

Winter 41

Chapter 41: A Slave's New Life

A group of slaves, shackled with chains and ropes, stepped onto the land of the Red Tide Territory under the guidance of the slave merchant.

Their eyes were filled with unease, speculating on the fate awaiting them.

However, as they entered the territory, they were stunned.

Clean houses, orderly roads, and the smell of cooking smoke in the air...

This was completely different from the slave camps they had in mind.

No filthy, muddy tents, nor rotting food emitting a foul stench.

Even the soldiers guarding them did not show the usual disdain and contempt, merely maintaining order calmly.

They became even more fearful, because the more different things are, the more unsettling they become.

But this was only a preliminary impression, what truly shocked them were the words of the Lord on the second day at the square...

In the morning, the square in Red Tide Territory was packed with people.

One thousand five hundred newly arrived slaves were neatly gathered here.

Louis's voice echoed across the square, "Welcome to Red Tide Territory."

The phrase left many stunned. They were sold here, yet they were "welcome"?

Louis continued, "You can think of this place as just like where you were before, but I hope this place can be a rebirth for you."

The slaves looked at each other, their eyes still wary.

"I won't have you work for nothing, Red Tide Territory will provide stable food, housing, and jobs. Your labor will not be wasted, and everyone's sweat will have meaning."

"More importantly," he paused for a moment, then slowly uttered:

"Here, as long as you work hard enough, you can rid yourselves of slavery."

Bang— —!

The hearts of the slaves took a fierce jolt, and the square was in an uproar!

"...What?!"

"What did he just say?"

"How is that possible...?!"

Freedom?

Is there really a possibility of gaining freedom?

Would there really be a master in this world willing to forfeit slaves?

They had long been accustomed to the restraints of chains, guided and traded, and dared not hope for a change in fate.

This was a promise so beautiful it even seemed absurd.

The whispers across the square grew louder, some were excited, some were lost and overwhelmed...

But most sneered, their eyes full of doubt, having heard too many lies.

Louis watched all of this, but he believed time would tell all.

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A few days passed, and the slaves gradually adjusted to the new environment.

The morning sun cast its light upon the streets of Red Tide Territory, carrying a rare warmth in the Northern Territory.

A young slave stood outside a wooden cabin, holding a steaming bowl of oatmeal, momentarily dazed.

This was his breakfast, ample in portion, more than his entire day's ration before.

Not far away, other slaves also came out of their homes one after another, gathering in small groups to warm themselves around a fire pit.

"The beds here are more comfortable than the straw mats I used to sleep on," an old slave whispered.

"Yeah." Another replied, his expression complex.

There were no more endless whippings and insults, daily food supply was ample, and the accommodations compared to their previous slave camps were practically paradise.

Most shocking to them was witnessing freemen with their own eyes.

"Hey, are you a slave?" a young slave timidly inquired of a craftsman fixing the road.

The man stopped his hammer, wiped the sweat from his forehead, and smiled, "I used to be."

The young slave's eyes widened, "But... but now you..."

The craftsman grinned, "Because I worked diligently, the Lord granted me the status of a freeman."

"Really?" His voice trembled.

"Of course." The craftsman patted his shoulder, "As long as you work well, the Lord won't let down anyone."

Such examples became more frequent.

They saw freemen in the fields, in the blacksmith shop...

Those who were once slaves were now wearing decent clothes, living with heads held high.

The slaves' doubts were shaken at this moment.

They began to believe that perhaps... freedom was not an empty promise.

As time went by, their fear gradually faded, replaced by adaptation to Red Tide Territory and a longing for the future.

"As long as we work hard, we can achieve it too!"

This thought quietly spread among the slave community, igniting a spark of hope.

They no longer passively obeyed, but truly committed to their work.

Began to genuinely appreciate the person who gave them a chance, the young lord.

Whenever he inspected the mines or workshops, the slaves would involuntarily pause their work.

