

System 951

Chapter 951: Gold Pounds Pave the Way

And they want to convey their spiritual needs to life through the clergy in the Church.

The existence of the Church precisely meets the needs of ordinary people.

Because of this,

the number of followers the Church has is extremely vast.

The Church may find it a bit difficult to recruit these followers to join the wars of external expansion.

But if the Church encounters a crisis of life and death, as long as the Church Bishop issues a decree, these followers will unhesitatingly step forward.

This is why all the Lords feel anger towards the existence of the Church, yet are helpless against it.

Even if a Lord suppresses all the Church Officials in their territories and burns the Church to the ground,

it won't take long before a new Bishop is spontaneously elevated from among the ordinary believers.

This Bishop will lead the followers to construct a Church anew and organize a team of clergy.

They sprout like bamboo shoots after the rain, impossible to eradicate.

Because this is the most important spiritual support for the residents, aside from material life.

To completely overthrow the Church, there is only one possible way.

Create a territory where the residents do not need to seek spiritual support externally!

Where all the residents are well-fed, leading happy lives, without worrying about any wars.

Their spiritual support would be themselves.

Or it would be,

the Lord who allows them to live such good lives!

Residents would no longer need to confide in or seek shelter from the Church!

By then, even if the Lord doesn't actively eradicate the Church Church,

the Church Church will inevitably collapse due to the lack of donations and offerings from followers.

As a member of the Church Officials, he understands better than outsiders how to deal with the Church.

However, Samuel knows even more clearly.

Achieving such a state is nearly impossible!

Neither Viscount Jon Zuck of Kasong City nor Marquis Mark Duca,

nor even the previous Emperor Charlemagne VI of the Empire,

could achieve this!

Because the essence of a Lord is being a landowner, a political ruler, an economic exploiter, and a military commander.

Everything they do is to maintain their own interests and rule.

How could the Lords be willing to sacrifice their own interests to let the ordinary residents in their territories benefit and live good lives?

Such thoughts could never appear in the minds of these Lords.

Therefore,

the Church can always survive within the territories of the Lords.

And even affect the Lords' power and status!

Suppressing the thoughts in his mind, Samuel looked at a Church Guard beside him.

He opened his mouth and said, "After deducting the fifteen Gold Pounds for tithing, the remaining fifteen Gold Pounds will be one per person."

The four Church Guards accompanying him showed a flash of delight in their eyes.

Before they could speak, Samuel continued.

"What you just saw, I think even without explicit instructions, you understand what to do, right?"

The four Church Guards, without any hesitation, unanimously responded.

"Of course, Captain Samuel."

"We only received instructions from Bishop Semo to follow you to this territory and collected the fifteen Gold Pounds for tithing."

"We know nothing about anything else that happened!"

Samuel nodded in satisfaction, "That's good."

"As long as you follow me here, you can receive one Gold Pound each time."

"As for where your Gold Pounds come from, what they are used for, how they are used, I know nothing as well."

The four Church Guards replied again, "Yes, Captain Samuel."

Listening to their words with evident joy,

a hint of brightness appeared on Samuel's calm face.

This month there are fifteen Gold Pounds, but he is willing to allocate only one Gold Pound per person to the four Church Guards.

This is already his grace towards the Church Guards!

Starting from this month, he can obtain an additional thirty Gold Pounds every month.

He would be able to receive twenty-four of them, already a sizable extra income!

For these Church Guards, it's the same!

Samuel tightly gripped the reins and said to the four Church Guards: "Increase the speed and return to Kasong City."

"If we delay too long, Bishop Semo might think we absconded with the money."

Hearing Samuel's seemingly joking words, a smile appeared on the faces of the four soldiers.

They quickly responded with a smile.

As Samuel's legs tightly clamped the horse's belly, his warhorse let out a pained neigh and suddenly leaped forward.

As the sharp sound of horse hooves fell, the warhorse moved in stride, galloping along the dirt road ahead.

The four Church Guards behind, without any hesitation,

urged their warhorses onward, following Samuel forward.

Perhaps due to collecting the tithing, or possibly because they received extra income,

the pace of Samuel's group returning to Kasong City became much lighter.

...

Until nightfall.

After resting for a while, Lynn rose from the bench and stepped back towards the castle.

As he walked, thoughts spun in his mind about how to deal with Viscount Jon Zuck of Kasong City.

Up to now,

he had a rough understanding and grasp of the military power Jon Zuck possessed.

Eighty Manor Lord supporters, totaling a force of seven thousand.

Among them, the number of cavalry and infantry in armor was less than two thousand.

Less than two hundred archers, the rest were all infantry.

Such military power in front of his nearly four thousand fully armed soldiers was nothing to mention.

However,

Viscount Jon Zuck possesses Kasong City and its walls!

To breach the walls and annihilate Jon Zuck's active forces is not simple.

First,

in siege warfare, the defenders have the advantage of fortifications provided by the walls.

They can use the walls for cover and hold steadfast.

This advantage

can greatly compensate for the shortage of cavalry and armored soldiers.

Secondly,

the soldiers led by Rose are only undergoing the most basic physical and weapons training, and relatively basic defense training.

If they were sent into siege warfare, only one scene would unfold.

That would be these soldiers, burying their heads, bending low, rushing up the cloud ladders without regard, climbing towards the walls.

Clearly,

such a siege method, while perhaps somewhat effective, would result in heavy casualties among the soldiers!

Even with four thousand soldiers now, he couldn't afford to squander their lives to such an extent.

To attack Kasong City, an effective strategy to reduce soldier casualties was necessary!

As Lynn entered the castle, climbed the steps, and reached the reception hall, his eyes suddenly lit up.

He had already thought of a tactic!

Chapter 952: Launching War

Whether to counter foreign threats or to ensure the territory's self-preservation.

He needed to formulate a strategy in advance against Jon Zuck.

As a Viscount, Jon Zuck had evidently obtained some information about him.

Either from the Ducas Clan or from previous spies' inquiries into Morgan Town.

But the information he obtained was certainly not entirely accurate.

Like him, Jon Zuck was also in the phase of gathering intelligence on each other.

