

## Sixth 51

### Chapter 51: White Sage Healing Potion

Herag held the wooden tray, feeling all the coldness being dispelled from his body, and the operation of Magic Power no longer felt obscure.

Ribbit! Ribbit!

The toad crawled over, and as it approached, a look of fear appeared on Shivara's face.

The toad crawled to Herag's feet, looked up, and croaked to him.

Herag didn't understand what it was trying to say, but he sensed that the toad seemed to have no malice toward him.

The toad sniffed humanly, then turned to stare at Shivara.

Shivara's black hair instantly stood on end, as if it had been electrocuted.

Ribbit!

With a croak, the toad began to crawl towards Shivara, who began to back away in terror.

Shivara crawled backward at a surprisingly fast speed, no longer slow as before.

The toad, however, moved forward leisurely, its eyes fixed on Shivara.

The world around Herag suddenly turned black and white, with flowers, grass, and trees losing all color.

At this moment, the toad, in a blink, had swallowed Shivara whole, with a bunch of black hair frantically trying to crawl out of its mouth.

Cracks began to appear in the space around; Herag watched as everything around him developed cracks like broken glass.

The toad turned back to look at Herag and croaked once more.

A breeze passed by, and Herag smelled the scent of forest plants and heard the sound of insects in the nearby bushes.

He looked around and found the grass and trees nearby had regained their color, no longer the black-and-white world.

"This place..." Herag realized he was standing right where he had noticed the anomaly.

He ran over to where Lune and the others had been devoured, finding no trace left on the ground, and the three human skins had disappeared.

"Such a pity, Lune probably had some good stuff on him." Herag had wanted to search Lune and the others' corpses.

But then he thought, being able to escape was already lucky enough, what's the point of searching for things?

The strange toad, Shivara popping out of nowhere, and that eerie space—Herag was clueless about all these, filled with questions in his mind.

He looked at the wooden tray in his hand, which had returned to its usual appearance, no longer emitting a faint yellow glow.

"This should depict the Sixth Ring Tower, but what kind of existence is the Sixth Ring Tower really?"

After entering Moonlight Forest, Herag had once searched the first floor of the library for related materials but found no information about the Sixth Ring Tower.

He didn't know whether Moonlight Forest had no records or if the relevant materials were stored on higher levels in the library, inaccessible with his current permissions.

Herag temporarily put aside these doubts in his mind and quickly fled Moonlight Forest.

For a while, he wouldn't be returning here, primarily because the reason for Shivara's appearance wasn't clear—this was a demon from the Abyss Plane; how could it be mysteriously pursuing three wizards from Green Cottage?

Moreover, Lune and the others died here, on Moonlight Forest's territory.

Wizards have many methods, and Green Cottage would likely know where these three vanished. At that time, Moonlight Forest wouldn't be able to explain what happened to these three, and it might be assumed Green Cottage was deliberately looking for trouble.

But given Moonlight Forest's usual style, it likely wouldn't explain anything, causing considerable friction between the two sides.

When that happens, Moonlight Forest, as the border area, would become quite unstable, and as a First-Class Wizard Apprentice, he didn't need to get involved.

Upon returning to Moonlight Forest, Herag first went to the transaction hall to exchange over one hundred and seventy Sleeping Mushrooms for Magic Stones.

Andrew was still at the window; he was quite surprised to see Herag producing so many Sleeping Mushrooms.

However, the look in Andrew's eyes became more peculiar, as if he wanted to say something but never did.

It wasn't until Herag left with seventeen Magic Stones that Andrew muttered in the direction of the doorway, "Could it be he killed them..."

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Herag wandered around the town for a while and found a shop selling herbs.

The owner was a middle-aged man with layers of cloth wrapped around his head, holding a basket of herbs at the door, seemingly trying to air them out in the good weather.

"Owner, do you have White Peony Root, Beetroot, Golden Bell Flower, these herbs?" Herag asked as he stepped forward.

The owner smiled, "You might as well ask for the raw materials of White Sage Healing Potion, two Magic Stones per set of raw materials."

After chatting with the owner for a while, Herag discovered that some common Magic Potions generally had sets of raw materials for sale; there was no need to buy each herb separately.

Raw materials for White Sage Healing Potion cost two Magic Stones; the finished product's market price was five Magic Stones.

If every set of raw materials could successfully be used to make potions, there would be a profit of three Magic Stones.

The demand for White Sage Healing Potion was high and easily sold.

Five Magic Stones were somewhat expensive for the average Wizard Apprentice, but they were necessary.

White Sage Healing Potion can heal most common injuries and is essential for wizards who frequently go out on missions.

Since Herag couldn't go to Moonlight Forest anymore, he lost an important source of Magic Stones.

In his current weak state, many missions were too dangerous for him; he had to consider other ways to earn Magic Stones.

Herag considered the current situation comprehensively and thought that alchemy was a good way to earn Magic Stone.

For others, unless they specialize in Magic Potion, the success rate of alchemy is very low.

They wouldn't even consider earning money through alchemy, hoping not to lose money.

But Herag had Shenlan Assistance, which could significantly increase his success rate in alchemy.

"Owner, I'd like ten sets of White Sage Healing Potion raw materials." Herag, who only had twenty-two Magic Stones, spent almost everything on the raw materials.

The owner was somewhat surprised, "Ten sets? Alright."

He could almost guess that Herag wanted to earn money through alchemy. He's encountered many such Wizard Apprentices, and usually, they end up losing.

But he wouldn't say it aloud; for him, making money was all that mattered.

After buying the raw materials, Herag went to the flea market to buy some second-hand cauldrons, test tubes, beakers, balances, and other alchemical equipment.

These things were cheap; Herag used a single Gold Coin to buy two sets of equipment.

After returning home, Herag cleaned out a room specially for alchemy.

He took out a yellow ear from his Space Ring, chanting a few syllables.

The ear floated up, then started moving through the room in all directions.

The ear had a powerful suction force in its eardrum, sucking all the dust and debris from the room.

This was a common tool for wizards to clean rooms, called the Clear Ear.

Nobody knows where things sucked into the Clear Ear end up; once inside, they're never found again, so before using it, one needs to put away all useful items in the room.

## Chapter 52: Alchemy of Magic Potions

This room was originally empty, Herag just used Clear Ear to clean it up, as there was too much dust inside.

Herag took out the purchased equipment one by one, then simply planned the room, arranging a section for herb handling, a section for potion brewing, and a section for reagent reaction... He rigorously followed the experiment regulations taught by Larry.

This alone took him busy for four hours, and he eagerly took out the raw materials for the White Sage Healing Potion, ready to start the alchemy.

"Shenlan, now start the refining of the White Sage Healing Potion, provide steps, temperature, time, and other related assistance tips."

"Magic Potion Refining Assistance activated."

Shenlan had input the refining processes for every type of potion from the "Basic Introduction to Magic Potions," combined with Larry's regulations, finally assembling them into a complete system for potion refining assistance.

In Herag's view, there was a series of flowcharts, and Shenlan's current prompt was, "First step, wash the White Peony Root then soak in alkaline water for thirty minutes."

Herag recalled the processes recorded in the book, then based on Shenlan's prompts, methodically started handling the potion materials.

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"Golden Bell Flower Juice temperature is approaching 75 degrees Celsius, place in beaker in thirty seconds."

"White Peony Root Juice and Beetroot Concentrate have reacted for fifteen minutes, one minute remaining, remember to take it out on time, countdown 59 seconds."

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Herag held a test tube containing a milky solution, he gently swayed it in his hand while chanting a dozen strange syllables.

A burst of Magic Power emanated from him into the test tube, and the solution inside started to emit white smoke, which eventually formed into the shape of a plant.

"White Sage Healing Potion has been successfully refined," Shenlan prompted.

