

Winter 241

Chapter 241: Fire-Scaled Viper

Even though she was mentally prepared, Emily still couldn't help but frown when she truly stepped into the geothermal core region of the Red Tide Territory.

The air seemed to be filled with a scorching fire fog, with waves of steam coming at them, heating the rocks to a scalding temperature, and even breathing felt like inhaling air from a furnace.

She instinctively tightened the light cloak over her shoulders, though it couldn't really block the heat, it was more of a psychological comfort.

"Are your feet still burning?" Louis ahead turned back, his gaze falling on her boots.

Emily nodded, then shook her head, the corners of her mouth carrying a gentle curve: "It's fine. Though it's a bit hot, as long as you're here, I'm not afraid."

Louis chuckled softly and walked back to her side.: "I originally planned to come alone, this place is really too hot."

"I know." Emily reached out to gently wipe the sweat off his forehead, "But I also want to know what you're doing."

From the first day she met Louis, Emily knew in her heart: this man's footsteps were destined not to stay between greenhouses and banquets.

Emily wanted to walk beside him, not stay in place and wait.

The ground was so hot it felt like an iron plate, each step was like dancing on flames.

Although she was an elite knight and could use fighting energy to resist most of the high temperature, sweat still continuously seeped out, flowing from her neck into her collar, soaking the fabric close to her skin.

"So," Emily turned her head to look at Louis walking in front, wiping sweat as she asked, "What exactly are we here to catch?"

Louis didn't turn back, yet his tone was as relaxed as if he were walking in the mountains: "Fire-Scaled Viper."

Hearing this, Emily responded with a light "Mm," and didn't ask more.

Of course she knew what that was.

She wasn't an apprentice knight new to military life, nor one of those ladies sitting in a courtyard reciting poetry.

She grew up in the Northern Territory and had some understanding of these dangerous magical beasts hiding in scalding rock crevices.

Fire-Scaled Vipers are reptilian magical beasts dwelling in extremely high-temperature environments, commonly found in regions with active volcanic activity, near geothermal faults, and in rock crevices around sulfur pits.

Their body length is about three meters, scales are as hard as iron, and they are deep red or orange-gold in color, capable of enduring continuous high temperatures above ninety degrees Celsius.

They have a gregarious nature, strong aggressiveness, their teeth contain high-temperature toxins that, once injected into a wound, can cause intense burning reactions or even loss of neural control.

Their scales, liver, and poison glands are all highly valuable alchemy materials.

Due to their stable thermal energy output characteristics, they are favored by various military alchemists.

However, because of the difficulty in capturing them and harsh environments, Fire-Scaled Vipers have long been on the high-priced resources list.

Therefore, Louis's purpose for this journey is not just to "catch a few snakes."

But to prepare for the subsequent military research of Red Tide Territory, Magic Explosion Technique, and even the training system for special forces.

"The surface temperature of this area has already exceeded ninety degrees." Louis spoke while observing the terrain, "Sulfur gas, cracked rock steam... precisely the favorite habitat of the Fire-Scaled Viper."

"Yeah, I smelled it." Emily nodded, a faint sulfur scent mixed with a slightly sweet and damp fragrance filled her nostrils.

The surrounding rocks were already turning red, as if repeatedly scorched.

White smoke occasionally rose from the cracks, swirling and tumbling with the air currents.

Faded snake molts occasionally appeared on the ground, with densely packed scales slightly glistening under the light.

"They usually move in groups and like to forage between dawn and dusk." Louis murmured, "We have to find their nest before they return."

"So how many do you plan to catch?" Emily asked.

"If we're lucky enough to find a nest, try to capture as many alive as possible." Louis spoke calmly, "Use a portion for experiments, and the rest for taming."

Tame Fire-Scaled Vipers?

Emily didn't voice her question but her eyes showed more interest.

The scorching ground was trembling slightly.

"Found it." Louis lightly touched an almost imperceptible winding trace with his fingertip, "A crawling track of the Fire-Scaled Viper, and it's a new trace."

Emily followed his gaze, behind a cracked rock not far away, a trace of crimson scales seemed to flicker and disappear, like some kind of lurking heated phantom.

"Their nest should be near the front melting trench." Louis stood up, dusted off his pants, and said calmly.

He waved his hand, and the knights who had been on standby quickly divided into three groups.

The lure group was responsible for drawing out the target, the observation group recorded behavior responses and released mist, and the protection group held shields on guard against sudden occurrences.

A knight standing beside Louis expertly took out a silver-white portable distillation device.

That device looked like a crystal jar protected by a metal frame.

Pale blue liquid was carefully poured in by another knight, falling into the core slot of the jar.

"Activate." The knight whispered, pressing a mechanism on the side of the device with his thumb.

Just a faint "hiss—" was heard.

The next second, wisps of pale blue cooling mist rose from the top of the device, the mist carried a fragrance of grass and mint, appearing particularly cool in the high-temperature scorching air.

An aura of silence reminiscent of the arrival of the first snow slowly enveloped the surrounding heat.

The other knights also successively activated their mist generators, and in an instant, the entire rocky terrain seemed to be subtly dragged from purgatory into a snowy land.

The Fire-Scaled Vipers squirming faintly between the cracks seemed to have sensed something, their movements became sluggish, no longer restless but cautiously lifting their heads, lightly twitching their noses, sniffing the peculiar scent spreading through the air.

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Emily also frowned slightly, staring at the device gently emitting mist, her nose twitching as she sensed a faint scent of grass mixed with mint.

"What kind of potion is this? I don't think I've seen it before," she couldn't help but ask.

"Frost Leaf Vine Guiding Agent," Louis answered casually, still focused on observing the few red figures slowly wriggling between the crevices of the rocks ahead.

"Frost Leaf Vine?" Emily repeated in a low voice, "How come I've never heard of it?"

"That's normal." Louis's lips curved slightly, a hint of self-assuredness appearing in his eyes.

"A rare chill-type vine from the Northern Wilderness, often found clinging to icy cliffs, secreting a sticky blue sap with a piercingly cold scent when mature. I had some people collect a batch for experiments, and after refining, it was made into this guiding agent."

Emily tilted her head, looking at the white mist slowly spreading out, her expression becoming a tad more serious: "Are you saying... this thing can control Fire-Scaled Viper?"

"To be precise, it 'suppresses the explosive reaction in all magical beasts' instincts.'" Louis's tone became a bit more serious.

"Fire-Scaled Vipers, these magical beasts, will directly enter a self-destructive rage when faced with threats, making it hard to capture or even approach. But this potion can release a cold mist, penetrating their nervous systems and suppressing that state."

He paused, seemingly observing a snake that was getting restless, "Just like now, it's hesitating, sniffing, instead of charging directly to self-destruct."

Emily nodded, her pupils reflecting the shadow of the Fire-Scaled Viper seemingly swimming in the mist.

