

Sixth 81

Chapter 81: Mammoth

Herag thought more and more that this place might belong to a wizard or a wizard organization.

The magic potion materials in these fields and the things in those houses are likely raised by wizards for long-term acquisition of magic potion or casting materials.

"This place is under the jurisdiction of the Aluf Swamp, could it be their people..." Herag speculated.

He sighed, realizing that thinking about it was meaningless. Although Aluf Swamp had a good relationship with Moonlight Forest, it didn't really concern low-level wizard apprentices like them; if they were meant to be killed, they would be.

Herag stood up, glanced at the surrounding magic potion materials, and began to pick and dig some high-tier magic potion materials.

There were many he didn't recognize, but he had his methods of identification.

That was energy particles; high-tier magic potion materials usually had more energy particles, which was a small method to identify the level of magic potion materials.

About half an hour later, Herag heard some noise from afar.

He crouched in the fields and raised his head, quietly observing the place where the noise originated.

It was a piece of flat land there, completely barren, not even a single blade of grass.

The ground suddenly cracked, and something arched up from underneath.

A massive white bone burst out from the earth.

"Roar!"

A loud elephant call came from underground, the large bone hadn't yet revealed its full form and was continuously arching upward.

Soon, Herag finally saw the complete form of that large bone.

It was a complete mammoth skeleton, as high as a three-story building.

At the head of the mammoth skeleton, a green flame was burning fiercely inside.

Herag knew what this was; it was the soul fire of this mammoth, indicating that it was an undead creature.

"I've always felt the term 'undead creatures' is rather awkward." Herag thought it might be a translation issue, as 'creatures' in Chinese means living beings, but in this language, it didn't mean the same.

"Does having a soul count as being a creature?"

Herag didn't have time to ponder this question further, because the mammoth had already turned its head and was looking at him.

He knew he'd been discovered and immediately cast a wind elf's blessing on himself and ran back.

The mammoth followed closely, and the scene that followed was unexpected for Herag.

The mammoth was initially fast, but when it approached the field, it stopped and gently stepped on the vacant land that wasn't planted with magic potion materials; it seemed to know not to step into the fields.

However, the paths between the fields were narrow, very narrow for the mammoth, which made it unable to run at full speed and forced it to tread carefully forward.

This speed was naturally impossible to catch up with Herag, who seized this opportunity to speed up.

He observed the distance and chose a direction to sprint.

"Hope I don't encounter the situation over the mountain foot."

The only thing Herag worried about now was if he suddenly appeared somewhere else while running, especially if he ended up right next to the mammoth, then it would be a real mess.

The strength of that mammoth was at least several dozens. At this level of power, no shield would be useful; it could stomp through with a single step.

After Herag crossed the field area, there was a small forest ahead, mostly pine trees.

He slowed his pace, as everything here required caution, especially when entering a new area.

"So many spider webs?"

Herag looked serious and first cast three shields on himself.

The pine forest was covered with a large range of spider webs, with the ground almost filled with white spider silk.

The fact that such a large area of spider webs was woven indicated that this spider must be of the demon level, usually very troublesome.

Roar!

The mammoth's call from behind drew nearer, as it tread down the narrow paths, its gaze fixed intently on Herag.

"No, I can't go into this forest."

Herag ran to the side; under no circumstances could he enter this pine forest.

Although the mammoth was chasing, the things inside could potentially be more troublesome than the mammoth.

Running to the side risked being caught by the mammoth, but venturing into the forest would surely result in being caught between the demons inside and the mammoth, ensuring certain death.

Herag took a deep breath, once again picked up speed, ran to the right of the pine forest, and circled around it.

The mammoth drew closer and after a while finally got out of the field, immediately speeding up and knocking over a large area of pine trees.

At the same time, rustling noises came from within the pine forest, the sound dense.

Herag turned back to glance and saw a mass of spiders crawling out of the pine forest, each more than a meter long.

He realized this was a spider colony, and these spiders were just small ones. Deep within the spider nest, there was usually a spider queen, larger and more powerful.

"The poison and silk of this kind of spider queen seem to be precious magic potion materials, looks like it's also kept by some wizard."

Seeing that the spiders weren't coming for him, Herag felt a bit relieved.

"It's good I slowed down when passing by. If I had alarmed these things, there'd be nothing left of me to even chew." He looked at the countless spiders, feeling a bit frightened.

The spiders from the pine forest rushed out, all swarming toward the mammoth.

The mammoth, all bones, stepped on and killed a spider with each foot, its two gigantic mammoth tusks sweeping and killing a swath of spiders.

But these spiders seemed endless, continuously emerging from within, more and more.

Spiders soon covered the mammoth's body, causing it to run around the pine forest like a headless fly.

The ground was filled with spider webs, and green spider pulp everywhere, spilling out from the trampled spiders.

Herag had no time to continue observing their battle and ran forward without looking back.

A loud crash came from behind, accompanied by the mammoth's wailing.

Herag glanced back while running and found the mammoth had fallen, wrapped in spider silk.

Initially, many of the spider silks on its body were snapped by the mammoth, but breaking one was followed by tens of thousands more.

The strength and toughness of these spider silks were extraordinary and soon enveloped the entire mammoth.

Then, the horde of spiders dragged the mammoth into the depths of the pine forest.

"Can they even eat bones?" Herag couldn't help but sneer. It seemed these spiders had hunted the mammoth as prey, wrapping it in webs as a stored food source.

Just as he was sneering, these spiders suddenly halted their movements in unison.

They began severing the spider silk connecting the mammoth, then turned around uniformly to face Herag's direction.

"Oh no, you've got to be kidding!"

A strong sense of crisis overwhelmed Herag. Evidently, these spiders had received some sort of command, possibly from the spider queen behind them.

He understood his position had been exposed, and the target of the spider swarm had become him.

Chapter 82: Stone Slab

As the saying goes, "Many ants can kill an elephant," and these aren't ants; they are gigantic spiders larger than humans.

Even with Herag's thick shield and abundant magic, these spiders could eventually wear him down.

Hearing the rustling noises behind him, Herag felt a chill down his spine and pushed his speed to the limit.

The scenery around him blurred into a backdrop; his footsteps remained steady.

With the aid of Shenlan's detection, he ensured that each step was firm, avoiding any accidental slips or falls.

However, these spiders were faster than Herag expected, scuttling across the ground at an alarming pace.

Additionally, the number of spiders was overwhelming, forming a vast sea of spiders spreading like a tidal wave.

The swarm of spiders was nearly forming a ring around Herag, threatening to encircle him soon.

"This must be directed by the Spider Queen!" Through Shenlan, Herag gleaned insights about the scene behind him.

The spiders' tactics, from initially hunting the mammoth, to collectively abandoning it, and then chasing him while forming an encirclement, all indicated someone was directing them.

With so many spiders, only the Spider Queen in their lair could simultaneously issue commands.

"The spider swarm is closing in fast, and in three minutes, the encirclement will be complete!" Shenlan issued a warning.

As he ran, Herag scanned his surroundings: "I must find a place to take cover; blindly running forward spells certain death."