Seeing him off, their gaze held not only reverence but a kind of indescribable trust and respect.

Of course, the influx of a large population brought not just labor, but unavoidable challenges.

The food issue wasn't significant; previous reserves and family support made supplies ample, but housing became a tricky issue.

Red Tide Territory didn't originally have a large population, and housing was built as needed.

Now, with a sudden influx of fifteen hundred slaves, previously sufficient accommodations became tight.

But with a little crowding, they managed to fit in.

The slaves were arranged into existing semi-underground longhouses, temporarily sharing accommodations with the original residents.

In other places, such a situation might lead to dissatisfaction or even conflict, but Red Tide Territory remained remarkably stable.

Because everyone believed the Lord had promised to expedite the construction of new houses.

Moreover, craftsmen had already begun laying foundations in the outskirts, new housing was being built, progressing faster than anyone expected.

But Louis said, "Bear with it a little longer, more houses will soon be ready."

So even though it was a bit cramped, there was little grumbling among the slaves in private.

The housing pressure was just an immediate issue, what really concerned Louis was sanitation.

One afternoon, Louis took some time to inspect the newly built residential area.

The houses here had just been erected, the beams still carried a fresh wood shavings smell, and the ground was freshly laid with dirt roads.

From a distance, the rows of houses were neatly arranged, considered one of the greatest achievements in Red Tide Territory recently.

But as Louis walked deeper along the path, he sensed something was amiss.

On either side of the path, occasional piles of garbage could be seen, a musty smell permeated the air.

Especially at the corners of the street, that patch of oily yellow-brown stuff under the sun made Louis's Adam's apple bob involuntarily.

Such an environment may not cause trouble short-term.

But with the population growth, issues of water, sewage, and environmental hygiene will inevitably become hidden dangers sooner or later.

If left unchecked, once diseases spread, Red Tide Territory would not have enough doctors to cope.

Chapter 42: Solving Sanitation Problems

Although conditions were harsh, Louis would never allow sanitation issues to affect the future of the territory.

"First, we have to build toilets." Louis's gaze swept over the gathered craftsmen and laborers: "Install multiple public toilets in every residential area, start preparing."

The craftsmen nodded at Louis's command, but many still had puzzled expressions.

Build toilets?

Isn't it just a matter of digging a hole?

Louis didn't explain much but directly led people to choose the locations.

He chose locations away from water sources, avoiding the main roads of residential areas, and downwind.

Ensuring it wouldn't pollute the drinking water nor affect daily life.

The double-pit alternating method was adopted.

Each toilet would have two adjacent pits, separated by one meter. Each pit would be at least two meters deep and 0.8 meters wide.

The first pit would be covered and left for fermentation after 6 to 12 months, turning into fertilizer, and then the second pit would be used, cycled like this.

To ensure the people truly followed the new regulations, Louis even arranged something special.

Pictorials of the "Ten Commandments of Toileting" were made and hung on every toilet wall.

Since the vast majority were illiterate, he simply had straightforward illustrations drawn.

For example, "Do not relieve yourself anywhere", "Cover the pit after use", "Do not litter in the toilet", etc.

He issued a strict prohibition on these: "Everyone must use the toilet as per regulations, violators will be heavily punished."

When the new rules were first implemented, many residents were perplexed, they were used to relieving themselves anywhere since childhood and never thought using a toilet would require rules.

But no one dared to refute, perhaps not understanding why, but they believed the Lord's words were absolutely correct.

Building toilets was just the first step; the next focus was on water treatment.

Louis frowned, pointing at the map near the rivers of Red Tide Territory: "We can no longer let everyone fetch water from the river as they please, we must build a water purification system."

He sent people to sample from several fast-flowing rivers, eventually selecting the cleanest water source.

Here they constructed a stepped sand filtration pool using a three-layer filtration method to purify the water.