He's not even an alchemist, yet he can design something like this, like some wild genius...

She silently watched his concentrated profile, a feeling arising in her heart that she had never experienced before.

"I originally thought you were just the kind to fight," she said softly, the corners of her mouth curling, "Turns out you even study so thoroughly how to capture and raise magical beasts."

"Magic Explosion Bullets and Fiery Oil also need raw materials, after all." Louis shrugged, his tone calm, "The world is going to get more chaotic, and if we don't prepare for a 'non-human soldier' force early, we'll suffer sooner or later."

The mist had gradually spread out, wrapping around the edges of each hot rock like silk.

Pale blue mist drifted through the air like a light veil, as if the entire Geothermal Canyon was draped in a layer of dreamy frost-woven veil.

"Mist layer is stable." Louis looked up at the refraction of the sky's light, confirming humidity and wind direction, "We can start contact now."

A knight with a lean build and a covered face walked out slowly.

He was wearing a custom-made brown-silver protective suit; this was Adrian, in charge of today's induction task.

A knight from the Calvin Clan, specializing in hunting.

He slowly approached the crevice area where the Fire-Scaled Viper was.

The completely crimson demon snake with scales hovered on the warm rock, no longer raising its neck high as before, but slowly moving, the frequency of its tongue flicks reduced.

Suddenly, a thin flame tongue sprayed from its mouth, hot but brief, not forming a complete stream of fire.

"It's okay, it's a warning flame tongue," Adrian reported in a low voice, "It's not a predatory spray, its emotion remains low-agitated."

Louis spoke softly, "Then increase the dose by one-tenth, we need to form a 'Frost Leaf Veil' in this area."

As the second round of distillation device started, a denser blue mist slowly released, merging with the canyon's moist air, like a thin gauze barrier, gradually enveloping the Fire-Scaled Viper.

It began to slow its movements, its head on the ground, eyes half-closed, clearly entering some kind of calm state.

"Begin contact."

Adrian steadily approached. He put on a pair of specially made frost-covered gloves, gently reaching out, stroking the side of the Fire-Scaled Viper's neck—one of its most sensitive areas.

The snake's body trembled slightly but did not evade.

Taking the opportunity, he took a small piece of meat from his waist and slowly extended it to the snake's head.

The Fire-Scaled Viper paused slightly, flicking its tongue lightly on the meat, emitting a low "hiss."

Adrian's eyes lit up, "It's a neutral signal, it doesn't see me as a threat."

"Very good, induction group, start the operation," Louis whispered.

The team immediately began their actions, with the induction group guiding it to the already prepared taming area.

The protection group got into position, ensuring the perimeter's safety;

The observation group continued analyzing the Fire-Scaled Viper's breathing frequency and muscle tension changes.

Throughout the process, the Fire-Scaled Viper never again showed intense hostility, even moving only slightly when the gentle restraints were applied, then obediently being guided, slowly swimming into the taming area.

When the cold iron net closed, the ligature locked in place, the entire canyon suddenly fell into silence.

"Successful capture."

The knights breathed a sigh of relief, some even cheered softly, but all kept it restrained.

With the first Fire-Scaled Viper successfully guided to the taming area, the pace of action quickly accelerated.

"Follow the same procedure," Louis ordered in a deep voice, his sharp gaze sweeping over the geothermal canyon, "Today, we aim to clear out as much of this activity area as possible."

The knights quickly divided into groups, with distillation devices set down like spirit lamps releasing blue mist along both sides of the canyon.

With the cold mist rising again and the air humidity gradually increasing, a thin and uniform "Frost Leaf Veil" quietly formed, as if covering the entire scorching rocky plain with a layer of transparent ice silk.

The Fire-Scaled Vipers gradually fell into calmness.

Their movements in the mist became slow, sluggish, even beginning to snuggle by the edges of the crevices, as if enjoying the long-lost coolness.

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Adrian approached again, his movements steady, skillfully using the frost-covered gloves to lightly touch the side of a slightly larger female snake's neck and feeding it a strip of meat.

The fire-scaled viper emitted a long, low hum, the "hiss" gentle and without hostility.

"Neutral signal, not perceiving humans as predators." He gestured to Louis.

The entire team acted in perfect coordination, and soon several fire-scaled vipers were gently tied with soft straps, slowly and securely guided out of the valley.

Three hours later, over seventy fire-scaled vipers were all captured, almost sweeping this area of its snake population.

The most remarkable among them was the giant specimen coiled at the edge of a lava fissure.

A king fire-scaled viper, nine meters long, with its entire body fiery red, scales reflecting a metallic luster.

Under the effect of potions, it maintained its vigilance but did not burst into aggression, and was finally successfully guided to the taming area.

The taming environment was already prepared.

This was a natural lava cave, located near the geothermal heart of the hot zone in the Red Tide Territory, winding and twisting throughout, yet everywhere bathed in the red glow of natural magma.

Inside, multiple modified distillation devices were installed, slowly releasing diluted frost leaf vine essence to keep the entire taming area in a "semi-calm" state.

The mist was thin and even, gently covering the ground and the paths of the snake group.

Occasionally, a few restless fire-scaled vipers tried to spit fire tongues, but only hot waves spewed out, disappearing instantly into the mist inconspicuously.

"Instinct suppression is working well." Adrian nodded after observing a circle, "As long as the dosage is maintained, it should ensure stability during the taming phase."

Louis stood with hands behind his back, watching the peaceful swimming figures of the snake group, his mind swirling with thoughts.

These fire-scaled vipers would become the main combat tool materials against the Nest, and this was just the first step, everything was just beginning.

Thus, halfway through the capture, Louis sent for Hillco.

Standing at the edge of the hot mist, he turned his head and whispered to Adrian: "Pick a few older, low-reproduction individuals. The bigger the better, and they should have sufficient fat content."

Adrian nodded in agreement, soon selecting three older snakes over four meters long from the already tamed fire-scaled viper group.

With skilled movements, he secured the snake bodies with cold iron chains, and together with the knight team, dragged them into the dissection tent at the back.

Hillco, dressed in a white robe with cuffs layered with several fireproof materials, walked in with steady steps, holding a toolbox.

He said nothing more, just gave a slight wave, and the toolbox unfolded, revealing a full set of silver dissection instruments and refining devices.

With Adrian's assistance, he precisely cut open the fire-scaled viper's belly scales, gently separating its shallow red underbelly fat.

The fat was thick and viscous, with a slight faint flame sheen, emitting a strange scorched mineral aroma.

"Thick texture, and contains weakly volatile minerals." Hillco murmured, a trace of excitement in his eyes, "Indeed, the fire-scaled viper's fat contains natural combustible crystal salts."

He quickly began processing the experimental samples, using the "cold press + silver charcoal adsorption" alchemy treatment method to stratify and filter the impurities in the fat and stabilize its component activity.

