escort squad to ensure your safe return to the Lienhardt Grand Duchy."

Monica's face lit up, and she clasped her hands together. "That's wonderful! My father must be getting anxious waiting for us."

The ship's captain and the chief guard also bowed in gratitude. "We appreciate your assistance. Despite the misunderstandings we had before, the Lienhardt Grand Duchy won't forget the helping hand you extended when we were in a difficult situation. Under the gaze of the divine, we've forged a bridge of friendship."

"Of course, I hope the friendship between the Crown of the Ocean and the Lienhardt Grand Duchy will endure."

In the afternoon, at the harbor...

Supplies were smoothly being loaded onto the ship, and the warship was prepared for departure.

The group began to board the ship.

As Monica looked at the sailors and guards who were filled with joy at the prospect of returning to the duchy, she noticed that she didn't feel as elated as she had imagined for the journey back. Instead, a subtle sense of loss seemed to envelop her.

Was it because she was reluctant to leave this newfound freedom behind?

During her time on the islands, Monica had shed all the constraints that had bound her. She no longer had to worry about every detail of etiquette, nor did she need to be constantly concerned about the opinions of outsiders, fearing that she might tarnish the reputation of the duchy or her father.

Like a canary released from a cage, she fluttered her wings freely through the sky.

These days had been among the happiest in her life so far.

Monica took a deep breath. But this too must come to an end. As a member of the Valencia Family and a potential heir to the grand duchy, she would have to relinquish some of this newfound freedom and embrace her responsibilities.

“What's wrong? Reluctant to leave?”

Ji Chen's voice, tinged with a hint of amusement, interrupted the emotions she had been contemplating.

Monica turned around in surprise and saw Ji Chen approaching her, which brought a smile to her face. “Lord Ji Chen, you startled me!”

Even she didn't realize that she sounded somewhat coquettish as she spoke.

“Haha, uh-oh. If Grand Duke Lienhardt finds out that I scared his precious daughter, won't I be in trouble?” Ji Chen immediately feigned a fearful expression, jokingly..

Chapter 227: Farewell, Entering the Skeleton Realm (2)

The appearance made Monica unable to hold back her laughter as she covered her mouth with a smile.

“Your Excellency, if you say that, I might actually get angry!”

After some joking laughter, Ji Chen glanced at the almost-ready warships and smiled.

“Alright, it's about time. Monica, you should board the ship now.”

Monica also knew it was time to leave, looking at the tall and handsome Ji Chen before her. A hint of affection flashed in her eyes, but she quickly concealed it deep in her heart, bowing and performing a knee salute.

“Your Excellency, if we successfully overcome this challenge, then you're welcome to visit the Lienhardt Grand Duchy. We will definitely receive you as an honored guest.”

Ji Chen didn't say much, just nodded and replied, “If I have the time, I will consider it.”

As the warship slowly sailed out of the harbor, Monica waved goodbye towards Ji Chen's figure at the stern. Her figure gradually grew distant until it disappeared on the horizon.

Standing at the harbor for a moment, he shook his head and returned to the Lord Manor.

At this time, Alice and Anina, who had been missing for several days, as well as Benbo, Daro, and a group of heroes, stood in the hall.

"How is the situation with the Illusory Realm Crystal?"

"Reporting, my lord, the Illusory Realm Crystal is currently stable, but there's still a risk of it being forcefully opened."

At this news, his expression grew more serious.

Ever since he had led the army to defeat the invading skeleton army and skeleton heroes from the gate two months ago, and promptly closed the Illusory Realm Gate, the Illusory Realm Crystal had remained silent.

Until the second day when Monica and her group arrived at the New Moon Islands, the Illusory Realm Crystal suddenly experienced intense fluctuations.

Several indications suggested that on the opposite side of the Illusory Realm Gate, within the Skeleton Realm, there was an ongoing effort to forcefully reopen the gate.

As expected, it should be the work of the Skeleton King within the Illusory Realm.

The Skeleton King still held the ambition to invade.

However, if a couple of months ago he might have been afraid.

But today, the strength of the Crown of the Ocean, in terms of both the quality of his troops and his heroes, was incomparable to that time.

Their strength had increased by far more than just tenfold.

