

Ocean Lord 571

Chapter 571: Embrace Evolution! (3)

“The way those nobles look at us is like we’re nothing more than livestock...”

Suddenly, within this closed and dark hall, “many” believers began to lament the wicked deeds of the nobles and their lackeys. The emotions of anger and sorrow infected other believers, causing them to recall the injustices they had suffered.

This made Jon’s expression shake as well, images of his own mistreatment by the nobles flashing through his mind. He couldn’t help but curse, “Damn nobles!”

The priest, observing this scene, displayed a satisfied expression on his face.

Taking advantage of the increasingly intense emotions of the believers, he spoke loudly.

“But the appearance of the Lord has changed everything!”

“The Archbishop told me that the Lord is willing to bestow abundant blessings upon us, granting us the power to resist the nobles!

As long as all the brothers and sisters here can receive the blessings personally bestowed by the Archbishop!”

In the passage leading to the front of the hall, suddenly, a wriggling sound was heard. Amid the expectant gaze of numerous believers, a tall figure walked out.

However, the appearance of this figure left the believers breathless.

It had a humanoid body with a grotesque and eerie form, its pallid bones exposed, grayish-blue muscles intertwined between the bones. Its hands had mutated with sharp, grayish-blue claws, and instead of human facial features, there were several horizontal strips of flesh. Fins and similar organs adorned its neck and body.

What sent shivers down one’s spine the most was the fact that it had no legs; it moved using a hem of flesh and blood composed of tentacles wrapped around its waist, writhing and undulating.

The priest spoke in a hoarse voice, “This is the Lord’s blessing. We should accept it sincerely and praise the Lord’s generosity!”

“Is this the Archbishop?”

“Oh my, it’s so repulsive and horrifying. I don’t want to become such a monster...”

Such a non-human appearance instantly generated a sense of rejection among many believers. The excitement they had felt earlier subsided in an instant.

“I don’t want this power anymore. I want to leave the church...”

A young believer who recently joined the church also wanted to leave, but as soon as he turned to run towards the passage, he was knocked to the ground. The priest’s hand had transformed into a tentacle, piercing through the young believer’s chest, and blood quickly spread beneath his body.

“Going against the Lord’s will shall incur punishment.”

The strong smell of blood made other believers shiver, dispelling any thoughts of leaving.

Seeing this, the priest smirked and turned to the monstrous figure – the Archbishop.

“Your Excellency, Archbishop, please purify these lost believers and let them join us, into the embrace of the Lord and the deep sea!”

The Archbishop, with its writhing tentacle hem, moved forward and suddenly opened a large hole in its chest. It extended a small, thin tentacle, which forcefully pierced into the body of the frontmost believer.

What followed was the injection of some kind of liquid into the believer’s body. His face contorted in pain, and he let out agonizing screams. His body developed numerous bumps, his skin peeled away, and his facial features changed. Tentacles emerged from the bumps...

In just under half a minute, this believer transformed into a monstrous entity of tentacles and flesh.

This horrifying scene made the other believers tremble, and they couldn’t help but try to escape from this place. However, without exception, they were all killed by the priest with his tentacles and brought before the transformed tentacled monstrosity to be devoured.

The priest’s eyes gleamed with benevolence. “Feast, my brothers and sisters. Embrace evolution with serenity; this is the Lord’s gift. We are destined to come into this world to fulfill the will of the Lord.”

While the underground hall was in the midst of a cult-like conversion ritual, the door of the house above suddenly rang.

The middle-aged man guarding the door leaned cautiously against it, asking in a hushed voice, “Who is it?”

“Open up! Tressburg City Guards!”

Chapter 572: Sea Heirs Turning Into Humans, Humans Becoming Sea Heirs

The middle-aged man’s face turned pale, and he instinctively tried to lock the door to buy some time. However, in the next moment, the soldiers violently burst through the door and streamed in.

Behind the shattered door, the middle-aged man’s eyes turned bloodshot, veins bulging on his neck, and his skin grew pale gray. It was as if something was crawling under his skin, forming grotesque bumps.

A thick, damp, and viscous smell, like that of the deep sea, filled the air.

Feeling a surge of immense power coursing through his body, the middle-aged man believed he could now punch a bull to death. A maniacal grin spread across his face as he lunged at the soldiers with a powerful fist.

The soldiers, seasoned in combat and clad in armor, were unafraid. One of them swung his short sword, piercing the man right through.

However, as the sword was withdrawn, black blood spurted out, filling the air with a nauseating stench. The middle-aged man, wearing a crazed smile, continued to swing his fists as if nothing happened until he was finally decapitated by a sword blow.

In the underground hall, the priest felt a disturbance from above and his face turned grim.

Danin it, who leaked the information that Jed the city defense guards of Tressburg to this place!?

His serpent-like eyes scanned the faithful below, wishing he could kill the traitor on the spot.

It seemed these believers had not yet shown enough loyalty and devotion to the Lord, as His blessings had not fully manifested in them.

At this critical moment, with problems suddenly arising, the priest knew that the Church's power was still not strong enough to confront the Lienhardt Grand Duchy head-on.

So, he respectfully said, "Lord Archbishop, those humans who have not yet undergone the transformation have discovered this place. To safeguard the Church's secret, it would be best for us to leave with our newly reborn faithful as soon as possible."

The faceless Archbishop nodded stiffly and, his tentacles wriggling, led the way through the passage. The priest followed with dozens of successfully transformed faithful in tow, navigating a deep and winding tunnel until they reached the seashore.

As they beheld the pitch-black ocean ahead, the priest finally breathed a sigh of relief. As long as they returned to the sea, there was no way Lienhardt could catch up to them.

They were the offspring of the ocean, protected by the great sea!

As he was about to step into the water, he suddenly noticed a few individuals standing ahead. The leader was a young, handsome man in a robe, looking at them with a smile that seemed both friendly and sinister.

Ji Chen looked at the group rushing out of the hidden passage with a hint of surprise on his face.

After learning that Baron Bessos participated in a gathering of believers in the basement of 66 Avenue des Champs-Élysées and that an annual meeting was scheduled to take place soon, with many believers attending, he and Julius decided to launch a surprise attack on this night to capture the Deep Sea Church's faithful and trace the source of the Sea Heir's poison.

To be fully prepared, Ji Chen voluntarily joined the mission, and he hadn't expected to stumble upon this situation just outside the tunnel.

At first glance, he almost couldn't believe his eyes.

Ignoring the humanoid creature and human running ahead, what were those monstrous beings following them?

Tentacles, flesh, twisted bodies—wasn't this the Sea Heir!?

The Deep Sea Church was indeed closely tied to the Sea Heir!

Just as Ji Chen was filled with astonishment, the priest, seeing Ji Chen's group blocking their path, showed a flash of annoyance. How could these people dare to stand in their way so recklessly?

Tonight, they had suffered significant losses, and so many of their kind had been transformed into seeds. It was the perfect opportunity to convert these people into believers!