As the devices operated, they eventually produced a deep red, semi-solid ointment that remained stable at room temperature.

When he cautiously ignited a bit of the experimental sample, the flame leapt up instantly, burning quietly with no black smoke residue.

"Success." He murmured to himself, "This is a high-quality fuel..."

Seeing the experiment's success, Louis was also pleased: "Let's call it Fire Scale Ointment."

In the alchemy experiment zone inside the lava cave, the firelight reflected off the damp rock walls.

Next came the experimental phase, Hillco stood in front of a cold iron platform, clad in a heavy protective alchemy robe, holding the freshly refined deep red ointment.

He smeared a small amount on a cold iron plate, ignited it with a regular flame source, and the flame surged up immediately, burning bright and steady, extinguishing completely after nine minutes, leaving no scorch marks or residue at the bottom of the plate.

"This stuff is real nice," he murmured, "burns in wetlands, ignites smokelessly... If I hadn't made it myself, I would've thought it was a product of the Jade Alchemy Institute."

Then he added several refined demon marrow drops to a small amount of Fire Scale Ointment, stepped back a few steps, and lit it.

"Boom!"

A split-second burst flame shot nearly two meters high, the heat wave sweeping in, scorching the face slightly.

Hillco raised an eyebrow: "This burst temperature is at least six hundred degrees, also a good material for making Magic Explosion Bullets. Hmm... stability is good, temperature is high."

He noted down the data one by one, then looked at Louis who was observing nearby.

Curiously asked: "So, what do you plan to use this Fire Scale Ointment for? Mainly for combat, or daily use?"

Louis's gaze was calm, but his tone carried a hint of anticipation: "Prioritize the development of combat-use Magic Explosion Bullets and Explosive Oil, ideally making them convenient to carry, with stable ignition delay, and capable of range burst combustion."

He paused, "Of course, if you have any other ideas, feel free to let me know anytime."

Hillco responded with a chuckle: "I have a few small ideas, but I'll need a few days, after all, this stuff isn't fully understood yet."

Louis nodded, saying lightly: "A few days is enough for you, but be careful not to blow up the laboratory."

The two magic burst enthusiasts exchanged a smile, under the firelight, some dangerous ideas were gradually taking shape.

As Louis was preparing to continue watching Hillco's Magic Explosion Bullet experiments, a knight briskly approached: "Sir, several people claiming to be 'Mages Among Mages' have come to see you."

Louis nodded slightly at the words, calmly saying: "Take them to the meeting hall to wait for me, I'll be there shortly."

Chapter 244: The Grand Mage of the Mage Forest

Sunlight streamed through the high windows, casting onto the deep red carpeted floor of the conference hall, with a faint scent of parchment floating in the air.

The door creaked open.

In walked an elderly woman with silver hair flowing to her shoulders, dressed in a cloak trimmed with purple and gold, her figure small and thin.

She looked just like a kind grandmother, always ready to pull candies from her bosom for her grandchild.

But when she lifted her head, her gaze was as serene as ice and snow, seemingly able to see through to the depths of a person's heart in an instant.

This was Flora Holden, one of the prominent Grand Mages from the Mage Forest, and today she was here on behalf of the Mage Forest to negotiate with Louis.

Louis, seated in the main position, slightly straightened his body.

He deliberately maintained a demeanor of a "calm and steady young Lord," his gaze serene, showcasing just the right amount of the aloofness of a ruler.

Flora nodded with a smile, beginning with courteous words before turning to more serious matters: "Lord Calvin, thank you for saving our Mage Forest's Lei Xi'er. This kindness will not be forgotten by the Mage Forest."

As she finished speaking, she gently gestured, and the young attendant behind her hurriedly placed the box he was holding onto the long table.

It was a steady and ancient ebony box, encrusted on the surface with intricate silver designs, clearly not something one could randomly purchase on the market.

Flora stepped forward herself, with a turn of her fingers, deftly unlocking the latch.

With a soft click, the lid of the box slowly opened.

Inside lay a set of silver-blue armor, its plates arranged like dragon scales, with faint luminescent edges flowing.

Under the light, it seemed as if fragments of a galaxy were forged into the metal.

"This is a small gift we have prepared for you," Flora said softly, her tone gentle yet with weight.

"The armor is made of Nebula Steel, matching the strength of Dragon Bone Iron, and is endowed with a Constant Temperature Barrier cast by a Mage. Regardless of scorching heat or severe cold, it automatically adjusts the temperature. On the battlefield, it might save your life."

Louis's gaze shifted slightly, his fingertips lightly brushing the edge of the armor, feeling its cool surface.

The texture of Nebula Steel was chilling, with a faint magic pulse that throbbed like a heartbeat.

He could sense that this armor was not an ordinary item; not only was the Mage's handiwork exquisite, but even the materials and enchantments were chosen with utmost care.

He nodded lightly, with a polite smile at the corner of his mouth: "It is indeed precious. Lei Xi'er got injured in my territory, saving him was my duty."

Then, Flora lightly coughed, her expression transitioning from the softness of pleasantries to a more serious tone:

"We are here this time to investigate the source of the Corpse Worms. According to Lei Xi'er's account, they are not ordinary insects, and if they were to spread, they could potentially affect the entire Northern Territory."

Her gaze was piercing as if trying to see through the young Lord in front of her.

However, Louis merely spoke nonchalantly, as if he were mentioning an everyday affair: "No need to worry about that, two days ago we already destroyed the center of the Nest, which was the control source of the insects that attacked Lei Xi'er."

For a moment, the air seemed to pause slightly.

"...Nest? What is that?" Flora's eyes widened in surprise, her brows slightly knit, "Lei Xi'er's description did not mention the concept of a 'Nest'."

She was not questioning Louis's logic, but rather in disbelief.

Could such a formidable enemy be "resolved" so lightly?

She had not even had the chance to conduct an investigation!

Louis maintained his composed demeanor, with no hint of pride or boasting, simply stating the facts: "We took our Elite Knights deep into the area and destroyed it using modified Magic Explosion Bullets, afterward..."

"..." Flora listened to Louis narrate the entire incident, her lips moved, but she did not immediately speak.

At this moment, her expression could no longer maintain the facade of a "kind old granny," her brows filled with shock and disturbance.

And what Louis said next brought a further chill to the air in the room.

Louis remained unchanged in his expression, softly added: "We have brought back some remnants of the Nest and samples of the uninhabited Corpse Worm, if you are interested, they can be delivered immediately."

His tone was calm, as if discussing a batch of trade goods, without a trace of boasting or flaunting.

Flora thought for a moment before finally nodding: "Please bring them."

Soon, several Knights carried in a sealed Black Iron Box, and as the lid was lifted, a nauseating stench filled the air.

The remnants of the Nest displayed a bizarre dark red flesh-like texture, as if a part of some large biological organ.