The spiders were too quick; continuing straight would result in him being inevitably surrounded.

Spiders covered the mountains and plains, making Herag's head spin.

"There's a cave there!"

Sweeping his gaze around, Herag quickly spotted a cave to his left.

Although entering might not guarantee safety, not entering surely meant death.

With no other options, Herag dashed towards the cave and squeezed inside.

Inside, he glanced at the surrounding earth, noting its extreme hardness.

Initially, Herag intended to collapse the cave entrance to somewhat impede the spiders.

But feeling the rock-hard cave walls, he had to abandon that plan.

The sound of spiders crawling, like a death toll, prompted Herag to venture deeper into the cave, hoping to find an escape route — even an underground river would suffice.

After entering, the spiders swarmed outside overwhelmingly.

Oddly, every spider squatted at the cave entrance, not daring to enter.

Countless spiders crouched there, their eight eerie green eyes fixed intently inside.

Once inside, Herag found total darkness, so he retrieved a lantern from his space ring, activating it to emit light.

The lantern's light source was a type of mineral, with a small magic array at the base that, when switched on, absorbed a small amount of fire energy particles, causing the mineral to glow.

Upon turning off the switch, the mineral would continue to glow for a moment before gradually dimming.

"Hmm?" Herag also took note of the spiders outside; Shenlan provided real-time updates of the situation.

He pondered: "Why don't they dare pursue inside? Could there be something more terrifying in here, or is this place forbidden to them?"

He recalled the scenes of the mammoth passing through the fields, where the mammoth, spiders, and those mysterious entities in the town's residences seemed to obey certain rules.

For instance, not disturbing the magic potion materials in the fields should be one of the rules set by the wizards overseeing this place.

Lighting the lantern, Herag noticed numerous murals on the cave walls.

The mural lines were simplistic, nearly primitive, as if drawn by a child of three.

Yet these murals caused Herag to frown.

"This certainly dates back quite a bit."

Holding the lantern, he proceeded, discovering the murals spanned long sections, conveying a continuous narrative.

After viewing them all, Herag comprehended the story; though crude and blunt, the murals clearly conveyed their meaning.

Essentially, the indigenous people here constantly battled with various beasts, losing many lives daily.

One day, a messenger of the gods descended, bringing them a stone slab.

From the Stone Slab, the indigenous people acquired extraordinary power, effortlessly defeating the wild beasts.

With the ease of acquiring food, the tribe expanded rapidly, and people began living well-fed and warm.

"The Stone Slab..."

A thought flashed in Herag's mind as he concluded the murals, suspecting the spiders outside feared intrusion not due to a more formidable presence within, but rather a binding rule preventing their entry.

"I should look for other things."

He proceeded onward; the ancient cave might hold hidden treasures.

Yet he considered that, if the spiders were indeed under the wizards' care, he might only scrape the surface, but drinking a little from the pot would suffice.

"What do so many spiders feed on daily? Even with abundant wildlife nearby, it wouldn't suffice. Could there be another energy source?"

The thought struck Herag; given the colossal spider numbers, they would likely decimate any local wildlife anywhere.

Keeping such numbers fed would be impossible for any ecosystem to sustain.

But this was a world rife with extraordinary power. Herag speculated that instead of conventional hunting methods, the spiders likely had alternative energy intake methods.

After traversing a ways inside, Herag noted the cave's expanding width.

On the way, he encountered some statues, which he thoroughly inspected; they were merely ordinary stone carvings, devoid of any special energy.

Within the cave, just one path existed — with no other branching routes.

Following this path deeper, Herag soon reached a vast plaza, approximately the size of a football field.

The plaza, too, featured numerous statues and pyre stone pillars, showing traces of past fires.

It was largely empty, containing little else.

However, one peculiar object in the plaza's center attracted Herag's attention.

Standing two meters tall was a stone slab situated in the plaza's heart.

Approaching, Herag scrutinized the Stone Slab, noting engravings of human figures.

Beyond the engravings, a myriad of complex patterns decorated its surface.

"I mustn't look anymore."

After observing for a moment, Herag felt dizzy.

Quickly realizing: "My spiritual power isn't sufficient for prolonged viewing of this Stone Slab!"

In the wizarding world, numerous items imposed demands on spiritual power.

Most commonly found were certain books, whose profound contents overwhelmed those lacking in spiritual force, resulting in dizziness after perusal.

Should one persist in viewing beyond their limits, mental harm, even death, wasn't improbable.

Chapter 83: Ancient Magic

"Shenlan, identify what this stone slab is."

Herag closed his eyes and sat on the ground to rest for a while, his head still feeling buzzing and somewhat dizzy.

Shenlan quickly provided the result: "The probability of it being an Ancient Magic Stone Slab is 87.6%."

"Ancient Magic Stone Slab..." Herag understood what it was.

In ancient times, there were also wizards.

But back then, there was no paper, so they used other mediums to record magic spells.

Some used human or animal bones to record spells, while others used animal fur.

The stone slab in front of him was a more advanced recording medium, usually reserved for very powerful spells.

"It should be a Level 1 Spell." Herag thought for a moment and reached this conclusion.

Only a Level 1 Spell could make him feel dizzy just by looking at it for a while; even the most profound Level 0 Spell couldn't have such an effect; not the same grade.

"Shenlan, scan and record every detail of the stone slab." Herag instructed.

This stone slab is an extremely precious treasure, the value of the spells recorded on it is high, ancient magic recorded on slabs was never simple.

Ancient society was mostly in the form of tribes and groups, and this ancient magic recorded on slabs was likely the core inheritance of a tribe, their survival guarantee from that era.

Herag had read in some magical history books that the characteristic of such ancient magic was its extreme combat power, emphasizing actual combat strength improvement.

After all, in that primitive era, the primary issue was survival, fighting countless beasts and demons to ensure the tribe's survival.

Thus, this kind of ancient magic was very precious, countless wizards strove to acquire it to enhance their own combat power.

"Scanning and recording completed." Shenlan took a few minutes to record every detail of the stone slab.

Herag glanced at Shenlan's recorded images, still feeling a bit uneasy.

Such an important slab, merely researching from pictures might not be useful, possibly missing some crucial information.

He circled around the stone slab, suddenly having a bold idea.

"I might as well take the entire slab and move it away."

This stone slab was two meters tall and fifty centimeters wide, buried in the soil.

Herag took the herbal digging shovel and squatted down, digging at the soil beneath, finding the slab wasn't buried deeply and could be unearthed.

Moving it while carrying or holding it would be difficult, but Herag had a Space Ring.

He glanced at the Space Ring, though filled with many items, it could still hold this slab.

"The only problem is, is there really an owner here?"

Herag discovered a problem; if this truly belonged to a wizard.

This ancient magic stone slab was so valuable; why would it be left here without any defensive measures?

A Second-Class Wizard Apprentice like him could reach here, stronger wizards would certainly find it easier.

Herag pondered for a while but couldn't conclude, unable to determine if there was indeed an owner here.