Herag breathed a sigh of relief, potion refining was a bit harder than he imagined, requiring high concentration of Spiritual Power throughout the process, any delay in the slightest step could lead to errors.

This was merely the most basic White Sage Healing Potion, and it's conceivable how difficult the refining process for the Dawn Potion would be.

"Luckily there's Shenlan Assistance, allowing for very precise control over temperature and time."

Herag fetched a special potion bottle, poured in the White Sage Healing Potion, and sealed it with a wooden plug, completing a basic potion.

"Two Magic Stones in hand." Herag felt a bit of accomplishment.

"Continue!"

With nine portions of potion materials remaining, Herag tidied up the laboratory according to standard procedures and proceeded with the next round of potion refining.

Herag kept refining potions until midnight, not because he was tired, but because he needed to engage in his Meditation Practice.

A total of four portions of White Sage Healing Potion were completed, one mistake was made that wasted a portion of materials, causing Herag to feel pained for half a day, losing two Magic Stones just like that.

Herag sighed, brewed himself a cup of coffee, and started Meditation Practice.

The fifth star was already nearing completion, Herag felt that tonight he should be able to complete the meditation for this star.

He boiled a pot of Meteor Grass, the water boiling inside emitted green bubbles.

"This thing becomes useless after becoming a Second-Class Wizard Apprentice, the body develops resistance, but meditation speed also slows down."

Herag had a love-hate relationship with Meteor Grass, a common potion material here mainly used for stabilizing the spirit potion.

A few hours later, when the sky was slightly lit, Herag opened his eyes, gaze deep, then let out a heavy breath.

"Herag Merlin: Power 2.5, Agility 2.4, Constitution 3.6, Spirit 8.5, Magic Power 100%."

This meditation significantly improved his stats, not only Spiritual Power but other bodily data also greatly enhanced.

After breaking through a Spiritual Power of 8, Herag's sensitivity towards the free energy particles in nature increased greatly, he could even vaguely distinguish differences among some of the energy particles.

"Could these be energy particles of different attributes?" Herag's perception was still a bit blurry, only able to guess based on some learned knowledge of Elemental Magic.

"Luckily my aptitude is decent, otherwise who knows when I'd be able to complete meditation for these stars."

Herag's aptitude was scored at seventy-five points, considered quite good among most Wizard Apprentices. Larry took great care of him largely because Herag's aptitude was deemed worth investing in.

The level of aptitude affects the sensitivity towards the free energy particles in the universe. The sharper the sensitivity, the easier it is to perceive energy particles during meditation, and the absorption efficiency gets higher. The ultimate result is faster progress in Meditation Method practice and faster advancement.

In Herag's mind, the array map lit up the fifth star, with positions for five more stars waiting to be lit.

"Shenlan, what happens when the entire array map lights up?" Herag curiously asked.

"No data support available."

Shenlan only optimized based on the principles of Meditation Method, but there was no historical data from anyone's practice, thus unable to know any changes that might occur.

After completing his daily practice, Herag delved back into the laboratory, continuing the refining of White Sage Healing Potions.

This busy work lasted all day, and under the sparse moonlit sky, Herag looked at the nine bottles of White Sage Healing Potion before him with satisfaction.

He made no more mistakes in the subsequent refining process, with increased Spiritual Power his focus also improved significantly.

"Nine bottles of potion total forty-five Magic Stones, deducting costs, I can net twenty-five Magic Stones. Then I'll go buy raw materials again, refine them and sell them." Herag calculated his money-making plan.

At the time for Meditation Practice, Herag stored the White Sage Healing Potions in the Space Ring and proceeded with his daily practice.

He was only one star short of the Spiritual Power requirement for a Second-Class Apprentice, once he completes meditation for this star he could prepare for the related raw materials for the Dawn Potion.

Herag looked up, searching among the myriad stars for one to start meditating on.

"Why was the starry sky I saw that day so completely different..."

During meditation, Herag recalled the day he encountered Shivara, the sky he saw then was completely different from the one here.

"Shenlan, was data of that starry sky recorded?" Herag asked.

"Based on visual records, the star map is as follows." Shenlan displayed a star map before Herag.

Herag closely observed this star map, unable to find any resemblance to the starry sky overhead.

"Shenlan, compare it to the current starry sky, search for any similar places."

"After comparison, no similarities were found."

Whenever Herag had downtime, thinking back about that day's events felt off.

He reviewed every detail before and after, unable to understand how he got trapped in that strange space, or what kind of place it was.

"And that toad, before the space shattered, if I wasn't mistaken, it swallowed Shivara in one bite..."  
Herag pondered these questions while meditating.

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In Moonlight Forest, there are two ways to purchase potions, one is to buy from the Moonlight Forest official Magic Pharmacy, the quality is very good, but the price is slightly higher than the market price.

For example, White Sage Healing Potion, market price five Magic Stones, Magic Pharmacy sells it for six Magic Stones.

The other way is to purchase from other wizards.

### Chapter 53: Flea Market

Herag prepared to go to the flea market to sell White Sage Healing Potions. This is a common magic potion at the flea market and sells quite well.

He planned to first sell the ones he had on hand to see how it goes, and if there were any issues, he would consider other options.

Although the potions made by wizard apprentices can't compare to those officially sold by Moonlight Forest, they are generally quite effective and sufficient for their needs.

The flea market is essentially a plaza. Herag was getting ready to find a spot to set up his stall when he encountered someone he knew.

Leo, wearing glasses, was sitting on a small stool with a thick book in hand, surrounded by stacks of books in front of him.

"Leo!" Herag greeted him.

Leo turned his head and, upon seeing Herag, adjusted his glasses and smiled, "Long time no see, Herag."

"Is there anyone next to you? I'm planning to set up a stall here." Herag asked.

He saw that both sides of Leo were empty, with no one setting up stalls.

"No one, the stalls at the flea market are unclaimed, first come first served," Leo explained.

Hearing this, Herag felt relieved, took out four bottles of White Sage Healing Potion from his bag, and laid them out in front of him. He then took out a book, like Leo, to seize the time for learning.

He was reading "Basic Principles of Meditation."

Herag had been learning a lot lately, and in such a short time, he certainly couldn't digest it all; he needed to spend more time delving into his studies.

Shenlan could indeed allow him to progress faster, but it could also become a future hindrance to further advancement.

"The only thing I can always trust is myself; even Shenlan is merely an external force."

Seeing Herag take out four bottles of White Sage Healing Potion, Leo was surprised, "Have you learned magic potion-making already?"

"I've barely managed to learn it, but practicing cost me dearly, so I'm forced to come out and exchange for some Magic Stones to cut my losses," Herag said with a gloomy face, as if he had lost a lot of Magic Stones.

Leo nodded understandingly, "For us wizard apprentices without much background, it's best not to dabble in magic potion-making at first; it's too costly."

"Indeed, it's not something poor people can afford to play with. Once I sell off this batch of potions, I won't do it anymore," Herag lamented.

He gave up on continuing to make White Sage Potions to earn Magic Stones. The small number of potions he had could be explained, as many wizard apprentices, when first learning magic potion-making, would concoct White Sage Healing Potions to sell, which was quite normal.

However, if Herag produced a large quantity of potions, it would be suspicious, as most people don't have a high success rate in potion-making.

If Herag brought out twenty bottles of White Sage Healing Potion, it would generally require at least sixty sets of raw materials, which is no small amount.

As a First-Class Wizard Apprentice, where would he get so much money? It would only cause unnecessary trouble.

Herag now hoped to minimize any trouble, and the money for the Dawn Potion could be gathered by doing other tasks.

"Is this the White Sage Healing Potion?"

After a while, a customer arrived. It was a male wizard apprentice with red curly hair, looking around twenty years old.

Herag replied, "Yes, it is."

"May I take a look?"

Herag smiled, "Of course, you can."

When wizards trade potions, they usually inspect the quality, especially since they aren't officially sold by Moonlight Forest.