The surface was in constant, faint writhing, with twisted human faces embedded in the folds, seemingly wailing silently amidst half-burned ruins.

Those "faces" appeared half-real, each etched with pain and struggle.

The original worm bodies were submerged in a pale blue Magic Preservative Liquid, thin as threads, entirely semi-transparent.

The most striking feature was its head, with a needle-sharp stinger, occasionally trembling lightly in the liquid, sending chills down the spine.

Flora gazed at the mass of Nest remnants, the compassion in her eyes freezing, replaced by furrowed brows and a barely noticeable chill.

She slowly stretched out her hand, a wisp of fine blue-silver Magic Silk Thread hovered from her palm, probing towards the sample.

At the moment of magical contact, her pupils narrowed sharply.

This was not magic.

At least not magic from the Mage Forest's system.

The magical residue on the remnant was eerily strange, like a sharp spike, piercing spiritual defenses, carrying whispers and noises into the depths of perception.

Chapter 245: The Grand Mage of the Mage Forest

It lacks a clear structure, does not follow any known legal principles, yet seems to possess some sort of primordial "will," constantly struggling, corroding, and howling.

"...It's still resisting," Flora murmured, filled with vigilance and awe.

She had seen the remnants of Forbidden Techniques and had touched the deep magical pollution at the edge of the Magic Tide.

But this fluctuation...

It is a twisted order, reverse life, devouring the spirit with composite attributes.

It doesn't seem to be man-made, more like an "external entity."

She took a deep breath, forcibly isolating magic power perception, her fingers trembled, and the demon silk immediately snapped, scattering like burnt spider threads.

Then, she looked at the original insect body soaking in the bottle.

The insect's long spiked mouthparts seemed to be trying to penetrate the bottle wall. Even though knowing it's already dead, the malice and instinct still spread in the air.

Even as one of the Grand Mages of the Mage Forest, she felt a long-lost shiver.

This thing was definitely "designed" by some advanced magical intelligence.

This completely overturned her initial judgment. She originally thought that the so-called "insect disaster" was nothing but the chaos of mutated creatures caused by the usual demonic energy diffusion in the Northern Territory.

Like the Demon Wolf Tide, the Rotting Beast Swarm, and other such situations, but now...

She slowly opened her mouth: "This magic... carries malice... a kind of curse-type self-expansion incompatible with any natural attributes.

It doesn't even seem to be something human mages can control or create, like it's..."

And her suspicion of Louis in her heart completely dissipated.

This young lord did not exaggerate.

If she hadn't seen it with her own eyes, she would probably think it was just the young lord's fabricated achievement for credit.

But seeing such remains, Louis truly faced such profound terror, and even destroyed it with his own hands.

Perhaps it was because he knew nothing about magic that he could achieve this.

Just as she was working to calm her mood, Louis spoke again, his tone still unruffled: "Although it has been destroyed, based on the structure on-site and the origin of the insect body, we suspect that the nest is not the only hub."

He paused, as if weighing how much to reveal, before continuing with the number: "Perhaps... there are a dozen more nests like that."

The air suddenly became so heavy that it seemed it could crush the entire conference hall.

Flora's pupils narrowed slightly, slowly raising her head to look at him: "May I have a look on site?"

Louis nodded: "I'm busy with affairs, unable to personally accompany you. But I will arrange knights to escort you."

However, it's already late. Have a hot meal first, rest well tonight. Setting off tomorrow morning is not too late."

Flora slowly nodded: "...Alright."

This meeting completely changed her impression of the young lord.

And the truth of this insect disaster might be far deeper than she imagined.

Just as the meeting was nearing its end, everyone was preparing to leave.

Louis, however, suddenly mustered the courage to speak: "Um... Lady Flora."

His voice was not loud, yet enough to make the Grand Mage who hadn't gone far stop in her tracks.

Flora turned around, looking at him with confusion: "Hmm?"

Louis slightly turned his head, as if pondering his words.

At this moment, he didn't seem like the always composed, experienced lord, more like a young man about to knock on a mysterious door.

"I wonder... if I could apply to become a member of the Mage Forest?"

"Eh?" Flora showed an unusually surprised expression, "What did you say?"

She blinked, not reacting for a moment, even doubting if she'd heard wrong.

"I know a bit of the Meditation Technique, and can perform some low-tier magic," Louis spoke softly, as if stating some insignificant matter, "When I was young, the mage in the family taught me some."

Of course, this was the story he and Lei Xi'er had concocted in advance, sounding simple yet sufficient to mask his unusually rapid growth.

Flora squinted, scrutinizing him, as if earnestly analyzing the truth behind this person.

But after a few seconds, she nodded lightly, thinking to herself: "After all, it is the Calvin Clan, having some knowledgeable elderly mages isn't surprising."

She didn't hesitate long; after all, allowing a new mage into the Mage Forest was a trivial authority for someone like her.

"Then... show me your magic."

Upon hearing this, Louis lifted his right hand, his fingers gently rotated, and an observable wave of magic power immediately rippled through the air.

The next moment, a ball of fire emerged suddenly in his palm.

The flames were clear and bright, burning steadily and modestly, the fire didn't even make a crackling sound.

Flora raised an eyebrow, revealing a slight expression of appreciation: "Fireball Technique... well controlled. You're very adept at manipulating magic power; it's evident that you've put in a lot of effort."

She stepped forward a few steps to observe the rotating trajectory of the flame, yet didn't see the deeper mystery within.

She only attributed this to "a solid foundation."

What she didn't know was that behind that tame fireball, Louis was merely "mimicking" what a normal person should be like.

Actually, Louis's magic output was extremely restrained, probably using only five percent of his magic intensity,

If the real him were willing, the flame could slice through a huge rock like a blade, instead of quietly hovering there.

"With your level," Flora finally spoke, her tone filled with encouragement and affirmation, "I can write a recommendation letter for you, allowing you to participate in the Mage Forest's examination."

She paused slightly, her tone turning half-joking and half-serious: "After all, our Mage Forest isn't a place anyone can just enter, even the offspring of the Calvin Family must follow procedures."

"Understood." Louis bowed slightly, his tone gentle and proper, a modest yet poised smile on his lips, "Thank you for your kindness, my lady."

As for the examination, he saw it as nothing but a formality.

He didn't say much more.

He didn't mention he could use Magic Hand to manipulate a hundred-pound boulder from a distance, or that he already mastered over a dozen combat spells, nor did he mention he was currently opening the path of magic resonance with the Primordial Meditation Technique.

Louis simply withdrew the slowly extinguishing flame from his palm.

As if just now, it was merely a noble scion's "casual show-off."

Flora didn't notice anything unusual, merely considering him a young man with a solid foundation in magic.

She smiled: "Then I look forward to the day you pass the examination."

"I will not disappoint you," Louis replied earnestly, without promising more.

Then he stood up and thanked Flora: "Thank you, my lady. I will arrange the matters for tomorrow's visit to the nest ruins."