Without hesitation, he mutated his left hand into tentacles and thrust it straight at Ji Chen.

However, a blue light flashed, and a section of the tentacle fell to the ground with a splat, black blood oozing from the wound.

The priest's expression changed drastically because he saw that the blue light was actually a blade formed from condensed seawater.

Immediately after, he sensed an overwhelming aura emanating from the man, and dozens of water-formed blades shot towards him. Smelling the thick scent of death, the priest hastily shouted, "Brothers, kill these enemies!"

"Lord Archbishop, save me!"

In what seemed like a commander-subordinate relationship, dozens of Sea Heirs behind him rushed forward, their twisted bodies moving.

The Archbishop, who had been motionless, hesitated for a moment but finally took action. He moved in front of the priest, his clawed hands as resilient as metal, swatting away the water-formed blades that were flying towards them.

Although he temporarily blocked the attacks, the other ordinary Sea Heirs couldn't withstand the onslaught of the water-formed blades. Under the barrage of the blades, they fell one by one, their flailing tentacles and putrid flesh scattering all over the ground.

Ji Chen furrowed his brow slightly and, with a thought, increased both the intensity and frequency of his projectile attacks.

The creature referred to as "Lord Archbishop," with its fleshy drapery, waved its hands as if weaving a net, deflecting all the water-formed blades aimed at it.

However, as time passed, it seemed to exhaust a considerable amount of energy, and its swinging speed gradually slowed down. One of the water-formed blades managed to pierce through its defense, instantly puncturing the right shoulder of the priest standing behind it.

In a brief pause, the blade suddenly detonated with intense explosive energy, leaving the priest with only half of his shattered body.

What was astonishing, though, was that the remaining half of the priest's body began to writhe abruptly. Flesh and blood rapidly regrew, and even the visibly diminished head was swiftly returning to its previous state..

Chapter 573: Sea Heirs Turning Into Humans, Humans Becoming Sea Heirs (2)

After dozens of seconds, the priest, who had fully restored his humanoid form, stood up.

Ji Chen looked at him with a hint of surprise.

Rebirth from a mangled state was not an ability that ordinary humans could master, not to mention the strange ability to transform their hands into tentacles.

Watching as the newly transformed believers were all wiped out, the priest felt a deep sense of regret.

“My newly converted believers!”

The priest looked at Ji Chen with a resentful expression and said in a tone full of bitterness, “Damn human, I will make you pay and condemn your soul to be forever immersed in the depths of the sea!”

“Human?” Ji Chen raised an eyebrow slightly. “So, you don’t consider yourself a human anymore?”

“The bodies of creatures like humans are too fragile.”

The priest’s face showed a trace of disdain, and he coldly snorted, “I have long abandoned that weak body, pledging loyalty to the Lord and willingly embracing the evolution bestowed by the Lord.”

Transforming one’s body into this monstrous appearance was called evolution?

As Ji Chen gazed at the priest with elongated tentacles, the bishop who was swaying his own tentacles, and the scattered bodies of the sea heirs, a sudden realization struck him. His eyebrows furrowed deeply as a memory resurfaced. Hadn’t he just seen this priest commanding these sea heirs? Connecting the dots about the so-called evolution, could it be... that this priest and bishop were both sea heirs?

Ji Chen’s heart skipped a beat, and he focused his gaze to bring up their information panels.

[Sea Heir Priest: Primo]

[Race]: Half-Sea Heir

[Sea Heir Archbishop: Isaiah]

[Race]: Sea Heir

Ji Chen’s heart grew heavy.

This revelation was nothing short of shocking to him.

In his impression, sea heirs were either adorned with large, flowery crowns on their heads or had tentacles covered in slime. In any case, they had absolutely no resemblance to humans.

And now before him, two sea heirs with striking human-like appearances had emerged, one of whom even admitted to transforming from a human into a half-sea heir. The other, although somewhat unsightly, had a humanoid appearance that hinted at some significant revelations.

These sea heirs were evolving to resemble humans in their outward appearance.

What was even more unnerving was that the sea heirs were no longer treating humans as mere food sources but had developed some form of social logic. They were assimilating specific humans, turning them into their own kind, and covertly forming a religious organization.

Did this not indicate that sea heirs had undergone significant evolution in their learning capabilities?

Ji Chen, who once fought against a sea heir tribe, instantly sensed the complexity of the situation.

The best way to deal with sea heirs was to act swiftly and decisively, eradicating them all before they could develop powers that countered their weaknesses.

However, it now appeared that this deep-sea church, consisting of humans turned into sea heirs and sea heirs becoming humans, had become active in Tressburg City. They absorbed an unknown number of followers, and even Baron Bessos, a noble, was compromised.

Especially concerning individuals like the sea heir priest, who showed no obvious differences in appearance when not provoked, sea heirs transformed into humans had been lurking within human society, quietly probing human weaknesses and abilities. They were evolving powers that would be absolutely devastating.

Ji Chen spoke with a cold and indifferent expression, "Is your Deep Sea Church active only in Tressburg City, or are you active elsewhere as well?"

The priest didn't conceal anything and responded candidly, "Wherever the will of our Lord is sown, our footsteps are there.

Sooner or later, the will of the Lord will be spread across this land, and all believers will experience rebirth."

The sea heir priest's eyes wandered, and he spoke with surprising seriousness, "Why not join us? The Lord will grant you greater blessings and bestow upon you even more powerful abilities."

Ji Chen sneered and said, "The price is becoming a monster like you?"

"This is precisely the necessary path for us to gain immense power and become loyal followers of the Lord."

"But I've killed so many of your believers."

The sea heir priest wore a cold-blooded smile on his face. "If these believers knew that their sacrifices had guided a lost newcomer to the Lord, they would feel extremely honored."

Ji Chen rolled his eyes. It seemed like a waste not to recruit this guy as a pyramid scheme leader.

With a mischievous thought in mind, Ji Chen whispered a few words to Alice.

Alice nodded and brought out the sea heir heart core.

As the Sea Heir Core emerged, both the Sea Heir Priest and the Bishop instantly fixated their gazes on it. The Sea Heir Priest displayed a look of disbelief, as if he had witnessed something incredible.

He actually sensed a trace of the divine aura emanating from this object!?

Could it be that this human and these other races were also followers of the Lord, and the Lord had sent them to test him? But he hadn't sensed any familiar aura from them!

For a moment, the sea heir priest considered many possibilities, without even noticing the playful look in Ji Chen's eyes.

However, the sea heir archbishop suddenly reacted and uttered a hoarse voice resembling speech for the first time.

"Lord... fellow... humans killed... Take it back... for the Lord!"

Before the sea heir priest could react, the archbishop rushed towards Ji Chen, emanating a strong, damp, and putrid odor.

Without the need for further words, Anina stepped forward, her feet touching the seawater as she wielded her large sword. The Dragon Slayer Great Sword, a 6-star artifact, possessed immense power even when not slaying dragons, capable of cutting through metal and stone.