Otherwise.

With the armed forces of a Viscount and the military aid from numerous supporters.

With a total of over seven thousand soldiers.

The army would press against the border.

To annihilate a Lord who only recently began to rise is simply too easy.

Whether it's because Jon Zuck received orders from the Ducas Clan to destroy his territory.

Or because of coveting the resources in his territory.

The most advantageous way for Jon Zuck is to lead his soldiers to attack Morgan Town and his walls.

On the plains of Morgan Town.

He could rely on over a thousand heavy and light cavalry to charge at Jon Zuck's troops!

If they attack his walls.

He could depend on the walls and Weng City for defense.

Coincidentally, Colin had completed the production of most of the large-scale equipment.

He could test the power of these large-scale equipment in siege defense exercises!

Of course.

If Jon Zuck discovered the fully armed soldiers in his territory.

Decides to hole up in Kakasong City, waiting for the Sword and Shield Corps' support from the Ducas Clan...

He could initiate a war and suppress Jon Zuck's supporters one by one.

Defeating them one by one!

Until then, Jon Zuck would be in a dilemma.

If Jon Zuck supports the Manor Lords he attacks,

He will have the chance to launch a cavalry charge at Jon Zuck's troops.

If he chooses to turn a blind eye and remains holed up in Kakasong City.

Then he could wait for all the supporters to be destroyed.

Even with the walls of Kakasong City, Jon Zuck would still struggle alone!

Relying solely on the armed soldiers Jon Zuck possesses.

Of course, it is impossible to resist the large-scale equipment he has already produced.

Catapults, crossbow cannons, and other large-scale equipment can be used for defense!

At the same time, they can also be used for offense!

However.

Due to their massive weight, transporting them while marching is extremely slow.

Of course, there is another possibility.

Jon Zuck learning of his attack on the Manor Lord supporters, gathers all Manor Lords in advance.

Converging them in his Kakasong City, using them as the main force to guard the city.

But for him, this would be a good thing.

Manor Lords and their soldiers can enter Kakasong City.

But their land, feed supplies, and peasants cannot all be brought to Kakasong City!

He could easily take possession of all the properties of the Eight Great Manor Lords.

The manor lords possess more than ten thousand peasants and maids, along with some free people.

This could once again significantly increase the population in his territory!

Even though in Lynn's mind, the plan to deal with Jon Zuck was finalized.

He still did not dare to relax in the slightest.

Because there was still a variable.

The military aid from the Ducas Clan to Jon Zuck!

According to Samuel,

The Zak Clan was once titled Viscount by Marquis Duca!

Either the Zak Clan made a significant contribution to the Ducas Clan or the Karedi Empire.

Or the Zak Clan is a loyal follower of the Ducas Clan.

Marquis Duca, through other means, conferred the title of Viscount lawfully with the Emperor of the Empire's permission.

No matter the reason.

It could likely lead to the Ducas Clan dispatching the Sword and Shield Corps to aid Jon Zuck!

This variable must be included in future battle plans.

To prevent any unforeseen events!

While Lynn was pondering, he had already returned to the castle's reception hall.

As usual, Kuisi had already prepared tonight's dinner, waiting for him.

Arriving before the main seat of the dining table, Janet, standing nearby, proactively pulled out the seat for Lynn.

As Lynn sat down, Janet used her arms to gently push the main seat forward.

Lynn sat accurately and comfortably on the main seat.

During the time in Lynn Castle, Janet had become accustomed to moving the seat and pushing the chair for Lynn.

Of course.

There were also the after-meal bath massages and warming the bed before sleep.

Kuisi served a bowl of chicken soup in front of Lynn.

She then picked up the carving knife and started slicing the large piece of golden-roasted pork ribs for Lynn.

While slicing, Kuisi asked,

"Sir, do you need me to report on the situation in the territory?"

Sipping on his chicken soup, Lynn responded, "Yes."

She placed the neatly cut pork ribs on the plate before Lynn and sprinkled some pepper and salt.

Kuisi then began to speak, "Sir, the development in the territory is proceeding smoothly."

"Firstly, under the guidance of Scholar Clive and Scholar Erin, the groundworks for the Territory Court have been completed and the wall construction has begun."

Chewing on the meat, Lynn gave a nod in response.

Kuisi continued, "Additionally, with the last group of townsmen attending night school this evening and under the scholars' teaching, the first literacy campaign for all the townsmen in the territory is completed."

Chapter 953: Launching the War _2

"However, Scholar Tate reported to me that the results of this round of literacy education are not very satisfactory."

"It will be quite difficult if we want to teach all these Townsmen to read, recognize characters, and write."

"Unless we increase the time they spend studying."

Listening to Kuisi's account, Lynn was not surprised at all.

The Townsmen who had come to his territory were mostly Peasants and Free People.

It could be said that they had never received any Education.

Even the various Skills used in daily life were passed down orally from parents or others.

If they could learn to read, recognize characters, and write after just one lesson from a scholar, that would be what truly surprised him.

On top of that, the Townsmen went to the night school for literacy classes after a full day of physical labor.

This would inevitably affect the energy they had for studying.

Swallowing the food in his mouth, Lynn spoke.

"No need, it will still only be two hours after the Townsmen finish work."

Letting the Townsmen attend night school to start literacy education was only to generally raise their level of knowledge.

Naturally, it would not be like compulsory Education, with the Townsmen studying full-time.

Moreover—

The literacy campaign must by no means affect the Townsmen's labor the next day.

Engaging in Production is their most fundamental job.

Kuisi understood and replied, "Yes, Master, I will pass this on to Scholar Tate."

"Other than that... right, Foreman Yimini informed me that the linen and Linen Cloth currently in the warehouse are not enough to make long robes and trousers."

Lynn raised an eyebrow. "Didn't we just harvest a batch of linen recently?"

Hearing this, Kuisi hurriedly explained, "Yes, Master."

"Recently, the Farmers harvested one hundred thousand jin of linen fiber and forty-five thousand jin of linen seeds from two thousand mu of land."