"Hmm." Flora nodded, "The magic fluctuations on the nest's remnants are too strange to be underestimated. Seeing them with my own eyes will help in a swift investigation."

As time wore on, the meeting at last concluded.

Flora walked out of the conference hall, her figure especially calm on the deep red carpet.

The tall magic robe slightly swayed in the night breeze, snow night's chill hadn't yet faded, but her expression was even colder than the icy wind.

Having seen the magical fluctuations on that piece of nest remnant, her heart could hardly find peace again.

"...How could one just ease up?" Flora murmured, her steps heavy, "This might not merely be a simple issue of mages being attacked."

She sensed that this insect corpse matter would never be just an ordinary crisis investigation, but without evidence to elevate its urgency to allocate more mages, she could only take it one step at a time.

Meanwhile, the atmosphere in the conference hall was entirely different.

Louis could barely contain his inner satisfaction.

His plans for the day were perfectly achieved.

Firstly, the secret of the insect corpse nest successfully caught Flora's attention, effectively drawing the Mage Corps into the situation. The subsequent investigation and information-sharing would proceed smoothly.

Secondly, he seized the opportunity to showcase his magic control ability and naturally gained the recommendation to take the Mage Forest examination.

"Both targets were achieved." He smiled faintly.

Chapter 246: Search

A group of people was traversing the Dark Snow Forest.

The branches and leaves were withered yellow, the ground muddy, and a nauseating stench of decay permeated the air.

The knight leading the group remained silent, focusing solely on guiding the way, while the mages following behind mostly wore Silver Masks, with only the leader wearing a Purple Gold-Edged Mask.

"May I ask... how much farther?" one of the female mages asked quietly, frowning.

"Almost there." The leading knight responded without turning his head, "Walk forward for another half an hour, and you'll see the outpost on the slope. At our current pace, we'll reach the ruin by afternoon."

The mages nodded and continued forward.

Towards the back of the group, a young mage complained softly to his companion, "Didn't Viscount Calvin say he had already 'dealt with' the Nest?"

Since it's been dealt with, why are we even investigating? It's redundant... I was planning to go back and study the Fire Prison Array."

His companion immediately looked nervously ahead, quietly advising, "Keep your voice down... don't let the Grand Mage hear."

"Hmph, so what if he hears?" The young mage sneered.

He knew the only reason he dared make such a flippant remark was that the leader was Lady Flora, a famed kind old lady, gentle and forgiving, never losing her temper.

Also accompanying them was Grand Mage Dilin, the youngest High Tier member of the Mage Forest.

It's only natural for the young to harbor some disdain for young prominent figures.

If it were those stern grand mages who are the cold, silent type, quick to freeze people on the spot, he would have kept his mouth shut long ago.

Just as he was pondering, the knight guide spoke again, "It's just ahead; crossing this patch of forest will reveal it. Knights have long been stationed here."

Everyone quickened their pace.

As they emerged from the dense forest, reaching the top of the slope, the scene before their eyes made everyone hold their breath.

"Ugh..."

The young mage who was complaining earlier hastily covered his mouth, turned around, and vomited violently.

He thought he was used to seeing the rotting corpses and the remnants of sacrificial altars in the Magic Laboratory, but he had never witnessed such a sight.

The air was saturated with the foul stench of burning flesh and mucus; an elderly mage couldn't help but whisper, "Is this truly real?"

The Mage Forest team fell into collective silence.

The Nest was no more.

The once sprawling, rotting mass was likened to a giant beehive from a nightmare, leaving nothing now but a scattered field of charred fragments, piled up at the valley bottom like a collapsed mountain.

Its pale resinous shell had long shattered, the fragments embedded into the rock wall and ground.

Between the cracks, faint traces of human-like faces frozen in flame, some grimacing, some shouting, solidified like wax figures.

The tentacles that had once rampaged the battlefield like massive serpents now curled like charred twigs, disorderly stacked together, with dried-up pus oozing from the cut edges, emitting a strange metallic sheen.

Beyond were countless silkworms and insect carcasses.

The ground was littered with severed limbs and torn skeletons, many still wearing damaged knight armor, their identities indistinguishable.

Inside each insect carcass, the self-destruct sacs had ruptured, the released corrosive acid scouring the earth into dense, honeycomb-like pits, filled with a viscous green-black liquid that exuded a pungent stench.

The entire valley bottom now resembled a black hill made of charcoal, flesh, and nightmares.

It was both grotesque, yet imbued with some unspeakable dignity, akin to an ancient and mysterious altar, silently narrating the terror this land once endured.

A few fully armed knights were encircling the "remains" for clearance.

They donned heavy black protective armor, heavy breathing echoing from beneath their masks.

Some carried petroleum cans, continuously burning insect carcasses not yet fully carbonized.

Others wielded long-handled scythes, carefully slicing the remnants of parasitic nerve tissues.

Knights at the outermost perimeter raised torches, driving away wild beasts and scavenging birds attempting to approach.

Preventing these remains from being inadvertently touched, taken, or consumed.

Even though Flora believed she was mentally prepared, her chest still tightened slightly upon witnessing that "Death Hill."

She took a deep breath, tapped her finger twice on her Magic Staff, and refocused her attention.

No mage, however dull, upon seeing this "ruin," has any doubt that the young Lord's words were true.

This disaster indeed existed.

And he did indeed put an end to it.

"Everyone..." Her voice was calm yet incontestable, "Descend and touch the remnants of the Nest and these insect corpses with your Magic Power. I want you all to personally sense their magical properties."

As soon as she finished speaking, several young mages exchanged glances, exhibiting outright disdain.

"This... Grand Mage, is it really necessary?" one attempted a mild protest.

Flora glanced at him without a word, and the silent authority in her gaze caused all complaints to cease abruptly.

The mages eventually acted as ordered.

They took hesitant steps towards the insect carcasses and scorched remains, releasing faint sensing techniques from their fingertips.

Only in the instant they made contact.

The first mage's pupils contracted, his body shivering as if pierced by electricity.

He exclaimed in shock, nearly collapsing onto the ground, quickly severing his magic connection, his chest heaving violently.

"Magic erosion... it's like a spike piercing through my barrier, there's whispering, there's... noise... it's talking...!"

Another clutched his head and squatted down, his face pale, murmuring, "It's not ordinary residual magic... it's like some sort of consciousness, a non-human, primal malice, staring at me, trying to devour me..."

Chapter 247: Search 2

Someone forcibly cut off the Technique, eyes filled with terror, throat tight. It seemed they hadn't recovered from that instant of "mental touch."

Sweat rolled down his cheeks, his fingers trembling uncontrollably.

Their reactions were almost identical: pupils contracted violently, muscles trembled, and magic power on their skin flared like a hedgehog, repeatedly attempting self-defense.