The first layer was coarse gravel, which could intercept mud and large particulate impurities;

The second layer was laid with fine sand, which could adsorb the suspended substances in the water, making it clearer;

The most crucial layer was the topmost birch charcoal fragments, which could not only remove odors from the water but also filter out some bacteria, making the water safer.

Louis watched as the first batch of purified water slowly flowed into storage barrels, clear enough to see the fine sand at the bottom.

He scooped up a cup and confirmed there was no odor before nodding: "Not bad, this water is drinkable."

To ensure water quality, he even specially arranged a few reliable soldiers and stewards to test the water quality daily and report any abnormalities immediately.

The surrounding residents gathered to see, carefully sipping the water in their hands with surprised expressions on their faces.

"Sweeter than river water..."

"And without that strange earthy taste!"

Thus, the residents gradually accepted the rules for fetching drinking water here.

With the new water source system operational, the water source problem in Red Tide Territory was no longer a hidden danger.

And the cleaning work must be thoroughly executed.

Louis gathered about a dozen reliable residents, pointing at the filth: "From today on, you are the cleaning team, responsible solely for maintaining the territory's cleanliness.

Tools like brooms, wooden buckets, and lime will be issued to you, and inspections must be conducted daily with no blind spots."

But relying solely on these people was not enough; hygiene had to be everyone's responsibility, so he established a big cleaning day.

"Once every month, everyone in the territory must participate. Whether they are soldiers, civilians, or slaves, even Knights, no exceptions."

The first big cleaning day officially started, and the sound of morning bells rang out, with streets in Red Tide Territory bustling with people.

Soldiers, civilians, slaves, all holding brooms, wooden buckets, and shovels, gathered in the square, ready to start today's cleaning work.

Though people didn't say much, many still had faces full of resistance.

But just when they hadn't started yet, a familiar figure had moved first.

Louis picked up a broom and started sweeping the dust and fallen leaves on the ground.

Swish—

The sound of the broom dragging across the ground was distinctly audible, especially loud in the quiet air.

Everyone was momentarily stunned.

The soldiers had subtle expressions, they originally thought they were just there to maintain order and never expected the Lord himself to get involved in the task.

Slaves, even more incredulous, a Noble doing the same work as them?

But before they could think much, a few soldiers were the first to react, whispering "the Lord is doing it," before bending down to start cleaning as well.

With the soldiers leading the way, the remaining residents also began to take action.

People gradually dispersed, main streets, alleys, enclosures, markets, every corner had people cleaning, quickly transforming the formerly dirty and chaotic environment.

Louis didn't say a word more, he just focused on doing his own cleaning among the crowd.

Looking up, he saw those residents who initially resisted were now fully engaged in the cleanup too.

As the sun set, the garbage and excrement in Red Tide Territory were thoroughly cleared, leaving a hint of freshness in the air.

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At first, Louis's series of "troubles"—building toilets, purifying water sources, digging drainage ditches, organizing cleaning teams.

Many thought it was just the young Lord's whim, that it wouldn't last long before it fizzled out.

But as time went on, observant people began to notice something was different.

"Hey? Where's the trash on the street?"

"Wait, why isn't there that stench in the alley?"

Even more surprising was that when drinking, there was no longer the previous muddy smell!

In the past, people often had diarrhea, but now such cases had almost disappeared.

In the past, everyone thought dirt and mess were natural since everyone was used to it anyway.

But looking back now, they realized a place could truly become so clean, so livable.

The most visible change was fewer sick people.

Unconsciously, the initial complaints of "the Lord is too troublesome" disappeared, replaced by silent acceptance of the new rules.

After all, who wouldn't like a more comfortable environment?

Bradley stood high up, overlooking the newly transformed Red Tide Territory.

As the old steward of the Calvin Clan, he had seen the domain management across the Empire.

Even the core city where the Calvin Clan's mansion was located, Cloud Tide City, had most neighborhoods with poorer environments than here.

"Interesting..." Bradley murmured to himself, raising his evaluation of Louis by several notches.

