

System 1111

Chapter 1111: Dark Magic Corrosion _4

But just from his expression and the outline of his body.

With one glance you could tell he wasn't an ordinary Free People.

However.

This spy had clearly already gone through Commander Luo Si's brutal torture.

There were scarlet welts all over his body from the whipping.

At the corner of his mouth, a smear of fresh blood had yet to dry.

That sturdy body was trembling uncontrollably.

Lynn stared straight at the spy and asked.

"Tell me, what was Jon Zuck's purpose in sending you to Morgan Town?"

The spy lifted his head and glanced at Lynn on the throne, sudden shock filling his eyes.

The Lord Lynn who was being mythicized in Kakasong City was actually this young!

The lord's throne was a seat only a Lord was qualified to sit in!

Seeing that the spy said nothing.

Lynn didn't care in the slightest and spoke to Rose.

"Commander Luo Si, it seems your interrogation wasn't harsh enough..."

Rose's face was full of tension and apology as he spoke.

"Forgive me, Master, it was my negligence."

"I'll take him down right now and continue the interrogation!"

Listening to the exchange between the young Lord on the throne and the burly man, the spy's face was filled with terror.

The spy Liven Zeke hurriedly spoke.

"Lord, there's no... no need for interrogation, I'll talk, I'll talk..."

"Viscount Jon Zak sent me to the vicinity of Morgan Town to scout the roads."

"To avoid running into unknown ambushes during the march later..."

Lynn continued to ask, "Besides that."

Feeling the force in Lynn's tone.

Liven's eyes widened, and he nervously repeated Lynn's words.

"Besides that... besides that..."

"Lord, the Task Knight Commander Ack gave me is just that."

"Other than that, there really is no other purpose!"

Lynn let out a thoughtful sound, "Oh?"

His gaze shifted and he looked again at Rose standing there.

Without needing Lynn to ask, Rose instantly understood and answered.

"Master, I'll take him back for further interrogation!"

Liven was horrified and hurriedly said.

"Lord, there's more! There's more..."

Lynn and Rose exchanged a look, as if a subtle tacit understanding had formed between them.

Liven no longer hesitated and continued.

"Besides scouting the roads, if there was a chance to slip into Morgan Town, I was to find out exactly how many armored soldiers Morgan Town has."

"Then return to Kakasong City and report to Knight Commander Ack..."

Lynn responded and directly asked.

"Right now, how many supporting Manor Lords have gathered in Kakasong City?"

Liven's brows twitched, a bit of surprise in his eyes.

How did this Lord Lynn in front of him know that Viscount Jon Zak was summoning supporting Manor Lords?

Very soon.

Liven's heart settled.

He had wiped out all the Manor Lords of Morgan Town Manor, and also destroyed Connelly and Louis Manor of Alba Town.

He had even wiped out Benitez Manor.

How could this Lord Lynn in front of him not have his own intelligence channels?

Perhaps the intelligence Lord Lynn possessed was far more detailed than what a common soldier like him knew.

Liven hesitated for two seconds, then still spoke.

"Lord, so far not a single supporting Manor Lord has gathered in Kakasong City!"

Lynn answered and continued asking.

"I need to know the detailed number of soldiers Viscount Jon Zak commands."

"For example, armored cavalry, infantry, or Archers..."

Liven once again grew hesitant.

If he told this Lord Lynn on the throne everything about Viscount Jon Zak.

It would be no different from betraying Viscount Jon Zak!

The next second.

A trace of bitterness rose in Liven's heart.

He had already been captured by Lord Lynn; did he have any other choice?

Keep his mouth shut?

Then what awaited him would surely be brutal torture.

Or even direct Beheading as a public warning!

A spy infiltrating to gather intelligence for an enemy force.

Once captured, naturally there would be no good end!

Liven seemed to have made up his mind; hope appeared in his eyes as he looked at Lynn.

"Lord, I can tell you everything I know."

"Though I know very well I have no right to bargain, I still wish for a chance to live..."

"As long as I can stay alive, I'm willing to do anything!"

As he spoke.

Liven bent his waist into a ninety-degree bow.

Lynn stared straight at Liven and said.

"The farmland of Morgan Town happens to need lots of labor to harvest and work."

Liven's face lit up with joy, and he hurriedly replied.

"Thank you, Lord."

Without any more hesitation, Liven began to recount.

"Lord, Viscount Jon Zak has a total of twelve hundred armored soldiers!"

"Among them, five hundred armored cavalry and five hundred armored infantry."

"Besides the armored soldiers, there are another thousand Unarmored or Cloth Armor and Leather Armor soldiers."

"Other than Ordinary infantry and shieldmen, there are also two hundred Archers!"

"All of the soldiers are under the command of Knight Commander Ack!"

Speaking of this.

Liven concluded, "Lord, that is the detailed number of soldiers Viscount Jon Zak commands..."

Compared to the intelligence Gasper had gathered and what Samuel had told him.

Clearly.

As a soldier under Viscount Jon Zak, Liven's knowledge was much more detailed.

Lynn nodded, "Very good!"

"Then from today on, you'll join the Farmer ranks of Morgan Town and take part in harvesting and labor."

Liven bent down again to salute, "Thank you, Lord, for sparing my life."

Lynn glanced at Rose, and Rose, understanding, waved to the soldiers escorting Liven.

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The two soldiers immediately led Liven away.

Turning his gaze, Lynn looked at Rose and spoke.

"It's getting late, you should retire as well."

"Continue to strengthen the patrols on the main road to Morgan Town, and if there's any unusual situation, have the spies report back immediately."

Rose quickly replied, "Yes, Master!"

Bending to salute, Rose took a few steps back, turned around, and exited the reception hall.

The spacious reception hall was left with only Lynn and Red, along with the four soldiers standing guard at the entrance of the hall.

Once again, thoughts swirled in Lynn's mind.

From the very beginning, instructing Connelly Manor to dispatch spies to infiltrate Morgan Town for intelligence gathering.

To now, Jon Zuck himself dispatching scouts to Morgan Town...

It seemed like merely ordinary deployment actions.

But it was clear that Jon Zuck was becoming somewhat impatient.

Lynn could sense it...

The time when Jon Zuck would lead those supporting the Manor Lord to attack Morgan Town was not far off!

Even if Wesley and Earl, whom he dispatched, have yet to return.

But with military strength of 1,700 armored cavalry and Wesley's command.