But no matter what, the feeling of that twisted chaotic magic power was already deeply etched into their nerves.

However, Flora just calmly observed it all.

"Remember." She spoke slowly, "Remember this feeling."

"From now on, you must use Sensing Technique to search this valley for echoes and traces of similar magic power, regardless of where they might be hiding, whether they are still alive or have only left traces."

Thus, the mages tried conventional Techniques one by one, like "Elemental Residue Tracing," "Spiritual Resonance Technique," and "Broken Reflection," but almost all were fruitless.

Either the residual magic power was too chaotic to discern direction.

Or once the Sensing Technique touched that malicious remnant, it was immediately countered and interfered, sometimes causing disordered echoes or forcibly interrupted mental waves.

A mage stopped the Technique, cold sweat on their forehead: "It's like trying to touch shadows in the water, not catching a trace."

Flora silently watched all of this until she slowly turned her head to the young man behind her who hadn't yet acted.

"Dilin." She called softly.

The young Grand Mage under the purple-gold mask nodded slightly and finally stepped forward.

He didn't bring assistants, nor prepared a complex array; he just took out a silver Magic Crystal, gently holding it in his palm.

"Sensing Technique, against such a chaotic field, conventional methods won't be effective." He said calmly, "So I'll first perform a 'retrospective' to reconstruct the last magic fluctuations in this area."

He closed his eyes, silver hair slightly trembling, the surrounding air seemingly frozen.

Along with a low and clear spell, a silver Magic Crystal slowly floated from his palm, complex light patterns appearing on its surface, spreading like ripples, then casting a vague and distorted three-dimensional illusion.

That was the magic residue he "compiled" with his spiritual power, and he began a reverse tracing.

The initially appearing were innumerable fragments of magic information from the chaotic aftermath of battle, strewn like broken bones, dispersed like sand.

He continued to delve deeper, penetrating the collapsed shell of magic.

The next moment, the entire illusion suddenly jerked.

"...Found it." He said in a low voice.

In the image, the previously silent valley suddenly exploded—the moment the Magic Explosion Bullet detonated.

A massive Shock Wave erupted in the Nest's core, horrific magic shattering the core in less than a second, unleashing a mountain-breaking, tsunami-like destructive vortex.

Heat waves, debris, and magic streams diffusely spread layer by layer in the illusion, as if the end had come.

Go further back in time.

He frowned deeply, consciousness sharply penetrating the deepest remnants, finally reaching that moment yet to be destroyed.

The scene stabilized.

The Nest's magic pulsed slowly and rhythmically, like the breathing of some colossal life form.

Among the mounts of flesh and bone, innumerable thread-like neural lines subtly extended.

Passing through the spines of insect corpses, into their bodies, gently connecting to their Magic Cores, like puppet strings, precisely controlling the spiritual rhythm of each insect corpse.

Those threads weren't physical; they were resonance conduction structures at the spiritual level—the Nest using itself as a "frequency source," enabling all insects to act in the same rhythm, like a silent symphony.

"This is it." Dilin murmured.

But just as he glimpsed a corner of that resonance core, his face suddenly turned pale.

The illusion abruptly shattered, and the Magic Crystal rapidly fell to the ground. He wobbled, holding his forehead, lips slightly pale.

"Cough... cough."

A nearby mage hurried forward: "Lord Dilin?"

"I'm fine." He waved, taking a few breaths, "The retrospective took too long... spiritually burdened a bit."

He opened his eyes, still slightly dizzy, but his voice remained steady: "I've already roughly located the Nest's spiritual control frequency.

It indeed controls insect corpses remotely through frequency synchronization. And these fluctuations... some still linger beyond the scorched land."

Flora glanced at him, eyes showing slight gravity: "Can you continue?"

"Of course." Dilin looked up, with a slight wry smile, "I can still hold on, but we'll have to switch to a different method."

Then, Dilin gently waved his right hand, restarting a second Technique.

Thin light threads extended from his fingertips, slowly drifting towards the Nest's remains and surrounding insect corpses.

He focused, manipulating the light threads to "scan" the charred and fractured Magic Cores as if seeking some kind of pattern.

Before long, the light threads began to slightly tremble, gradually converging as if responding to a familiar rhythm.

"...Indeed there are signs." Dilin opened his eyes, voice calm, "These insects once temporarily maintained the same frequency with the Nest, as if uniformly controlled."

He stood up and continued: "I can store this 'frequency' and later use it to compare nearby magic fluctuations to see if any area shows a similar reaction..."

This could mean there are other nests or residual control signals."

He spoke slowly, each word carrying caution and fatigue.

"However..." He paused, frowning, "This is all I can manage."

Flora watched him, voice low: "Is there anything that can be immediately used as a clue?"

"...No." Dilin answered honestly, "The Nest is blasted too cleanly, the magic shattered like powder, too chaotic to make sense. I can only record this frequency first, then slowly test around, hoping luck will lead us to something."

Flora closed her eyes, sighing lightly.

"That's all we can do then."

Dilin was currently the most outstanding in 'Sensing Technique' in the whole Mage Forest; even if she replaced him, she couldn't do more.

And to take it further, it wasn't something a "Genius Mage" could solve.

That was the domain of the Supreme Mage.

Lindi suddenly spoke again, voice low and unusually firm: "But I can confirm—this isn't a naturally formed nest, nor is it random mutation."

He slowly raised his head, gaze sweeping over the charred, twisted remains of the Nest and the surrounding burned, contorted insect corpses, eyes gleaming with a trace of cold light.

"The entire structure, whether it's the frequency construction of spiritual synchronization or that precise self-destruct mechanism... it's too structured, too deliberate."

He paused, voice becoming deeper: "It's like a carefully orchestrated experiment."

The surrounding silence was palpable, a few young mages instinctively tensed, expression uncertain.

Lindi didn't stop: "And the most crucial thing is, the magic system they use is completely different from any school passed down through our 'Mage Forest' for generations.

Neither the energy guidance methods, the logic of Spell structures, nor the feedback mechanisms of Demon Waves—it's all like... a system from another world."

"It may be some... branch of Spellcraft we've never encountered before."

His tone wasn't loud, but it clearly conveyed a chilling unease.

As the words fell, the air seemed to freeze for a moment.

Flora's already tense expression deepened, her lips tightly pressed, brows knitted into an unrelenting knot.

She stood silently for a few seconds before speaking, her voice hard and unquestionable: "Rest for a while, get your state ready. Then prepare to set off."

She surveyed the scene, "Using the frequency model Dilin established as the core, initiate a gradual search in the surrounding mountains and fields. Even the slightest resonance, residue, or interference shouldn't be missed."

Chapter 248: Armor

While the mages of various paths searched separately for traces of other nests, Louis was far from idle.

He experienced the first true contact with the Nest and its insect swarm.

Louis realized that the most terrifying thing about these monsters was not just their fearless charge or formidable combat power, but that one move—

The "parasitic regeneration" after self-detonation.