Many novice wizard apprentices, even if they fail in potion-making, will boldly sell their potions, often swindling those uninformed apprentices.

Many people get scammed every year; it's a common occurrence.

More experienced wizard apprentices will carefully check the quality before buying potions.

The curly-haired wizard examined the White Sage Healing Potion meticulously, checking its color, turbidity, and other aspects. After a moment, he said, "This potion is quite good; I'll take two bottles."

"Deal!" Herag handed over a bottle and received ten Magic Stones.

White Sage Healing Potion sold even better than Herag anticipated. The four bottles sold out quickly.

Herag took out another three bottles, planning to keep two for himself.

Leo widened his eyes at those three bottles of potion, "Did you spend that much money?"

"Sigh!" Herag sighed, "Don't mention it. I still owe Mr. Larry quite a bit."

Leo suddenly understood, as if something dawned on him, "I see, I envy you."

Herag smiled without saying anything, not explaining further.

"Just a little leverage from Mr. Larry..." Herag mentioned Mr. Larry only to create some ease for himself.

After exchanging a few more words, they returned to their books.

Business was a bit slow on Leo's side, with no customers for a long time.

Herag's stall, however, had another customer soon after. This time, it was a tall woman wearing a black Wizard Apprentice Robe.

As she passed by, she took a glance at the White Sage Healing Potions on Herag's stall, let out an exclamation, and squatted down to pick up a bottle for inspection.

Herag estimated that the woman was about 1.8 meters tall, and squatting down, her long legs were quite prominent, giving the impression that everything below the neck was all legs.

"Did you make this potion?" the woman asked.

Herag nodded, "Yes, I did."

"Just three bottles? Do you have more?"

Herag laughed, "I don't have that many Magic Stones to buy materials, just these."

"Alright, you're pretty good at this. I'll take all three bottles." The woman promptly took out fifteen Magic Stones and left.

Herag watched her leave in a hurry, couldn't resist taking another glance at those long legs partially hidden by the robe.

Seven out of nine bottles of White Sage Healing Potion were sold, netting thirty-five Magic Stones.

"Leo, I'm heading out," Herag called over to Leo, who was still engrossed in his book.

Leo nodded stiffly, not taking his eyes off his book.

Seeing him this way, Herag couldn't help but smile, thinking, "Despite Leo's hard work, he's still a First-Class Wizard Apprentice. I wonder if it's due to a lack of resources or poor aptitude."

On his way back, Herag observed other stalls. There were quite a few selling potions, and many of them sold White Sage Healing Potions, but most of them were of average quality.

Herag's White Sage Healing Potion was milky white, slightly inferior to the pure white ones sold by Moonlight Forest.

This small gap was currently insurmountable for him, as it was due to the differences in spiritual power.

The potions sold by Moonlight Forest were mostly made by capable Third Class Wizard Apprentices or Official Wizards. Their Magic Power quality was beyond Herag's reach, and it required high-quality Magic Power to make the best potions.

Those others sold White Sage Healing Potions that were slightly yellowish, some even entirely yellow, bordering on unusable quality.

This sight further convinced Herag that he couldn't rely on potion-selling to make money, at least not until he had enough strength.

After returning home, Herag took out a Talisman Stone, browsing for suitable tasks.

He currently had a total of thirty-seven Magic Stones, not even enough for one set of Dawn Potion materials.

A task caught Herag's attention.

"Hunt the Stone Giant, reward for processing the Stone Giant's heart and familiarity with magic potions: twenty Magic Stones."

#### Chapter 54: Heart of the Stone Giant

The heart of the Stone Giant is an essential Magic Potion material for a Second-Class Wizard Apprentice to advance to a Third-Class Wizard Apprentice, and it's generally not available for purchase.

Because keeping the Stone Giant heart active is necessary for Magic Potion making, it needs to be soaked in the potion to maintain its activity for two months.

A Second-Class Wizard Apprentice must consume the potion within two months to advance to a Third-Class Wizard Apprentice.

Therefore, the heart of the Stone Giant is typically sought out by Second-Class Wizard Apprentices after reaching their limit, followed by completing a series of processes including hunting, potion making, and advancement.

Handling the heart of the Stone Giant is a case study in the course "Basic Introduction to Magic Potions", where Herag used a model for several experiments during lab classes, a process he's already familiar with.

He is also the only Wizard Apprentice in this batch of courses who successfully completed the Stone Giant heart experiment; others did not succeed.

"Do First-Class Wizard Apprentices need to fight when handling the Stone Giant's heart?" Herag sent a message to the task issuer.

The task issuer named Bessie seemed to be a woman.

"First-Class Wizard Apprentice? Are you sure you can handle the Stone Giant's heart?" Bessie asked.

"I attended Mr. Larry's Magic Potion course and am familiar with handling the Stone Giant's heart," Herag replied.

"Hmm... why don't you come to the Lion Cafe in town and let's talk face to face," Bessie decided to meet him.

The Lion Cafe is located at the center of town, a place where many wizards choose to talk, exchange ideas, or relax.

As Herag approached the Lion Cafe, he could smell the aroma of coffee wafting in the air.

He pushed open the door and immediately saw a familiar face, the tall woman who bought three bottles of White Sage Healing Potion from him.

"Herag?" Bessie asked.

Herag smiled, "What a coincidence."

Bessie was also surprised, laughing, "I didn't expect it to be you. If those White Sage Healing Potions were indeed crafted by you, then I have no doubt about your Magic Potion skills."

Herag chuckled, "I wouldn't dare deceive anyone in such matters. After all, once I leave the Moonlight Forest, I'm just a weak First-Class Wizard Apprentice and can't afford to lie."

The meaning was clear; outside the Moonlight Forest, he would be unprotected. If he dared to deceive, they could easily deal with him.

"Rest assured, I'm not one to break the rules; otherwise, who would dare cooperate with me in the future? Sit down, the others will arrive soon," Bessie explained.

Herag nodded and sat down by the table, knowing that taking this task involved risks and everything out of the Moonlight Forest depended on his ability to adapt.

"But what task doesn't involve risk? Even picking mushrooms can lead to so many problems," Herag sighed internally.

The two chatted willingly and unconsciously about topics related to Magic Potions.

Herag knew a lot about these topics, as Shenlan's database stored a wealth of information. Whatever question Bessie raised, Herag could immediately respond and expand into many subjects.

"Truly knowledgeable, Mr. Herag!" Bessie was genuinely surprised at how knowledgeable a First-Class Wizard Apprentice could be, and it indeed astonished her.

Soon after, two other people Bessie had arranged arrived.

One named Rock Dean, a Third-Class Wizard Apprentice, wore a heavy spectacle frame and entered with a scrutinizing glance at Herag.

The other, named Emma Marcy, was a freckled-faced woman who seemed to have a close relationship with Bessie, as they hugged upon meeting.

After the group sat down and introduced themselves to each other, Bessie said, "Everyone's here. Let's discuss the plan. Departure time is two days later; I'll prepare everything needed, Herag will handle the Stone Giant's heart, he won't participate in the combat..."

After Bessie finished, Rock spoke, "I have a question. Why bring a First-Class Wizard Apprentice to handle the Stone Giant's heart?"

"Though Herag is only a First-Class Wizard Apprentice, his expertise in Magic Potions is high, so I'm assured of his capability," Bessie explained.

Rock sipped his coffee, "If you think that's fine, then so be it."

Rock's job was to deal with the Stone Giant, regardless of whether the heart would be handled successfully or not.

The Stone Giant generally requires Third-Class Wizard Apprentices to manage; Bessie invited two Third-Class Wizard Apprentices this time, which made success almost certain.

Herag was too weak to directly engage in combat, avoiding being affected by the fighting.

If Herag were injured or killed due to combat, handling the Stone Giant's heart would fall to the three of them, who weren't proficient in Magic Potions.