He crouched next to the slab and began digging at its base.

Herag dug carefully, afraid to damage the slab entity, as it was a precious treasure.

After carefully digging for half an hour, the soil at the base was mostly excavated.

Herag attempted to move the slab, discovering he could lift it.

He immediately stored the slab in his Space Ring, also smoothly.

With a slab added to the Space Ring, the internal space seemed to be a bit cramped.

Herag looked at the remaining pit and rubbed the back of his head: "If this belonged to some wizard and I were caught, my fate could be quite dismal."

To secure such a large place, the wizard must be someone Herag couldn't contend with.

Now, he could only pray that the wizard would return late; if he could get out by dawn, he would flee.

His trip here yielded a considerable harvest, not only collecting a pile of Magic Potion Materials but also unexpectedly acquiring this Ancient Magic Stone Slab.

Herag calculated that normally, there should be about half an hour left before dawn.

If the Blacksmith Uncle's information was correct, he would have the chance to leave in half an hour.

The problem was, Herag didn't know if the spiders outside would leave, as they were living creatures.

The Blacksmith Uncle's existence could only count as a soul, hiding upon dawn was quite normal.

But those spiders were flesh and blood; Herag was unsure if the spider group would disperse after dawn.

He walked around the square, carefully observing every place.

The other decorations and carvings were very old, but they were just ordinary stone carvings.

Herag examined every corner of the square, no more valuable items were found.

After confirming everything was okay, Herag carefully approached the cave entrance with a lantern.

He maintained a certain distance from the cave entrance and did not continue outward.

Through Shenlan, Herag learned there were still many spiders outside, the sky outside was slightly bright.

He breathed a sigh of relief: "Looks like it's coming daylight, luckily the sunrise here is normal."

As the sky grew brighter, the spiders outside began to fidget uneasily.

Some spiders on the periphery started to head towards their nest, and the spiders blocking the cave entrance began shifting their focus, no longer fixated on the cave but climbing around instead.

Ten minutes later, the spider group began a large-scale retreat.

A huge number of spiders started turning towards the direction of their nest in the pine forest, producing a widespread rustling sound.

This sound, which originally made Herag's scalp tingle, now seemed extraordinarily pleasant, Herag felt a weight finally lifting from his heart.

Herag waited in the cave entrance until it was bright.

After it was bright, he did not rush out but waited for the sunlight to fully shine down before standing at the entrance observing the outside.

Indicators of spiders crawling in the forest remained, with a lot of spider silk hanging on the branches.

Herag quietly passed through the forest, glancing at the distant fields.

To his surprise, there were no fields at all.

"This is the location; I'm not mistaken." Herag was very certain he had not misremembered; the fields growing Magic Potion Materials were indeed at this location.

But now it was dense shrubbery, filled with various short plants and weeds.

Herag cautiously moved closer, observing the base of the shrubbery, finding no signs of cultivated land.

"What's going on here..." he muttered in confusion.

"Shenlan, is this the field for planting Dragon's Beard Grass and other Magic Potion Materials?" Herag doubted his eyes and asked Shenlan.

Chapter 84: Changes

Shenlan quickly replied: "Based on the terrain comparison, there is a 99.99% probability that this is a planting area for Dragon's Beard Grass and other Magic Potion Materials."

Herag looked around: "It seems I wasn't mistaken; it's not my problem."

He looked around, the traces of cultivation were gone, and the path between the fields was also missing.

Herag pondered for a moment, then boldly approached the pine forest.

His pace was slow, and his movements cautious, trying not to make loud noises.

When he reached a point where he could barely make out the pine forest in the distance, he stopped to observe the movements within the forest.

"The spider silk is gone..."

After several examinations, Herag found that the spider silk within the pine forest had completely vanished.

The ground of the original pine forest was covered with spider silk, but now it was nowhere to be seen.

"Strange, I just came out of the cave and could see the spider silk hanging on the branches, but now, how come it's all gone in the pine forest, wait..."

Herag recalled that at dawn, when he emerged from the cave, he could see residual spider silk on the branches at the entrance, and traces of spiders on the ground.

Suddenly, he wondered if the fields were gone and the spider colony in the pine forest had disappeared, would the ancient ruins inside the cave still exist.

With this in mind, Herag decided to go back to the cave to check the situation.

Returning the way he came, he arrived at the cave's vicinity.

The sight before him left Herag dumbfounded; the cave entrance was nowhere to be found.

The place where the cave used to be was now just a mountain, without any entrance.

Refusing to give up, Herag circled around, finding no traces of a cave.

He used a spade to clear away some weeds from the mountain's surface, digging a bit into the soil, but found no signs of excavation.

Turning back, Herag glanced at the surrounding woods, with the spider silk on the trees gone and no traces of spiders on the ground.

So much spider silk hung on the trees that it couldn't possibly all be blown away by the wind in such a short time.

"With my current knowledge, it's hard to explain this phenomenon..."

Herag had never encountered such a situation and hadn't learned related knowledge, not even knowing which subject to study to understand this phenomenon.

"According to the Blacksmith Uncle, you can leave during the day, does that mean that day and night are two different worlds here? Or rather, two different spaces. Otherwise, the changes couldn't be this drastic."

After a moment of thought, Herag speculated that there might be space overlap here.

At night, the eerie town, the fields planted with Magic Potion Materials, the spider colony, and the cave would all emerge, whereas during the day, it was the normal Valley Town.

Suddenly, Herag thought: "Right, let's check out the town."

The residential houses in Valley Town are dangerous; every house harbors something unusual.

If it were nighttime, Herag wouldn't dare go back, not even to take another look.

But now it's daytime, he felt he could risk going back to observe from afar, and if there were no issues, then venture into the town.

After all, returning to Heaven's Edge at the foot of the mountain requires passing through the town; if there were problems with the town, he would just circumvent it from a distance.

Looking back at the mountain wall without the cave, he retraced his steps.

However, he still avoided the location of the pine forest, as the impression the spider colony left on him was too profound.

Even in the daytime, he dared not get too close, taking a wide detour instead.

On the way back, Herag also observed the road beneath his feet.

The giant Mammoth from last night should have left obvious tracks, considering its size.

But as Herag walked, he saw no trace of it.

The ground was overgrown with weeds, with even the roads covered, suggesting it had been years since anyone passed through.

Herag followed this path back to the town, stopping at a spot where he could clearly see the situation in the town.

Surveying the town from afar, he sensed something ominous.

He remembered that when he first arrived in Valley Town during the day, it looked like an ordinary town from the mountain's base, with people moving about.

But now, from his position, Valley Town appeared entirely in ruins.

The residential houses in Valley Town were either completely collapsed, decayed, or wrapped in numerous green plants.

Some houses bore traces of fire, with an adjacent cluster of houses reduced to ruins by the flames.

Approaching a bit closer, Herag found that the road in the town was also overgrown with weeds. From a distance, you couldn't even tell it used to be a road.

According to his memory, he made his way to the Blacksmith Uncle's house.

The main structure of this house still remained relatively intact, and the main door was still tightly closed.