"After degumming and combing, the linen becomes linen fiber, which can be put into spinning and weaving for the Production of clothing."

"But I need to confirm one thing with you, Master..."

All of this was Master Lynn's property, so she naturally needed his consent.

Lynn nodded and said, "From now on, you can handle these matters yourself. There's no need to report them again."

"Have the foremen make detailed statistics based on the needs of their own industrial workshops, then report to you."

"You will then, according to the actual situation, mobilize and allocate the useful stored materials in the territory and distribute them to them."

"If there's anything you can't quite handle, then report it to me."

Kuisi's eyebrows lifted slightly.

Master Lynn was granting her more and more authority.

But Kuisi also understood.

This was based on Master Lynn's trust in her.

Kuisi quickly bent her waist slightly in a respectful bow and answered respectfully,

"Yes, Master, I will follow your instructions."

Lynn gave a brief acknowledgment, and under the service of Kuisi and Janet, continued to enjoy his dinner.

After dinner, while waiting for the hot water to be boiled, Lynn sat down on the Lord's throne.

With a thought, he opened [Resource Management] and let his gaze sweep over the lines of information on the panel.

The total population displayed on the panel had already reached twenty-three thousand.

There were eighteen thousand men and eight thousand women.

This also included some children and elders.

Although he had never paid much attention to the gender ratio of the men and women who were exchanged or incorporated,

this ratio of men to women was in fact the best possible state.

With a large male population, he could select men with better physical fitness to recruit as soldiers to protect the safety of the territory.

With a relatively larger female population, he could put them into some of the Handicraft Workshop District to make handicrafts.

Whether male or female, as long as they came to his territory, there would be suitable jobs for them, allowing them to be投入到生产建设之中.

Lynn carefully examined the composition structure of the twenty-three thousand people.

He found that the labor invested in the Handicraft Workshop District was actually far too much.

The number of people just in the Blacksmith Workshop and the textile workshops had already reached five thousand!

And that did not even include several other workshops.

Counting all of them, the labor force in the workshop district was close to seven thousand.

Adding to that the four thousand two hundred soldiers and Guards, and the five thousand Farmers currently reclaiming and Planting land in the territory,

there were nine hundred workers in the Salt Factory, and nine hundred ranch workers under Guy.

On the city walls there were eight hundred Stonemason Workshop workers led by Avery, and two hundred stone carving workshop workers led by Jode.

There were fifty apprentices in Old John Hospital, and three hundred cooks and kitchen hands in the canteens.

The coal, iron, and salt mines, plus the Saltpeter and soda ash mines, employed a total of one thousand nine hundred miners.

There were three hundred workers in the logging workshops and the Papermaking Workshop.

And two hundred transport workers who handled various raw materials.

As well as, finally, around six hundred underage children, and so on.

In this way, the twenty-three thousand people were divided up.

After investing a large amount of labor into each industry, production efficiency had indeed improved.

But it was far from as obvious as he had imagined.

Especially in the Handicraft Workshop District!

Because after he had incorporated and brought back the Free People and Peasants from Morgan Town,

there had been a massive surplus of labor.

He could only temporarily assign them to various workshops.

This digested the labor surplus while also improving the production efficiency of the Handicraft Workshop District.

But now, he had to reduce and slim down the labor force in the handicraft workshops!

To improve the efficiency with which labor was used.

He had already thought about this before.

He would recruit one thousand male Townsmen from the Handicraft Workshop District to become soldiers.

Chapter 954: Waging War (3)

By this, increase the number of soldiers and enhance the military strength of the territory.

He needed more trained soldiers to resist and face unknown dangers!

Of course.

It was just a thought of his for now.

Everything had to wait for the Blacksmith Workshop to finish crafting the remaining thousand sets of Composite Armor.

While the Blacksmith Workshop's blast furnace was being improved into a Double-chamber Reflector Furnace, and while the Blacksmith Apprentices were resting.

Recruit and select soldiers.

At this time.

A light footstep sounded from afar, approaching closer.

Stopping not far away, a gentle reminder sounded.

"Master, the hot water is ready, you can prepare to soak and bathe now."

Hearing this familiar voice, Lynn turned his head to look.

Janet stood slightly bending at the waist, waiting below the Lord's throne platform.

Perhaps because Janet's robe had a slightly low opening, coupled with her bending posture.

The half-revealed whiteness directly entered Lynn's eyes.

Lynn responded, got up from the Lord's throne, and walked towards the private room not far away.

As he was about to pass Janet, there was no need for Lynn to speak.

Janet was the first to say, "Master, do you need Janet to massage you?"

Hearing Janet's soft and charming words, Lynn slightly raised his eyebrows and responded.

"Of course."

Janet explained, "Okay, Master, then I will come in after ten minutes as usual."

Lynn nodded and walked past Janet into the private room.

He couldn't help but sigh in his heart.

Janet from initially resisting, then reluctantly, to being shy, and now proactively asking.

Evidently.

Under Janet's training, she had been assimilated.

Even though he had destroyed Frank Manor, crushed Janet's ambitions, and occupied her body.

Now she no longer had any resistance in her mind.

Habit, indeed, is a terrible thing.

Standing at the door waiting for ten minutes, Janet knocked on the double wooden doors of the private room.

With the agreement she had with Lynn earlier, she didn't need Lynn's verbal reminder.

Gently pushing open the door to create a gap through which she could pass, she stepped inside.

Just after closing the door.

A wave of warm, faintly fragrant vapor entered Janet's nose.

Looking at the man lying in the bathtub in the distance, her heart couldn't help but beat faster.

However, she had no fear or hesitation, stepping towards the bathtub.

Arriving at the edge of the bathtub.

Seeing Lynn with a piece of Linen Cloth warm on his cheek, Janet gently reminded.

"Master, Janet will now massage you."

Lynn was still lying in the bathtub, responding with a sound as a reply to Janet.

Without any unnecessary words, Janet soaked her hands in the bucket until they were red and warm.

Only then did she extend her slender hands, holding Lynn's head, massaging with just the right pressure.

From not knowing any massage techniques at the beginning, to now becoming skilled at them.