With a swift strike, the sharp blade broke through the archbishop's defenses, almost cutting him in half at the waist. However, in the next moment, the flesh and blood at the wound rapidly regrew, returning to its original state within a dozen seconds, leaving no trace of damage.

Compared to the sea heir priest, who had transformed from a human into a sea heir, the pure sea heir bishop possessed a much more robust regenerative ability.

Whether it was the sea heir archbishop, who seemed to be a leader among the monsters, or their powerful regenerative abilities, it was the first time Ji Chen had witnessed such things. The Sea Heir tribes he wiped out before only had a Sea Heir chieftain as a monster leader, and the others were just ordinary foot soldiers with no rapid recovery abilities.

Clearly, the strength of these sea heirs was far greater than the sea heir tribes Ji Chen eliminated back then.

Boom!

A loud explosion rang out as the fists of the sea heir archbishop and Anina collided heavily. Then, both of them quickly retreated, wearing grave expressions.

Although Anina had a massive advantage in terms of strength, the sea heir archbishop managed to hold his ground with his formidable regenerative abilities.

Seeing that Anina had not achieved any results, her face turned resolute as she prepared to continue the battle. However, she watched as the sea heir archbishop suddenly began muttering to himself and then turned to flee toward the ocean. His flesh and blood skirt wriggled, and he swam rapidly on the water's surface.

"Trying to escape?"

A glint of cunning flashed in Ji Chen's eyes. He raised his right hand, and a towering wall of water several meters high shot up around them. Sharp water spikes protruded from the wall, trapping the sea heir archbishop inside. Then, one by one, chains pierced through his body like sharp arrows, pinning him to the water's surface. No matter how he struggled, he couldn't move an inch.

On the other side, Anina didn't remain idle. Seeing that the sea heir archbishop was restrained, she turned and charged toward the sea heir priest. At Ji Chen's command, they decided to spare his life for now.

By the time the city's defense guards came rushing out of the passage, the battle here had already ended.

As they looked at the bodies of tentacled monsters strewn about and the eerie-looking sea heir archbishop, the guards couldn't help but show horrified expressions. They had seen their fair share of gruesome creatures, but this was the first time they encountered something so grotesque with human-like features.

“The battle here has already ended. How’s the situation inside?”

“We’ve already taken control inside. All surviving Deep Sea Church believers have been subdued, and those who... mutated into monsters were executed on the spot.”

Ji Chen nodded in approval. This operation was relatively successful, capturing most of the Deep Sea Church believers and successfully apprehending the Sea Heir priest and the Sea Heir archbishop, two crucial figures.

This was of immense value for his research on human-turned-sea heirs and sea heir-turned-humans, this was of immense value.

Without further delay, Ji Chen began escorting the two captives back..

Chapter 574: The Sealed Spell Map

However, just as Ji Chen was using the water chain to secure the Sea Heir Archbishop’s neck and moving forward, a sudden change occurred.

The Sea Heir Archbishop suddenly gave up struggling, and with a swift motion, plunged sharp nails into his own neck. His entire body rapidly dissolved like ice and snow, and within moments, it had completely turned into a pool of black blood, leaving no trace of bones behind.

Ji Chen was momentarily stunned, then turned to look at the other side.

Before he could say anything, he witnessed the heavily injured Sea Heir Priest’s hand transform into tentacles once again. In his terrified expression, those tentacles ruthlessly pierced into his own heart.

“Why, my lord... I was your faithful believer...”

The Sea Heir Priest spat out black blood, his words incomprehensible, his eyes filled with unwillingness. He attempted to struggle but felt as though his body weighed a thousand pounds. His consciousness gradually faded, and he finally lost his breath.

Looking at the puddle of black blood on the ground and the gradually dissolving body of Sea Heir Priest, Ji Chen fell into silence for a moment. Then, accompanied by a few heroes, he left.

Back at the Lienhardt Palace, Julius and Monica were waiting at the palace gates. They rushed forward when they saw Ji Chen returning.

Monica asked with a concerned expression, “Lord Ji Chen, are you unharmed?”

Ji Chen smiled and shook his head, saying, “No, how could some believers harm me?”

Monica carefully examined him from top to bottom and found no traces of injury. She then let out a relieved sigh and smiled.

“That’s a relief. My mother instructed me to ensure your safety. If anything happened to you, I would be scolded.”

“Is Lady Milorna doing better now?”

“Thanks to your help, my mother’s condition has improved significantly. She should be able to get out of bed and move around soon.”

Julius watched as Monica and Ji Chen engaged in a pleasant conversation, seemingly ignoring his presence. His large lion-like face turned dark.

Why did he feel like an outsider?

Clearly, he was Monica’s father!

Julius cleared his throat loudly and interrupted the two, saying in a deep voice, “Have the priests and the so-called archbishop of the Deep Sea Church been captured?”

It was evident that Julius had already received the news of the successful raid from the city’s defense guards and knew that the priests and archbishop had escaped through another passage.

Ji Chen nodded but then shook his head with a hint of regret on his face.

He said, “After I captured the priests and archbishop of the Deep Sea Church, they committed suicide.”

“Suicide!?”

“Yes, it seems they didn’t want to reveal any secrets or information about themselves. Even their bodies turned into a puddle of black blood.”

Ji Chen briefly described the situation of the Sea Heir Priest and Archbishop.

“It can be confirmed that the Deep Sea Church is a cult formed by a group of human-turned-Sea Heirs and Sea Heirs who have taken on human forms, and they are actively recruiting followers in coastal areas.

Their ambitions must be significant.”

Julius also looked solemn. This group of sea monsters hidden among humans, disguised as a church, and secretly recruiting followers was like a time bomb placed among them.

No one knew when it would explode.

Monica furrowed her eyebrows and asked, “Lord Ji Chen, how can we identify the hidden human-turned-Sea Heirs?”

“Based on the current situation, those who have become Sea Heirs tend to exhibit some mutations, such as growing blue scales on their necks and their skin turning gray.” Ji Chen observed the pensive faces of the two. “But I believe we should pay more attention to the Sea Heirs who have taken on human forms. Although their appearances still differ significantly from humans, no one knows if they will continue to evolve until they become indistinguishable from humans.”

Julius nodded; this was indeed his greatest concern. Human-turned-Sea Heirs would only become slightly more powerful, and the soldiers of the principality could handle them. However, Sea Heirs

in human form were a much greater problem. Judging from Ji Chen's encounter with the Sea Heir Archbishop, their tier was at least five, and their level was over 40.

"Your Grace Julius, the Deep Sea Church has likely already spread and become active in coastal cities.

Please be vigilant, especially considering that the war between Lienhardt and the Kingdom of Bass has just ended, leaving many homeless refugees. This might provide the Deep Sea Church with an opportunity for rapid expansion."

Julius's expression turned grave, and he didn't say much, just nodded in acknowledgment.