Looking through the window, Herag saw that the interior setup was similar to what he saw the previous night.

He walked to the door and tried to push it, but it didn't budge.

The lock had rusted shut, and when Herag applied a bit more force, he ended up toppling the entire door frame.

Feeling somewhat embarrassed, Herag said: "Sorry, Blacksmith Uncle, I didn't mean to..."

The door frame collapsed to the ground with a bang, and years of accumulated dust flew up, forcing Herag to step back outside to avoid the dust.

Once the dust settled, Herag re-entered the house.

He explored the first floor, discovering various plants already growing in every room.

He even spotted a snake, which slithered away quickly through a hole in the window after being startled by Herag.

"Let's check the second floor," Herag thought for a moment and decided to take a look upstairs.

The stairs leading to the second floor were already somewhat decayed, with many steps having holes.

As Herag stepped on the stairs, they creaked under his weight.

To avoid stepping on unsupported sections, he had Shenlan scan the staircase.

Some sections beneath were hollow and would break if stepped on.

Cautiously, Herag ascended the stairs to the second floor, casting his first glance at the dining table.

Last night, Robert's unfortunate arm had been on this table.

Now, the table was still there, but apart from a lot of clutter, the arm was nowhere in sight.

Herag checked the other two rooms on the second floor; each was dilapidated and overgrown with various plants.

What caught his attention was that in the room where there was a leg hanging last night, Herag still found those photographs.

The photos were blurred beyond recognition, but he could vaguely tell it was a family photo of the Blacksmith Uncle's family of three.

Besides the photos, Herag also discovered a rag doll at the head of the bed.

The rag doll was tattered, but it was obvious that it was the same one held by the little girl last night.

Chapter 85: Return

"This rag doll..."

Herag picked it up and gently dusted off the thick layer of dust covering it.

It was just an ordinary rag doll, not a Resentful Doll, nor was there anything unusual about it.

Herag looked at the doll, recalling everything he had experienced, and felt that something unfortunate might have happened to the Blacksmith Uncle's family and this town, otherwise they wouldn't find peace even in death.

He sighed and placed the rag doll back where it belonged.

Last night Herag hadn't noticed, but in the daylight, from the room's setup and color scheme, he could tell it was a little girl's room.

Herag looked around the room; it was about the same as last night, except many things were already in ruins.

For example, when he pulled the cabinet door, the whole thing fell off, having completely decayed.

Inside the cabinet, there were still some clothes, all belonging to a little girl.

After leaving the room, Herag stepped on the rotting stairs to the attic.

The attic was even messier, with many weeds growing, and there were several holes in the ceiling.

Herag glanced at the windowsill, no heads were there.

The window glass was broken, and half of the doorframe hung outside, looking like it would fall off at any moment.

After wandering around the Blacksmith Uncle's house, Herag left, propping up the fallen doorframe and setting it back into place on his way out.

He actually wanted to find the corpses of the Blacksmith Uncle's family, even if they were just bones, to bury them and let them rest in peace.

From what he observed last night, the Blacksmith Uncle's family might have all turned into Evil Spirits, restless in death.

So he wanted to see if he could find any remains to bury the family.

After all, without the Blacksmith Uncle's help, he could very well have died. Without the information the Blacksmith Uncle provided, he wouldn't have been able to handle various situations later on.

But, unfortunately, he couldn't find any remains.

After leaving, Herag went to check another place.

He arrived at the house next to the Demon Flower garden and found that the garden plot was still there, with many kinds of flowers growing, but no sign of the Demon Flower.

The house next to the garden had now become a heap of ruins, lacking even the basic structure of a house, with just a pile of wood haphazardly stacked.

Herag continued to look around various places in the town, hoping to find traces of Robert, who had gone missing.

He inspected every resident house but found nothing and didn't discover any corpses or bones.

"There are far fewer houses here than last night."

After wandering through these houses, Herag noticed that the number of houses was significantly fewer.

He had noticed it last night, that there were far more houses than when he first entered Valley Town.

"Is it really two different spaces?" Herag increasingly felt his guess was correct.

In fact, verifying it would be simple: just come back here again tonight.

But Herag would never return, not until he had enough strength to handle it. At the very least, he wouldn't step back in until he could easily manage that spider swarm; otherwise, he'd just be courting death.

He continued down the mountain path, and when passing the tavern, he suddenly realized that the footsteps behind him had disappeared.

"When did they disappear..."

Herag found he hadn't noticed, as the footsteps seemed to have vanished long ago.

He thought back, remembering that he hadn't heard the footsteps since entering the cave.

At that time, his focus was on the murals and stone slab, completely missing the moment the footsteps vanished.

By the time he came out of the cave, it was already daylight, and he heard no more footsteps behind him.

Herag held his head as he pondered, "What on earth were those footsteps?"

This puzzled him greatly. Although the footsteps had followed him for quite a while, they hadn't caused any harm, leaving him confused about what they were and their purpose.

While the footsteps had not led to any danger, Herag had a nagging feeling that the matter of the footsteps wasn't over.

He glanced at the tavern, which had collapsed extensively, making it easy to see the tables and bar from outside.

After one last look at the tavern, Herag followed the mountain path down to the foot of the hill.

Looking back, Valley Town remained in decay, and the downhill path was overgrown with weeds at some point. It was estimated that before long, this mountain path would merge completely with the surrounding mountains, showing no sign of ever having been a path.

The One-Line Sky Canyon had also changed somewhat, and Herag clearly remembered how it looked on the way in.

On arrival, the path was fairly clean, and one could tell that it was regularly maintained.

But now, the entire Heaven's Edge had become nearly a primal forest.

Shrubbery as tall as a person filled the canyon, making it impossible to see the end of the path.

Herag drew out his Longsword, cutting through the bushes blocking the way as he walked.

By the time he walked out of Heaven's Edge, he was quite wet, from the dew clinging to the bushes, as well as the accumulated water in wide-leaf bushes that tipped over unexpectedly.

"Hmm?"

As Herag emerged, he immediately saw a familiar figure.

Robert was sleeping against a tree nearby, snoozing soundly.

Above his head, a squirrel perched on a branch, staring wide-eyed at Herag.

Herag walked over, and the squirrel, startled, chattered loudly before scurrying away out of sight.

Robert seemed to be awakened by the squirrel, slowly opening his eyes to see Herag at once.

"Sir..."

Herag looked at him and asked, "Why are you sleeping here?"

Robert, puzzled, scratched his head, "I don't know. I just remember having a Butter Beer with you and that uncle at the tavern, then nothing after."

"Anything else you remember?" Herag continued to ask.

Robert shook his head, "No, the last image in my memory is of the tavern, and then nothing. Just a Butter Beer, did I get drunk from that? Or was something added to it..."

Hearing his account, Herag pondered, "Robert's last memory only exists at the tavern, so the Robert we met later, and the dismembered Robert, might not be the real one."

He suddenly turned to look at Robert, thinking, "Or perhaps, this one in front of me isn't the real one..."