Chapter 43: The Second Letter from the Northern Territory

The candlelight flickered, illuminating the letter spread out on the desk. The handwriting was neat, matching the character of the cautious and prudent old butler, Bradley.

Duke Calvin's gaze fell on the beginning of the letter, and he had only modest expectations for this son.

However, as he delved deeper into the words, the Duke's initially indifferent expression gradually tightened, and his brow slowly furrowed.

"Outperforming other pioneer territories?"

Agricultural breakthrough, crops maturing ahead of schedule?

Solving the housing problem more efficiently than established territories?

The Demon Marrow Ore not only being successfully mined but also having a scientific mining plan in place?

Even slave management optimized to the point where no flaws can be found?

Especially the part about the grain yield supporting an additional 1,500 slaves, which gave him pause.

He sat up a bit, glanced at Bradley's signature.

If it weren't Bradley, the family's most loyal old butler, who wrote the letter, he would have suspected the writer was bought off.

But his gaze did not leave the letter as he continued reading.

Duke Calvin quickly discovered that Louis's leadership was evident not just in policy, but also in his personal charisma.

He did not rely on the family's prestige but instead on his ability, winning the heartfelt following of the entire territory's people.

Especially when Duke Calvin read about the near-fanatical respect the residents of Red Tide Territory had for Louis.

"Fanatical? Is it that exaggerated?"

Even the Duke had to admit that, in his impression, few Lords in the entire Ironblood Empire could achieve this.

He originally only intended for Louis to fend for himself in the Northern Territory while extracting the last bit of value.

Who knew this kid would actually make a name for himself?

Indeed, his "many children, many fortunes" plan was correct, Duke Calvin thought proudly.

Like a lottery; the more you enter, the more likely you'll win a few prizes.

He continued reading, and at the part about the Demon Marrow Ore, Duke Calvin's gaze paused slightly, showing a tinge of intrigue in his eyes.

The sales rights of the Demon Marrow Ore were transferred to the family in exchange for support while retaining processing technology.

"This kid's ambition is indeed big."

He certainly knew what this meant.

Louis did not want to be overly constrained by the family; he was trying to preserve his independence.

The Duke sneered: "He's quite bold."

However, he did not dislike it.

On the contrary, he even found it somewhat interesting.

Red Tide Territory, located in the Northern Territory, seemed barren and desolate, but if managed well, it could become a formidable local power.

Louis's willingness to transfer sales rights to the family indicated he understood he still needed the Calvin Family's protection for now.

But his refusal to give up processing rights signaled he was planning for the future.

Once the time was ripe, the Demon Marrow economy of Red Tide Territory could fully detach from the family, even potentially having independent influence in the future market.

A pioneer lord born into nobility often chooses to wholly depend on the family, but Louis did not do so.

Of course, just this was not enough to make the Duke view him in a completely different light.

Louis has yet to truly establish a foothold in the Northern Territory, and the benefits of the Demon Marrow Ore have not been fully realized.

With the ever-changing landscape of the Northern Territory, his future remains uncertain.

But Louis indeed gave him an unexpected surprise this time.

He primarily valued Louis's potential; as for some resources in Red Tide Territory, they did not yet catch his full attention.

Perhaps he should reconsider the value of this son.

The Duke held the letter, his fingers tapping lightly on the table, his gaze wandering between the lines.

Bradley's appraisal was unexpectedly high, even giving him a sense of absurdity.

But regardless, the facts were before him.

A child he never really regarded showed more capability on the barren land of the Northern Territory than expected.

The most important point: the Northern Territory is, after all, too far from the Southeast Province.

The land of Red Tide Territory, though full of potential, is too distant from the family core; fully supporting it seems unrealistic.

The present Red Tide Territory, like a seed yet to sprout, has potential but is also fraught with uncertainty.

Excessive support might lead Louis into opportunism, possibly not adapting to the harsh environment of the Northern Territory.