Magic Potions require a lot of financial resources and supplies; most Wizard Apprentices struggle to gain substantial experience without ample accumulation.

After confirming the specifics, they left the cafe, with Herag returning home to begin preparing the potion needed to soak the Stone Giant's heart.

"Florob Worm Slime, Hoklap Juice, Lionfish's Stinger..."

After counting the necessary Magic Potion materials, Herag began crafting the potion called Broad-spectrum Potion.

He placed Florob Worm Slime into a beaker, then ignited the Lionfish's Stinger, placing it into the beaker, and then infused Magic Power while chanting several syllables.

Thick White Mist rose continuously from the beaker, filling the room shortly thereafter.

Herag wore protective goggles, ignoring the surrounding White Mist, focusing heavily on the beaker.

"Reaction countdown of 9 seconds," Shenlan provided the countdown to the reaction time.

As soon as the time ended, Herag immediately poured a pink powder into the beaker, which was ground from a fruit known as Scarlet Grass.

Two hours later.

"It's done."

A round crystal bottle in front of Herag contained a purple solution that occasionally bubbled on the surface with a soft popping sound.

He sealed the bottle with an oak-made stopper, having successfully crafted the Broad-spectrum Potion.

At night, the sixth star in Herag's mind already had a basic shape, and he expected to complete meditation and fulfill advancement conditions to become a Second-Class Wizard Apprentice within two months.

"Luckily, the ingredients for the Dawn Potion can be bought in the Forest, avoiding the huge risk of hunting to acquire materials."

Herag was already preparing the Dawn Potion-related materials, needing only the main Demon Flower Root, which was currently unaffordable, but completing this task would allow him to complete the necessary materials for a Dawn Potion.

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Two days later, Herag met with the group at an inn in the Northern Forest Region.

The route they would take this time was not heading toward the Moonlight Forest but towards the east.

Upon arrival, Herag noticed that the inn's atmosphere was different from usual, with an Official Wizard and several Third-Class Wizard Apprentices stationed there, enhancing the security forces.

"Was it because of what happened that day..." Herag thought of the incident where Lune was killed by Shivara.

#### Chapter 55: River Town

After Hellfoot arrived at the station, Herag and the others boarded the wagon one after another. They first needed to ride Hellfoot to the Red Mountain Range, which marked the eastern border of the Moonlight Forest.

Beyond that point, they would be outside the domain of the Moonlight Forest.

Herag got off the wagon, and at a glance, he saw the continuous red mountains ahead.

The rocks here were relatively soft and presented a bright red color.

Many maple trees grew in the mountains, turning the scenery into a fiery red world in autumn.

After arriving at the Red Mountain Range Station, Hellfoot walked to a trough nearby to eat fresh grass and then drank water in large gulps.

Once it was full, it stood still, looking at Herag and the others, stamping its hooves a few times.

Bessie patted Hellfoot's head and said, "You can go back now, little one. We won't be taking the wagon."

Hellfoot seemed to understand, pulling the wagon back by itself.

At the Hellfoot station, there was an ordinary wagon, and the driver was a robust young man who had been waiting here early according to Bessie's arrangements.

"Get on the wagon. Let's aim to reach River Town tonight so we don't have to camp in the wild," Bessie said, lifting the curtain and getting in first.

Herag followed closely behind. The interior of the wagon was quite spacious, with soft cushions on the seats, making it very comfortable to sit.

Bessie's long legs were somewhat cramped in the wagon, requiring her to occasionally adjust her leg position to make herself more comfortable.

Emma and Bessie had a close relationship and chatted about various trivial matters after boarding, such as which Third Class Wizard Apprentice had to sleep with whom for promotion or who was having an affair with whom.

Neither Herag nor Rock spoke. After getting on the wagon, Rock kept his eyes closed, seemingly meditating.

Herag opened the curtain of the window, fixed it with a hook, and gazed at the scenery outside.

This was his first time leaving the Moonlight Forest.

Outside the wagon, it was a continuous stretch of maple woods, initially with no signs of any human activity.

The wagon ran for about two hours, eventually revealing some people logging in the woods, and occasionally some wooden houses appeared, presumably resting places for the nearby lumberjacks and hunters.

After another half an hour, the maple woods gradually faded behind them, and the scenery outside included more diverse landscapes.

They were headed to the Thousand Needle Stone Forest to search for the Stone Giant, a journey expected to take three days, with River Town being their first stop.

Herag closed the curtain and also began to meditate, and about five hours later, the wagon's speed gradually slowed down.

"We're here." The driver opened the curtain, respectfully notifying the Wizard Apprentices inside the wagon.

After getting off, Herag found himself in what appeared to be a peaceful little town. The sky had already darkened, and there were few people moving around the town, making it seem especially tranquil.

Next to River Town, a wide river flowed through, the sound of the water murmuring.

"River Inn."

Herag followed Bessie and the others to an inn, where two lanterns hung at the entrance, emitting a pale yellow glow.

"The rooms I prepared for you are upstairs. Tonight, you're the only guests staying there," said the driver, who turned out to be the innkeeper, eagerly leading the way.

The inn's first-floor hall had many tables set up; this was where travelers ate and drank.

Four tables were occupied, with a mix of local residents and adventurers with swords by their side.

The moment Herag and the others walked into the inn, they attracted attention, and upon seeing the robes they wore, people's expressions became extremely alarmed and fearful.

They glanced quickly and then lowered their heads, not daring to look again, rendering the entire inn extremely quiet.

Herag indeed noticed a big-bearded man trying hard to control his breathing, seemingly afraid to breathe loudly.

"They seem quite afraid of us," Herag said after going upstairs.

Bessie turned back, "That's normal. This area is quite close to the Wizard Organization, so many people are aware of wizards' existence. As we go further out, people in those places will generally not know about wizards."

After a while, when they went downstairs to eat, they found that the first floor hall was empty.

Herag asked, "Where are they?"

The driver bowed, smiling, "They've all left, even those who had rooms have checked out, afraid of disturbing the rest of you."

...

Two days later, Herag and the others arrived at the Thousand Needle Stone Forest on horseback.

The landform here was very peculiar, consisting of a sunken valley. The valley contained countless tall stone pillars, each several hundred meters high.

Vegetation was scarce in the Thousand Needle Stone Forest, mostly bare yellow earth.

A slight breeze could stir up clouds of dust within the stone forest.

Rock walked at the front, warning those behind, "Be cautious once we enter. This is a completely neutral area, and we might encounter people from any Wizard Organization. If we run into people from Green Cottage, we must be particularly careful."

Herag was fully attentive to Shenlan's environmental monitoring, and there seemed to be no unusual movements for the time being.

Rock held an hourglass in his hand, adjusting their direction after covering a certain distance, continuing to move forward if the hourglass flipped automatically.

The Thousand Needle Stone Forest was vast, and its similar terrain made it easy to get lost. The Stone Giant typically hid deep within the forest, sometimes even burying itself in the ground.

Rock's hourglass seemed capable of locating the Stone Giant, leading the group through the stone forest by constantly adjusting their direction.

Although Herag could use Shenlan to help search for the Stone Giant's location, it was a personal secret he naturally wouldn't disclose.

In his mind, the map of the Thousand Needle Stone Forest was gradually being completed, with a red line clearly marking their path from the moment they entered the forest until now.

An hour later.

Rock suddenly stopped, and the hourglass in his hand began to turn rapidly, flipping over furiously.

"We've found it. It's nearby; be cautious." He put away the hourglass and closed his eyes.

Herag could sense a surge of magic power emanating from Rock's body, quickly sweeping over the surroundings.

"It seems to be Magical Perception, and quite a large range," Herag estimated. Rock's Magical Perception was probably about seventy to eighty meters.

Once Rock activated Magical Perception, the group slowed their forward progress.

Soon, Herag noticed a colossal figure hidden behind a stone column about two hundred meters ahead, seemingly hibernating underground.