Back then, he was able to crush the skeleton army with around a hundred units of his own troops, and the same would hold true now.

Since the Skeleton King was so ignorant of his own limitations, he might as well solve this problem once and for all!

With this thought in mind, Ji Chen's expression grew solemn, and he said in a serious tone.

"Monica and her group have already left, so there's no need to conceal anything."

"Pass on my command. The entire army should begin preparations. I intend to attack and conquer that Illusory Realm!"

"Understood!"

With the order given, the entire Crown of the Ocean began to mobilize once again.

The army assembled, and various supplies were transported to the frontlines.

The warships set sail, anchoring around the island where the Illusory Realm Crystal was located, ready to provide firepower support once the Illusory Realm Gate opened.

Ji Chen came to the military recruitment camp and recruited all the accumulated units over the past two weeks.

After this recruitment, the number of units surged once again, as follows:

Naga Berserkers: 202 —? 482, Tier Four, 5 stars.

Dragon Blood Murlocs: 207 —> 487, Tier Four, 3 stars.

Elemental Sea Pixies: 224 -> 518, Tier Four, 3 stars.

Lobster Riders: 210 -> 490, Tier Four, 1 star.

Murloc Rangers: 266 -> 350, Tier Three, 5 stars.

Self-Detonating Water Spiders: 350 -> 1400, Tier Three, 3 stars.

Elite Pirates: 270, Tier 'Two, 4 stars.

Deep Sea Roamers: 20

40, Tier Four, 1 star.

Tidal Sea Spirits: 3 -> 5, Tier Four, 1 star.

Giant Octopuses: 10 -> 20, Tier Four, 8 stars.

Ruins Guardians: 780, Tier Three, 8 stars.

Ocean Guardians: 2020, Tier Three, 9 stars.

Sky Guardians: 40, Tier Four, 8 stars.

Half-Orc Warriors: 1080, Tier Three, 8 stars.

A total of 7982 units.

While this number was considerable, according to Ji Chen's estimation, the Skeleton Realm within the Illusory Realm probably lacked aquatic creatures.

Only a portion of the units would be able to participate in this campaign.

The planned forces consisted of Naga Berserkers, Dragon Blood Murlocs, Elemental Sea Pixies, Self-Detonating Water Spiders, Murloc Rangers, and the Half-Orc Warriors with enhanced strength.

A total of 4317 units.

Although the number of skeleton monsters in the Skeleton Realm was surely much greater, Ji Chen believed that these forces would be enough to handle them.

Two days later.

Ji Chen led his army and a group of heroes to the front of the Illusory Realm Crystal. As time passed, the energy fluctuations of the crystal grew increasingly intense. This indicated that the Skeleton Realm was trying to forcefully open the Illusory Realm Gate.

The Illusory Realm Gate was two-way, so after repairing the crystal to instantly open the gate, as long as it wasn't destroyed, the portal would remain open.

Therefore, upon their entry, he strategically stationed hundreds of Ruins Guardians here to prevent any stray skeleton creatures from escaping.

With all preparations in place, Ji Chen arrived at the Illusory Realm Crystal and began the repairs.

“Ding- Repairing the Illusory Realm Crystal requires consuming 3000 units of crystal.”

A mere 3000 units were already insignificant for him at this point. Without a moment's hesitation, he invested the required amount.

The solid crystal gradually turned liquid, merging into the Illusory Realm Crystal. The visibly damaged surface began to repair itself.

Half an hour later, all the crystal had been absorbed, and the surface of the Illusory Realm Crystal became smooth and flawless, radiating transparency.

“Ding- Repair of the Illusory Realm Crystal is complete. The Illusory Realm Gate can be opened.”

Seeing this, Ji Chen didn't waste any time. He reached out and touched the crystal, his mind focused.

The Illusory Realm Crystal trembled suddenly, causing the ground to shake slightly.

He took a few steps back.

A stream of red energy shot out from the Illusory Realm Crystal, forming a slowly enlarging red vortex at a distance of dozens of meters.

Perhaps due to the complete repair of the Illusory Realm Crystal, this red vortex was much larger than before, with a diameter of fifty meters. Faint lightning flickered on its surface, brewing a somewhat terrifying energy.

“Move forward, everyone!”