After a pause, Ji Chen continued, "Since things have settled for now, it's time for me to leave."

Monica hastily spoke up, "Lord Ji Chen, are you leaving so soon? Won't you stay a bit longer?"

"I've been away from my territory for over half a month, and I have no knowledge of the current situation in the Crown of the Ocean. The army I brought with me on this journey suffered heavy losses, and it's time for me to return and recuperate."

Hearing this, Monica felt a tinge of guilt. She understood how difficult it was for the Lord of Glory to assemble a tier-five army. These thousands of soldiers had likely depleted all the resources of one of his territories.

Especially the Crown of the Ocean's army, sacrificed in a foreign land for Lienhardt's sake, made her feel even more remorseful.

In Ji Chen's puzzled gaze, Monica pulled Julius aside and whispered, "Father, Lord Ji Chen has done so much for us. Perhaps we should offer him more in terms of rewards to show our gratitude.."

Chapter 575: The Sealed Spell Map (2)

Julius reflected on how Ji Chen had aided him in securing victory during the war and had exposed the Deep Sea Church's hidden threat. He had also generously compensated most of the troops for their efforts.

Offering a modest bonus or additional reward as a token of appreciation is not a challenging task.

This request was entirely feasible.

"It can be done, but what kind of reward should we give?"

Monica answered eagerly, "For example, we could grant Lord Ji Chen control over several towns near Fish Tail Island. I've been to the Crown of the Ocean, and Lord Ji Chen has shown great talent in governing territories. I believe he can make these towns even more prosperous!"

When Julius heard this, his eye twitched suddenly.

He had a complex expression and sighed.

"Daughter, in the history of the Grand Duchy, non-noble families have never been granted such a high degree of autonomy over land. When I previously granted Fish

Tail Island to Lord Ji Chen, many nobles expressed their dissatisfaction. If we grant control over several towns as well, it may lead to even more discontent..."

"I see..."

Monica's face was filled with disappointment, and even her eyes dimmed, which made Julius somewhat flustered. He quickly tried to console her.

"I fully agree to grant him more reward, but it should be something other than additional land."

"Really?"

Monica became more attentive and asked in a hushed tone, her eyes revealing a touch of doubt.

Julius, seeing this, vigorously patted his chest and assumed the role of a reliable father. "Of course, after all, I am the Grand Duke. I can afford such a reward!"

Monica's eyes gleamed mischievously. "Let Ji Chen pick a few things from the warehouse."

"No..." Julius was about to instinctively refuse, but he held back, feeling somewhat trapped.

The Valencia family's warehouse was filled with a vast amount of gold, silver, rare resources, and precious treasures collected over hundreds, even thousands of years. Even he hesitated to use them, let alone give them away.

Julius quickly realized that he had fallen into a trap as he saw the mischievous look in Monica's eyes.

Well, this was a clever setup by his dear daughter!

Seeing her father's realization, Monica immediately employed her playful tactics, hugging Julius's arm, which was thicker than her leg, and swaying it gently.

"Father-, you've already agreed to grant him a reward other than towns-, you can't go back on your word!"

In the eyes of outsiders, Grand Duke Julius, who was majestic and brave enough to fight lions and tigers barehanded, had no resistance when faced with his daughter's cute act. His stern lion-like face gradually softened.

Finally, he could only sigh heavily.

"At most, only two items!"

Monica suddenly beamed with joy, jumping up and down with excitement.

"Father, you're the best!"

Julius had an extremely complicated expression, and the emotions in his eyes were so complex that they could be charted as a pie chart.

His daughter, whom he had raised with his own hands, now even had him wrapped around her little finger. It truly saddened this old father.

He couldn't bring himself to hit her, and he couldn't bring himself to scold her. In the end, he could only glare angrily at Ji Chen.

Ji Chen looked at Julius suddenly glaring at him and felt puzzled.

What's going on? What did I do to provoke him?

The two of them quickly approached, and Monica generously said, "Lord Ji Chen, my father said that as a token of our gratitude for helping us uncover the Deep Sea Church, he is willing to let you choose two items from the Valencia Family's treasury as our thanks."

Ji Chen's eyebrows twitched, his interest piqued.

"Oh, this is rather embarrassing. I just did what I could."

If he was truly embarrassed, he could decline, Julius rolled his eyes internally but still managed to force a reluctant smile under Monica's suggestive gaze.

"This is our way of expressing our gratitude to you. Please don't refuse again."

A faint curve appeared at the corner of Ji Chen's mouth. He could actually get two items for free? In that case, he wouldn't be polite.

"Please follow me."

After saying that, Monica couldn't wait to lead the way, which made Julius roll his eyes once again. This daughter of his was beyond salvation. Where was the intelligence and rationality she had displayed earlier? Why did it disappear when facing this guy?

And another thing, was it really a good idea to bring an outsider to take items from their own family's treasure trove?

The Valencia Family's treasury was located within the palace and was heavily guarded by numerous guards. It had very strict rune mechanisms and magical seals in place, making it impenetrable even to a fly.

However, this was not a problem in front of the current Grand Duke. Julius directly bypassed the security layers and arrived at the door of the underground treasury. Using a certain passphrase, spells, and keys, he opened the door and led Ji Chen inside.

Inside was a spacious domed space, with dozens of intricately carved stone columns supporting the topmost stained glass dome, through which some source of light projected a colorful and vibrant spectrum.

In the radiant glow, countless piles of gold coins, enough to make a dragon's heart race, filled nearly one-fifth of the enormous storage room.

Ji Chen glanced at it with mild surprise before shifting his gaze to the other side, where rows of wooden shelves displayed various treasures and rare items.

Julius pointed in that direction, saying with a touch of annoyance, "Go ahead and pick two items, but remember, only two!"

Ji Chen nodded and walked confidently toward the shelves, starting to inspect them row by row.

As the ruling family of Lienhardt for over a thousand years, the Valencia Family's treasury contained many rare treasures rarely seen in the outside world.

With just a cursory glance, Ji Chen found no less than five 4 to 5-star treasures, several high-level spell scrolls, potent alchemical potions, and more. Any item taken from here would undoubtedly arouse the fervor and competition among players.

Among them were also some high-level military recruitment camp cores and rare building blueprints.

Ji Chen glanced briefly at a few recruitment camp cores but quickly lost interest. These cores were either land-based units or unsuitable for the Ocean Crown, rendering them useless to him.

Taking a cursory look, he stopped in front of a wooden shelf in the middle of the third row. He gazed at an item on the third tier.

It was a roll of silk exuding a faint magical aura. From the exposed side, one could see intricate runic patterns and unfamiliar, archaic inscriptions etched in golden threads.

Julius leaned over to take a look and suddenly realized.

He spoke in a relaxed tone, "This is a spell map, but it has been sealed for centuries because no one could unlock it.

It was probably created by a powerful ancient figure, maybe to record the location of some treasure or a specific relic. It has been lying here for so long without anyone being able to unlock it. If you forcibly break the seal, it will likely be damaged."