Moreover, with Louis's attitude towards the benefits of the Demon Marrow Ore, he seemingly does not want the family to excessively involve in his territory.

The Duke sat in front of his desk, eyes again fixed on Bradley's letter.

"Maintaining the family's influence, yet not overly interfering..." he gently tapped the table, murmuring.

Financial support will be given, but not much; he decided to continue allocating 1,000 to 1,500 gold coins.

This amount of money is enough to keep Red Tide Territory stable, but for expansion?

Louis must find his own ways to earn money, to ponder how to let the territory sustain more people.

Learn to augment income and reduce expenditure, not just rely on family aid to scrape by.

By letting him lack money, forcing him to think, only then can his true abilities be seen.

Some military support is necessary, too; the Duke decided to allocate him two more squads of knights.

Nominally to protect the Demon Marrow Ore, but in reality, leaving him a trump card to prevent him from being stomped out right at the beginning.

This contingent in the Northern Territory can't support any grandeur but at least prevents Red Tide Territory from being overturned by any random bandit.

If Louis truly has the ability, the knights he holds are enough for him to stabilize the situation, perhaps even develop his own power based on this.

But if he can't even protect the territory with this bit of family support...

Then there's nothing more to say, not worth further investment.

As for talent support, Louis can handle agriculture, deal with basic infrastructure, and even plan mineral development, proving he has a certain management talent.

The Duke will only send a few alchemy apprentices to assist him with the basic technology of Demon Marrow refinement, leaving the rest to him to figure out.

He has to recruit people, trade his limited resources for cooperation, learn how to swim in the quagmire of reality, instead of sitting back waiting for the family to spoon-feed him.

And for political support, he won't give Louis any formal political backing, nor will he restrict his dealings with powers in the Northern Territory.

Who he wants to ally with, how he wants to establish himself locally, is entirely up to him.

But the premise is, do not cause trouble for the family.

It's like placing a chess piece on the battlefield, to see if he can charge forward or be used as a stepping stone and trampled below by others.

If he can't withstand this bit of pressure, it only proves Louis never had the capability, and perishing in the Northern Territory would be fitting.

He certainly won't waste resources on a useless child.

Anyhow, he has many children, what difference does one or two make?

The family's lineage never lacks; what it lacks are capable, ambitious people.

But since Louis made it this far, earning such high praise from Bradley.

It proves he has some skills and carries a bit of pride.

Very well, then demonstrate some true skills and show him.

Chapter 44: Blood Stone

After dealing with the issues brought by 1,500 slaves, the development of Red Tide Territory was smoother than expected.

New houses sprang up continuously within a month, and barren fields were rapidly cultivated.

There was finally hope on people's faces, and the barren and desolate land was becoming a real domain.

Louis sat in the office, nodding in satisfaction as he looked at the territorial intelligence compiled by Bradley.

Very good, the foundation has been laid, it's time to do something more important.

It's time to proceed to the next step of the plan.

Louis picked up the Blood Stone brought from the Southeast Province, a deep red crystal with a strange luster on its surface, as if flowing with blood.

This is a special magic ore that can test whether a person has the aptitude to become a Bloodline Knight.

Only those with knight lineage can cause it to react.

Louis cut his fingertip with a dagger, and the blood slowly dripped onto the stone.

The next second, the Blood Stone vibrated slightly, emitting a dark red glow.

This indicated that Louis had the qualification to become a Bloodline Knight.

Of course, this stone can only test the qualification to become a knight, not assess the strength of the talent.

But Louis wasn't worried about that because he had the Daily Intelligence System.

If there are children with strong talent, the system will eventually notify him, and he can focus on nurturing them then.

So, how many children in Red Tide Territory have the talent to become knights?

Louis planned to use this stone to select children from Red Tide Territory and find those with the potential.

To cultivate true Bloodline Knights belonging to him and Red Tide Territory.