As long as they don't encounter an ambush or fall into an enemy encirclement.

Even if they couldn't annihilate the two supporting Manor Lords in Boxi Town, they could still retreat unharmed!

If they were ambushed or encircled, paying such a painful price.

Even if Wesley and Earl returned with a small number of remaining armored cavalry.

Lynn would behead both of them in public, to serve as a warning to others!

It wasn't that Lynn couldn't accept failure.

War inherently carries the possibility of victory and defeat.

However.

Lynn could not accept a defeat with significant soldier casualties, especially when their military strength was already superior to the opponent!

That would be squandering the lives of the soldiers!

Suppressing the thoughts in his mind.

Lynn willed it, opening the [Holographic Map], switching his vision.

The view of the small town and territory under the night sky unfolded before Lynn's eyes.

Just like usual.

After a day of labor, the townsmen went to the canteen, enjoyed dinner, and entered their resting time.

On the spacious Lord's Square, groups of figures sat around bonfires.

Chatting, discussing freely.

The simple faces were full of ease and peace.

So much so that.

Children, just a few years old, ran and played joyfully on the Lord's Square.

Not having to worry about hunger the next day.

And not needing to fear bandits or soldiers threatening their lives.

Even if hard labor was a daily necessity.

This was the life they dreamed of!

For free people and peasants at the lowest tier of society, their demands were just this simple!

Lynn's perspective constantly switched throughout the territory.

Handicraft workshops, the three major mines, ranch, city walls...

In Lynn's eyes, the balcony on the second floor of the castle just happened to appear.

Kuisi stood there with Janet and several maids.

The maids who didn't need to serve him were enjoying a rare leisure.

After scanning the entire territory to confirm no anomalies, Lynn willed it, directly closing the [Holographic Map].

Currently, his territory only had a few hundred guards.

To maintain order within the territory and protect the city walls.

If it were a small-scale group of bandits, Lynn had nothing to worry about.

The ten-meter-high walls, the city wall machinery, the defending soldiers...

For bandits, the city walls of Weng City were an unsurmountable barrier!

Plus the real-time surveillance by the [Holographic Map]...

Because of this.

Lynn dared to lead Rose and a group of armored soldiers, leaving the territory and heading to the Manor Castle in Morgan Town.

His gaze moved past the Manor Castle's gate, glancing at the increasingly dark sky.

The night grew deeper and darker.

Lynn rose from the throne, and with measured steps, proceeded towards the bedroom deep within the Manor Castle.

Without Janet to serve him, Lynn quickly fell asleep.

...

On the other side beneath the night.

Bordeaux City.

Inside the Marquis's Castle.

Sitting at the walnut desk, Mark Ducas's eyes scanned over the words and symbols on the letter in his hands.

Mark Ducas's handsome face was full of cold severity.

The next moment.

Mark Ducas crumpled the letter in his hand into a ball and threw it forcefully away.

"Women! Only know how to toy with women!"

"The Marquis Polk's army has besieged twice, yet not once did he show up?"

"And he's indulgent in the arms of two prostitutes with Sea Siren's bloodline?"

"Good! Very good!"

"One day, Lawrence will die under a woman's belly."

Standing opposite Mark, Doyle Gack, the Defense Commander, kept his head down, not daring to add a word.

Huff~ huff~ huff~

Perhaps too angry, Mark exhaled one heavy breath after another.

Upon seeing Doyle standing opposite, Mark began to calm his agitated mood.

A moment later.

With even breathing, Mark stared directly at Doyle and said in a deep voice.

"Defense Commander Doyle, you're aware of the contents of Knight Commander Godfrey's request for support letter as well."

"I want to hear your opinion..."

Upon hearing Mark call his name, Doyle nodded slightly and began to speak.

"Marquis, the situation at Spirit Reef Port is very dangerous right now!"

Mark contemplated for a moment, "Continue."

Without hesitation, Doyle continued speaking.

"Though Spirit Reef Port is on the edge of the Marquisate of Polkado, at some distance from the Marquis's Castle."

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"However, compared to your marquisate, my Lord Marquis, they naturally have a distinct advantage."

"Even if you decide to provide support, you will be limited by the long distance and the slow marching speed of the infantry."

"It will take at least a month to march from Bordeaux City to Spirit Reef Port!"

"By the time you send the second batch of Sword and Shield Corps soldiers... Spirit Reef Port might have already fallen!"

"The second batch of Sword and Shield Corps soldiers might even fall into the enemy's encirclement..."

Mark frowned tightly and nodded subconsciously.

He knew that what Doyle was saying made some sense.

Mark asked, "Do you mean, Doyle the Garrison Commander, that I should abandon Spirit Reef Port? Abandon the Sword and Shield Corps soldiers in Spirit Reef Port?"

"They are all family soldiers of the Ducas Clan!"

He felt Mark's tone become a bit heavier.

Doyle bowed slightly as a salute, explaining without arrogance.

"My Lord Marquis, you misunderstand."

"Naturally, Doyle would not dare to ask My Lord Marquis to abandon Spirit Reef Port and the remaining Sword and Shield Corps soldiers."

"Once support is abandoned, everything done before would be for nothing!"

"Losing thirty thousand Sword and Shield Corps soldiers and failing to gain corresponding benefits..."

"The military strength of the Ducas Clan would plummet!"

"Let alone fighting for more interests in the future royal power war."

"It is even highly likely... that the Ducas Clan would withdraw from the historical stage of the Karedi Empire!"

Mark's face was stern, looking directly at Doyle, and continued to ask.

"Then what should Doyle the Garrison Commander do?"

Doyle seemed as if he had long considered this, explaining naturally.

"In Doyle's view, what My Lord Marquis should do now is to appeal to His Highness Mitchell for sympathy!"

"My Lord Marquis, you dispatched those thirty thousand Sword and Shield Corps soldiers of the Ducas Clan to Spirit Reef Port under the directive of His Highness Mitchell!"

"Attacking Spirit Reef Port, occupying it, and now holding off the two sieges from Marquis Polk."

"This is the best time to appeal for sympathy to His Highness Mitchell!"

Mark's eyebrows instantly lifted, addressing Doyle.

"Continue."

Doyle continued, "The Spirit Reef Port, occupied by the Sword and Shield Corps, is very important to the future of the Ducas Clan!"

"It is the nearest dock to Triumph City, apart from Iron Anchor Port."