Ji Chen picked up the map, a glint of interest in his eyes.

[Sealed Spell Map]

[Level]: Special

[A mysterious map that, if the seal is unlocked, may reveal its secrets.]

"Ding- Detected an item in your backpack that can unlock the seal."

Ji Chen was slightly stunned and felt a surge of joy in his heart.

Well, it was quite a coincidence that he happened to have something capable of unlocking the map's seal, wasn't it?

"The first item is this!" Ji Chen declared confidently.

Julius was taken aback, wearing a peculiar expression. "Are you sure about this?"

Ji Chen nodded calmly. "Of course, I believe this item is destined for me."

"Lord Ji Chen, if you can't unlock the seal on this map, it will be of no use. Perhaps you should choose something else," Monica said anxiously.

Ji Chen shook his head, but Julius furrowed his brows in response and spoke with a deep voice.

“If you think I would feel resentful or hostile towards you for taking something valuable from here, then you are mistaken. It’s only two items, Yurius Valencia can afford that.”

Ji Chen was slightly astonished and somewhat amused. He replied, “Your Grace, I really didn’t choose this item for that reason. I have a way to unlock the seal on this map.”

“You have a way to unlock it?” Julius was skeptical, but seeing Ji Chen’s honest expression, he slowly nodded.

“Since you’re certain, I won’t say more about it. Let’s proceed to choose the second item now..”

Chapter 576: Elisia’s Realization

Ji Chen nodded and didn’t rush to unfold the map, placing it in his backpack before continuing to select the second item.

Various rare treasures from the outside world were displayed on the shelves, each of them worth a fortune. There were at least hundreds of them, a testament to the heritage of a native family that had been passed down for thousands of years, not to mention the indigenous forces that had inherited their legacy for tens of thousands of years.

This made him increasingly interested in the biggest reward of this war—the tenth of the wealth of the Kingdom of Bass’ treasury.

No doubt, among these treasures, there was a significant amount of gold coins, enough to satisfy his desires.

Finally, Ji Chen chose a rare architectural blueprint.

[Architectural Blueprint: Hero Fountain]

[Tier]: 7 Stars

[Effects]: 0 Increases the chance of heroes being born in the territory

(2) Slowly enhances the life potential of the residents in the territory

Talent is always a valuable resource that can greatly drive the development of a territory.

The girl, Leysha, created the brewing industry of the Crown of the Ocean, while the interior minister, Wilus, allowed him to set aside the complicated affairs of the territory and efficiently manage resources and construction. The half-orc hero, Irona, created potions, reducing the mortality rate of the residents. Heroes like Alice and Anina fought alongside him, achieving countless victories in battles... These clearly showed the tremendous impact of hero units.

The military talent tree could improve the tier of heroes, but it couldn’t conjure heroes out of thin air.

The Hero Fountain could increase the chance of hero units being born, which held extraordinary significance for the Crown of the Ocean.

When Julius saw Ji Chen choose this blueprint, a look of approval appeared on his face.

In terms of preciousness, this Hero Fountain blueprint was easily in the top five here.

The next day.

Ji Chen received a message sent by Julius' messenger, stating that two fleets of thousands of elves had already arrived at the City of Tressburg. This meant that they were about to embark on their return journey.

After a brief stop to refuel and resupply, the fleet set sail once again with Ji Chen and his companions.

Before departing, the young girl Monica had a reluctant expression on her face. However, she also knew that Ji Chen had many things to do next, and the residents of the Crown of the Ocean needed him more than she did. It was impossible for him to stay here forever. So, she suppressed her feelings of reluctance and waved goodbye to Ji Chen on the deck with a smile.

With the loud sound of ship horns, the fleet slowly moved away from the mainland, gradually becoming indistinct on the horizon.

Ji Chen stood at the bow of the ship, feeling the sea breeze blowing against his face, and his heart was filled with a pleasant emotion.

The gains from this trip to Lienhardt exceeded what he had initially imagined. Not only did he settle the score with the Kingdom of Bass, but he also obtained a vast amount of wealth. It also resulted in a significant boost in his own strength.

It felt akin to hitting a jackpot, just like when Qin Shi Huang struck gold!

Ji Chen, as if recalling something, opened his backpack and glanced at the eight-digit gold coin balance. A satisfied smile curved his lips.

This was only a small portion of what Julius had promised earlier, a tenth of the wealth from the Kingdom of Bass' treasury.

Although the Kingdom of Bass had spent more than eighty percent of its gold coins for the war, the remaining twenty percent was still an enormous fortune. It amounted to billions of gold coins, and a tenth of that was nearly seven hundred million gold coins.

To be more precise, it was 698,680,000 gold coins, which was almost seven hundred million.

At a literal glance, it was an astonishing number.

For this wealth, Ji Chen only took a small portion. The rest would be entrusted to Julius to exchange and purchase rare resources before he left.

He wasn't the kind of dragon who liked to sleep in a mountain of gold coins; the gold itself held little meaning to him. It could only be put to better use when converted into various resources.

This nearly seven hundred million gold coins were expected to bring him a considerable number of rare resources, in the tens of millions of units.

The fleet sailed southeast in the sea for several days, gradually heading towards the central part of the Western Central Ocean.

One day, Marianne, the Elder of Vale, approached Ji Chen.

The elderly elf, who was at least a thousand years old, appeared somewhat anxious and asked with a puzzled tone, “Lord Ji Chen, why aren’t we following the northern continent’s coastline directly to the Maple Principality? Instead, we’re taking such a roundabout route?”

Ji Chen looked at Marianne’s somewhat impatient expression and could somewhat understand her feelings.

Isolation for hundreds of thousands of years and being separated from the main clan for so long naturally made them eager to meet their kin from the outside world.

Ji Chen smiled and reassured her, “Lady Marianne, it’s not that I want to take a roundabout route, but I have no choice but to do so.”

With that, he took out a map and pointed to a long, narrow stretch of sea in the northwest of the Western Central Ocean, extending from the coast of the northwestern continent to the central region.

“This long, narrow sea area is a forbidden zone of life, known as the Death Zone. It was the battleground of the gods tens of thousands of years ago, and there are rumors of fallen gods there.

Even to this day, the lingering divine power still runs rampant there. It’s constantly shrouded in storms and raging waves, making it unsuitable for safe navigation. For your safety, I had no choice but to take the fleet on a detour.”

Marianne suddenly realized and looked apologetic. “I see now, I misunderstood you..”

Chapter 577: Elisya’s Realization (2)

Ji Chen waved his hand nonchalantly. “No worries. My plan is to first detour and reach my territory for a brief rest and resupply. Then, I’ll head to the Maple Principality.”

Looking at the map, this long and narrow sea region spanned hundreds of kilometers. In terms of marine geography, it directly separated the eastern coast of the Northern Continent, where the Maple Principality and the Elven Empire were located, from the northwestern coast, where Lienhardt, the Bass Kingdom, and four other countries were situated.