Only Janet and Lynn knew what she had gone through!

It was entirely Master Lynn's hands-on approach, massaging her body, that she learned.

After massaging Lynn's head, neck, and shoulders.

Janet spoke softly to Lynn, "Master, I'm ready to start massaging your body and limbs."

Lynn responded.

Hearing Lynn's casual reply, Janet furrowed her brows slightly.

Without any words, she stepped behind Lynn, moving to the right side before the wooden stairs of the bathtub.

With a slight movement of her feet, she left her Linen Shoes behind.

Her arms moved gently, loosening her robe.

The linen robe slipped directly off Janet's smooth, fair shoulders.

Smoothly and fluidly falling to the floor.

Janet slightly raised her legs, stepping her exquisite white feet outside the long skirt, onto the stairs, entering the bathtub where Lynn was lying.

As soon as she stepped in, the warm water enveloped her legs.

As she squatted, the hot water passed over her legs, hips...

Finally, covering only half of her round, plump chest.

With the water's ripples in the bathtub, the other half barely visible.

Even though her body before Lynn was already without any privacy or reserve.

However.

Every time in such a situation, she still couldn't suppress her nervousness.

Once stable, Janet immediately looked up at Lynn, her eyes widening instantly.

The Linen Cloth that had been warmed on Lynn's face had somehow fallen, floating in the bathtub.

Lynn's deep gaze was unrestrainedly watching her body.

Meaning.

From when she stepped into the bathtub and slowly squatted down, Lynn fully observed everything.

Janet could clearly feel her face heating up rapidly.

Seeing Janet's expression, a hint of mockery flashed in Lynn's eyes.

"Janet, you can start the massage now."

Janet just returned to her senses and responded, "Yes, Master, starting now."

She reached out her hands, gently lifting Lynn's right hand, starting to massage the palm.

As she pressed continuously, Janet's brows gradually furrowed.

Lynn's palm was long, muscular yet slender.

Chapter 955: Waging War (Part 4)

As a lord, he shouldn't have to do any labor; he should be living a life of luxury.

But Lynn's right palm was full of hard calluses.

Janet felt.

Their thickness was no less than that of farmers who had worked for decades.

Or like soldiers and mercenaries wielding weapons and licking blood.

However.

She understood in her heart why this was so.

It was precisely because the Lynn before her was unafraid of hardship and labor, persisting with the townsmen.

That this territory, once a mere wasteland of weeds, had developed to such a scale.

If not witnessed personally.

If only heard through rumors, no one would believe it!

In an instant, Janet's movements massaging Lynn's arm became a bit more intimate.

The look in her eyes toward Lynn began to change from past resentment and hatred.

Once a manor lord of Frank Manor, indeed.

She was well aware of the principle of the victor becoming the ruler.

Facing such a powerful lord.

Facing such a handsome man.

Every woman would admire and look up to strength.

She was no exception!

Looking at Lynn still gazing at her with his deep eyes.

Even though her heart was still nervous and shy.

She needed no order or action from Lynn.

She propped herself up at the bottom of the bathtub, using both feet, slowly crawling toward Lynn before her.

Under Lynn's gaze, she gently sat on his lap.

Janet wrapped her arms around Lynn's neck.

Even though due to her sitting posture, the whiteness in front of her completely emerged from the cover of the hot water, surfacing upon the water.

Janet didn't mind at all.

Leaning forward slightly, that white part pressed against Lynn's chest.

Her face, full of blush, quickly approached Lynn.

The next second.

Janet's rosy lips pressed against Lynn's lips.

As soon as they touched, a strange feeling emerged.

Janet's body couldn't help but tremble, her whole body hair standing up instantly.

But she didn't move away at all, immersed in the atmosphere of the moment.

Feeling Janet's passion, Lynn naturally had no reservations.

He opened his hands, wrapping them around Janet's delicate waist, starting to explore.

Feeling the change in Lynn's body.

Janet slightly moved her head, shifting her face away from Lynn's.

She looked directly at Lynn, her body slowly moving, searching.

Not more than two seconds.

Janet's rosy mouth opened wide, eyes wide open.

Her whole back formed a perfect curve like a bent longbow.

If not for Lynn's support with both hands, Janet would have fallen into the bathtub.

...

On the other side under the night sky.

A silver-white glow spread over a city surrounded by towering walls.

Houses built of stone and brick had fallen silent.

Only a few affluent homes still had oil lamps burning, telling stories.

The bluestone-paved streets were empty.

The only sight was teams of ten patrolling soldiers, carrying torches, occasionally passing by.

Compared to the quiet and emptiness of the city.

The dock near the Seine River.

Even late at night, remained unusually lively.

Strong-bodied workers, bare-chested, with coarse cloth towels around their necks, shouldered sacks of linen, striding down from longboats.

The weight each porter carried was nearly at their limit.

Even with coarse cloth towels to wipe the sweat, their bodies were still drenched like rain.

All for the sake of earning more pence, to buy and replace more food for their hungry families.

At the dock, merchants were busy checking the quality and quantity of goods, bargaining furiously with the ship owners...

This was Kakasong City, nearly two hundred miles from Morgan Town.

On the third floor of the Viscount's Castle.

In a lavishly decorated, spacious meeting room.

Several oil lamps were burning continuously.

Strands of black-gray smoke rose, coloring the already dark walls even darker.

But the yellow-orange glow illuminated the entire room.

Carved on the ribbed vaulting beams were exquisite stone patterns.

Hanging on the wall opposite the entrance was a wool tapestry embroidered with large-scale marching scenes.

Below the tapestry, on a walnut-carved table, were three candle holders.

The candlelight illuminated the faces of those gathered around the square table.

The middle-aged man sitting at the main seat turned his gaze onto the short-bearded man sitting before him to the right.

A deep, authoritative voice came from his mouth.

"So... the spy you dispatched only found out that Morgan Town is garrisoned by a squad of armored soldiers?"

"You don't know the number of armored soldiers, how they're distributed, or who the lord behind them is... is that correct, Zock Connally Manor Lord?"