The army, already arranged in formation, bypassed the Illusory Realm Crystal and marched in an orderly fashion towards the Illusory Realm Gate.

As they came into contact with the red vortex, they vanished behind the gate with a faint flash.

Ji Chen and the group of heroes were situated in the middle of the formation, and they too stepped into the gate without hesitation.

A flash of white light.

The environment before their eyes had suddenly changed.

The sky was black and red, radiating an eerie color.

Layers upon layers of red gravel extended from beneath their feet to the distant horizon, not a single stone in sight.

Within the gravel, some dark, leafless trees grew, but their twisted and bizarre shapes gave off an unsettling feeling.

A faint but pungent smell of rust immediately filled their noses, causing discomfort.

Gloomy and dim.

This was the initial impression the Illusory Realm gave them.

Ji Chen sighed inwardly. It was truly deserving of a realm inhabited by undead skeletons. It was clear that this environment was unsuitable for human survival.

Looking around left and right.

They were currently standing on higher ground, providing an easy view of the surroundings for several kilometers.

However, a glance around revealed that aside from the red gravel and the peculiar trees, there was not a single skeleton in sight.

Weren't they supposed to be trying to forcefully open the Illusory Realm Gate from the Skeleton Realm?

Logically, there should be a ready-to-invade skeleton army waiting behind the gate.

Ji Chen was puzzled.

After some contemplation, a thought struck him.

Could it be that the Illusory Realm Gates opened from the outside are randomly generated within the Illusory Realm?

If that was the case, it presented them with an opportunity to regroup.

With Ji Chen's guidance, their own army continued to emerge from the Illusory Realm Gate, reassembling in a valley below the high ground.

Although the Illusory Realm Gate was not small, it still took considerable time for several thousand troops to pass through.

After half an hour, over three thousand units of the army had passed through.

Now their task was to find the Skeleton King.

Skeletons were a mysterious race with a hierarchical structure resembling that of a beehive.

Higher-ranking skeleton monsters commanded lower-ranking ones.

For example, a Skeleton Vanguard would command several dozen regular small skeletons.

A Skeleton Squad Leader would command several dozen Skeleton Vanguards.

A Skeleton Battalion Leader would command several dozen Skeleton Squad Leaders.

And so on, with control over all the skeletons eventually concentrated in the hands of the highest-ranking Skeleton King.

Therefore, by killing the Skeleton King, most of the lower-level skeleton monsters would lose their control, becoming scattered and easy to defeat.

Looking left and right, Ji Chen found himself surrounded by endless, uniform red gravel.

Only the distant rocky mountain drew some attention.

Similar to a fly buzzing around one's head in the desert, wandering aimlessly here would only drain their energy in vain.

After careful consideration, Ji Chen decided to first head towards that rocky mountain to assess the situation..

Chapter 228: Bone Forge

Under Ji Chen's command, the army marched steadily towards the stone mountain.

During this period, the formation remained unchanged, with Naga Berserkers at the front, Dragon Blood Murlocs and Half-Orc Warriors on the flanks, Elemental Sea Pixies and Murloc Rangers in the center, and explosive creatures like Self-Detonating Water Spiders at the rear.

Ji Chen and the group of heroes positioned themselves at the very center of the formation, the safest spot.

As they say, it's better to anticipate danger.

The stone mountain seemed not too far away, but the journey was quite a distance.

It took a full three hours to finally arrive within a short distance of the mountain.

Amidst the desolate red gravel, there appeared some discordant white spots.

Intently scrutinizing the scene, they noticed a multitude of white bones hidden beneath the gravel surrounding the stone mountain. Among the gravel, various skeleton creatures roamed about.

Sensing the aura of living beings, the flickering soul flames within the eye sockets of many skeleton creatures trembled.

Driven by an innate craving for life, they instinctively gnashed their teeth and swung their claws, hastening forward on their frail legs with a surge of determination.

They converged into a small wave of skeletal tide.

At a glance, the sight of ferocious skeletons and flickering azure flames was somewhat daunting.

However, every member of their group had experienced countless battles. How could they be daunted by such a show?

With a determined expression, Ji Chen gave the order.

“Naga Berserkers, prepare to withstand the charge!”

“Dragon Blood Murlocs, prepare for the first volley!”