This forced numerous trade ships crossing the Central Ocean to take detours. Commercial ships traveling east-west in the northern part of the Western Central Ocean had to head southeast or southwest first, bypass the southernmost tip of the Death Sea Region, and then continue their normal routes. This created a highly prosperous trade route south of the Death Sea Region, often referred to as the lifeline of trade.

The Stormy Sea, where the Ocean Crown was located, served as a critical node on this route.

Both the Hanseatic Chamber of Commerce and the Bass Kingdom had shown great interest and desire for this area, and that was precisely why.

Setting up a supply point here would lead to numerous merchant ships anchoring for rest and resupply, bringing in a considerable amount of gold coins.

After four days of sailing on the ocean, the fleet finally returned to the New Moon Islands.

When Ji Chen saw the appearance of the Ocean Crown, he looked somewhat astonished.

In just a month's time, a prosperous town area, no less impressive than the native settlements, stood before him. Eight streets, wide enough for four carriages to pass side by side, radiated out from the Lord's Castle in eight directions. On either side of the streets were either already completed buildings or building frames springing up like mushrooms after the rain.

Well-planned stone-paved roads connected other important areas. To the east was the harbor, to the west was the agricultural area, and the northern road directly passed through the jungle, linking the Kobold caves, several jungle plantations, and the vineyards on the hillside.

Such organized urban development clearly owed much to Wilus's efforts.

Wilus came to report on the situation in the territory the moment Ji Chen returned.

The sea rice cultivation area had expanded several times, now capable of providing normal food for tens of thousands of human residents. Grape vines grew rapidly in the plantations, and they would soon yield the first batch of grapes for wine production, among other things.

Wilus reported truthfully, "Lord, during your absence, the territory exported a total of fifty-two ships of various specialty goods to the Maple Principality and the Elves, with total earnings of 350,000 units of rare resources."

350,000 units of rare resources?

Ji Chen wasn't particularly surprised. This figure was close to his previous estimate. Currently, the Ocean Crown's main exports included deep-sea Merfabric, weapons and equipment collected from the Lizardfolk, premium coffee beans, and precious jungle wood, among others. As production capacity expanded and quality improved in the future, export benefits were expected to soar.

Moreover, the territory had yet to tap into its potential with grape wine and Dwarven weaponry, two highly profitable industries in the future.

The future looks promising.

"Lord, Sir Thotmudo mentioned that after your return, he'd like you to visit the underground Lizardfolk world. He mentioned that he has created the alchemical weapons from the third blueprint and has also manufactured alchemical vessels capable of operating underwater."

Ji Chen nodded slightly, pleasantly surprised that Thotmudo had managed to create what he had described earlier. Thotmudo truly lived up to his legendary status as a Dwarven blacksmith.

"I understand. I will make time for the visit," Ji Chen replied. He then took out the Hero Fountain blueprint from his hand and said, "Coordinate the resources and manpower to construct this. It's crucial for the territory."

Wilus respectfully received the blueprint and, after examining it, showed a pleased expression.

This was a valuable item that could increase the chances of hero units being born. If they could produce more administrative-type heroes, they could better manage the increasingly busy affairs of

the territory. Moreover, he heard that the Lord had acquired land in the Lienhardt Grand Duchy mainland, which would also require administrative heroes to oversee.

“Yes, I will start construction as soon as possible.”

After hearing Wilus’s report and dealing with some matters that required his personal decisions, Ji Chen left the Lord’s Castle with Elisya.

The elves from Vale were staying in guest houses specially set up for them. These elves, who had lived in the icy wilderness, were pleasantly surprised and filled with delight when they saw the stunning surroundings of the New Moon Islands. With Ji Chen’s approval, they got together in groups to explore the island, bringing the cheerful laughter of elves to the area.

Elisya, the amnesic elven hero, followed Ji Chen closely, her eyes filled with curiosity as she looked around at the place where she would be living in the future.

“Brother, are we going to live here from now on?”

“That’s right. This is my territory, Elisya. You can consider this place your home from now on.”

Elisya obediently nodded, “This will be my home from now on!”

Ji Chen thought for a moment and opened the Military Talent Tree, navigating to Elisya’s page.

[Elisya]

[This hero possesses ancient elven bloodline with immense potential but is currently sealed, with Tier remaining at the Red-Legacy Tier.]

[Requires a sufficient amount of resources to unlock the seal.]

[Resource requirements]: 5 million units of crystals, 5 million units of mithril, 5 million units of adamantite.

Unlocking Elisya’s seal required a whopping 15 million units of resources, a quantity even higher than what it took for Alice to advance to the Legendary Tier. This immense requirement showcased just how powerful this ancient elven bloodline truly was..

Chapter 578: Elisya’s Realization (3)

Thinking about this, Ji Chen asked in a relaxed tone, “Elisya, do you want to handle internal affairs or become a warrior?”

Elisya didn’t hesitate at all and replied with certainty, “I want to become a warrior.”

“Can you tell me why?”

“Because I want to protect you, big brother.” Elisya’s obsidian-like black eyes stared intently at Ji Chen. “If I don’t fight, then you, Alice, and Anina will have to divert your attention to protect me. I don’t want to be a burden to any of you.”

Ji Chen was somewhat speechless; he hadn’t expected this reason.

“Even though Alice said I’ve forgotten many things, even if you tell me, I won’t remember,” Elisya continued. “But there’s one thing I still remember, and that’s how you saved me back then. Without you, I would have died long ago, or perhaps perished in the ice crevices.” Elisya’s eyes were filled with determination. “I want to do something for you.”

In Elisya’s blank mind, there was one thing she had never forgotten – the warmth brought to her by that ill-fitting coat in the icy wilderness.

It was something she would remember for eternity.

After a moment of silence, Ji Chen nodded slowly.

Seeing this, Elisya smiled mischievously, her eyes narrowing into crescent moons.

Ji Chen gently ruffled her hair and said, “If you’re eager to be a warrior, I’ll arrange for you to learn from a skilled elf fighter.”

Elf Arlin looked at Elisya, who was hiding behind Ji Chen, with a curious expression on her cold face.

“Lord Ji Chen, did you just ask me to teach Elisya how to fight?”

“That’s right.”

A look of disbelief suddenly appeared on Arlin’s face, as if she thought Ji Chen was joking.

When Elisya became the strongest elf warrior in Vale and was held in high regard by all the elves, Arlin was still practicing basic archery skills. It seemed a bit too much to ask her to teach an elf hero.

Ji Chen cleared his throat and said, “Actually, after Elisya lost her memory, maybe because she was in a state of madness for a long time, she seems to have forgotten her previous combat and archery skills.

And there is no tutor in my territory who is skilled in archery. So, I can only ask for your help.”

Arlin suddenly realized and looked at Elisya with a hint of pity in her eyes. Without any hesitation, she nodded.

“That’s not a problem. I will do my best to teach Elisya in these few days before I leave.”