Feeling the gaze of the middle-aged man on the main seat and listening to the nearly interrogative words.

Zock Connally's flesh quivered.

He quickly stood from his chair, turned his body, and spoke to the middle-aged man full of apology.

Chapter 956: Waging War

"Sorry, Viscount."

"The intelligence I've gathered so far is just this."

"Two days ago, I arranged a spy squad to infiltrate Morgan Town and gather intelligence."

"But three days have passed and the spy squad has yet to return."

"I'm afraid my spy squad has been detected and captured by the soldiers stationed in Morgan Town."

Seated at the head, Jon Zuck listened to Zock's explanation.

Yet after Zock finished explaining, Jon remained silent.

Even though there were nine people gathered around the walnut square table.

The atmosphere in the conference room was extremely quiet!

Almost pin-drop silence.

The remaining seven Manor Lords also turned their gaze towards Zock.

Feeling the strong pressure of their gazes, Zock bent his waist even lower.

Half a minute later.

Jon's deep voice broke the silence in the conference room.

"So, not only did you fail to gather useful intelligence."

"You also delivered a spy, familiar with your identity, into enemy hands?"

Zock instantly began to sweat profusely and hurriedly spoke.

"Sorry, Viscount, Zock failed to accomplish his task and let down your trust, please punish me."

Not only Zock.

The other Manor Lords also became tense.

Even though they had close ties with Zock, none dared to plead for him.

Because they sensed Jon's shift in tone and the authority it exuded.

The questioning words rang from Jon's mouth again.

"You do realize that you have let down my trust in you?"

Zock immediately accepted punishment, "Please, Viscount, punish me."

Watching Zock's nearly ninety-degree bow, Jon let out a cold snort.

"From this month on, Connelly Manor in Alba Town will no longer have the privilege of using Fisherman's Wharf for free."

"Just like a regular merchant vessel, it must pay the corresponding fees to use the wharf for transportation."

"Cargo tax, docking tax, market tax, and additional taxes during special times, among others."

"Not a single penny less!"

Jon stared at Zock Connally, asking: "Zock Manor Lord, do you have any objections?"

Listening to Jon's nearly intimate tone and the content of his words, Zock's breathing involuntarily sped up.

Luckily.

Jon was merely removing his free access to Fisherman's Wharf.

This would only reduce the profits from his future trade activities.

The loss in Gold Pounds was indeed significant, but this kind of punishment was within his tolerance range.

Zock dared not utter a single unnecessary word and promptly replied: "Viscount, Zock has no objections."

"Everything follows your instructions, Viscount."

Seeing Zock dare not voice any dissent, Jon then shifted his gaze away from him.

Jon's gaze swept over the faces of the other seven Manor Lords.

His deep voice sounded again from his mouth.

"I suppose everyone already knows the purpose of gathering you here?"

All the Manor Lords exchanged glances with each other.

Jon, tired of wasting words with them, came straight to the point.

"The purpose is to address the Lord who privately occupied Morgan Town!"

"A Lord who emerged from nowhere dared to wipe out all five Manors in Morgan Town."

"And plundered all the assets and peasants of the five Manors!"

"Although Morgan Town is located at the southern edge of the Marquisate, they are still Manor Lords of Marquis Ducas, they are Vassals of Marquis Ducas!"

"Relying on military strength, began external aggression and territorial annexation."

"As the Viscount conferred by the former Marquis Ducas, as the current Vassal of Marquis Mark Ducas, it's my duty to quell internal unrest!"

Listening to Jon's increasingly resonant voice, all the Manor Lords showed a stern expression.

Jon Zuck suddenly stood up, addressing all the Manor Lords: "I, Jon Zuck, in the name of Viscount, hereby summons you."

"Declare war on Morgan Town and the Lord hiding deeper in Morgan Town!"

"Who can respond to the summons?"

Jon's gaze once more scanned the eight Manor Lords around the table, waiting for their response.

Just as others hesitated, Zock immediately rose from his seat.

He looked straight at Jon and shouted in response: "Connelly Manor responds to the Viscount's summons."

"Five hundred soldiers of Connelly Manor are at the Viscount's disposal."

"This is to show Zock's resolve to earn forgiveness for failing the Viscount."

Upon receiving Zock's response, Jon's face revealed a trace of satisfaction.

He praised: "Zock Manor Lord, to respond at the first moment, you indeed haven't disappointed me."

"Don't worry too much about the taxes."

"As long as this campaign is victorious, the punishment of earlier can be waived!"

"Sit down."

Zock's eyes lit up with some surprise.

"Thank you, Viscount!"

Indeed, the first one to declare is granted extra attention.

Zock knows very well, that despite his close relationship with Jon.

The uncompleted task is a dereliction of duty and disrespect towards Jon.

The punishment upon him also serves as a warning to the other seven Manor Lords.

Dereliction certainly leads to punishment.

As long as this war wins, Jon can cancel his punishment.

As long as Jon issues a summons.

As supporters, they can hardly refuse the privilege of tax exemption at Fisherman's Wharf without responding.

Chapter 957: Launching the War

A total of eight Manor Lords, not to mention everyone would respond.

As long as five or six Manor Lords respond, combined with the fully-equipped soldiers in Jon's city.

The combined number of soldiers, at least over five to six thousand.

To overthrow a Lord would be as easy as flipping a hand!

Isn't this clearly finding any random reason to cancel the punishment for him?

At this moment.

Zock's originally suppressed mood gradually returned to calm.

Just as he had guessed.

Jon had just asked him to sit down when another Manor Lord beside him immediately stood up.

"Viscount, Samuel Manor responds to your call."

In the next second.

Two other Manor Lords simultaneously stood up and responded in unison.

"Garrett Manor responds to your call."

"Steven Manor responds to your call."

"..."

In just a few moments.

Six Manor Lords stood up one after another, their eyes bright as they looked at Jon, waiting for his response.

Looking at the eyes of the six Manor Lords, a rare smile appeared on Jon's face.

He praised them, "Thank you all for your response. Please sit down."

Following Jon's instruction, the expressions of the six Manor Lords obviously relaxed.

They understood.