As the wave of skeletons climbed over small hills and entered their firing range, Dragon Blood Murlocs hurled tridents, smashing the skeleton creatures with force and causing secondary damage as the tridents returned.

After a round of exchange, most of the skeleton wave had been killed or injured, with only a few stragglers reaching the front lines, where they were dispatched by the Naga Berserkers.

Seeing this, Ji Chen ordered them to move forward.

The stone mountain appeared to be a gathering point for skeletons.

The closer they got, the more wandering skeleton creatures there were. Under the summoning of higher-ranking skeletons, waves of them charged forward.

The numbers in each wave increased from dozens to hundreds, and then to several hundred.

However, these were just second-tier skeleton creatures and were naturally no match for their forces.

Bang-

With the final skeleton creature shattered, there were no more attacks from the surrounding skeleton creatures.

But Ji Chen didn't let his guard down and sternly commanded,

"Remain on high alert, everyone!"

Afterward, he surveyed the surroundings.

They were currently in a valley, with elevated ground on three sides, resulting in a limited field of vision.

His extensive experience in commanding battles allowed him to act decisively. Without any delay, he deployed three reconnaissance teams to ascend the three elevated regions and assess the surroundings.

Soon, the three reconnaissance teams sent back messages. They found a skeleton camp located near the northern side of the stone mountain.

Climbing the elevated area, Ji Chen looked toward the stone mountain and indeed spotted a skeleton camp constructed entirely of bones, leaning against the mountain.

Outside the camp, countless skeleton creatures roamed.

At a glance, their combined numbers easily exceeded thirty to forty thousand.

"Should we attack now, Lord?"

"No, let's observe first," Ji Chen shook his head.

After around ten minutes of observation, he had a rough idea about this batch of skeleton creatures.

These densely packed skeleton creatures, radiating from the camp's center, included common white skeletons, skeleton hounds, skeleton mages, skeleton vultures, and black skeletons.

Among them, the most numerous were the common white skeletons, accounting for at least seventy percent of the total.

As for the more formidable forces such as the black skeletons, skeleton hounds, and skeleton mages, they made up a significant portion, roughly around twenty percent.

The least in number were the skeleton mages, with only around three to four hundred observed.

The scarcity of spellcasting units was a common principle among various races.

Apart from that, they hadn't discovered any new types of skeleton creatures so far, and it was unclear whether they did not exist or were simply not present here.

Ji Chen also noticed that at regular intervals, the skeleton camp would send out freshly risen skeleton creatures that unsteadily joined the sea of skeletons outside the camp.

At this point, Benbo, who was beside him, spoke up.

“Lord, it seems this camp is the stronghold of skeleton creatures in this area.

Furthermore, there's a recurring emergence of new skeleton creatures. This strongly implies the presence of a potential bone forge within the encampment!”

Bone Forge?

Ji Chen's brows furrowed. It seemed like he was hearing this term for the first time.

Immediately, he began to inquire more about it.

A bone forge was a unique creation of the Undead class, similar in nature to a military recruitment camp.

As the name implies, it produces various types of skeleton creatures.

However, the difference was that while a regular military recruitment camp typically produced only one type of unit, a bone forge can produce multiple types of skeleton creatures. It was an upgraded and enhanced version of a military recruitment camp.

As he listened, he suddenly recalled.

If he could obtain one, it would be equivalent to acquiring several different types of skeleton units.

This kind of thing should be highly sought after among players of the Undead class, right?

After giving it some thought, Ji Chen opened a forum, entered the keyword 'bone forge,' and initiated a search.

He directly entered the post with the highest popularity.

“The bone forge is a treasure comparable to a legendary item for players of the Undead class, especially those who specialize in the skeleton line!”

“A low-level bone forge can produce most common skeleton units from 1st to 3rd Tier. Intermediate-level forges can produce units from 2nd to 4th Tier, while advanced forges can produce units from 3rd to 5th Tier. Moreover, the production rate is much higher than that of regular recruitment camps!”

“If you come across one, you must seize it by any means necessary! Obtaining a bone forge can instantly boost the potential of players of the Undead class!”

“We all understand the reasoning, but where should we go to find it?”

“Based on the information we have, there are currently only a few dozen undead players who have obtained the Bone Forge, and most of them are still low-level. The one who obtained the mid-level Bone Forge has now become a super powerhouse among the undead race.”