Two days later.

Elisya was leaping swiftly between the trees, her bow raised quickly in her hand, and a bright red elemental arrow suddenly materialized as she made a quick gesture.

“Explosive Arrow.”

With an expression as calm as still waters on her face, she softly chanted the incantation and released her right hand, holding the arrow.

The bright red arrow, carrying scorching heat, disappeared with a trail of red light. Two hundred meters away, a tree in the open ground exploded as if it had been hit by a shell. Wood splinters and sparks filled the air, leaving only a large crater on the ground.

“Great shot!” Ji Chen applauded as he walked up, smiling in approval.

Elisya’s cold expression quickly melted, and she jumped down from the tree with some embarrassment. “Hehe...”

Arlin looked at Elisya with admiration in her eyes and sighed.

“Lord Ji Chen, I think there’s nothing more I can teach Elisya.”

Elisya’s performance in these two days had shown Arlin what true talent and heroic potential were.

In just a short amount of time, Elisya mastered all the combat techniques and used them more skillfully and accurately than Arlin herself.

These combat skills were not completely forgotten by Elisya but were deeply hidden within her body and soul, only waiting to be awakened. And as Elisya had already advanced to the Red-Legacy Tier, she would only become even more formidable in the future..

Chapter 579: Submarine From Another World: Verena’s Complaints

The underground lizardman world had now become the heavy industrial base of the Ocean Crown. Various workshops of all sizes stand tall within the towering caves, and the sound of hammering nails and the operation of alchemical machinery echo day and night throughout the entire cave.

Thousands of robust lizardmen laborers carry mining picks, excavating the abundant ore found everywhere. They collect the ore at gathering points, then transport it to the workshops near the magma river using ore carts connected to various mining tunnels. Finally, lizardman blacksmiths forge these ores into various iron-made products.

The Ocean Crown exports various weapons and military equipment, with more than half of the product export share originating from here.

This place is like the heart of the Ocean Crown, continuously pumping out resources to support the development of the entire territory.

After being away for nearly a month, it has become even more bustling. In the distance, several dozens of meters high new forging workshops have sprung up.

Elisya observes the surroundings, finding that this underground world, unlike the jungle-filled islands on the surface, consists mainly of uniform rocks and rolling magma. The stark contrast in styles makes this young elf feel extremely curious.

“Big brother, where are we going?”

Ji Chen pats her head and replies with a smile, “We’re going to visit a dwarf.”

Elisya nodded, her expression unchanged. However, she heard from Arlin that they had a grudge against dwarves as if they were some bitter enemies.

But what she didn't understand was that the elves of Vale, secluded within the frozen wilderness, had never had any contact with dwarves, let alone seen them. So why the animosity?

Ji Chen leads Elisya into one of the spacious workshops. Upon pushing the door open, they see an airship made entirely of some kind of metal, with two rotor wings front and back, each adorned with a circular ring, giving it a somewhat futuristic appearance.

Thotmudo, a small but incredibly sturdy figure, squats in front of the airship, stroking his chin, seemingly pondering something.

“Lord Thotmudo!”

Thotmudo turns around, and upon seeing Ji Chen, he stands up and claps his hands. “So it’s you, kid. Finally back from the outside.”

Then he quickly noticed Elisya and his expression became somewhat displeased. “A elf has come here?”

“Yes, it’s a long story, but there are several thousand elves temporarily staying in the Ocean Crown.”

Thotmudo’s expression became even less pleasant, and he spoke through his nostrils, “Hmph, it seems I’ll have to stay underground for the next few days, or else I might be suffocated by the elf’s stench.”

He glanced at Elisya, who was looking at him curiously, and suddenly furrowed his brow. “This elf seems a bit peculiar as if she possesses some special bloodline...”

Ji Chen’s eyes flashed, proving his reputation as an epic-tier powerhouse with his keen perception.

“...Elisya was brought back by me from a sealed ancient battlefield of the gods. She possesses the bloodline of ancient elves, with the potential to reach epic-tier,” Ji Chen explained briefly about their experiences in the frozen wilderness.

After hearing this, Thotmudo was somewhat surprised. He hadn’t expected Ji Chen to have such experiences during his time outside. Then, as if he remembered something important, he spoke seriously, “You must not let the elves of the Elf Empire know about her existence.”

Ji Chen asked with some confusion, “Why?”

Thotmudo looked at him deeply and said, “From hundreds of thousands of years ago to the present, the bloodline of ancient elves within elves has become increasingly diluted. If they were to discover the existence of a pure-blooded ancient elf with the potential to become epic-tier, they might take her back for reproduction to increase the purity of their bloodlines for future generations.

The elves’ obsession and fanaticism for bloodlines in this aspect far exceeds your imagination.

At least until she truly becomes epic-tier, don’t let them learn about her.”

Ji Chen’s expression turned serious. Was there such things going on?

Wasn’t this akin to being seized for breeding like livestock? Were elves truly that imposing?

For a moment, he didn’t know if Thotmudo was exaggerating or if he had been given a skewed perspective of elves.

Ji Chen nodded nonetheless and said, "I'll be careful."

However, Elisya, with a dissatisfied expression, added, "I won't be taken away! I'll stay with my brother forever!"

Thotmudo snorted and didn't say anything further.

Ji Chen seized the opportunity to change the topic and pointed at the airship, "Is this the alchemical contraption recorded in the third blueprint?"

Thotmudo became more animated and nodded, saying, "Yes, it's called the Alchemical Airship. The blueprint only covers the basic version, which can only carry passengers.

Considering your needs, I've modified it into a maritime version. It can not only be loaded onto the sea surface vessels and accommodate about ten people, but it can also carry dozens of alchemical bombs for attacking enemy surface vessels and underwater targets. To enhance its firepower, I've also installed small-caliber alchemical cannons on both sides, which can be used to eliminate soldiers on the decks of enemy ships..."

Thotmudo explained enthusiastically, a self-satisfied look crossing his face, clearly quite pleased with his creation.

Ji Chen was taken aback. It could ride on surface vessels, carry passengers, drop bombs, and even use small cannons to clear enemy ship decks.

Wasn't this like an otherworldly alchemical version of a naval helicopter!?

Well, this was going to new heights!

If Thotmudo were given more inspiration and time, who knew, he might even replicate war machines like aircraft carriers and fighter jets..

Chapter 580: Submarine From Another World: Verena's Complaints (2)

However, what intrigued Ji Chen the most was that submarine from another world.

"The alchemical submarine that can operate underwater?"

"Submarine?"

Thotmudo suddenly paused, his face lit up with delight. "Submarine, a vessel that submerges underwater, what a fantastic name! I was struggling to come up with a name, but this is perfect!"

"I didn't expect you to be so good at naming things. The alchemical submarine is stored in the shipyard by the harbor, and it's not small in size."

Ji Chen smiled, not saying much.

Drawing inspiration from the modern weaponry on Earth, using its original name felt fitting.