If they didn't express themselves at this moment, it would mean they were betraying Jon.

They would not only lose their tax exemption privileges but also face Jon's exclusion and suppression!

Several Manor Lords exchanged another glance before daring to slowly sit down.

As the crowd sat down, Jon's gaze suddenly shifted, looking to the far end of the square table.

He spoke with a curious inquiry.

"So...Devant Benitez Manor Lord, are you unwilling to respond to my call?"

"Do you intend to betray the oath of loyalty you made to me earlier?"

The recently seated Lords raised their eyebrows and collectively looked toward the far end of the square table.

There.

A young man dressed in a brocade robe, with long brown hair, sat upright on a wooden chair.

A pale, bloodless face, an elongated and gaunt body, coupled with sunken black eye sockets...

At first glance, he seemed as though his Essence Qi had been drained by some sinister entity.

Devoid of the youthful vigor that a young man ought to possess.

Yet, in his eyes, there was a touch of elusive wisdom.

Feeling the pressure of everyone's gaze, Devant Benitez's face was full of calm.

He spoke indifferently, "Viscount, you misunderstand."

"Benitez Manor in Boxi Town has been loyal since the time of the old Viscount."

"As long as the Zak Clan calls, Benitez Manor will always respond."

"This time will be no exception!"

Listening to Devant's explanation, Jon's stern face gradually eased.

The needle-sharp atmosphere in the conference room also slightly relaxed.

Devant continued, "However, after responding to the call, what can we do?"

"Relying on the armed forces owned by the Eight Great Manor Lords and a Viscount, to directly pressure with an army and annihilate the Lord you talk about?"

"Everyone! Don't forget, it's the summer plowing period now."

"And we are Manor Lords relying mainly on agricultural production!"

"I don't know how many peasants your Manors have."

"But the peasant labor I possess is simply insufficient for the summer plowing needs."

"I must involve soldiers in the cultivation just to barely manage!"

"If war is initiated at this time, we might achieve victory, but what will we gain after the victory?"

"If nothing is gained, my territory will waste the entire summer plowing for nothing."

"This will result in enormous losses to my Manor's production..."

Listening to Devant's words, the Manor Lords instantly fell silent.

Standing before the main seat of the square table, Jon frowned instantly.

Devant cared little about Jon's expression; he continued speaking.

"Moreover, we're responding to your call, Viscount, yet we have no idea who the enemy we're going to war with is."

"We don't know his background, we don't know how many armed soldiers he has, we don't even know the specific location of his territory!"

"Such a war...Excuse me, Viscount, I don't know how to fight it."

"As your supporter, Devant needs to provide you military assistance, which is my duty."

"But at the same time, I must also be responsible for the soldiers of the Manor."

"I would never allow the soldiers of my Manor to die senselessly on the battlefield!"

At this point.

Some Manor Lords nodded empathetically.

Several other Manor Lords cast approving glances at Devant.

Jon's eyes narrowed slightly, and he spoke to Devant.

"So...Devant Manor Lord, what do you want to know?"

Devant's eyes looked at Jon, speaking decisively, "I want to know what the final objective is in attacking that Lord?"

As a Viscount once enfeoffed by Marquis Ducas.

As the current vassal of Marquis Mark Ducas.

To purge rebellion?

Such a reason is far too pretentious.

It even makes it impossible for him to find any convincing reason!

A Lord summons all Manor Lords, gathers forces, and initiates an external war.

Either, it is to expand territory.

To occupy more farmland, forests, and other resources through war, thereby increasing resource output.

Or, it is to gain economic benefits.

To control trade routes, imposing high transit taxes on passing merchants.

Or, it is to consolidate governance.

When economic difficulties arise within the territory, or conflicts exist within the city or among Manor Lords.

An external war could shift people's focus from internal issues to external enemies.

By collectively confronting external forces, it increases cohesion across all levels within the territory.

Or, it is to maintain honor and prestige.

Through achieving victory in war, it maintains the Lord's supreme honor in the territory.

Showcasing the formidable military power possessed by the Lord.

Etc.

Any war initiated by a Lord carries incredibly complex political, economic, social, and other multifaceted motives and purposes!

Far beyond a casual remark by the Lord could gather supporters and initiate a war.

Because once war occurs, casualties are bound to arise!

Chapter 958: Attack on Morgan Town

The eyes of the manor lords unanimously turned toward Viscount Jon.

Including Zok Manor Lord, who was the first to rise from his seat and express support for Viscount Jon's summons.

Devant's words seemed somewhat sharp.

Yet they resonated with everyone.

Because they were merely the lowest-class manor lords within the nobility.

After several generations of accumulation and stabilization, they did possess a certain amount of armed forces.

But compared to true lords, that little bit of armed force was insignificant.

Furthermore, Kakasong City is located on the periphery of the Karedi Empire.

Lacking a lucrative industry chain.

To maintain the living needs of everyone in the entire manor...

Their primary task was to occupy land, drive the peasants, and engage in agriculture and manual labor production.

Even so, the labor force they had remained insufficient.

Being in a peripheral region, they could freely cultivate those overgrown wastelands to expand them into their own territory.

No manor lord or lord could suppress their greedy desire to expand their lands!

Moreover, it required no war, no financial expenditure.

Consequently, the more land there was, the more labor was needed.

So, a vicious cycle formed.

Even with the hundreds of soldiers they had, they would also be put into planting and cultivation.

If at that moment they were to deploy the soldiers, following Viscount Jon into battle, delaying the entire summer plowing...

As Devant said.

Such losses were not something they could bear.

Feeling the shift in the atmosphere of the meeting room.

Jon's expression turned slightly cold, and he stared directly at Devant, nearly inquiring.

"Devonte Manor Lord, do you know what you are doing now?"

Upon hearing this, Devant immediately rose from his wooden chair.

He quickly bent his waist, speaking respectfully.

"I apologize, Viscount, Devant only wishes to know the answer."

"If my words have angered you, I beg your forgiveness, Viscount."

Jon's brow instantly furrowed.

At this moment.

Another voice filled with doubt suddenly appeared in the meeting room.