“If someone is willing to sell it, I’m willing to spend all my wealth to buy it!”

After more than ten minutes, Ji Chen closed the forum with a subtle expression on his face.

Unexpectedly, the Bone Forge was such a rare existence in the main world.

Out of the multitude of players, only a handful of them had emerged, which was quite astounding.

Yet, they had just entered this Skeleton Mystic Realm not even half a day ago and it seemed they had encountered one.

It seemed they had come to the right place after all. These mystic realms were indeed like treasuries.

If they could explore the entire mystic realm, who knew what more they might find?

As he looked at the distant Skeleton Camp, his gaze gradually turned fervent, as if he were staring at a gold mine. He waved his hand.

“Full force ahead! Attack the Skeleton Camp!”

The army set out again, ascended the high ground, split in two around Ji Chen, then merged back into one, charging aggressively toward the Skeleton Camp.

Within the camp, there was a tent made up of countless white bones.

Several higher-ranking skeletons were sitting on bone chairs, engaged in soul communication.

“How is the production status of the Bone Forge?”

“It’s producing steadily. At this rate, we’ll soon complete the task given to us by the king.”

“We need to be even faster. The king’s plan to invade other realms is being prepared. We must do more for the king’s great cause!”

“That’s right. The previous invasion plan was thwarted by a human, leading to the death of a prominent general. The king was enraged. This time, our plan must be flawless. We need to breach the gates and launch a thorough invasion of other realms without any room for error!”

“Hah, if I ever come across that human, I’ll definitely use soul fireballs to scorch his soul! I’ll ensure his suffering surpasses mere death!”

Just as they were enthusiastically discussing, they suddenly noticed that the soul connections of a few lower-ranking skeletons were severed.

A strong aura of living beings also drifted in from outside.

“Enemies are approaching!”

Upon receiving this message, the higher-ranking skeleton creatures were instantly taken aback.

Enemies?

How could there be enemies invading the Skeleton Mystic Realm?

Could it be from the outside world?

Although they weren’t sure what was happening, a surge of anger erupted deep within their souls.

For countless ages, no living beings had dared to enter this mystic realm. This realm was ruled by the skeleton race.

However, today an unexpected visitor arrived, and they felt that their pride was being disregarded.

“No matter the cause, whoever has the audacity to assault this location shall endure the agonizing torment of soul immolation!”

The sounds of battle grew closer, and they picked up their weapons and walked out of the tent, only to see a formidable army of several thousand people fiercely attacking the periphery.

At the same time, they also saw the human who was commanding in the middle of the army and roared in anger.

“Damn it! Could that human be the same one who disrupted the king’s plan the last time!?”

“Whether it is or not, we must kill him here. Otherwise, once the king finds out, he will surely be furious!”

“If it truly is that human, as long as we kill or capture him and present him before the king, we will surely be richly rewarded!”

“Hmm?” Ji Chen, who was commanding the army in a relentless slaughter, suddenly noticed that the previously disorganized skeleton creatures were now organizing themselves into formations and launching an attack.

Upon seeing this scene, Ji Chen quickly realized what was happening.

A skeleton commander had started to give orders.

He surveyed the surroundings and soon spotted a few distinctive skeleton creatures within the massive skeleton army.

At a glance, all of them were White Common-Tier skeleton commanders!

Could this mystic realm’s monsters’ commanders really show up so frequently?

Ji Chen muttered to himself inwardly while continuing to gesture his commands.

Just a few White Common-Tier commanders wouldn't change the tide of battle at all.

“Full assault!”

“The target is the enemy skeleton commanders!”

With the command given, the army's assault grew even more ferocious.

Like a massive rolling war chariot, it pressed forward, crushing the skeletons beneath it.

Whether it was the white skeletons, the black skeletons, or even the skeleton hounds, they all turned into shattered bones before the sharp onslaught.

Only the three to four hundred skeleton mages managed to inflict some minor damage, but under the combined barrage of Elemental Sea Pixies, not even bone fragments were left behind.

If viewed from the sky, Ji Chen and his forces were like sharp cones, piercing deep into the enemy's ranks.