"It is also the most convenient dock for inland transportation next to Iron Anchor Port!"

"A large number of traveling merchants will land and depart from here."

"A large number of traveling merchants means a large amount of tax revenue can be collected..."

"The Ducas Clan must use this dock and its greater interests to compensate for the losses in this royal power war..."

Mark nodded.

Doyle's words did not stop.

"Spirit Reef Port is important to the Ducas Clan."

"Similarly, it is also very important to His Highness Mitchell!"

"As mentioned earlier, Spirit Reef Port is the nearest dock to Triumph City besides Iron Anchor Port."

"Whether for merchant goods landing and departure or transporting soldiers for landing!"

"If Spirit Reef Port falls back into the hands of Marquis Polk, into His Highness Caesar's camp..."

"Definitely, a large number of soldiers will land from Spirit Reef Port, endlessly attacking Triumph City currently held by His Highness Mitchell!"

"Doyle even feels that at this moment, His Highness Mitchell should be more anxious than you..."

"Because who holds this strategic point of Spirit Reef Port relates to whether His Highness Mitchell becomes Emperor of the Kaladi Empire!"

Hearing this, Mark looked at Doyle approvingly and said.

"Indeed, Doyle the Garrison Commander, your words are greatly beneficial to me!"

Doyle respectfully bowed and said.

"My Lord Marquis, you over-praise me. Doyle has always been Doyle of the Ducas Clan."

"Whether defending Bordeaux City for the Ducas Clan or providing strategies to relieve My Lord Marquis's worries..."

"These are Doyle's responsibilities within his duty."

Mark nodded with satisfaction.

Doyle shifted his tone and continued.

"However, there's one more thing I need to clarify to My Lord Marquis."

Mark replied sternly, "Go ahead without reservation!"

Doyle was straightforward, "In Doyle's view, My Lord Marquis, you need to reappoint Knight Commander Godfrey as the top commander of Spirit Reef Port."

Mark frowned and asked, "If I remember correctly, you and Godfrey have always been at odds, right?"

"Yet you recommend him as commander?"

Doyle's face remained calm and responded, "My Lord Marquis, in light of the Ducas Clan's interests, my conflict with him is insignificant."

"In Doyle's view, Godfrey's conduct poses a significant problem."

"However, his command and operational abilities in large-scale battles are impeccable."

Mark replied, "I understand, I will seriously consider Doyle's suggestion."

"It's getting late; retire and rest."

Doyle bowed once more, just about to leave when his steps suddenly paused.

Mark looked at Doyle, puzzled, and asked.

"Doyle the Garrison Commander, is there anything else?"

Doyle respectfully said, "My Lord Marquis, Master Donovan's condition is worsening..."

"I hope My Lord Marquis is prepared mentally."

Mark's expression froze, and just as he was about to pick up a feather pen to write, his right hand trembled suddenly.

A few seconds later.

Mark said in a low voice, "Understood, you may leave."

Doyle said nothing more and withdrew.

Following the sound of the door opening and then closing.

The entire study fell into complete silence.

Leaving only Mark, seated in the wooden chair.

On the desk, the animal oil candles burned swiftly, flickering and casting a yellow-orange glow.

Perhaps because the candle had been burning for too long.

The candle was about to be spent...

Mark stared straight at the candle stand.

Soft and indifferent words emanated from his mouth.

"Better off dead! Should've died long ago!"

"Dying sooner means no longer enduring the pain of dark magic's erosion for so many years..."

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He shifted his gaze away from the candle stand.

Mark Ducas picked up the feather pen from the desk, and with the sharp tip stained in black ink, he began to write on the paper.

As he wrote, cold words continued to flow from his mouth.

"The sooner you die, the sooner I can inherit the Marquis Duca title."

"The sooner you die, the sooner I can plan, and the Ducas Clan won't fall to such a state..."

One symbol after another appeared on the paper as Mark's right hand moved.

Ten minutes later.

Mark moved, taking out a red wax seal from the walnut desk in front of him.

He held it near the candle burning on the stand, slowly lighting it.

The red wax seal illuminated, casting an eerie red glow over Mark's face.

Mark inverted the wax seal, and the burning wax quickly melted.

A few drops of scarlet wax dripped down, precisely landing on the edge of the envelope containing the letter.

He waited as the wax cooled, beginning to harden.

Mark removed the black badge ring from his right ring finger and pressed the pattern on the ring into the soon-to-harden wax.

As Mark lifted the black badge ring, an emblem of a greatsword and shield was left on the cooled and hardened wax seal.

Having sealed the two finished letters, Mark called out in a deep voice to those outside the study.

"Come in!"

As soon as Mark's voice fell, after two knocks, the study's double wooden doors were pushed open.

A soldier dressed in standard plate armor strode in front of the walnut desk.

Bowing, he respectfully responded.

"Marquis, sir."

Mark glanced at this squad leader and continued.

"I need you to immediately arrange cavalry and a fast horse to deliver this letter to the Royal City of Triumph tonight, hand it personally to His Highness Michelle."

"Tell His Highness Mitchell, Spirit Reef Port is in danger!"

The squad leader promptly replied, "Yes, Marquis, sir!"

Mark paused and continued.

"This one, send overnight to Spirit Reef Port, hand it personally to Knight Commander Godfrey!"

"Tell him that from the moment he receives this letter, he is the highest commander of Spirit Reef Port."

"Everyone must follow his orders, including Lawrence Ducas!"

The squad leader's expression slightly tensed as he replied again.

"Yes, Marquis, sir."

Mark nodded and said, "Go arrange it immediately."

The squad leader took the two letters from Mark's hand, dared not delay, and retreated from the room.

After finishing all this, Mark slightly reclined, leaning against the back of the wooden desk.

He lifted his head, gazing at the dome carved with various patterns above the study, a hint of distraction in his eyes.

He seemed to be contemplating something.

The study once again fell into silence.

Until a few minutes later.

Mark, leaning on the wooden chair, suddenly got up and walked towards the study door.

As he pushed the door open, he walked along the dim corridor.

Mark glanced back at the soldiers ready to follow him and said.

"I need some peace!"

The four soldiers, looking tense, immediately stopped in their tracks, not daring to follow further.

Withdrawing his gaze, Mark continued to stride forward.

Amidst the soldiers' exchanged glances, he disappeared at the corridor's corner.