Robert, sensing Herag's stare, felt a chill down his spine, swallowed hard, and said, "Sir, what's wrong?"

"Nothing, let's hit the road, time to head back," Herag glanced at the trees in the distance, where two horses were still tethered, leisurely grazing.

Chapter 86: Doubts

Herag swung onto his horse, and Robert quickly followed, mounting his own horse.

Herag looked back at the One-Line Sky Canyon, where dense bushes still grew.

He turned his head and asked, "Robert, look over there."

Robert followed his gaze toward the One-Line Sky Canyon. Seeing the scene clearly, he exclaimed in surprise, "What's going on here? It wasn't like this when we came."

He looked as if he'd seen a ghost, unable to comprehend how such a transformation could occur overnight.

"Looks like it's not just me," Herag had doubted whether only he saw it this way, but now it seemed the place had indeed undergone significant changes.

"Let's go."

Herag pulled the reins and gently kicked the horse's belly, and the horse began to gallop down the road.

The matters concerning Valley Town remained unclear to him; he only knew that what was hidden behind it was beyond his current capability to explore.

There were many mysteries here yet to be unraveled, waiting until he had enough strength to explore them in the future.

This experience was perilous, fraught with danger, and surviving it took no small amount of luck.

Were it not for randomly encountering Blacksmith Uncle at the tavern and treating him to a mug of butter beer, he might have perished at the hands of the little girl.

But with high risk came high reward, and this time the gains were substantial.

A pile of high-tier magic potion materials; selling them to Larry once back in the Moonlight Forest should earn a considerable number of magic stones.

Most importantly, the Ancient Magic Stone Slab, a secret Herag vowed to keep even from his teacher, Larry.

The stone slab recorded a Level 1 Spell, which he currently had no qualification to even look at.

He needed to at least advance to a Third Class Wizard Apprentice and raise his spiritual power close to the requirements for an Official Wizard promotion to read the contents of the stone slab properly.

Herag wasn't worried; such matters couldn't be rushed and required a step-by-step, gradual enhancement of his strength.

This time also provided an opportunity to learn more; his understanding of ancient magic was still too scant.

The complexity of a Level 1 Spell model was exponentially greater than that of a Level 0 Spell, entirely different in magnitude.

Herag had much to learn; Shenlan stored a wealth of knowledge he hadn't yet had the time to study.

During this trip, he could digest the knowledge stored in Shenlan, most from the Moonlight Forest's library.

Robert rode behind him with a troubled expression.

He couldn't understand what had happened, nor dared he ask Herag.

But seeing Herag eager to leave, he sensed that the matter was grave.

Herag was a Mystic, and for something to frighten a Mystic so, Robert found the thought terrifying.

More importantly, he couldn't remember what he'd experienced.

"Sir, I feel pain in my neck and limbs."

Robert hadn't noticed upon waking, but once on horseback, he felt pain in his neck and limbs, as though he'd been slashed.

He touched his neck but found no wounds.

"Neck pain?" Hearing this, Herag recalled the sight of Robert's severed limbs from the previous night.

He grew puzzled, thinking, "Robert feels neck and limb pain; could he really have been dismembered, yet why is he still alive now..."

Herag silently pondered, not mentioning his observations to Robert.

Speaking of it would solve nothing and might instead increase Robert's fear.

Both rode swiftly, eager to distance themselves from Valley Town.

Herag deliberately observed the surroundings on the return journey; the scene remained unchanged after leaving Valley Town, just as it had been when they arrived.

Two days later, Storm City came into view for Herag.

Upon returning to Storm City, both felt a sigh of relief, the bustling street imparting a sense of safety, as if this was truly the realm of humans.

The hawker calls, disputes, and the distant sound of a child crying and a mother's scolding all seemed melodious.

Herag headed immediately for the Adventurers' Association upon returning to Storm City.

The first-floor hall of the Adventurers' Association building was as crowded as before.

"Where's Milo?" Herag asked as he grabbed one of the association's staff members.

The young man frowned when held, unhappy and about to curse, but seeing Robert obediently following Herag like a child, quickly realized the gravity of the situation.

His expression shifted promptly to a smile as he said, "Sir, the vice chairman is upstairs. Shall I notify him for you?"

"No need, I'll find him myself." Herag released his hand and headed straight for the second floor.

Robert followed closely, glancing at the staff member and offering a small smile without a word.

On reaching the second floor, Herag knocked on the door and entered without waiting for Milo's response.

"Mr. Herag? You're back." Milo was seated on a couch reading, with a steaming cup of coffee before him.

Herag sat across from him and asked, "Are you sure you showed me all the file information on Valley Town?"

The people there had obviously all died, turned into evil spirits.

For years, surely he wasn't the only visitor; entering as an ordinary person was certain death.

Herag couldn't believe no one had gone missing there over the years.

Given the scale of the Adventurers' Association, ignorance of the anomalies at Valley Town seemed implausible, leading Herag to suspect that Milo was holding back.

Milo explained, "I indeed showed Mr. Herag all the files. As I said, it's merely an abandoned town for decades, not worth looking at."

"What?" Herag widened his eyes, feeling as if Milo were playing with him.

In just two days, Milo's story completely changed, with unflinching composure as though stating facts.

Milo hesitated, "Uh... Mr. Herag, did something happen?"

Spotting Robert's perplexed eyes upon him, Milo sensed that something was indeed amiss.

Herag took a deep breath to calm himself: "You didn't say so two days ago; you said it was just an ordinary town back then, no mention of it being deserted for decades."

Milo shook his head firmly: "Impossible, many know Valley Town was raided by bandits years ago, left everyone dead and the town burned."

Chapter 87: Eerie

Milo said these things with clear reasoning, without any pauses, with no signs of lying.

Herag also didn't think he would lie about such a matter but fell silent, pondering something.

"Mr. Milo, you must be mistaken. I've been to that place several times before; there are people in the town. It's just an ordinary small town. But two days ago when we went, the mountain road was normal on the first day, but the next day it was overgrown with weeds, which would take many years to grow like that."

Robert couldn't sit still, and with some agitation, he told Milo what he had seen and heard.

Milo sat upright, knowing that since Great Knight Robert and Mystic Herag had both said so, the problem wasn't simple.

These two wouldn't have come to mess with him for no reason.

After pondering for a moment, Milo said, "Mr. Herag, you remember the Valley Town archive I showed you earlier, right? Everything I said is recorded in the archive, we can check it again."

Herag nodded: "That's exactly what I was thinking."

He thought the same—human memory might be flawed, but the archives are written in black and white, surely they're not wrong.

The three of them went upstairs again, to the place where various archives were stored.

Milo, just like last time, went to the location of the Valley Town archive and retrieved it.

He directly handed it to Herag: "Mr. Herag, take a look."

Herag took it, found no traces of magic power on it, and opened it to read carefully.

He read for about ten minutes, without speaking the whole time.

After reading, he closed the archive, murmuring: "Shenlan, bring out the Valley Town materials recorded last time."

"Valley Town materials have been retrieved." Shenlan presented the previously scanned Valley Town archive in front of Herag.