"To be honest, I am also curious about the reason..."

The moment the voice sounded, it was like a spark igniting dry grass.

One voice after another continued to echo.

"Indeed, even if Morgan Town has vast farmlands, it's too remote, making planting too troublesome..."

"I've always known that area is filled with overgrown wasteland, unclaimed land!"

"But there's plenty of overgrown wastelands next to my manor's territory... Why go far away?"

"If that lord wants to take Morgan Town, let them, what does it have to do with us?"

"Agreed, as long as he doesn't invade my manor, whatever he does is none of my business!"

"Should another bandit corps appear, it would be another armed force to resist them..."

Bam!

A loud slamming sound erupted in the meeting room like a thunderclap.

The noise was so great that the voices of several manor lords were instantly interrupted.

In fact, two manor lords jerked with fright.

Their gazes once again rested on Viscount Jon.

When they encountered Jon's clearly indifferent gaze, they quickly lowered their heads.

Not daring to utter another word.

Jon spoke nearly word for word: "As supporters of me, Viscount Jon Zack, you enjoy significant benefits from Kakasong City."

"What I say is your highest directive!"

"And one more thing!"

"Perhaps it's been too long since we held a meeting, and you have all forgotten..."

"This is not a consultation with you!"

"This is about issuing orders!"

The faces of all the manor lords sank slightly, not daring to say a word.

Standing at the far end of the round table, Devant's mouth opened slightly.

Just as he was about to speak again, the manor lord sitting next to him tugged at the silk robe he was wearing.

Devant seemed to understand something and ultimately chose to close his mouth, sitting in his chair.

Jon glanced around, continuing to speak.

"If you are unwilling to execute the orders, there's another choice."

"And that is... to withdraw from my support team of Viscount Jon Zack!"

"As manor lords appointed by Marquis Ducas, you have that right."

"Of course, I, as Viscount appointed by Marquis Ducas, also have the right to view you as traitors!"

The manor lords were filled with terror.

Yet they felt more relieved in their hearts.

Because.

A few minutes ago, they had clearly expressed their agreement to respond to Viscount Jon's summons.

Jon's gaze turned towards the far end of the round table.

"If Devonte Manor Lord is unwilling, you can withdraw from my support team now!"

Devant's brow furrowed, his eyes filled with hesitation.

The manor lord sitting beside him also sat upright and tense.

Facing Viscount Jon Zack, and the words coming from his mouth, they felt immense pressure.

Seeing Devant still unwilling to speak.

Jon changed the subject.

"If Devonte Manor Lord is unwilling to withdraw..."

"Then I can also inform you of why we must go to war against that lord!"

All the manor lords immediately raised their heads, looking at Jon Zack, still standing at the head of the table.

Feeling their gaze, Jon took a slight breath and started to speak.

"Last month, Simo issued a private decree, transferring the entire territory of Morgan Town to a lord named Lynn."

Chapter 959: Attack on Morgan Town (2)

"Even if Morgan Town's territory does not belong to me or any of us here, it is still within the boundaries of Kakasong City."

"Simo issued an edict without obtaining my approval as a Viscount!"

"This is disrespectful to me as a Viscount!"

"Thus, I had a dispute with Simo!"

The Manor Lord nodded slightly in response.

Anyone who pays a little attention to events in Kakasong City would know.

Jon continued, "I questioned Simo, why would he assign Morgan Town to a Lord who incited turmoil in the territory?"

"Simo informed me it was to facilitate the governance and management of Morgan Town, to restore Morgan Town's agricultural production."

"Haha, a convenient way to govern and manage! A convenient way to restore production and construction!"

"If it weren't for this Lord destroying Morgan Town's Manor, I suppose Morgan Town would still be engaging in productive construction, wouldn't it?"

"I asked Simo to revoke the edict, but he cited the fact that the Lord paid tithing as a reason."

"Deeming this Lord who incited turmoil as a devout believer, a citizen of God."

"The esteemed Church Bishop, overwhelmed by the paid tithing, how laughable!"

The Manor Lords fell silent, not daring to respond to Jon's words.

True, they were Manor Lords.

Yet they also believed in God, as followers of the Church.

Jon's words continued, "Gentlemen!"

"The existence of the Church in Kakasong City is an undeniable fact."

"Setting aside the land, money, and goods that believers willingly donate."

"It's been a long time since any Noble Lord paid tithing."

"But now, this Lord named Lynn has once again started the precedent of paying tithing!"

"If the Church uses this as an opportunity to require all Noble Lords to pay tithing."

"Paying one-tenth of their income to the Church..."

"Gentlemen, what will you do?"

"Quietly pay up? Or... rise in resistance?"

The Manor Lords remained silent, unsure of what to say.

Jon stepped away from his seat, pacing around the group.

Squeak~ Squeak~

The sound of leather shoes clicking on the stone floor was unusually distinct in the meeting room.

Jon's deep voice rang out, "You must understand, this is not just about paying taxes!"

"Paying tithing to the Church will reduce our income economically, decreasing our investments in agricultural and military development, and limiting our growth."

"The Church, receiving tithing, accumulates immense wealth, thereby enhancing their own economic power and political influence."

"With sufficient wealth, the Church can establish a more authoritative image among the people, even outshining the image of the territory's Lord!"

"This will severely weaken the authority and control we possess in our territory."

"The most crucial point is that the economic pressure from tithing will directly create tension between the Free People in the territory and us Lords!"

"It might even cause conflict and resistance with the Free People."

"Until then, the Church's authority will surpass the Lord's! At that point, it will no longer be us governing them, but them governing us."

Jon spoke up, "For the safety of the people, to ensure productive construction, within the scope surrounding Kakasong City, there must not be any element of turmoil."

"Therefore, to eliminate danger in its cradle, we must wage war against Lynn, the Lord of Morgan Town!"

The Manor Lords remained solemn, nodding in agreement.

They knew Jon's words were true.

Regardless of the series of impacts caused by paying tithing.

Or this Lord capable of demolishing all Manors in Morgan Town—Lynn.

The military strength he possesses already made them feel threatened.