Perhaps because it was already late at night.

The vast Marquis's Castle, except for the occasional passing patrol troops, showed no other presence.

When the patrol soldiers saw their marquis, they stopped, bowed, and greeted him out of respect.

Mark merely cast them a casual glance before withdrawing his gaze.

Walking through the dim and silent corridors, turning at the deserted corner...

Mark's steps gradually came to a halt, standing still.

Before him, several soldiers stood guard at the room with double wooden doors.

Mark hadn't expected that, after wandering around the Marquis's Castle, he would end up at Donovan's room.

After hesitating for a few seconds, Mark stepped forward and walked ahead.

The soldiers guarding the room's entrance immediately turned their heads alertly upon hearing footsteps.

Upon recognizing Mark Ducas's face and silhouette in the dark.

The soldiers were startled, quickly bowed their heads, and collectively called out.

"Marquis, sir."

Reaching the door, Mark swept his gaze over the soldiers.

Before he could speak, two soldiers moved to push open Donovan's double wooden doors.

Mark's mouth slightly opened, intending to stop them.

In the end, he chose to let it happen.

As the doors were pushed open by the two soldiers.

A scent mixed with faint incense and herbs wafted out, directly entering Mark's nose.

Mark could clearly smell the strong odor of decaying flesh within that scent...

With the opening soldiers' puzzled glances, as Mark hesitated in thought.

A deep and powerful voice came from the bedroom.

"Since you're here, why won't you come in?"

Upon hearing this strange yet familiar voice, Mark's brows instantly furrowed tightly.

With a solemn expression, he strode into the open bedroom door.

As Mark stepped into the bedroom, the scents of incense and herbs mingled with decaying flesh became heavier and more intense.

Treading on the carpeted floor, entering the bedroom.

Despite some display cabinets and furniture obscuring the view, Mark's eyes were fixed straight in one direction.

Chapter 1115: Branding the Ducas Clan

When Mark stood in the middle of the bedroom.

By the dim light of the oil lamp on the wall of the bedroom.

Mark clearly saw a figure leaning against the big bed.

It was the previous Marquis Duca, Mark's biological father, Donovan Ducas!

In Mark's memory, the originally tall and burly Donovan was now all thin and bony.

On his arms, the twisted, coiled veins could be clearly seen beneath the yellow-black skin.

On the wrinkled neck, Donovan's sharp, high Adam's apple bulged and rolled abruptly as he swallowed.

The once lustrous black hair that captivated countless young women had now become sparse.

Strangely.

The obviously terminally ill Donovan had a reddish flush on his hollow-cheeked face...

At a glance, Mark knew that Donovan did not have much time left.

Donovan sat leaning on the big bed, his eyes intently staring at Mark, speaking once more in a strong voice.

"What? Do you not recognize your own father?"

"Or is it because of a guilty conscience that you dare not face me?"

Mark snorted coldly, striding over to Donovan's sickbed.

His body stood firmly, looking down at Donovan from above.

"Guilty?"

"The title of Marquis Duca rightfully belongs to me, the eldest son of the Ducas Clan!"

At this point.

A voice almost like a beast's roar sounded from Mark's mouth.

"Why would I feel guilty?"

"Why should I fear you?"

Donovan said nothing.

His eyes, filled with disdain, still fixated on Mark.

Mark was not frightened at all, his gaze clashing coldly with Donovan's.

A few seconds later.

A bizarre smile appeared on Donovan's sickly face.

"Very good! Very good!"

"As the Marquis Duca, as the head of the Ducas Clan, one must have such courage and resolve!"

"Even if a mistake is made, it must be made resolutely!"

"Even if in the end, the Ducas Clan's blood stains the battlefield and there's no return..."

"It should burn like the rising sun, searing the mark of the Ducas Clan across the entire Karedi Empire!"

Perhaps because his speech just now was too agitated.

Or because Donovan's words stimulated him.

Mark's breathing was rapid, his chest rising and falling quickly.

Donovan still stared directly at Mark, continuing to speak.

"At such a moment, I thought I would have much to say to you and Lawrence."

"To recount the deeds of the Ducas ancestors, to narrate the former glory of the Ducas Clan..."

"Or, to share the dullness of being bedridden for over ten years..."

"Or perhaps, to inform you of the long-thought-out future plans for the Ducas Clan..."

Donovan's tone shifted.

"But now, I find it unnecessary."

"You are more stubborn than I imagined!"

"Once you've set a goal, you'll stop at nothing to achieve it."

"Whether it's my illegitimate children who might block your way, or the self-important Lawrence."

"Or even... me!"

Mark's brow furrowed instantly.

He understood.

Donovan already knew of all his previous actions!

Secretly killing Donovan's illegitimate children, stripping Lawrence of his power.

And instructing the territory doctor to mix a slow-acting poison into Donovan's medicinal treatments, accelerating his death!

Yet Donovan did not point it out!

Donovan naturally saw Mark's change in expression and further comforted him.

"Even so, you need not feel any guilt!"

"As the Marquis Duca and the head of the Ducas Clan, the sole mission is to make the family stronger!"

"Conversely, if you became timid and stagnant because of these relationships, these individuals..."

"The position of Marquis Duca would have already changed hands!"

"I am old and terminally ill..."

"But as long as I wish, I still have the power to depose the Marquis Duca, and I still have the strength to do so!"

Listening to Donovan's words filled with warning.

Mark's body trembled suddenly, images flashing instantly through his mind.

In the study, Doyle Gack, the Defense Commander of Bordeaux City, who analyzes and strategizes for him.

Godfrey Harvey, the Knight Commander dispatched to Marquisate of Polk, to attack Spirit Reef Port.

And a host of commanders in the Sword and Shield Corps...

They had all once fought under Donovan's leadership, bloodied and battled.

It can be said.

They were all cultivated and promoted by Donovan!

Why did these old generals of the Ducas Clan, in the face of his command, not exhibit any indifference or difficulties?

Instead, they were completely obedient, willing to offer strategies and tirelessly analyze the current situation for him.

Willing to personally lead the soldiers in exterritorial battles!

Only at this moment did Mark finally understand.

It was because of Donovan Ducas in the big bed!

Even though Donovan Ducas had been bedridden for over ten years, his past prestige and grace made these commanders dare not harbor any disloyalties.

Even though he had been the Marquis Duca for more than half a year.