Having evolved to their current level, the higher-ranking skeletons weren't much less intelligent than humans. Seeing their own skeleton army getting dismantled as if they were mere vegetables being chopped, the thought of escape had long surfaced in their minds.

Especially for those enemy commanders who hadn't fought before, looking into their sharp gazes almost extinguished the flames of their souls.

The situation was extremely dangerous!

“The situation has changed! This human and his army are too powerful. We should retreat immediately!”

“Retreat? What about the Bone Forge in this area? And the king won't spare us either!”

Upon hearing this, the other higher-ranking skeletons hesitated, but one of them quickly found a reason to justify their actions.

“It's precisely because this human is so powerful that we should inform the king immediately. Otherwise, letting him escape would be an even greater offense.”

“You're right. We're not retreating... we're informing the king!”

Several higher-ranking skeletons instantly reached a consensus and, accompanied by a small contingent of elite skeleton creatures, hastily began to flee.

Witnessing this scene, Ji Chen couldn't help but frown, his expression growing stern.

Thinking of escaping? There's no way!

He immediately shouted, “Daro, you and the Half-Orc Warriors chase down those fleeing skeleton commanders! Make sure to capture them!”

“Yes!”

Daro accepted the command and led a group of muscular Half-Orc Warriors, charging from the side to pursue the escaping skeletons.

Although the skeleton army held numerical advantage, the loss of the skeleton commanders' command turned them into scattered chaos in an instant.

Under Ji Chen's command, they were divided into several sections, gradually devouring them like a cake being slowly eaten away.

An hour later.

Not a single standing skeleton remained in sight. Everywhere were shattered white bones.

“Ding- You have slain thousands of skeleton creatures. Level up (19—>22).”

Looking at the system notification, a hint of satisfaction appeared on Ji Chen's face.

Even before this series of battles, his level had already reached 19. But this time, wiping out such a large wave of skeleton creatures all at once brought enough experience to propel him up by three levels.

It seemed this trip to the mystic realm would allow him to gain several good levels.

Walking amid the white bones, Ji Chen leisurely entered the skeleton camp.

At this moment, a fresh batch of low-level skeleton creatures wandered over from the direction of the stone mountain.

It seemed the Bone Forge was on the side of the stone mountain.

Ji Chen casually gestured, and the army tore apart this group of low-level skeleton creatures.

Then he headed toward the stone mountain. Following the traces, he soon arrived at a sinister-looking cave entrance.

Without hesitation, he entered.

The cave was dimly lit, with skull torches affixed to the walls on both sides that emitted a dim blue flame.

Walking a dozen meters into the cave, he arrived at a circular domed space.

Looking around, a massive skull stood in the center, its empty eye sockets flickering with a ghostly blue flame.

With a slight click, the mouth slowly opened, and a few skeleton hounds walked out from inside.

When they saw Ji Chen, they visibly paused, then rushed towards him one after another.

Sounds of bones shattering echoed, and Anina set down her greatsword, clapping her hands expressionlessly.

Seeing this, Ji Chen began to size up this so-called Bone Forge.

[Bone Forge (Low-Level)]

[Purpose]: Capable of producing 1-3 tier skeleton units

[Producible Units]: White skeletons, black skeletons, Netherfire skeleton hounds, Skeleton vultures, Skeleton mages...

[Harvestable Resources]

Chapter 230: Skeleton Uprising, Skeleton Lizards

A low-level bone forge?

Shaking his head, Ji Chen didn't feel much disappointment. He had anticipated this outcome.

After all, the guarding skeletons in this area ranged from Tier 1 to Tier 3, with a handful of white skeleton commanders among them.

With a wave of his hand, Ji Chen casually stored this low-level bone forge in his backpack. He looked around and confirmed that this was the only thing here before retracing his steps.

Back at the entrance of the skeleton camp, after only a short wait, Daro and his half-orc group appeared on the dunes, thundering towards them.

Plop-

Several differently-shaped heads were thrown on the ground. As Daro ran up, his rough voice resounded like thunder. He held three white crystals in his hand.

"Lord, I've taken care of those fleeing skeletons/"

"These three crystals rolled out of their heads."

Crystals that fell from them?

Ji Chen seemed to recall something and reached out to receive them, examining them closely.