If his target were only the land of Morgan Town, it would be tolerable.

A border town, which they already despised.

But what about a Lord with enough power?

How could his ambition be merely that?

Jon passed by several Manor Lords, arriving behind Devant at the far end of the round table, halting his steps.

Sitting upright in the chair, Devant felt the pressure rise.

Jon's voice continued, "The above is just one reason to wage war!"

"The second reason, through my investigation, revealed frequent visits from traveling merchants cross-regionally to Kakasong City."

"They bring large quantities of grain goods, even warhorses and slaves!"

"They unload at Fisherman's Wharf and, using four-horse drawn carts, transport the goods out of the city."

"With the assets owned by Noble Lords in Kakasong City's territory, it's impossible to have such abundant wealth for purchases."

"Upon their return, the carts that originally carried goods are filled entirely with fine salt!"

The Manor Lords, their expressions once severe, were instantly overwhelmed by surprise.

"The goods turned into fine salt? How is that possible?"

"Viscount, do your words imply there exists an open-pit salt mine in Morgan Town?"

"This... simply unimaginable!"

"I understand! I understand!"

"Because there is an open-pit salt mine, this Lord named Lynn continuously trades fine salt with traveling merchants for resources needed for development."

"Thus, his territory rapidly strengthens!"

"Truly enviable, how did he find an open-pit salt mine? How advantageous it would be if this open-pit salt mine were in my territory..."

"It's not a salt mine; it's clearly a gold mine!"

Chapter 960: Attack on Morgan Town (1W)_3

"..."

Looking at the manor lords, their faces full of expectation, listening to the words full of greed.

Including, just now, Devant, who had held an opposing view.

Jon couldn't help but snort coldly in his heart.

Sure enough.

Only sufficient interests can move this group of manor lords.

Jon raised his right hand, and the originally murmuring manor lords immediately sensibly shut their mouths, waiting for him to continue speaking.

Waiting for the conference room to quiet down, Jon extended his right palm and placed it on Devant's shoulder.

He asked, "Devonte Manor Lord, do you have any objections now?"

All the manor lords immediately stared straight at Devant.

Feeling the heavy power from his shoulder, Devant's mouth slightly opened.

Before he could speak, Zock sitting opposite him spoke first.

"Devonte Manor Lord, we obey the Viscount's instructions to start a war just to eliminate potential dangers, and so our manors can be better developed for production and construction."

"Bo Xi Town is not far from Morgan Town; you don't want to live in fear every day, being invaded by other lords, right?"

The nearby manor lords also nodded in agreement.

"Indeed so!"

Devant hesitated for a few seconds, and finally said, "I...Viscount, I have no objections."

Jon raised an eyebrow, then lightly patted the right hand resting on Devant's shoulder.

"That's good."

Retracting his right hand, Jon resumed his pacing.

On the chair, Devant's tense body relaxed slightly.

Jon continued speaking.

"There is also a third reason!"

"I found that the lord named Lynn has secretly been stealing Free People from my Kakasong City."

The manor lords looked at Jon in confusion, not understanding the implication of his words for a moment.

Jon explained, "Kakasong City is just a small city with a very limited population."

"According to the last population census, the total population is just over fifty-five thousand."

"Compared to other cities, the labor force is still too small."

"Due to its remote location, insufficient production capacity, and insufficient food, population growth is limited."

"This is true for Kakasong City, let alone a small Morgan Town."

"Perhaps because this lord has taken too big a step, the labor force he owns is simply not enough to cultivate the land of Morgan Town."

"He actually let a merchant set up a hiring point in the Kakasong City talent market, hiring Free People to go to Morgan Town!"

"If it were just that, it could be overlooked."

"However, the Free People who went to Morgan Town actually returned again, bringing all their families there to settle long-term!"

The manor lords immediately understood.

For every additional Free Person in the territory,

The lord can collect one more land tax, head tax, and other miscellaneous taxes!

Jon, having walked a round, returned to the main seat, bent his waist, and sat back into the leather padded chair.

Jon swept over them again with his gaze and spoke, "Thus, this war is imperative."

"As long as we can destroy this lord, the open-pit salt mine on Morgan Town will belong to us."

"We can jointly occupy it, continue mining the salt mine, produce fine salt, and extract continuous wealth from it."

"At the same time, it limits the Church, preventing it from gaining more wealth!"

The originally expectant faces of the manor lords were instantly filled with surprise and joy.

"Viscount, are you saying we will occupy it together?"

"Do you have any doubts? The Viscount's words are golden and true!"

"I don't know how big that open-pit salt mine is? I heard that even a small open-pit salt mine can be mined day and night for decades!"

"If we can profit from the salt mine... That would be more lucrative than farming."

"Of course! With the current market price of eight pence per pound of fine salt, you can buy four pounds of wheat."

"That's great! I just wanted to replace a group of young maidens..."

"..."

Jon raised his right hand again, and the voices of surprise and excitement gradually subsided.

Compared to the previously tense atmosphere in the conference room, it was now full of fervor and casualness.

Their eyes, looking at Jon, were all full of admiration.

Jon asked again, "Now, does anyone have any objections to launching the war?"

The manor lords turned their heads, scanning each other.

The manner was as if, with any objection, they would immediately subdue the objector.

A few seconds passed after the question was asked, and no one responded.

Jon smiled with satisfaction, "Very good!"

"Then, what we need to discuss next is how to divide Morgan Town's land and the profits from the salt mine."

The manor lords frowned slightly, seemingly in hesitant thought.

Jon directly got to the point, "Before calling you all to the Viscount's Castle, I had already thought of a distribution method."

"I will take sixty percent of the open-pit salt mine fine salt production, and the remaining forty percent you will distribute equally."

The manor lords' eyebrows immediately raised.

The hesitation and contemplation on their faces became increasingly complex.

Before they could ask further, Jon continued.

"Of course, the land, peasants, and other possessions owned by Morgan Town and that lord are to be fairly divided among you."

"Everyone, without saying more,

"Just the land area of Morgan Town alone covers over a hundred thousand acres! Plus the land area owned by that lord..."