He was still greatly cared for by Donovan, which allowed him such smooth control over the entire Ducas Clan, the entire Marquisate!

Yet he had instructed the territory doctor to clandestinely poison Donovan, his own biological father...

Mark's emotions became complex, his body began to uncontrollably tremble.

As if Donovan instantly sensed Mark's anomaly.

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The deep and weary eyes moved away from Mark, looking at his broken body.

A voice filled with sighs sounded from Donovan's mouth.

"Once, as a father, I thought that as long as I could protect the Ducas Clan and the Marquisate of Dukas, it would be enough."

"But now as a father I understand, it is because I am old, afraid to witness life passing, turning into corpses..."

"For as long as one faces war, casualties are inevitable!"

"They are either someone's children, a wife's husband, or a child's father..."

"Perhaps because at this near end, as a father, I instead feel that your thinking is correct."

"Only by possessing a powerful military force can the Ducas Clan make the enemy fearful and prevent them from having any unwarranted thoughts against us."

"Even if the journey to become stronger requires a greater price, it is worth it."

Donovan's gaze shifted back to Mark beside the large bed, speaking solemnly.

"So... Marquis Mark Duca, act boldly according to the will in your mind!"

"Whether it is a Duke or the Emperor of the Empire..."

"You must know, the once Carolingian Clan was merely rebels of the Elfini Empire!"

"The Carolingian Clan forcibly split the current Karedi Empire from the Elfini Empire and established its own Empire!"

"If the Carolingian Clan could become the Emperor of the Empire, why couldn't the Ducas Clan?"

Listening to Donovan's resolute words, Mark's body trembled even more.

Looking at Donovan leaning on the large bed, Mark's mouth moved, ready to speak.

Donovan continued, "I have said my piece, you may leave!"

Mark closed his mouth instantly, giving Donovan a deep glance.

He bowed in salute, stepped back twice, turned, and walked out of the bedroom.

Watching Mark's tall, slender back gradually recede.

Donovan opened his mouth, exhaled a long breath, and his face displayed an obvious look of relief.

The long exhale seemed to release all the power from his body.

Donovan could no longer maintain his sitting posture, his body slowly moved, and eventually lay flat on the large bed.

Hoo~ hoo~ hoo~

Donovan's gaze was fixed directly on the ceiling above the bedroom.

Heavy breath continued to come from Donovan's mouth.

Donovan's eyes were full of flicker, as if with memories and hesitation.

A barely audible murmur resonated from Donovan's throat.

"There... though remote and barren, it can escape the clamor of war."

"Even if difficult, at least... at least there is still a chance to survive..."

...

The following morning.

Lynn, having awoken early, was eating breakfast with Red at the dining table.

A series of footsteps echoed from outside the reception hall.

Swallowing the soft bread in his mouth, Lynn slightly raised his head to look over.

It was the soldiers responsible for patrolling Morgan Town.

The patrolling soldiers quickened their pace, stopping about four to five meters from Lynn.

They bowed in salute, speaking respectfully.

"Lord, while patrolling we discovered."

"Lord Wesley is leading a large convoy, moving towards Morgan Town."

"At this point, they should be within the bounds of Morgan Town..."

Lynn responded, "I understand."

Seeing no instructions or inquiries from the Lord, the guard bowed in salute and quickly withdrew.

Glancing at the patrolling soldiers exiting the reception hall, Lynn retracted his gaze.

With a thought, he opened the [Holographic Map] and took a look.

Just as the patrolling soldiers said.

Wesley, clad in composite armor and riding a warhorse.

Leading Earl and a group of armored cavalry, were escorting a large workforce into Morgan Town.

They were either carrying or pushing items, or maneuvering two-wheeled carts...

Almost everyone was transporting goods, to varying degrees.

Some burly men held restrained pigs in their arms...

After scanning for a moment, Lynn closed the panel in front of him.

Wesley led seventeen hundred armored cavalry to attack the manor at Boxi Town.

As long as they do not encounter ambushes or get surrounded by countless peasants.

The likelihood of being wiped out by the enemy is extremely low!

The cavalry, wearing defensive armor, wielding five-meter-long winged spears for length advantage.

As long as the horses accelerated, they would be like a sharp, solid blade.

Tearing those without any armored defense - guards and peasants - to shreds!

Moreover.

The cavalry's high mobility and agility were demonstrated once more!

From dispatching Wesley with Earl and a group of armored cavalry to Boxi Town.

To now returning to Morgan Town with everyone.

It took only two days and one night!

This further solidified Lynn's resolve to expand the cavalry at any cost!

After finishing breakfast and resting for a few minutes on a wooden chair.

Lynn walked out of the manor castle with Red, halting at the edge of the open-air courtyard's wall.

Through the gaps in the wall, Lynn gazed into the distance.

A group in black-gray was moving along the gravel and mud road between fields in the distance.

As time passed, the black-gray silhouette became increasingly clear.

Until the distance between the procession and the manor castle was only a few hundred meters.

With the height of the manor castle wall and the bright sky, Lynn could clearly see Wesley and Earl on horseback.

Chapter 1117: Branding the Ducas Clan

On horseback, Wesley and Earl made it from the square to the city wall.

Both bent over, giving respects to their Lord.

Under Lynn's watchful gaze.

Wesley and Earl, followed by their troops, entered the manor castle amidst the bustling sound of footsteps.

Two minutes later.

Amidst the sound of climbing steps, accompanied by the clattering of armor.

Wesley, leading Earl, arrived atop the city wall.

Their gazes shifted, noticing Lynn still standing at the edge of the wall, they approached without hesitation.

Standing behind Lynn, Wesley and Earl respectfully said.

"Master! Lord!"

Lynn shifted his steps, turning to look at Wesley and Earl, speaking.

"As expected, you two did not disappoint me."

"Tell me about the details of this foreign campaign!"

Understandingly, Earl closed his mouth.

Leaving the reporting tasks to Wesley, the commander of this foreign campaign.

Wesley responded without humility, "Master, your praise is undue."

"As the commander personally appointed by you, I naturally must do my utmost to fulfill any directives you issue."

Lynn nodded without words, awaiting Wesley to continue his narration.

"Master, upon receiving your orders, I led Centurion Earl and a group of armored cavalry out of Morgan Town, hastily heading towards Boxi Town."

"After passing through the large forested area between Morgan Town and Boxi Town, we entered Boxi Town's farmland."