"Stone Giant." Having discovered the Stone Giant, Herag didn't speak up; he continued to move silently, ready to retreat at any moment.

Rock's Magical Perception range was still slightly short of sensing the Stone Giant's exact location.

A moment later, Rock stopped with a serious expression, pointing to a stone column ahead, "It's behind that stone column, buried underground."

"Herag, find a place to hide. You can come over once we've settled this. Stay safe," Bessie advised.

Herag nodded, "Okay, you go ahead."

## Chapter 56: Encounter

Herag found a concealed place to hide based on the surrounding terrain feedback from Shenlan, while simultaneously observing Bessie's situation through Shenlan.

Rock walked at the forefront, stopping when he was still forty to fifty meters away from where the Stone Giant was sleeping. He pointed ahead, quickly reciting the syllables of a spell, and then said, "Wake up, big guy, Stone Spike Technique!"

A muffled rumbling sound came from the Stone Giant's resting place, and a humanoid creature, seemingly composed of numerous large stones, catapulted from the underground. A massive stone column was beneath the Stone Giant, appearing as if the Stone Giant had been propped up by the column.

Roar!

The Stone Giant let out a deep growl, stared at Rock for a moment, then charged at him.

"Quicksand Trap." Rock, unhurried, used another spell.

The area where the Stone Giant stood transformed entirely into quicksand, and due to its weight, it quickly sank into the quicksand, with only a third of its body remaining above the surface.

Emma then made her move, tossing a bottle of black potion onto the Stone Giant. Upon breaking, the black liquid spread out.

"High-tier Corrosion Technique!"

After Emma chanted a few incantations, the black potion suddenly expanded, enveloping the entire Stone Giant.

The Stone Giant emitted cries of agony as the stones on its body were rapidly corroded, soon revealing some blood-red muscle tissue underneath.

Herag was not surprised by this scene; he knew that the Stone Giant's surface was stone, but its interior still had organs and muscle tissue.

The Stone Giant was immobilized in the quicksand, its entire body covered with corrosive potion, continuously howling until its voice grew faint.

Seeing it was almost done, Rock said to Bessie, "Go call Herag over."

Bessie breathed a sigh of relief. They had rehearsed the plan many times before coming, and so far, everything was going smoothly.

After Herag came over with Bessie, Rock waved his hand: "Rock Spike!"

A few mud-yellow spikes rapidly formed in front of him and shot towards the Stone Giant, stabbing its neck and other vital parts, avoiding the heart.

The Stone Giant's body convulsed continuously after being hit by the spikes, and after a while, its head drooped powerlessly.

"That's it, hurry up and extract the heart." Rock said as he lifted the effect of the Quicksand Trap, and the ground returned to its hard, muddy appearance.

"Shenlan, is the Stone Giant dead?" Herag didn't rush over; he first inquired with Shenlan.

"The Stone Giant shows no signs of life," Shenlan replied.

Only then did Herag approach the Stone Giant's corpse with ease. He took out a set of special dissection tools from his Space Ring.

He first sliced open the stone shell at the Stone Giant's heart area, revealing the blood-red heart inside.

The difficulty in harvesting the Stone Giant's heart lies in the seventeen blood vessels surrounding it. They must be cut in a specific order, with each cut followed by sealing the vessel opening with pre-made Magic Potion Mud.

The entire process must be completed within a minute, which is very challenging and requires precise skill; any mistake is unacceptable.

With Shenlan's assistance, Herag performed each step with pinpoint accuracy, making this task fairly easy for him.

A minute later, Herag held a faintly pulsing blood-red heart in his hands. He placed it into a crystal jar, then poured the prepared Broad-spectrum Potion into it, sealed the jar's lid, and thus completed the processing of the Stone Giant's heart.

In the crystal jar, the Stone Giant's heart, soaked in the Magic Potion, pulsed gently, able to maintain its vitality for two months.

"All done." Herag handed the crystal jar to Bessie.

With the completion of the mission, Bessie felt her burden lifted. She placed the jar into her Space Ring and then took out a bag of Magic Stones: "Herag, this is your payment."

Herag accepted it, and Shenlan quickly scanned through to confirm that there were indeed twenty Magic Stones.

"Let's hurry back." Now in possession of the Stone Giant's heart, Bessie grew anxious again, eager to return to Moonlight Forest to commission someone to concoct the potion and advance.

Rock once again took out the Hourglass and began walking back.

Every location in the Thousand Needle Stone Forest looked similar, making it easy to get lost without special methods.

Herag trailed behind, observing the map in his mind without speaking. Even when Rock went off course several times, he didn't point it out because the hourglass in Rock's hand would eventually indicate the deviation.

After walking for half an hour, Herag suddenly slowed his pace.

According to Shenlan's feedback, there were people hiding behind two stone pillars up ahead, a total of three, each exuding a strong Magical Source.

Herag couldn't call out a warning, so he merely slowed his steps, ready to bolt at a moment's notice.

Rock had his Magic Sense activated and would soon discover the hidden enemies ahead.

Soon enough, Rock indeed stopped, and then suddenly stepped on a rock and swiftly retreated.

Not only him, but Herag, Bessie, and Emma also rapidly retreated.

A rain of fire immediately fell on the spot they had just occupied. Rock glanced at Herag, slightly surprised that he had sensed and dodged it.

Herag kept an eye on the movements of the three individuals, and as one of them silently cast a spell at them, Herag used the Wind Elf's blessing to accelerate his retreat immediately.

"What luck! I never thought we'd actually encounter people from Moonlight Forest here. Lord Malcolm did say that there's a reward for killing people from Moonlight Forest. Killing a First-Class Wizard Apprentice earns five Magic Stones, killing a Second-Class Wizard Apprentice earns twenty Magic Stones, and killing a Third-Class Wizard Apprentice earns fifty Magic Stones."

A man with a face mask said as he emerged from behind a stone pillar, followed by the other two.

"Shenlan, assess the strength of these three," Herag ordered.

"Power 5.8, agility 6.5, constitution 6.8, spirit 17.2."

"Power 5.1, agility 6.8, constitution 7.0, spirit 18.6."

"Power 6.2, agility 5.0, constitution 6.7, spirit 17.8."

"Three Third-Class Wizard Apprentices!" Herag, seeing Shenlan's results, felt the situation was a bit dire.

On their side, there were only two Third-Class Wizard Apprentices, one Second-Class Wizard Apprentice, and one First-Class Wizard Apprentice. The combat power difference was glaring.

More critically, Rock and Emma might have the ability to protect themselves; if things went south, they could escape, but Herag was unsure if he could run away safely.

Without hesitation, Herag decided to retreat.

With Shenlan mapping the way, he had no concerns about getting lost.

Bessie, noticing Herag's immediate retreat, didn't comment; it was a wise decision anyway, as Herag's presence wouldn't have added much combat value.

The three adversaries didn't mind Herag's departure; a First-Class Wizard Apprentice wasn't worth much. What mattered were the two Third-Class Wizard Apprentices in front of them - they were the true prizes.

#### Chapter 57: The Knight and The Rose

After Herag ran a distance, he could no longer sense any commotion from that side and began to take a detour towards the exit.

More than forty minutes later, Herag reached the exit, and he encountered no one else along the way.

The four horses at the exit were still there, and in addition, there was also a carriage, which Herag estimated belonged to the three Third Class Wizard Apprentices.

After mounting his horse, Herag began galloping madly, preparing to rush all the way back to the Moonlight Forest.

"From what those three said, Malcolm must have discovered that Lune died in the Moonlight Forest and blamed it on Moonlight Forest, even offering a bounty..."

He took off his robe and changed into casual clothes.

Herag kicked the horse's belly, making it run even faster.

More than an hour later, Herag felt a bit relieved, seeing no pursuers behind him.