Herag looked at it again, pondering: "How could this be?"

In the document he held, it clearly stated that Valley Town was attacked by bandits thirty years ago, all the townspeople were massacred, not a single person was left alive.

The bandits stole all the town's wealth and set fire to many houses.

More importantly, the bandits were never caught, and to this day, nobody knows which group did it.

After this incident, Valley Town gradually became deserted, and few people went there.

Because too many people died there, no one wished to settle.

Gradually, Valley Town was forgotten.

Herag could tell from the paper and handwriting that this archive was indeed many years old and didn't seem forged.

"Shenlan, did Milo show any signs of lying throughout?" He wanted to confirm once more.

"Based on observation, the probability that Milo is telling the truth is 99.8%." Shenlan provided the result.

Milo was just a Knight Level, without any traces of energy particles on him, likely not lying.

Herag was a bit puzzled—his view of the archive clearly recorded all population changes, taxes, and other details of Valley Town over thirty years.

The information was very detailed and had been scanned by him at the time.

"Was that place so bizarre? When did I start being affected?"

Herag had never been to Valley Town since arriving at Storm City, so everything he experienced at the Adventurers' Association should not have been influenced by Valley Town.

But after returning, the situation changed.

Herag's face turned grave: "It seems either Milo's or our memories have been altered. What kind of power could affect such a broad range? This must involve rules..."

The text on the archives was undoubtedly altered, but the distance here from Valley Town was over a hundred kilometers.

While thinking, Herag casually handed the archive to Robert, recommending he take a look.

Robert took it and, after looking at the archive for a few moments, widened his eyes in disbelief.

He finished reading, his hands trembling, asking: "Mr. Milo, are you joking with us? Is this archive real?"

"Of course, this place isn't accessible to just anyone, and no one would switch such a valueless archive. It's just a small place, and this matter happened many years ago." Milo explained.

"Robert, go out and ask others about Valley Town. Don't ask people within the Adventurers' Association, go ask on the street." Herag was still uneasy and needed to confirm whether everyone's memories were altered.

In theory, there's still a possibility Milo was lying and replaced the archive. This probability is very small, but he wanted to confirm again.

Robert nodded, understanding Herag's intention, and quickly ran downstairs.

He also wanted to confirm whether it was a problem with his own mind.

About an hour later, Robert ran back out of breath.

He didn't seem tired but rather frightened based on his expression.

"Sir, I went out to inquire, and what they say matches Mr. Milo's account." Robert looked dejected, occasionally turning around as if fearing something was following him.

Herag nodded to indicate he understood. Milo couldn't possibly unite everyone in Storm City to lie to them.

So it seems there's only one possibility: they triggered some power after doing something in Valley Town, leading to everyone's memories about Valley Town, except for the two of them, to change.

Only rules could achieve such feats—something Herag wasn't qualified to access at this stage or in the foreseeable future.

The fact that Herag and Robert weren't affected might be because they were in Valley Town at the time, thus being influenced by the power.

Although Robert didn't know why he was sleeping there, he indeed had memories of drinking at the tavern, indicating he did enter it.

"Sir, what should we do now?" Robert felt that everything around was fake, only he and Herag were real.

Herag patted his shoulder with a smile: "It's okay, it's just that some power exerted its influence. Don't be overly anxious, just eat, drink, and live normally."

"But sir..." Robert was still nervous, facing such an uncanny situation for the first time.

It's one thing for one person to remember wrong, but how could everyone remember wrong, even the archive contents changing? This was beyond Robert's understanding.

"Relax, the problem isn't big. You should survive, otherwise, we wouldn't have made it out alive, so don't be so scared."

Herag could only comfort him a bit, not revealing that there were things more terrifying than death.

The affairs in Valley Town clearly exceeded his ability to manage; he couldn't do anything.

The only thing he could do was run.

Chapter 88: Dispel

Herag had already prepared to run away, to hastily leave this Storm City, to leave the Violet Kingdom.

There were two reasons for the escape. One was having picked up quite a few things from Valley Town, and if there happened to be an owner there, he feared the owner would come to reclaim his belongings.

Herag was definitely no match in a fight, so he had no choice but to run first.

The second reason was that Valley Town was too bizarre a place, affecting even Storm City.

Herag decided to distance himself further, for even the strongest power has its limits.

"Mr. Larry's mission is still incomplete, it's time to set out for the Doris Kingdom." He hadn't forgotten his mission, which was to go west to the Doris Kingdom to find Moonstone Grass.

Although this mission was merely an excuse, it still needed to be completed.

"I hope the matters in Moonlight Forest are concluded soon."

Herag touched the Talisman Stone in his pocket, still without any message.

If the war had ended, Larry would have notified him through the Talisman Stone.

Holding the Talisman Stone outside, he was unable to use the communication function properly or browse the internal Gossip Tavern and missions of Moonlight Forest, only passively receiving some messages, and only someone with Larry's level as an Official Wizard would have permission to send messages.

Having made up his mind, Herag prepared to leave, speaking, "Alright then, I'll be leaving Storm City in the next couple of days."

"Ah?" Robert was a bit panicked, "Sir, where are you going? Can you take me with you?"

Herag decisively refused, "No way, taking you along is too troublesome, you're not a beauty, why would I take you?"

"But... I feel it's a bit safer following you. If you leave, who knows what I'll encounter." Robert was feeling quite insecure.

Herag laughed, "Safe with me? Are you sure? You've only been with me for one trip and already encountered these incidents. What about later?"

Robert thought about it and felt it made sense, he was just unlucky to have led the way and ended up encountering such strange matters.

If things went on, it could only get more dangerous, and he couldn't withstand such plights with his fragile life, he thought, and fell silent.

Herag chuckled and then spoke to Milo, "Vice President Milo, there's something I need your help with."

"Sir, please go ahead." Milo listened attentively.

...

After leaving the Adventurers' Association, Herag returned to the Banks Family's inn.

Sid was the first to learn of this news and hurried back, reeking of alcohol, "Sir, you're back!"

Herag was packing his things in the room, looked back, and said, "Hmm, I'll be leaving in a few days, you can also return."

"Leave? Where are you going, sir?" Sid sobered up slightly.

Herag said, "That's not something you need to know. When you return this time, help me give my thanks to Count Hu En."

"Alright, I'll relay the message to the Count." Sid nodded.

At night, Herag lay on the bed and began to meditate.

The recipe for the Magic Potion to speed up meditation still needed verification. He originally planned to stay in Storm City for a while to finalize this recipe through experimentation.

But due to the Valley Town incident, Storm City was no longer a place to stay, a distance of over a hundred kilometers clearly wasn't enough.

Upon reaching the Doris Kingdom on the West Coast, it should no longer be under the influence of Valley Town.

However, traveling from the Violet Kingdom to the Doris Kingdom is quite troublesome, requiring identity verification and some official documents from the Violet Kingdom, which is quite a hassle.

Having discussed his plans with Milo, Milo assured him he would handle it, preparing a fabricated identity for Herag, with all necessary documents in place.