"As Tim Jones said, after reshuffling, only Benitez and McKinley Manors remained in Boxi Town."

"Thanks to his intelligence, we could easily obliterate Benitez Manor..."

"..."

"The seventeen hundred armored cavalry faced a vast numerical disadvantage compared to the guards and peasants under Devant."

"To maximize the advantage of armored cavalry and to minimize casualties of the cavalry in battle."

"Wesley had to adopt some special combat strategies..."

Hearing this, Lynn raised an eyebrow and asked.

"Special combat strategies?"

Wesley concealed nothing, directly explaining.

"Under the guise of cooperation, we deceived all the guards and peasants out of Benitez Manor."

"Then ordered the seventeen hundred armored cavalry to charge against the defenseless guards and peasants!"

Standing beside Wesley, Earl glanced slightly at Lynn standing in front.

Waiting to see what response Master Lynn would make.

Lynn only hummed in response, indicating acknowledgment.

Seeing Lynn not probing further, Wesley continued his tale.

"After some direct battle, with the manor lord Devant's command lost, and many guards and peasants slain."

"The remaining guards and peasants chose to lay down arms and surrender."

"Nonetheless, the armored cavalry still suffered casualties... seeking punishment from the master!"

Earl also lowered himself in deference.

If Wesley were to be punished, as the centurion, he too couldn't escape blame.

Lynn instantly furrowed his brow, staring at Wesley's bowed form, and sternly asked.

"What is the casualty count?"

Wesley quickly responded, "Master, eight armored cavalymen perished, twelve injured, eight Badan warhorses killed, twelve ordinary horses..."

Lynn continued to ask, "How many guards and peasants did Devant muster?"

"Master, over four thousand!"

Lynn's tightly knit brow slightly relaxed, "Seventeen hundred cavalry facing over four thousand guards and peasants, to achieve such casualties..."

"Commander Wesley, you need not plead for punishment with me!"

"In warfare, casualties are inevitable."

"Especially under such numerical disadvantage, it's impossible to defeat the opponent without any losses!"

"However, make sure to bring the deceased soldiers back to Morgan Town, back to the domain."

"Let at least their parents, wives, and children know they died for the domain, for the Lord, and even for them."

"They are the warriors of the land."

Bending low, Wesley promptly responded.

"Yes, Master, Wesley has already brought their bodies back to the manor."

"Will immediately arrange for personnel to transport their bodies back to the territory!"

Lynn acknowledged with a word, "Continue."

Wesley continued narrating.

"Afterwards, Wesley led the armed soldiers to Benitez Manor."

"Shot down Manor Guard Captain Callum, who attempted to flee with money and jewelry."

"Once everything was subdued, Wesley arranged for all moveable items in Benitez Manor to be collected."

"Transported back to the manor castle beneath your feet, Master."

"Due to the large quantity, they need to be counted, and the detailed numbers confirmed before reporting to the Master."

Shifting his narrative, Wesley continued.

"However, Master, due to our scant information on McKinley Manor."

"Additionally, the battle between the armored cavalry and Benitez Manor's guards and peasants likely attracted the attention of McKinley Manor."

"To avoid blindly attacking McKinley Manor and potential ambush dangers."

"And to return the goods and labor from Benitez Manor to Morgan Town."

"Wesley only led the armored cavalry to conquer and obliterate Benitez Manor."

Chapter 1118: Branding the Ducas Clan (Part 5)

Lynn nodded and said, "Well done."

"Even just capturing one manor is enough to weaken part of Jon Zuck's military strength."

Wesley bent slightly to acknowledge Lynn's words of affirmation.

Lynn continued to ask, "Besides that, is there anything else you need to report to me?"

Wesley thought for a few seconds and then spoke.

"Master, when Wesley led the armored cavalry out of Boxi Town."

"We saw from a distance several unfamiliar cavalry conducting reconnaissance."

"If my guess is correct, those unfamiliar cavalry are spies from McKinley Manor..."

"These cavalry spies will surely convey the intelligence they gathered to Broo, the master of Blue Manor at McKinley Manor."

"And even inform Viscount Jon Zuck of Kasong City!"

Lynn responded, "No matter, the number of armored cavalry has already been exposed to the townspeople when we entered Alba Town."

"This is no longer much of a secret."

In a war, besides competing in logistics and supplies, it's also a contest of intelligence information.

The more detailed the intelligence information is, the more it holds a preemptive advantage.

And so, it becomes easier to win this war!

According to the intelligence Lynn currently has...

Jon Zuck possesses around 2,200 armored and unarmored soldiers.

The remaining guards and peasants, supported by the five manor lords, number around 10,000.

In total, about 12,000!

With nearly 4,000 armored soldiers in his Manor Castle and an additional 800 Rock Climbing Iron Guard.

Even with nearly a threefold difference in numbers.

Lynn has absolute confidence to entirely obliterate the armed forces Jon Zuck brings to Morgan Town!

Not to mention, the close combat between heavy infantry and light infantry, in a frontal battle.

Just the charge of over 1,100 cavalry and the arrow rain of 500 archers.

Is enough to charge through and shoot down large numbers of guard peasants, weakening Jon Zuck's living armed forces!

If heavy infantry and light infantry are sent to join the battle.

It will be enough to end this long-brewing war!

Even though Lynn is confident, he does not take it lightly because of this.

Knowing Jon Zuck's armed forces well.

The only thing he needs to do.

Is to prevent any other variables, causing the balance of victory in this war to shift.

Other variables will naturally come from military assistance from other lords!

What Lynn can think of — is the Marquis Duca of Bordeaux City.

But the current Marquis Duca is deeply entangled in the battle for Spirit Reef Port against Marquis Polk.

Naturally, it is impossible to dispatch Sword and Shield Corps soldiers to this distant and remote Morgan Town to aid a minor Viscount.

As for other Noble Lords...

There is a very big possibility!

A Viscount who has controlled Kasong City for many years.

Deep-rooted, with profound heritage.

And naturally has diplomatic contact with other lords.

If Jon Zuck can enlist help from other Noble Lords for military assistance...

The outcome of this battle would indeed experience immense change.

Even Lynn, who holds an assurance of victory, does not dare to guarantee his triumph in the face of Jon Zuck securing external aid!

At this thought, Lynn couldn't help but frown.

In the short term, he must constantly keep track of intelligence information from Kasong City!

Not only because Jon Zuck's supporting manor lords are rallying.