"Hmm?" Suddenly, ahead, he heard the sounds of swords clashing, along with cries and shouts of killing.

As Herag rode closer, he saw a group of bandits attacking a caravan.

The bandits numbered about thirty, including crossbowmen.

The caravan had only a little over ten people, desperately holding on, using the carriage as a fortification. Dead bodies lay all around.

"Come on, brothers, they're about to break! These are nobles, they must have good stuff!" The bandit leader, a man with a long scar across his face, was standing on the outside, directing the attack.

The strongest in the caravan was a knight level fighter in his forties or fifties, guarding a gap in the middle of the carriage, holding a giant shield to fend off the bandits' attack.

Herag just took a glance and continued on his way, not wanting to involve himself in unnecessary trouble.

Riding past, the scar-faced man noticed him, and spotted the two rings on Herag's hand at a glance, his eyes lighting up, saying, "Block him! That man has good stuff on him!"

Seven or eight arrows sailed towards Herag, aiming to shoot him down.

Herag had already received Shenlan's warning and ducked down to dodge the incoming arrows.

"This guy's got some skills, shoot his horse!" The bandit leader continued commanding.

Several arrows quickly embedded into the horse's rump and belly, causing the horse to wail and fall to the ground.

Herag tumbled off, his eyes coldly fixed on the bandits.

"Hahaha! Good shot, kill him!" The bandit leader laughed, immediately directing seven or eight men to charge at Herag.

At the same time, some crossbowmen started aiming at Herag, shooting arrows at him.

"Ice Shield!"

"Mana Shield!"

"Dark Energy Shield!"

The arrows bounced off the thick shields and fell to the ground, completely failing to harm Herag.

The bandit leader's smile froze on his face when he saw the strange shields on Herag, raising a bad feeling in his heart.

Clang!

Herag drew his brilliant longsword and charged at the bandits.

Arrows still kept coming, but without exception, all were deflected.

Herag's physique now was at a knight level, and with a few strides, he was upon the bandits, severing a head with a single swing of his sword.

The blades and arrows of these bandits were useless against Herag, unable to breach even the most basic defense.

In the blink of an eye, Herag killed one with each step, taking down all eight charging bandits, leaving a bloodied path.

"M-monster!" The bandits were terrified at the sight, becoming panic-stricken as they had never seen such shields like those on Herag, beyond their understanding.

The bandits began to flee, even abandoning the caravan they had been assaulting.

The bandit leader ran the fastest, silently mounting a horse and starting to gallop away.

Herag fixed his gaze on him, swiftly forming a Corrosive Arrow in hand, shooting it straight toward the bandit leader.

Swoosh!

The Corrosive Arrow pierced through the bandit leader's neck, knocking him off his horse.

The bandit leader's neck had a terrifying bloody hole, with black edges from corrosive energy.

The bandits, having lost their leader, scattered and fled in all directions.

Herag couldn't be bothered to chase them, as pursuing would only waste his travel time.

He looked back at his horse, which was barely alive on the ground, and then headed towards the caravan.

"Thank you, Mystic, for your help! The Allison family will forever remember your grace!" The middle-aged knight knelt on one knee to thank him as Herag approached.

"Hello, my name is Uffie Ellison." A noble young girl, dressed luxuriously, stepped off the carriage behind, her face delicate, legs wrapped in white stockings.

Herag gave her an indifferent glance but said nothing, and turned to ask the middle-aged knight, "Can I buy a horse?"

"Buy... a horse?" The middle-aged knight was a bit taken aback, then quickly said, "Of course, you need not buy it, just take whichever horse you fancy and ride away."

Herag nodded, chose a strong black horse, mounted it, tossed two Gold Coins on the ground, and rode off.

Uffie helped the middle-aged knight up, saying, "Uncle Shanni, I think he is the knight I've been looking for."

Knight Shanni sighed helplessly, "Miss Uffie, that gentleman just now is no knight, but a legendary wizard, don't provoke him."

"But all the knight novels say so, the knight always appears when the princess is in danger, rescues her, and they live happily ever after." Uffie held a novel titled "The Knight and The Rose" in her hand.

Shanni knew his young lady was recently infatuated with knight novels and said, "Miss Uffie, we should get back in the carriage, and head home while the bandits are scared off."

"We must treasure these two Gold Coins." Shanni carefully picked up the two Gold Coins Herag had left, wiped off the dust, and put them in his pocket.

For Herag, it was just a minor incident on his journey, and what annoyed him was the delay caused by the damned bandits.

Herag made no stops along the way, only camping at night to rest briefly and let his horse graze and drink water.

Three days later, Herag arrived at the Red Mountain Range Station.

He sensed a tense atmosphere as soon as he arrived, noting that a Formal Wizard and three Third Class Wizard Apprentices were stationed there.

"No one was stationed here when I left." Herag found it a bit odd.

"Show me your Talisman Stone." A chubby Third Class Wizard Apprentice came over to verify his identity.

Herag honestly handed over the Talisman Stone. The chubby wizard checked it and, finding no issues, returned it to Herag.

Then he took out something resembling a bamboo section and said, "This is the Faceless Bamboo Section. Take it and suck on it once with your mouth."

Herag did as instructed, and smoke puffed out of his ears, nose, and mouth, dissipating quickly.

Chapter 58: News of Death

The fat wizard nodded, "Mm, no problem. You can go now."

"Did something happen?" Herag asked curiously.

"Recently, the Green Cottage launched multiple attacks on us. To ensure safety, all wizards entering the forest must undergo identity checks," the fat wizard explained.

"Is the situation this serious?" Herag felt that only a few days had passed, yet the situation had become more complex than he imagined.

After putting away the Faceless Bamboo Section, the fat wizard said, "You don't need to worry too much. Just try not to leave the forest during this period. It's still safe inside. Even if you need to go out, don't go alone."

"Mm, your duty at the post station must also be quite risky," Herag felt that the defensive power at the post station was still somewhat lacking.

The fat wizard smiled bitterly, "There's no choice. The tasks assigned by the forest must be carried out; there's no escaping them."

In dangerous encounters, at least the official wizards can retreat unharmed, but it's much harder for those of us who are wizard apprentices.

If the Green Cottage wanted to attack a post station, they certainly wouldn't just send a few wizard apprentices.

"Are there any mandatory tasks?" Herag asked.

"Of course! As long as there is an emergency, everyone might be mobilized. You're just a first-class wizard apprentice; your power isn't enough yet, so there's no task for you at the moment. Once your power increases, you'll be assigned tasks too," the fat wizard explained.

After chatting for a while, the Hellfoot arrived. After boarding, Herag took out his Talisman Stone and started browsing Gossip Tavern, and sure enough, he saw many discussions about the Green Cottage attacks.

"Three first-class wizard apprentices picking Sleeping Mushrooms in the Moonlight Forest were killed!"

"I saw the scene; their bodies were hung on trees, the people from Green Cottage are too arrogant!"

"Calculating over the past few days, there have been over twenty casualties."

"Why have the people from Green Cottage suddenly gone mad?"

"It's said they have a bounty; killing one of our third-class wizard apprentices is worth fifty magic stones."

"Am I worth that much? I almost want to kill myself to claim the bounty."

...

Herag continued to browse other posts. Many wizard apprentices who went out on missions had encountered attacks from the Green Cottage.

"It seems we're not an isolated case. They must have some source of intelligence, an insider?"

Herag realized that the Green Cottage must have some special means of obtaining internal intelligence from the Moonlight Forest; otherwise, it wouldn't be possible for so many wizard apprentices on missions to encounter danger.

He glanced at Bessie's chat box but there was still no message.

After Herag escaped, he sent a message to Bessie asking about their situation, but still no reply after three days.

He had a vague sense of unease and wondered if Bessie's group could escape.

Three days later.

While meditating, Herag suddenly opened his eyes. His Talisman Stone flashed. He opened it to see a message from Bessie.