When an Insect Warrior self-destructs, what it sprays out is not ordinary bodily fluids, but a large number of microscopic larvae on the verge of hatching.

They can burrow into the target's body in an extremely short time, reproducing, controlling, eroding willpower...

It's an ability that could lead to almost instant downfall.

In the last battle, he barely thought of a countermeasure: that is to fully arm all participating knights, filling the inside and outside of armor with sealed padding, blocking all gaps.

But although this solution was effective in the short term, it severely restricted the warriors' mobility and endurance, with their physical exertion multiplying.

This was not a long-term solution at all, requiring a better suit of armor as a replacement.

Louis organized his ideas into several clear requirements:

High defensive and high sealing properties to withstand explosive impact and prevent insect entry.

Good ventilation and sweat-wicking system, so long-term wear won't cause heat stroke or infections due to humidity and heat.

Comfort, ensuring soldiers can operate for extended periods without decreasing combat power due to pressure or discomfort.

Modular design, allowing fast replacement of damaged parts, reducing the burden of wholesale scrapping and repairs.

With ideas in place, it was more important to have someone realize them, so he went to the War Workshop to find Mike for design and manufacturing.

Today's War Workshop was as bustling as ever, with furnaces roaring and the sound of hammers ringing continuously.

The air was filled with the scorching breath of metal and magic power entwined.

A year ago, it was just a crude iron workshop with only a dozen artisans; now, it is worlds apart.

With the rapid development of the Red Tide Territory, especially before the wedding when the Calvin Clan continuously sent over a large number of highly skilled craftsmen and designers.

Mike's team had expanded into a large-scale workshop system integrating forging, alchemy, materials, construction, and precision manufacturing.

In Louis's view, aside from the War Workshop under Duke Edmund's territory, there was no other in the Northern Territory that could match it.

Mike was personally inspecting the reinforcement process of a batch of spears when he suddenly heard footsteps. Looking up, he saw that familiar figure walking slowly towards him.

"Lord Louis? What brings you here," Mike hurriedly took off his leather gloves and briskly walked up to greet him.

"There's a new suit of armor which requires your workshop's expertise," Louis spoke with an unhurried tone, yet carrying an undeniable authority.

As he spoke, he casually took out a few slightly ash-stained draft papers from under his cloak and handed them to Mike.

On them were the basic configuration of the armor, stitching methods, and several section diagrams he had drawn by hand.

Seeing this, Mike raised his eyebrows.

He squatted down, spreading the papers on the workbench, his fingers lightly brushing along the lines of annotations.

"High sealing, explosion resistance, replaceable components... This doesn't seem like something for a regular battlefield." Mike muttered to himself, then looked up at Louis.

"This armor's construction is rather peculiar? What kind of enemy?" He didn't directly ask more, just probed.

"You don't need to know," Louis calmly replied, "you just need to remember, this is prepared for extremely dangerous enemies. It must be seamless; all these conditions must be met. Beyond this, don't ask more questions."

Startled, Mike then lowered his head: "Understood, sir."

After a moment, he looked up, his face now bearing a seriousness that was nearly solemn.

"This set of armor isn't simple, but it's not unachievable. Breathability and sealing have always been rivals, but...

We can use layered inner linings, at least it won't suffocate someone, while still ensuring sealing."

"As for the replacement issue..." He furrowed his brows, glancing again at the arm armor design on the paper, "We can design the outer armor with riveted joints, allowing for easy replacement of elbow and knee guards without moving the main part. However, someone must assist during replacement."

"Okay," Louis nodded, "choose your most trusted team to make a prototype. You're fully in charge of this task, use your best methods to complete it."

Mike took a deep breath, his eyes filled with passionate flames: "Honestly, my lord... every suggestion you bring forth makes us artisans feel like we're dreaming.

I often tell the people in the workshop, our Lord could become an extraordinary Artifact Maker, even if not a noble; he could easily rank among the Three Workshops of the North."

Louis chuckled lightly: "Enough flattery, I can't make these, just help you make them better."

"You're too modest," Mike bowed slightly, then turned and shouted, "Ed, Talia, Frey! Bring that long armor skeleton inside! We have a new task to do, directly ordered by the Lord!"

The workshop instantly erupted into activity.

Thus, over the past few days, the Red Tide Workshop was nearly ceaseless day and night.

Mike spread Louis's designs on the main table, where he and over a dozen seasoned craftsmen discussed by the hearth late into the night, scrutinizing every detail from joint angles to valve structures.

Some were responsible for testing the explosive resistance of new alloys, while others repeatedly tried on the inner lining, aiming to find the most suitable sweat-wicking fabric.

The forge fires burned through the night, and in the humid air, the craftsmen debated, hammered, dismantled, and reassembled amidst sweat and soot.

Upon learning the prototype armor was complete, Louis came immediately. The main hall of the workshop still brimmed with the rust and smoke from the previous night, and though the fires had been banked, they still emanated a lingering warmth, casting a heated glow on the rivets and pipes along the walls.

Chapter 249: Armor (Part 2)

Mike approached with a face full of excitement, his beard still speckled with coal dust, yet his entire demeanor was so spirited it seemed he could nearly fly.

"Lord Louis, you've finally come." He lowered his voice, but couldn't conceal the pride in his tone, "Lord Louis, the armor is ready."

In the center of the main hall, the space once piled with ores was completely cleared, and right in the center stood a tall prototype of the armor.

The surface shimmered with a gray-silver glint, the lines sharp but softened with craftsmanship.

Craftsmen and apprentices moved around it, some inspecting the joints, others adjusting valves, while someone was wiping the engravings on the breastplate with a cloth.

Neatly lined up against the wall were spare parts and material samples, clearly prepared for a full "Lord's inspection" process.

Mike couldn't suppress the pride in his expression: "Every requirement you mentioned, we meticulously trialed. I wouldn't dare say perfect, but... we feel it meets all your conditions.

I swear this is the most beautiful design since our workshop was established. I'm not bragging, but your sketch has true brilliance! If you weren't a lord, you could easily surpass others as a craftsman too!"

"You're exaggerating." Louis chuckled without saying much, simply remarked, "If this battle armor can truly be put to use, your efforts will certainly not be in vain."

"Then, my Lord, please give the order, and the fitting can begin."

Louis turned slightly and looked toward the young man not far away: "Weir, give it a try."

"Yes!" The young man answered, eyes full of anticipation, stepping forward briskly.

As Weir quickly removed his outer robe, several craftsmen stepped forward to assist him in donning the armor,

"Begin." Louis nodded slightly.

Weir swiftly drew his sword and stepped forward, his movements as agile as a falcon spreading its wings.

Meanwhile, Mike began his main demonstration.

"For the breastplate and arm guards, we used Cold Iron Ore mixed with Demon Beast Armor Scale." He said excitedly, "This material is impervious to blade or spear!"