But also to prevent other Noble Lords from leading large armies of soldiers to Kasong City!

In addition to this.

He needs to think of countermeasures!

If Jon Zuck indeed gains military support from other Noble Lords.

How should he respond?

While thinking about this, Lynn glanced across.

Wesley and Suli still stood afar.

Lynn spoke up, "If there's nothing else to report, go and conduct the statistics."

Having been silently waiting, Wesley quickly responded.

"As you command, Master."

With the response concluded, Wesley bowed and departed.

Standing beside Wesley, Suli followed in leaving.

Watching the two depart, Lynn withdrew his gaze and turned to look outside the Manor Castle.

Far on the eastern horizon, a disc slowly rose.

The emitted light drove away the darkness of the entire world.

On the fields of Morgan Town.

A large group of Free People and farmers engaged in new daily labor.

After a brief contemplation, Lynn, accompanied by Red, descended the city wall, heading towards the vast farmlands afar.

Amid the curious gazes of the Free People and farmers.

Lynn took a sickle from one of the farmers and participated in the harvest labor of the crops.

[Collection Experience +1]

[Collection Experience +1]

[Collection Experience +1]

...

Bit by bit, the experience steadily increased.

Even though Lynn was laboring.

With Level 3 [Collection] skills, wielding a sickle to harvest crops was almost instinctive for him.

Standing with legs slightly apart to maintain stability, he turned sideways to extend his arm, gripping the wheat stalks with his left hand, gathering them together.

His right hand, holding the sickle, moved forward, aligning it to the base of the wheat stalks.

Using the curved blade of the sickle and his waist strength, he cut through the wheat stalks gathered in his left hand.

Then, rotating his body, he placed the cut stalks from his left hand at his feet.

Once completing these actions fluidly, he turned back to continue harvesting.

Repeating the actions, step by step.

Chapter 1119: Branding the Ducas Clan_6

For the farmers, whether it's harvesting or planting, it's all the same.

Even if every year, the farmers are engaged in repetitive labor!

As Lynn gained experience, time quickly passed by.

Until dusk.

Soaked with sweat, with cheeks and neck full of heat and itchiness, Lynn strode out of the wheat field.

Red, who was waiting nearby, handed over a water bottle.

Seeing that Lynn didn't notice his gesture, Red spoke up to remind him.

"Master, drink some water and catch your breath."

Lynn turned his head, took the water bottle without any hesitation, and gulped down the water.

After several gulps, he even poured all the remaining well water on his head and body.

A comfortable coolness enveloped him, making Lynn exhale a long breath of heat.

Just after handing the water bottle back to Red.

Lynn noticed.

At this moment, Red's face was flushed, and large beads of sweat continually rolled down.

Even without asking Red, he could guess the reason.

Wearing a composite armor, Red had been continuously exposed to nearly 27 or 28 degrees of sunlight for several hours.

Although the composite armor is made from armor plates combined with standard chest armor,

its breathability is extremely limited in such hot and sweltering conditions.

At this moment, Red was like being in a steaming oven...

Lynn began to walk towards the distant manor castle.

While walking, Lynn glanced back at Red and asked.

"Hot, isn't it?"

Red responded immediately, without any hesitation.

"Master, not hot!"

Lynn gave Red a sidelong glance.

"Not hot? Then why does sweat keep pouring down your face?"

A hint of embarrassment appeared on Red's face.

Lynn didn't continue to tease Red, but quickened his pace, returning to the manor castle.

After this battle ends and the crises in the territory and Morgan Town are temporarily resolved.

He needs to immediately return to the territory to thoroughly reform the standard plate armor and composite armor worn by the soldiers and guards!

Using the steel smelted in the double-chamber reflector furnace as the basis, to redesign.

Ensuring that the armor is breathable and lightweight, while also having strong defensive capabilities!

Soon, Lynn suppressed this thought.

The immediate priority.

Is to prepare to confront the armed group formed by Jon Zuck and his supporter manor lords from Kakasong City!

As the soldiers stationed at the manor castle gate performed salutes, Lynn returned to the manor castle.

Lynn did not ascend the manor castle stairs but directly walked into the deep courtyard square.

On the spacious courtyard square.

Wesley was leading teams of armored soldiers, conducting checks and tallies.

Standing in formation, the armored soldiers responsible for guarding the peasants, seeing their lord arrive, quickly bowed in respect.

Perhaps due to a soldier's reminder, Wesley turned to look back.

Upon seeing Lynn.

Wesley instructed the armored soldiers a few words, then quickly walked up to Lynn.

"Master."

Lynn asked.

"How is the tally progressing?"

Wesley immediately responded, "Master, we're in the final stages of tallying."

"By dusk at the latest, all items will be accounted for!"

Lynn nodded, "Inform Rose, Earl, and Tyrone to come to the manor castle for dinner."

"I have important matters to discuss with you all!"

Wesley raised an eyebrow slightly and responded again.

"Yes, Master."

"I'll arrange for someone to convey your instructions immediately."

Lynn acknowledged, his gaze once again sweeping over the peasants brought back.

Withdrew his gaze and headed to the second floor of the manor castle.

Ascending the stairs, entering the guest hall, Lynn settled onto the throne.

His right hand propped under his chin, his mind began to ponder again.

While Lynn was pondering.

The light outside the guest hall gradually changed.

From the initial red-orange sunset illuminating the entire Morgan Town.

Until the sunset sank below the horizon, turning the sky a gray-white hue.

And now, it had become dim, with nightfall imminent.

During this time.

One soldier after another entered the guest hall.

They held tinder, lighting the oil lamps in the guest hall.

Perhaps worried about disturbing Lynn on the throne.

Their movements were light, not daring to relax.

As one lamp after another was lit, the somewhat dim guest hall gradually illuminated.

As soon as the soldiers lighting the lamps left.

A team of soldiers pushed a dinner cart, coming out from the depths of the manor castle.

Earlier, Lynn had arranged for guards to go to the kitchen to have the chef prepare the dinner for a few people.

After neatly setting the food on the dining table, a soldier approached Lynn, speaking respectfully.

"Lord, dinner is ready, you may begin eating."

Lynn replied, "I know."

Lynn just rose from the throne and headed towards the dining table.

Coincidentally, four figures walked in from outside the guest hall.

They were Rose, Wesley, Tyrone, and Earl!