"Emma is dead."

Seeing the message from Bessie, Herag thought the three of them were safe, but unexpectedly, the third-class wizard apprentice Emma had died.

"Emma didn't manage to escape to save me..." Bessie quickly sent another message.

Bessie had a good relationship with Emma, and Herag could imagine how sad she must be. After all, it's extremely difficult for wizards to have a friend.

"Herag, can you take me to see Mr. Larry? I want to commission him to help me concoct the Dawn and Dusk Potion. I must become a third-class wizard apprentice, I must become a wizard!" Bessie continued.

"No problem, I can take you there tomorrow." Herag had already arranged to meet Larry to discuss some precautions about the Dawn Potion the next day.

"Thank you, Herag." Bessie sent this message and then said no more.

Herag then opened Larry's chat box, explained the situation, and Larry readily agreed. After all, business was coming to his door, and there was no reason to turn it away.

"Shenlan, calculate how much longer it will take to complete the last star of meditation?"

Recent events had made Herag increasingly anxious, eager to enhance his power, as only with power could he control his own destiny.

"Estimated to take another thirty-five days."

"Thirty-five days." Herag murmured this time as he entered meditation.

...

The next day, Herag met with Bessie at the Lion Cafe, where Rock was also present. They were still at the same table, but four people had become three.

"My condolences," Herag saw that Bessie's eyes were still red.

"I'll also offer my condolences to those people," Bessie's eyes glinted with ferocity, filled with murderous intent.

"Bessie, you shouldn't rush into revenge..." Herag noticed her unstable state and tried to advise her.

Bessie calmed down and said, "I understand."

Rock spoke up, "It's my fault. I couldn't protect her."

Bessie shook her head, "No, you did your best. If it weren't for you and for that place in the Thousand Needle Stone Forest full of earth elements, we might have all been unable to escape. Rock, you've done enough."

"Let's go, Herag." Bessie stood up and said.

Herag brought her to Larry, who surprisingly came to the door to welcome them himself.

"I heard about Miss Emma. It's truly regrettable. I still remember her youthful and lively demeanor in my classes," Larry said with deep regret.

"Thank you, Mr. Larry, for remembering her." Bessie's mood again sank a bit.

"Back to business, the commission fee for the Dawn and Dusk Potion is one hundred magic stones. Miss Bessie should be aware of this, right?" Larry said, pouring coffee for both of them.

"I have it all ready," Bessie appeared unfazed by the cost.

"One hundred magic stones..." Herag thought to himself, the magic potion crafting business is truly lucrative, a career with high upfront investment and returns.

Larry leaned against the table and looked down at Bessie, saying, "One more thing I must emphasize to Miss Bessie: the promotion should only begin once your spirit and emotions have completely stabilized, otherwise, recklessly drinking the potion to advance can have terrifying consequences."

"Thank you, Mr. Larry, for the warning. I understand." Bessie nodded.

"Alright, you only have one set of magic potion materials. To ensure everything goes smoothly, I'll prepare extra time. Usually, you need two sets of materials, but let's skip that this time. In about seven days, I will start the preparation. The Dawn and Dusk Potion, once crafted, will be effective for a month. Miss Bessie will need to consume it and complete the advancement within that month," Larry explained.

"Thank you for your efforts, Mr. Larry!" Bessie bowed.

Larry smiled, "Wish me luck, and I also wish you success."

After Bessie left, Herag stayed to inquire about details regarding the Dawn Potion. Larry answered each question without reservation, offering some insights from his own experiences.

He had high hopes for Herag, especially in the field of magic potion, as Herag always managed to grasp every detail excellently, to Larry's great satisfaction.

Chapter 59: Dawn Potion

A month later.

Herag lay on the bed, the sixth star in his mind about to solidify and sparkle.

Just before sunrise, Herag opened his eyes.

"Shenlan, check the current state of the body."

"Herag Merlin: Power 2.8, Agility 2.9, Constitution 4.0, Spirit 10.5, Magic Power 100%.

The data in all aspects has reached the genetic limit."

Herag looked at the data, silently contemplating: "10.5 Spiritual Power, already surpassing the advancement requirements of most Second-Class Wizard Apprentices. Is it because of the Starry Sky Meditation Technique?"

Generally, a First-Class Wizard Apprentice's Spiritual Power tops out at 8 or 9 at most; to increase further, one must advance to a Second-Class Wizard Apprentice.

Herag had not yet advanced but already had a Spiritual Power of 10.5. If word got out, people might slice him up for research.

The body's data had also seen significant improvement, but it had already reached genetic limits.

Herag did not rush to advance but spent five days stabilizing his Spiritual Power, striving to keep his physical state steady.

"Next is alchemy." Herag prepared two sets of materials, and one extra set was borrowed from Larry.

If he succeeded on the first try, he could return the borrowed materials.

Herag heard that advancing to an Official Wizard requires multiple Magic Potions, drinking another if the first one isn't enough. Failure to advance means death.

The advancement from a First-Class Wizard Apprentice isn't as difficult or dangerous, requiring only one Magic Potion.

"Demon Flower Root, Ancient Tree Sap, 30 grams of Obsidian, Saturn Dust..."

In his laboratory, Herag counted the Magic Potion materials; the main challenge of the Dawn Potion lay in handling the Demon Flower Root and maintaining the activity of the Ancient Tree Sap.

The Ancient Tree Sap must be kept at a constant temperature of 83 degrees in a beaker, not a degree higher or lower, with constant monitoring.

The root of the Demon Flower is highly toxic and must be handled carefully, filtering out all toxins, as it's the main component of the Dawn Potion's efficacy.

The Dawn Potion is essentially a poison; an ordinary person would drop dead immediately after drinking it, and a First-Class Wizard Apprentice with insufficient Spiritual Power would find it hard to survive.

Herag took out a black sunflower-like plant from his Space Ring. Unlike a sunflower, the original head had turned into a human face.

From the features, it was a woman's face, with tightly closed eyes and cute, sharp tiger fangs at the corners of her mouth.

"Rather cute..." Herag didn't understand why the word 'cute' crossed his mind.

Suddenly, the woman opened her eyes, looking at Herag with a bewitching expression.

"Dark Energy Shield! I almost forgot! Damn, nearly messed up the first step." Herag was filled with dread; the Demon Flower has an enchanting effect and absorbs emotional energy from animals.

If the Demon Flower absorbed emotions, its venom would mix with impurities, rendering the Magic Potion materials useless.

The Dark Energy Shield provides a certain defense against spells involving Dark Attribute Energy, easily blocking the minor magic of the Demon Flower.

Herag took a pair of scissors, placing them at the junction of the Demon Flower's head and root. The Dawn Potion required only the root, and the head could be kept for other Magic Potions in the future.

"Shenlan, block hearing." Herag preemptively issued the command as a precaution.

The next moment, the Demon Flower sensed the cold scissors below, showing a human-like expression of terror.

Herag exerted force, swiftly severing the head while sealing the cut with Magic Power to prevent the sap inside from splattering.

"Ahhhh..." The Demon Flower opened its mouth and began to scream, but the Dark Energy within it was blocked by the Dark Energy Shield, rendering its sonic attack ineffective against Herag.

Given his current physique, this level of intensity was insufficient to harm his eardrums, as it was only a harvested Magic Potion material.

After about a minute of screaming, the Demon Flower's expression weakened, looking tired, and soon closed its eyes.

Herag soaked it in a pre-prepared glass jar, then stored it in the Space Ring, as it might come in handy later.

The next step was pivotal and challenging. Herag placed the root of the Demon Flower sealed with Magic Power into a large beaker, then infused Magic Power to control the toxins inside, squeezing them out with Magic Power.

This process required extreme care. A slight mistake in breaking the internal structure of the root would render the subsequent experiment unnecessary.