[White Heroic Soul Essence]

[Tier]: Special

[Effect]: Can immediately promote an ordinary creature to a white

Common-Tier hero.

Indeed, these were from the same series as the green Heroic Soul Essence that burst out from Styne the Malevolent Wind.

Three white Heroic Soul Essences could turn three ordinary individuals into heroes, even if they were just the lowest level of white Common-Tier.

There seemed to be an obvious development issue with the Crown of the Ocean.

Among the six heroes, four were purple Rare-Tier, while there was only one blue Excellent-Tier and one green Elite-Tier. Surprisingly, there was not a single white Common-Tier hero.

This structure was quite distorted.

If heroes like Alice and Anina, who were purple Rare-Tier, were likened to generals, then white Common-Tier heroes were like basic officers, the backbone of the force.

The lack of low-level heroes resulted in the need for high-tier combat heroes to handle every minor skirmish and small-scale monster invasion, which was wasteful and inefficient.

Moreover, there was the issue of how well heroes commanded armies.

Heroes like Anina, who were purely focused on violence, were more suited for solo combat. They were not good at leading armies in collective battles.

Not only did they fail to leverage the advantages of hero-commanded armies, but it also somewhat limited their abilities.

On the other hand, combat heroes like Benbo and Daro were not only adept at commanding Dragon Blood Murlocs and half-orc warriors, but they also provided significant boosts and enhancements.

If there were several heroes that could match their respective units, both in combat command and improving unit combat power, everything would be much smoother.

Storing the three white Heroic Soul Essences in his backpack, Ji Chen led his army away, searching for the next skeleton camp similar to this one.

He finally discovered that the skeleton commanders in this skeleton mystic realm had a relatively high probability of dropping Heroic Soul Essences. That was why he obtained three by conquering just one camp.

If he could conquer a few more camps and drop a dozen more Heroic Soul Essences, wouldn't he gain several more heroes for the Crown of the Ocean?

With this thought in mind, Ji Chen was filled with enthusiasm. With a wave of his hand, he led his army to set off again.

He chose to advance in the direction the white skeleton commanders had fled.

Since they ran in this direction, there should be another skeleton camp or something similar somewhere.

With the main army as the center, he sent out over a hundred Naga Berserkers to scout the surroundings.

This skeleton mystic realm was as vast as the Blood Sea mystic realm.

After leaving the rocky hill, the sight within the field of vision was nothing but a vast expanse of red desert, appearing both desolate and lonely.

After crossing one hill, there was another hill. They seemed endless, covering the entire ground.

After walking for several hours without finding any skeleton camps, the sky gradually darkened, and the visibility around them rapidly decreased.

Seeing this, Ji Chen had no choice but to order the army to stop and set up camp in a sheltered valley.

Soon, the night fully descended.

The sky was covered in dense black clouds, and a blood-red moon emerged from behind the clouds. The crimson moonlight illuminated the gravel below, making it even more vibrant.

Listening to the howling wind outside the tent, Ji Chen, who held Alice's soft body, gradually relaxed.

But before he could completely fall asleep, he faintly heard the sound of gravel shifting beneath the wind. However, he didn't pay it much attention.

It wasn't until a piercing warning cry came from outside that he suddenly opened his eyes.

"Enemy attack!!!"

Ji Chen instantly woke up and found that Alice was already awake, her face filled with alertness.

The two of them immediately got up and dressed, then quickly stepped out of the tent, bringing Alice along.

At a glance, they saw blood-red flames appearing on the tops of the sand dunes surrounding them.

Ji Chen narrowed his eyes as he observed.

No, these were flames coming from the eye sockets of the skeleton creatures!

Why would there suddenly be so many skeleton creatures?

Could it be that other skeleton commanders had noticed them and gathered forces to attack under the cover of night?

Although he didn't know the exact reason, Ji Chen knew that now wasn't the time to dwell on this.

Listening to the relentless sounds of creaking and the soft shifting of gravel, it was clear that a large number of skeleton creatures were rushing toward them from the other end of the sand dunes.

A portion of them had already engaged in battle with the night-watch army.

Their encampment was situated in a valley, surrounded by sand dunes. Once the skeleton creatures seized the high ground at the top, they would have the advantage of attacking from above. At that point, things would become quite difficult..