They are not knights dispatched by clans, but loyal knights selected, trained, and shaped by him personally.

Louis's knights should be fervent followers.

They should trust him completely, follow him, and be loyal to him.

Not just allegiance, but seeing him as a true leader, even as faith itself.

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Over two hundred children gathered in the plaza of Red Tide Territory, mostly under the age of fifteen.

The air was filled with an inexplicable excitement, and each child held their breath, eagerly anticipating something, their heartbeats quietly accelerating with that anticipation.

Their eyes were locked onto Louis, standing at the center of the plaza.

He wore a black cloak and bore the Calvin Clan emblem on his chest.

Like the sun hanging high in the sky, warm and dazzling.

Seeing Louis, every child felt a surge of strong admiration.

Most of them were children of drifters and natives, their parents rescued by Louis from near starvation.

And through the teachings of their teachers and parents, they held immense respect and admiration for Louis.

In their hearts, Louis was akin to the Sun.

"Today, I will select some children to become knights." The Sun spoke.

As soon as the words fell, the plaza instantly fell into a commotion.

"Becoming a knight, does that mean riding a horse and wielding a sword?"

"Could I protect Red Tide Territory like Lord Louis?"

"Can I... become a knight?"

The children chatted noisily, their eyes filled with surprise and excitement.

These children came from the lower classes, and they were too young to understand what the word 'knight' meant.

Their understanding was simple and direct.

A knight is the closest warrior to the great Lord, his guard, a figure of strength and nobility in everyone's eyes.

To become a knight meant standing beside the Sun, in the most prestigious place.

"Quiet, one at a time."

The testing officially began, with knights and teachers directing the children to queue up, ensuring each child stepped forward in order.

Louis stood on the high platform of the plaza, with the Blood Stone on the table before him.

The stone's surface shimmered with a strange light, its deep red glow seemed to be pulsing, capturing every child's attention.

The children stepped forward one by one, following Louis's instructions, gently cutting a small slit on their finger to let blood fall on the Blood Stone.

As the test began, all the children were animated, eagerly hoping for a miracle.

However, as most of the children's blood dripped down, the Blood Stone merely remained unchanged, showing no response.

As time passed, the children's expressions began to turn disappointed, and the atmosphere gradually dimmed.

Louis felt a tinge of disappointment too, but he showed no sign of frustration.

Such filtering was inevitable; only a very few could possess the knight's talent.

A little girl walked up and gently let her blood fall onto the stone.

Suddenly—

The Blood Stone faintly glowed, then gently quivered, emitting a dark red brilliance.

In that instant, everyone held their breath, their eyes wide open.

"It's her! She's the future knight!" the children whispered excitedly.

The little girl stood there, dazedly looking at the Blood Stone, seemingly not fully understanding what had just happened.

Her eyes glittered with confusion and excitement, her legs slightly trembling, unable to comprehend the miracle before her.

Louis gently patted her shoulder and asked, "What's your name?"

The little girl seemed startled, stammering, "I... I'm Lilia..."

"Congratulations, Lilia," Louis said, looking at her, "You are the first knight cultivated by Red Tide Territory."

Upon hearing this, the girl's legs weakened, almost unable to support herself, tears instantly welled up in her eyes.

She stood there in shock, unable to believe she could actually become a knight.

All the children in the plaza watched her, whispering amongst themselves, their hearts full of envy.

Listening to the envious words of her peers, Lilia finally stood proudly upright.

Though her legs were still somewhat weak, the excitement in her heart made her feel as if she were flying.

"I... I will become an outstanding knight and protect Red Tide Territory!" Lilia promised Louis.

Hearing the little girl's naive words, Louis smiled, "I look forward to that day."

With Lilia successfully passing the test of the Blood Stone, the atmosphere in the plaza became even more enthusiastic.

Children are always blindly confident, believing they are the chosen one in a hundred and that they will be selected as knights.

However, reality is always harsh.