The duo, along with the dwarf and elf, rode a converted minecart back to the surface and arrived at the shipyard beside the harbor. There, a roughly train-car-sized alchemical submarine, narrow at the front and wide at the back, was docked in a dry dock.

Compared to the sleek and long submarines Ji Chen was familiar with, this one was much smaller, measuring only around ten meters in length and three to four meters in width. It had numerous exposed gears, pipes, and illuminated devices, giving it a distinct steampunk style.

Seeing his creation, Thotmudo became visibly excited. "I dare say even those gnomes don't have an alchemical submarine that can operate underwater like this! This is my first masterpiece, and whether it's in dwarf history or alchemical manufacturing history, the name of Thotmudo the Dwarf will be remembered!"

Ji Chen, somewhat skeptical, asked, "Have you tested it yet?"

Thotmudo coughed lightly in response. "I was waiting for you to return before trying it out."

Liar! You're just afraid it might sink!

Ji Chen shook his head. Regardless, he knew he could handle it.

Ji Chen looked at the alchemical submarine being pulled up from the water by dozens of Naga Guardians, still emitting sparks and black smoke, and couldn't help but wear a wry expression.

On the relatively small vessel, there were more than ten holes of various sizes due to explosions and leaks, causing seawater to gush out like waterfalls as it was lifted up.

Thotmudo wore a rather embarrassed expression. "Um, this is the First Unit. It's the first one we've ever made, so it's normal to have a lot of issues."

Ji Chen's lips twitched. If it weren't for the fact that the pilot was a water soldier he had created using magic, immune to pain and injury, a normal pilot would have been blown to bits long ago.

This was truly a death submarine!

"However, we did make progress. This time, it dived to a depth of over thirty meters and operated normally for a full five minutes. That's a significant improvement," Thotmudo said earnestly. "Give me a bit more time, and I'll definitely make the alchemical submarine operate more stably!"

However, Ji Chen understood that alchemy, much like science and technology, often required a long period of research and improvement before mature and stable devices could be deployed. Therefore, he didn't expect things to be completed so quickly.

At that moment, he didn't say much. He simply nodded and left, gazing at the damaged submarine, pondering what might have gone wrong with Thotmudo's creation.

As Ji Chen returned with Elisya, he suddenly felt a powerful energy fluctuation emanating from a jungle. Curious, he walked over.

Seeing Ji Chen approaching, a vigorous figure in the clearing of the forest, who had been swinging punches and kicks, causing trees to snap, stopped and looked at Ji Chen with a beautiful and enchanting woman, Elisya, by his side. She approached with a slightly melancholic tone.

"Oh, isn't this the busy Lord Ji Chen? How come you have the time to visit me today?"

But I guess it's no surprise, with such a young and beautiful elf accompanying you, why would you think of an old geezer like me?"

This person was Verena, who had been rescued by Ji Chen at the Deceiver's base in the Maple Principality and had signed a thirty-year loyalty contract to fight alongside him.

Hearing Verena's somewhat complaining words, Ji Chen felt a bit awkward. It seemed like he had genuinely forgotten about Verena, and he realized that Verena was expressing her frustration about being left aside since he brought her back from the Maple Principality.

However, he couldn't solely hold himself responsible. Verena, being a legendary figure, had already achieved an impressive level of strength, reaching level fifty, and possessed the most extensive combat experience within the entire realm of the Crown of the Ocean. Her prowess in land-based combat placed her among the top two heroes in this regard.

The problem lay in the fact that Verena was a human. Unlike Ji Chen and the various ocean heroes who had the ability to fight freely in the sea, she couldn't make much use of her strength in the water.

Most of the time, Ji Chen found himself engaging in battles either on the sea's surface or underwater. Consequently, he often had no choice but to assign her to the Crown of the Ocean for defense.

However, for Verena herself, it felt like Ji Chen had brought her back from the Maple Principality only to forget about her, leaving her here as if she didn't matter.

For a warrior who cherished battle like her, being forgotten was even more painful than death itself.

It was a profound humiliation she couldn't easily bear.

Nevertheless, Ji Chen had already thought of a place where Verena would be needed.

"I came this time to give you a task."

As soon as she heard that, Verena immediately showed an eager expression. "What task?"

"I have acquired a piece of land in the Lienhardt Grand Duchy with a high degree of autonomy. I plan to establish a defensive army there. I intend to appoint you as the martial officer to help me organize and train the troops." Regarding Fish Tail Island, Ji Chen didn't plan to deploy the forces of the Crown of the Ocean to garrison it. Instead, he wanted to train a regular army to provide a certain level of defense and deterrence. After all, Fish Tail Island was within the influence of the Lienhardt Grand Duchy, and there was unlikely to be any overly powerful enemies attacking it.

In his plan, Fish Tail Island would become a commercial transit hub for the Crown of the Ocean to export products to Lienhardt and other regions of the two countries, or rather, a duty-free zone. With Verena, a legendary hero, guarding the island, it couldn't be more suitable.

Hearing that she was being entrusted with such a serious task, Verena's previous frustration vanished, and she responded enthusiastically.

"You can leave this task to me. I'm not just good at combat; I excel at training soldiers too."

Ji Chen smiled and nodded, "I look forward to your performance."

“Oh, by the way, before you depart, please help instruct Elisya in combat techniques.”

With Verena’s current excellent mood, she patted her chest and readily agreed.

“Leave this small matter to me; I promise to train her well.”

After settling Elisya with Verena and taking care of urgent matters, Ji Chen was finally able to enjoy a brief period of leisure.

At the southern edge of the Death Sea.

A fleet of three two-masted merchant ships sailed in a T-formation on the sea surface, heading from east to west. Whether it was the ship’s captain, sailors, or merchants, they all appeared relaxed. They had been shuttling between the Maple Principality and the Western Continent for years, making this journey almost a dozen times or more. Their experience was extremely rich, and as long as there were no unexpected incidents, they would complete this trip smoothly.

As the sailors chatted casually by the ship’s railing during their uneventful moments, they suddenly noticed a black line appearing on the sea surface in the far distance to the right of the ship.

“What’s that?” one sailor questioned with suspicion. He turned around, raised his voice, and called out, “Pete! Take a look at what’s appearing in the north!” On the lookout tower, a man named Pete, the lookout, picked up a spyglass and, when he clearly saw the black line, his pupils contracted to the extreme. Thousands of aquatic troops formed neat formations, surging forth from the direction of the Death Sea. There were various lower-ranking creatures like merfolk, crab soldiers, shrimp footmen, and even higher-tier units such as naga, sea elementals, and water drakes among them.

This was unquestionably a well-trained army.

Behind this army, a water tornado burst forth with tremendous momentum, and within it, there were faintly discernible pairs of eyes fixated on the approaching fleet.

“Soldiers, sink these human wooden boxes! Announce the arrival of your master, Lord of the Waves!

We shall establish a magnificent ocean kingdom in these waters!”