Lynn raised an eyebrow and said, "You have arrived quite punctually."

"Sit down for dinner first, everything else can wait until after we eat!"

After Lynn sat down, only then did the four dare to sit.

Regardless of whether Rose and the others were hungry.

After a day of labor, Lynn was already famished.

Picking up the knife and fork in front of him, Lynn started eating on his own.

One piece of meat after another, chewed and swallowed by Lynn.

He consumed several pieces of pork ribs, a large piece of wheat bread, and drank a bowl of chicken stew.

The hunger within Lynn finally began to dissipate.

Watching their Lord eat with such actions, Rose and the others slightly relaxed their tense mood.

Master Lynn called them together, seemingly not to inspect and reprimand them?

The four exchanged glances, being naturally rough men, they didn't bother with formalities and restraint.

They picked up the tableware in front of them and joined in the meal.

The crisp sound of tableware clashing and the sound of chewing echoed occasionally in the quiet, spacious guest hall.

Ten minutes later.

With his appetite satisfied, Lynn glanced over the dining table.

The table once overflowing with food now only had clean plates left.

Even the chicken stew in the pot was completely scooped out...

Lynn's eyebrows raised, looking surprised at Rose and the others.

Noticing Master Lynn's odd gaze, a hint of embarrassment crept onto Rose and the others' faces.

Chapter 1120: Igniting the Entire Forest

Obviously.

Rose and the other three were also aware of the preciousness of food.

They waited for the four to swallow their food and rest for a few minutes.

Lynn cast another glance at them and began to speak.

"Now that the meal is over, before we get to the main topic, I would like to hear Commander Wesley report on the war statistics regarding Boxi Town."

Rose, Earl, and Tyrone put down their tableware and looked at Wesley.

Wesley maintained a calm expression, rose from the wooden chair, bowed, and respectfully said.

"Yes, Master!"

"Four days ago, Wesley received the master's clear instructions."

"Leading Centurion Earl and seventeen hundred armored cavalry, we entered Boxi Town and launched an attack on Benitez Manor!"

"In this assault, seventeen hundred armored cavalry engaged in frontal combat against forty-five hundred guard peasants from Benitez Manor across large tracts of farmland."

"After several charges and melees by the armored cavalry, we killed... one thousand two hundred and eighty guards and peasants."

Lynn listened quietly, without any interruption.

Surprise inevitably crossed the faces of Rose and Tyrone.

Killed one thousand two hundred and eighty peasants...

The number nearly amounted to half the population of a small town's Free People!

Such a massive number.

Even if they only wielded iron weapons and farm tools as guard peasants.

They posed a significant threat.

In Rose and Tyrone's minds, the ground was already a bed of corpses, gathering into a stream of blood...

Wesley's report continued.

"Devant, the Manor Lord of Benitez, was pierced through the chest by Centurion Earl's spear, flying back ten meters, and dying instantly!"

Wesley did not conceal Centurion Earl's formidable performance in the battle.

Centurion Earl, on the side, couldn't help but cast a look of admiration toward Wesley.

"Apart from the guards and peasants killed and buried, a total of three thousand two hundred and twenty guard peasants survived and surrendered!"

"Master, the prisoners brought back from Connelly Manor and Louis Manor are somewhat different."

"These three thousand two hundred and twenty guards and peasants are all healthy men!"

Lynn replied with satisfaction.

He naturally understood the implication of Wesley's words.

Healthy men, with training and skill development, could be recruited as soldiers.

Thus, enhancing the military strength of the territory!

Receiving Lynn's response, Wesley continued to recount.

"Apart from these three thousand two hundred and twenty guard peasants, there are also nearly two thousand elderly, women, and children in Benitez Manor."

"Adding up all the people, there are a total of five thousand two hundred in labor force!"

Hearing Wesley's words, Lynn's eyebrows couldn't help but rise.

Though Lynn had already felt the thrill of a labor force boost from war before.

Now, over five thousand in labor force from yet another foreign battle.

Lynn couldn't suppress the joyous fluctuations in his heart.

This is over five thousand labor force!

The more labor force, the faster his development!

Indeed!

Seizing by force is far superior to arduous cultivation!

Of course.

Lynn also understood.

To seize by force from others, strong military power is essential!

Lynn exhaled warmly, continuing to listen to Wesley's report.

"Apart from the five thousand two hundred and twenty labor force, a large amount of grain was seized from Benitez Manor!"

"In grain, barley is estimated at two million pounds, wheat at one million two hundred thousand pounds, oats at three hundred thousand pounds."

"In legumes, peas at one hundred fifty thousand pounds, lentils one hundred thousand pounds."

"In root vegetables, turnips at eighty thousand pounds, carrots one hundred ten thousand pounds."

"Fresh and smoked meat stored in the cellar, adding up to at least fifty thousand pounds!"

Lynn nodded, not too surprised.

Whether it's Morgan Town or the neighboring Alba Town and Boxi Town, the summer harvest was only recently completed!

Furthermore, Benitez Manor occupies half of Boxi Town's land.

The manor mansion storing so much grain makes perfect sense!

Thinking this through.

Lynn slightly lamented the timing of sending Rose and Wesley to attack the manor!

Just as the Manor Lords gathered and stored harvested crops from the fields.

Directly saving him the step of crop processing!

Lynn made a mental note.

For future wars, they must be launched after summer and autumn harvests!

"Master, compared to previously destroyed manors, Benitez Manor has significantly more poultry and livestock, even two to three times more."

"Among the livestock, there are five hundred cattle in total!"

"Including three hundred ninety mature oxen, one hundred ten dairy cows, three hundred eighty draft horses, one hundred ninety pigs, one hundred twenty sheep, three hundred sixty chickens..."

Lynn's eyebrows couldn't help but rise again.

As Wesley mentioned, indeed, this is quite extensive!

However, Lynn quickly thought it through.

Benitez Manor has absorbed and digested two other manors.

Such numbers are no surprise.

If they didn't have over three hundred mature oxen.

Benitez Manor would not be able to accomplish the cultivation of Boxi Town's tens of thousands of acres of farmland!

"There are nearly six thousand iron tools and poorly made weapons."

"Additionally, the warehouse holds fifty thousand yards of linen cloth, over thirty thousand pounds of wool, and so forth..."

"In terms of money, there are three thousand five hundred eighty Gold Pounds, one hundred twenty shillings, and two thousand pence."