The black-purple toxins slowly dripped into the large beaker, the lab silent except for the drip-drip sound of water, with time passing slowly.

...

Herag took eight hours to complete the preparation of the Dawn Potion, sealing the test tube with an oak stopper, containing a light purple solution.

"Phew... exhausted." Herag finally breathed a sigh of relief, wiping the sweat from his forehead.

"Remaining Magic Power: 11%."

Apart from numerous details to pay attention to, the alchemy of the Dawn Potion also consumed considerable Magic Power.

With both physical and mental exhaustion, Herag was extremely fatigued at this moment.

"Luckily, it succeeded; I don't want to go through it again." That tightrope-walking-like tension where nothing could go wrong covered his mind; just recalling it made Herag break out in a cold sweat.

"The current Spiritual Power is still too much pressure for completing this potion; no wonder Mr. Larry insisted on lending a set to me, apparently doubting I could succeed on the first try."

Shenlan could only run simulations and calculations for each step and the timing of the next step, but every action needed his execution.

The normal human brain couldn't manage such high-precision, high-intensity tasks; only Wizards, with spiritual strength far exceeding ordinary people, enough focus, and stamina, could accomplish it.

After completing everything, Herag went downstairs to shower, still meditating while soaking in the bathtub.

Although his Spiritual Power had reached its limit, it was already a formed habit, plus meditation could speed Magic Power recovery.

In his mind, six stars connected, and the Array Map had only four positions left to illuminate.

"The advancement of a Second-Class Wizard Apprentice to Third Class requires ten stars, matching the Array Map's number exactly; maybe there's a link between them."

Herag lay in the bathtub, the meditation making him oblivious to the passage of time, even the cooling bathwater unnoticed.

"Remaining Magic Power: 100%."

After a night, the Magic Power fully recovered, and as Herag opened his eyes, his body and spirit felt refreshed.

He still didn't rush to drink the potion for advancement but intended to adjust his body state over a few days while reviewing the relevant knowledge of advancement.

"You succeeded on the first try?" Larry was very surprised to hear the news.

"Many times it almost ended in failure, so hard." Herag sighed.

Larry looked at Herag like a monster: "You know, I had already prepared the Dawn Potion for you because I never thought you could succeed."

Chapter 60: War

"Huh?"

Herag was surprised, not expecting Larry to have prepared the Dawn Potion for him.

Larry smiled and said, "I originally wanted you to use this opportunity to gain some experience in Magic Potion Refining. The Dawn Potion is still too difficult for you, but you actually succeeded."

"Genius, I've seen many wizards, and your talent in Magic Potion is unparalleled. Your wizard aptitude is seventy-five points, but your talent in Magic Potion can be rated as ninety-five points."

Herag touched the back of his head, not expecting such high praise from Larry. During the refining process of the Dawn Potion, Shenlan played a crucial role, and without Shenlan, he would've truly been unable to succeed.

"Thank you, Mr. Larry, for your compliment. Here is the unused portion of the Dawn Potion materials I borrowed from you." Herag returned the unused materials.

Larry snapped his fingers to collect the materials, then said solemnly, "In a few days, you'll be a Second-Class Wizard Apprentice. The academy might assign you some tasks."

"Tasks?"

Larry explained, "You know about the recent matter with the Green Cottage, right? Initially, it was just Malcolm's personal vendetta, and such clashes have happened before. But, a week ago, both sides had Level 1 Wizards confront each other."

"Level 1 Wizards." Herag realized the severity of the situation; conflicts between wizard apprentices were only trivial matters.

Once Level 1 Wizards are involved, it escalates to a conflict between two Wizard Organizations.

"Thus, it can be foreseen that in the upcoming period, our battles with Green Cottage won't cease, and the situation will only become tenser. I can see from the magic potions the forest commissioned me to refine in this period that they plan something big."

"Both sides seem to want to use this as an excuse to go all out, and the battle won't cease easily. It might even evolve into a war between two Wizard Organizations."

Herag had read in some tomes about the records of wizard wars; even Official Wizards might not be able to protect themselves, let alone wizard apprentices, who in such times become expendables.

Many Magic Arrays are even triggered by the sacrifice of hundreds of wizard apprentices, unleashing great power.

"I still remember the last wizard war I personally experienced. Every day, countless people died in various tragic ways. The night after the war ended, few houses in the Northern Forest Region had their lights on," Larry recalled.

"Were there no wizard apprentices who escaped?" Herag asked.

In times of large-scale wars, weaker wizard apprentices should choose to flee knowing danger has arrived.

Larry helplessly shook his head, "Do you remember the form you filled out on the day you joined?"

"Form?" Herag suddenly had a realization; Moonlight Forest seems to have little management over wizards, but there's actually a means of constraint.

"Yes, that form I told you about. It contains magic; aside from identity recording and authentication functions, it's also a contract. If Moonlight Forest wants to take action against you, you can't escape," Larry explained.

Herag was somewhat surprised but then realized it made sense.

There are no free lunches; Moonlight Forest will not provide these conditions for free, and when they need you, you must step up.

However, this still left Herag with a sense of discomfort, as he didn't want his destiny to be controlled by others.

"So, during a war, do we, the wizard apprentices, have to follow Moonlight Forest's arrangements?" Herag asked.

Larry shook his finger, "There are four ways. The first is, if you can be promoted to an Official Wizard, the magic's binding effect on you will lapse. At that time, you can decide whether to stay at Moonlight Forest or leave based on your own will. If you stay, you must re-sign a contract, a fair exchange of interests."

"The second option is to apply to leave the organization, but generally it's not feasible, except when your life is nearing its end and you want to leave."

"Third, if you're often outside, the forest can't manage you. Many wizards are in extremely remote places and cannot be contacted. This method doesn't work now; the forest now has entry and exit controls, and you must have a legitimate reason to go out."

"The last option is to be executing tasks outside, which is also one of the current legitimate reasons for going out."

Herag listened carefully, pondered slightly, and asked, "Mr. Larry, so it seems the most suitable for me is to take a task and then go out publicly?"

Larry replied, "In theory yes, but such tasks must be officially issued by Moonlight Forest, and many people scramble to take them. The duration of these tasks isn't fixed; you might have to return after just one or two months."

Herag furrowed his brow; it seemed the ostensibly safe Moonlight Forest now constantly faced the risk of possibly engaging in a war.

"But there's one other way." Larry smiled meaningfully, staring at Herag.

Herag felt a bit uneasy under his gaze and tentatively asked, "What way?"

"Become my student," Larry said slowly.

"Student?" Herag had somewhat expected this outcome.

Larry had always taken care of him, not necessarily out of being a good person, but more because of recognizing Herag's potential, something Herag had always been aware of.

If he could become his student, he could surely avoid many detours.

Larry smiled, "How about it, Herag? Are you willing to become my student?"

Herag didn't rush to answer but instead asked, "What do I need to pay?"

Larry smiled, "No need to worry, I won't make you give up your soul or anything like that. In fact, the teacher-student relationship is essentially a stable interest relationship. I help you now, and if you can help me in the future, you do so. Wizards don't talk about emotions; interests are always the most effective tool for maintaining relationships."

"Actually, the things I've sacrificed for you so far are worthless to me, requiring no cost at all."

"I originally wanted to observe a bit longer, at least until you could advance to a Third-Class Wizard Apprentice before considering taking you as a student, as only then would you have enough value. But your talent in Magic Potion makes me reconsider, and after deliberation, I believe you already have enough value."

"So, Herag, are you willing to become my student?"

Herag laughed, "Greetings, Mr. Larry!"

"Very well, hold on, I'll explain the points you need to note during the advancement process. And if you encounter any special situations and how to handle them, after you complete the advancement, I'll arrange a task for you. You can then go outside Moonlight Forest to avoid the forthcoming turmoil," Larry arranged.

"What about you, teacher? Are you staying at Moonlight Forest?" Herag asked.