Another tall, adult knight stepped forward, gripping his sword with both hands, his shoulders slightly lowering before delivering a powerful slash, the blade singing through the air toward Weir's shoulder.

"Clang—!!"

The crisp sound of metal hitting metal echoed in the main hall, sparks flew, but the armor merely vibrated slightly with no visible dent.

Weir stood firm, not retreating even a step, only shrugging his shoulders, "Feels strong."

The crowd let out gasps of surprise, while Mike stepped forward to pat the spot where the armor was struck, smiling satisfiedly.

"You see, sir, in terms of defense, it's no less than ordinary fine steel armor." He glanced subtly at Louis, "However, we reduced the thickness for lightness and breathability."

"Oh?" Louis raised an eyebrow, "So what to do?"

"I said, don't just look at the surface." Mike, while tapping the seams of the armor with his tools, patiently explained, "The external armor is made of Cold Iron, not relying on thickness to win. The real secret is in the lining."

He unclasped a small section of the arm guard, revealing the gray-blue fabric inside, woven like overlapping scales.

The inner armor woven with Secret Silver Silk not only absorbs impact but also evenly disperses the force. It doesn't look dented, but a strike like that on ordinary armor would have broken the soldier's shoulder."

Louis watched and nodded along, his gaze landing on the armor's joints: "And the mobility?"

"Don't worry!" Mike chuckled, as if he had anticipated this question, "Not only is it elastic, it's also heat and tear resistant."

Louis nodded, then gestured to Weir to continue.

Weir skillfully performed a forward roll, followed by a slide to the other end, rising with a flip.

"See, the joints are well-closed and move smoothly, right? We added action-locks, covered externally with rubber scales. Even hair can't poke through."

"The closure is indeed impressive." Louis rapped his knuckles against the armor plate at the waist, discerning by sound, "The feel is also steady."

"Not stuffy either!" Mike pointed at Weir, "Weir, run a few laps—yes, just like that!"

The young man ran while adjusting his breath, the armor opening and closing with a subtle sound of air flow.

Mike listened intently, as if he were hearing some sacred melody.

"Specially designed wind conduits that automatically adjust air ventilation! Paired with absorbent grass fiber cloth, no heat rash or mold. The humid diseases feared on the Northern Battlefield won't bother you inside this armor!"

Finally, he gestured for the craftsmen to step forward, removing Weir's right armor plate and swapping it with a spare part, the whole process taking less than ten seconds.

"The limbs feature quick-removal rivet designs, making battlefield part swapping as fast as building blocks."

"Excellent," Louis slowly nodded, his gaze landing on the entire set of armor, "This armor is even better than I anticipated."

Just after the final impact test was completed, Mike waved his hand toward the side: "Fire Wall, ready!"

Several craftsmen moved quickly, igniting the stone troughs prepared long before, causing blazing flames to roar up, forming a heated wall of fire.

The temperature twisted and surged in the air, making even the apprentices standing afar take a sharp breath.

"My lord, we mixed in the Fiery Oil, the temperature is at least four hundred degrees." Mike grinned wide.

Weir understood the test content, his eyes brightened; a young man always loves something thrilling.

He fastened his face mask, turned, and looked towards Louis: "My lord, may I try it?"

Louis nodded: "Go ahead. If you feel discomfort, retreat immediately."

"Understood!"

In the next moment, the young knight leapt forward, walking through the flames.

Chapter 250: Armor

The flames licked up the legs, slapping against the surface of the armor, only to emit a few crackling sounds.

The silver-gray armor plates shimmered with a subtle reddish-gold glow in the firelight, like a giant metal beast in molten lava, striding steadily through the fire.

The craftsmen and knights watching held their breath collectively, and it was only when Weir emerged from the other side of the Fire Wall unscathed that they burst into long-suppressed exclamations of amazement.

"This armor... can really withstand fire!"

Mike couldn't help but laugh heartily, exclaiming, "The inner layer is Cold Iron with an Ice Crystal heat insulation coating, plus that layer of Fire Scale Iron Powder spray, not to mention the Fire Wall, even in the Hell of lava, it won't burn through in the slightest!"

Louis nodded slightly, his gaze on that set of battle armor growing increasingly pleased.

"Very good, Mike, this is more than just a set of armor," he said in a low but approving tone, "It's the last line of life-saving defense for the soldiers on the battlefield. You truly did well."

"That's because your design was excellent!" Mike grinned, speaking with genuine admiration, "We just followed your few design suggestions in forging, and sure enough, we forged something remarkable."

After various tests, it was confirmed that there were no issues with this armor.

Weir, clad in the brand-new armor, came to Louis's side, beaming, "Lord, this armor is so comfortable to wear, I even feel like taking it for morning exercise."

Louis replied half-jokingly, "After mass production, no one will stop you from wearing it to sleep."

He paused for a moment and added, "Take it off, let me try it too."

At his words, the craftsmen hurriedly dismantled the armor from Weir and fitted it onto Louis.

Louis put on the armor and began a demonstration of standard combat maneuvers.

Lunge, sword swing, roll, dodge—every move was smooth and natural, without any feeling of constraint.

He even performed better than Weir, as this armor was made for an adult male's body, while it was slightly larger for Weir.

Seeing the Lord's impressive agility, Mike and the nearby craftsmen had eyes that shone brightly, exchanging excited glances with each other.

Louis, meanwhile, experienced the armor's breathability and flexibility, which far exceeded his expectations.

Although its defense wasn't on par with the Empire's top-level Fine Steel Armor, for the special task against the Nest corpse, this armor was undoubtedly the most suitable weapon.

Louis stopped his movements, pondered for a moment, and made a suggestion: "The overall performance is very good, but I suggest adding padding layers at the neck and knee areas."

He explained, "In long-duration high-intensity combat, if these areas are pressed for too long, it may cause temporary numbness, affecting judgment and response."

Mike showed a smile of admiration, immediately taking out his notebook to carefully record this improvement suggestion.

Satisfied, Louis nodded and then announced the reward plan: "Each craftsman involved in the design will receive 30 Gold Coins, and each participant in the crafting will receive 5 Gold Coins."

As his words fell, the workshop erupted into cheers.

The craftsmen patted each other on the shoulders, their smiles brilliant enough to spark flames.

"This is thirty Gold Coins! Normally, you'd have to work overtime to have a chance to earn this much!"
An old craftsman excitedly rubbed the calluses on his hands, his eyes shining.

"Gold Coins are nothing! The main thing is the Lord's personal recognition, which is the greatest honor for us!" a young apprentice shouted excitedly, his voice full of respect and pride.

The entire workshop became lively and united.

Amidst the excitement, Louis turned to Mike and asked, "How's the material preparation going?"

Mike answered confidently, "Everything is in place, just waiting for your command."

"Alright, then let's begin the manufacturing process."