Being the Vice President of the Adventurers' Association, Milo had an extensive network, and it would be easy to arrange such matters with a connection to the nobility.

Milo said that completing these formalities would take about seven days, so Herag would stay in the city during this period.

On the third day, Robert came.

"Sir, I've been having nightmares these days, dreaming of a monstrous man with an axe chasing me, every night being chopped on the head with an axe. Sir, do you think something's haunting me?" Robert looked worried, with prominent dark circles under his eyes, indicating he hadn't slept well these days.

Herag pondered for a moment, then took out a pocket watch and said, "Seems like something is indeed there, I can't be sure, let me clear it for you. This is the High-level Holy Light Technique, capable of dispelling all curses and nightmares. The usage is limited though, but I'll help you this time, after all, you helped me find my way."

Of course, there was nothing on Robert, at least Herag didn't see anything.

But to let this unfortunate guy have a good sleep, Herag decided to do a bit of psychological therapy.

He had already used the Holy Healing Technique on himself, but nothing happened, it only left his body warm for a while.

"Thank you, sir!" Robert immediately recognized the pocket watch as a treasure, its seamless construction was unlike anything he had seen.

Having been an adventurer for so many years, his eyesight was quite excellent too.

Moreover, since Herag wore this pocket watch intimately, anything a Mystic wore closely wouldn't be simple.

With these thoughts, Robert felt a bit excited, feeling he might be saved.

Herag held the pocket watch, dangling it in front of Robert, and then began to infuse it with magic power to activate the watch.

The pocket watch soon emitted a white glow, and a woman's phantom appeared, casting a glance at Robert, then gently exhaling a breath towards him.

This breath enveloped Robert, making him feel as if he were soaking in a hot spring, his whole body warming up.

At the same time, a plume of black smoke emanated from Robert's body, quickly dissipating after emerging.

"So there really was something..." Herag was a bit surprised, not expecting there really was something on Robert, and that the Holy Healing Technique actually worked.

Witnessing this, Robert felt a chill of fear, "I knew it, something felt off about my body, glad I came to find Sir Herag. If I waited till he left, my life might not have been saved."

Once that black smoke dissipated from his body, he felt much lighter, having previously felt a lot of pressure weighing down on him.

"You should be able to sleep well now," Herag said in a low voice.

"Thank you for saving me, sir!" Robert, overwhelmed with emotion, knelt on the ground and knocked his head against the floor, clearly having been severely tormented these past few days.

"Alright, go on, head back." Herag waved his hand.

Robert nodded, got up, and prepared to leave.

Suddenly, Herag called out to him, "There's something I want to ask you, though you don't have to answer if you don't want to. I'm just a bit curious."

"What's it, sir? Please ask, and I'll answer whatever I know." Robert said earnestly.

"I just want to know, who was it that hired you to assassinate Josh?" Herag asked.

Chapter 89: Dragon Ridge Highland

Herag's question was indeed just out of curiosity.

Robert was surprised and said, "Sir, how did you know it was me following that day?"

He remembered he was far away that day and had found cover to hide, so Herag couldn't possibly see his face.

"Don't worry about it." Herag naturally wouldn't answer his question.

Robert thought to himself, Mystics have many methods, so knowing it was him was quite normal.

He said, "Originally, according to industry rules, I shouldn't say anything. Even if tortured, we have to adhere to professional ethics. But since it's you, sir, asking, I will answer."

"The one who hired me to assassinate Josh was actually Count Hu En."

"Count Hu En?" Herag was somewhat surprised by this answer, but not entirely.

Robert laughed and said, "I also don't know what these nobles are thinking, hiring assassins to kill their own young child. But as an adventurer, as long as they pay me enough, I won't bother with the reasons."

Herag nodded and said, "I understand. You may leave."

"Take care, sir!" Robert solemnly bowed, then quietly closed the door as he left.

"Count Hu En, huh? Looks like he's picked an heir for himself, though he might not need to choose since he can live many more years now. No wonder he was vague about the origin of the Resentful Doll back then; he was afraid of this matter being exposed." Herag shook his head, deciding not to dwell on this noble family's affairs, purely as an observer.

Three days later, Milo visited in person, bringing Herag the necessary documents.

The name of his new identity was Jelant Logan, a fallen small noble from the countryside near Storm City, who became an adventurer due to declining family fortunes.

This time, he was heading to Doris Kingdom, hoping to explore new opportunities.

All the official documents were in order, with detailed identification that no one could tell was fabricated, sparing Herag a lot of trouble.

Although Herag could enter Doris Kingdom through unconventional means, fewer complications are better, so it's best to go through normal channels.

He looked at the identification for a while, then raised his head and asked, "Does this Jelant actually exist? This identification is too real."

Milo laughed and said, "There's always a fool who will sell anything for money."

He just chuckled without saying much more, but Herag understood the underlying meaning of his words.

This Jelant, most likely, was no longer alive.

"No wonder this identification is so genuine, because he was real to begin with." Herag didn't know what to say as he tucked away these documents.

To get things done, Milo would certainly eliminate Jelant. He wouldn't want a situation where Herag was holding the identification, only for someone to burst out and declare themselves as the real Jelant, ruining Herag's plans.

For Milo, pleasing a Mystic was definitely a good thing.

So killing a fallen small noble was just a trifle to him, as long as it helped the Mystic accomplish his tasks.

Herag sighed inwardly, "Is this the fate of the weak? To lack the strength to even know why they died. Your destruction is none of my concern."

...

Three days later, on the Dragon Ridge Highland road, a large caravan was slowly moving forward.

This caravan seemed to have three to four hundred people, including merchants, slaves, and accompanying guards.

There were about a hundred guards, some dressed in uniform armor, likely from a powerful adventure group.

After all, the full set of uniform armor was quite expensive, only affordable to elite members of powerful adventure groups.

There were around fifty fully armored guards, accounting for just a small portion of the guards.

The other guards had varied attire, clearly a group of adventurers constantly roaming the edge of life and death.

Such large caravans often hire these adventurers; while slightly weaker than powerful adventure groups, they are cheaper.

These adventurers have a fervent pursuit of money; a caravan only needs to shout in an adventurer hall for countless adventurers to volunteer and compete to join the caravan.

With many people, the price became negotiable; merchants would never overspend, offering the lowest possible price.

Although adventurers secretly cursed merchants' stinginess, they could only smile and display their strength, flaunting their muscles, and recounting past experiences, striving to show their worth.

Fail to impress, and the job won't come to you; competition among adventurers was fierce, and the pressure intense.

Large caravan jobs were the most comfortable; although the pay wasn't high, it was much better than ordinary task rewards.

Most importantly, large caravans rarely encountered danger; no foolish bandits would rob such a massive caravan, as it would be seeking death.

This greatly improved safety.

With safety and decent pay, adventurers naturally clamored to join.

This caravan carried large quantities of goods ready to be shipped from Violet Kingdom to Doris Kingdom for resale, with profits reaching six figures in gold coins for a successful trip.

The journey was lengthy, taking six months for a round trip, and profits could be uncertain if unexpected events occurred.

Losses were inevitable, the extent mattered.

The total loss was rare, happening only if everyone in the caravan died or fled, which was unfortunate.

Dragon Ridge Highland was the necessary passage from Violet Kingdom to Doris Kingdom, with high altitude and wide roads that perfectly accommodated such large-scale caravans.

Herag lay on a bed in a carriage, beneath it a fixed stove simmering coffee, its aroma wafting through the carriage.

His carriage was nicely decorated, with all aspects being top-tier.

The exterior, however, looked ordinary, showing no signs of luxury inside.

Milo prepared this specially for him, the humble exterior prioritizing discretion when traveling.

Herag's carriage was situated in the middle of the caravan, allowing him exclusive use.

The rest of the caravan had heard rumors about his identity, knowing he was a small noble whose family wasn't doing well, thus seeking opportunities in Doris Kingdom to restore his family's glory.

Herag spent the past few days inside the carriage, rarely appearing outside.

According to reports, the caravan needed about a month to cross Dragon Ridge Highland; the journey ahead was long.

Beyond Dragon Ridge Highland, it would take two more months to reach Doris Kingdom's border, marking a lengthy voyage.

The scenery on Dragon Ridge Highland was monotonous, with few tall trees and sparse vegetation.

The caravan's established route had consistent water sources for replenishment. Several carriages were stocked with supplies to survive the highland, enabling resupply once off the highland before continuing the journey.

Chapter 90: Ambushed

Herag's driver was temporarily hired from the caravan. He was a slave named Ed, a man around thirty years old, relatively thin but experienced in driving.

Herag was quite satisfied with his driving skills; the journey was smooth.

Ed was a rather silent person, always driving the carriage in silence. If Herag didn't call him, he wouldn't make a sound.

There was a brand mark on his face, a symbol of slavery.

Herag paid the caravan ten silver coins to rent Ed to drive for him for three months.

Of course, not a single copper coin of these ten silver coins would end up in Ed's pocket.

Slaves like them were merely objects, and objects wouldn't have possessions of their own.

As night gradually fell, the caravan also stopped moving forward.

One by one, the carriages began adjusting their positions, forming a defensive formation, including Herag's carriage.

The people of the caravan started to light seven or eight bonfires, and set up pots on them to cook, providing meals for everyone.

The entire caravan ate dry food at noon, and only had hot meals at night.

Herag also ate the food provided by the caravan. He had water and food stored in his carriage and space ring.

These were for emergencies; if anything happened to the caravan, this food and water could support him for a while.

Half an hour later, Herag received his dinner: potato stew with smoked meat, and half a smoked fish.

This meal was considered good, as meals in the caravan were divided into different grades.

Herag, who paid for his food, ate the best, while the adventurers ate slightly worse.

Slaves like Ed ate even worse; they were fed leftovers mixed together, and it was from several days ago, basically slop.

There were quite a few nobles in the caravan who despised the caravan's food and often left a lot uneaten.

The caravan was very frugal, not wasting any food, collecting these leftovers to feed the slaves.

After eating, Herag returned to his carriage to continue studying the knowledge stored in Shenlan.

Lately, he's been reading some magic history. There are too few direct records of ancient magic, so he could only learn more from some historical accounts.

After Shenlan scanned and recorded the ancient magic stone slab, it could start analyzing the content.

However, analysis required the consumption of his own magic power. Now, during a long journey, he had to maintain his state at all times, so he couldn't use too much magic power.

The analysis of the stone slab content and the experiment with magic potion formulas both needed to wait until he reached the Doris Kingdom to begin.

Dragon Ridge Highland's climate was harsh, with the sun itching the skin during the day and temperatures dropping sharply at night.

Herag was using a quilt sent by Lillian, which suited this weather well.

In the deep night, Herag closed his eyes to meditate. The seventh star in his mind was solidifying, and he estimated it would take about two more months to complete the meditation.

As the night deepened, it became especially quiet around.

There were no long-term residents on Dragon Ridge Highland, and few animals as well, making the nights tranquil.

The caravan's location was bright, with several bonfires burning throughout the night. The watchmen sat by the fires to keep warm and fend off the night's chill.

Early the next morning, as the sky just brightened, the caravan prepared to set out, and the surroundings became bustling.

They had to seize the daylight to quickly leave Dragon Ridge Highland.

It was now September, and Dragon Ridge Highland could enter snowy winter at any moment.

Usually, snow starts in October, but if the weather is unusual, heavy snow could block the way in September, which would be dangerous.

Fortunately, there were no such signs at present.

The caravan had been traveling safely in Dragon Ridge Highland for twenty days smoothly, with about five days left to exit this region.

The caravan advanced slowly in the thick white mist.

Due to the clear road traces, and only one road in Dragon Ridge Highland, there was no worry about getting lost in the white mist; they just needed to follow the road.

Herag lay in the carriage, initially resting his eyes, but suddenly opened them.

There was nothing unusual in Shenlan's environmental detection, but Herag heard some uncommon sounds.

Having traveled on Dragon Ridge Highland for so many days, Herag was familiar with the surrounding sounds.

But at this moment, he heard the distant sound of hooves, and quite a lot of them.

The caravan remained peaceful, proceeding as usual, obviously unaware of this unusual noise.

After a while, as the hoofbeats got closer, a voice suddenly came from the front: "Enemy attack!"

It was Kaleem's voice, the leader of the Putis Adventurer Group, known for their full-body armor.

He commanded all the caravan's guards, and they all had to obey his orders.

Of course, this was only theoretical; adventurers were notorious for not following orders and liked to act on their own thoughts.

Kaleem had strength close to a Great Knight, ready to take that crucial step at any moment.

It was said that he came from a noble family, but preferred adventures over enjoying his family's estate.

He treated his adventurer group well, with benefits far exceeding ordinary adventurers, evident from their full-body armor.

Wealthy and powerful, Kaleem's reputation grew, often taking on big jobs like this caravan escort.

Kaleem was the first among the caravan's guards to hear the distant hoofbeats.

He decisively judged it as an enemy attack and ordered the convoy to establish defensive formations.

Kaleem divided the other adventurers into several teams, each led by a member of his adventurer group.

After his warning, adventurer group members immediately commanded their adventurer subordinates to arrange the carriages, defending against the approaching hoofbeats.

The defensive formation was quickly set up, with guards gathered beside the carriages, weapons in hand, eyes fixed ahead.

The elderly, sick, and noble non-combatants were placed at the back to avoid the battle.

Herag and Ed were in the rear, lying on a slope. He had a smoked fish in his mouth, chewing slowly.

He wasn't planning to join the fight, having paid for his protection, even though it was Milo's money.

Still, as a paying customer, why should he have to go to the battlefield?

Minutes later, though the white mist still hindered visibility, everyone heard the dense sound of hooves.

The hoofbeats sounded like war drums striking fear into everyone's hearts, darkening their expressions.

The large scale of the hoofbeats indicated a probable military force.

Only a military could have so many horses; in this place, no bandit could possess such resources.