Nearly half of the children had already been tested, yet only three had shown the potential to become Bloodline Knights.

And among the crowd, there was a smaller child, his eyes glimmering with anticipation yet shadowed with a bit of fear.

He hoped to become a knight, yet feared he might lack the talent.

He wished to become a knight, to stand by Lord Louis's side, to repay the Lord's kindness.

His name was Weir.

Chapter 45: Weir

Weir's story began two years ago, on the day the Beastmen attacked his village.

He was only ten years old then, still just a child who knew nothing, and he lost all his family and friends as his former home became ruins.

Only his mother, dragging her weary body, escaped with Weir into the forest.

With no food and no water source, they could only rely on scavenging fruits to barely survive.

However, misfortune did not stop there.

Soon after, they were captured by a group of passing slave merchants.

His mother tried to get Weir to escape, but ultimately they were brought to the slave market.

Weir only remembered being displayed like a commodity in front of those cold buyers.

He wore rough fabric, his stomach was starving to the point his chest was touching his back, and even his basic dignity was stripped away.

His mother held Weir tightly, silently enduring it all.

Until a turn of fate appeared, the great Lord Louis arrived at the slave market and purchased hundreds of slaves, himself included.

Louis took them to Red Tide Territory, giving them a warm home.

For the first time, Weir ate his fill, put on warm clothes, and felt a long-lost sense of security.

His mother started working at the Smoked Fish Workshop in Red Tide Territory.

Every morning, she was busy, washing fish, marinating, smoking, never slacking on any step.

Although it was hard work, she survived through her own hands, finally gaining some dignity and stability.

And her efforts did not go to waste.

After hearing about her performance, Louis decided to remove the slave status from her and Weir, granting them free citizen status.

That day, the mother who never cried held Weir and bawled her eyes out.

From then on, Weir had a life goal—to become someone who could repay Lord Louis for his kindness.

Weir stood among the crowd, eyes fixed on the Blood Stone.

The opportunity had arrived, Lord Louis was selecting knights.

As long as he was chosen, he could serve the great lord and repay everything given to his mother and himself.

Only then could he stand by Lord Louis's side, only then could he change his fate.

Finally, he was called up.

"Weir," the teacher gently called.

Weir's heart nearly leaped out of his chest, and with heavy steps, he walked toward the high platform.

The great lord was right before him, somewhat dazzling.

Following the rules, he lightly cut his finger with a dagger, letting the blood drip onto the Blood Stone.

"I must succeed, I must succeed..." he kept chanting in his heart, almost unable to breathe.

As the blood touched the Blood Stone, it seemed a subtle reaction was taking place.

The surface of the stone glowed faintly, the red light flickering.

Weir's eyes widened, almost unable to believe the sight before him.

"I did it, I did it," he couldn't help but murmur softly, tears of excitement welling up, instinctively kneeling, his knees touching the ground.

"I... I really succeeded... Great Lord, I pledge my loyalty to you!"

Louis gently helped him up: "No need to be so excited."

Weir spoke with a slight tremble in his voice: "Thank you... Thank you, my lord! I will do my utmost to protect Red Tide Territory!"

Louis had long known that Weir had the potential to become a Peak Knight.

Even when Weir was still a slave, the Daily Intelligence System had alerted him.

Weir was a knight candidate with a super talent, capable of becoming a Peak Knight and a future top combat force of Red Tide Territory.

The test lasted a whole morning, and out of over two hundred children, eight were finally selected, possessing the talent to become knights.

"Eight knights..." Louis murmured, a hint of satisfaction in his eyes.

Though not a large number, for a burgeoning territory, it was already quite a considerable gain.

In fact, cultivating knights required a vast amount of resources, and though resources were tight in Red Tide Territory, with family support, it was still affordable.

In the South, those small nobles with several generations of accumulation might only have dozens of Apprentice Knights, a dozen Official Knights, and a few Elite Knights.

Compared to these small nobles, supported by his family, Louis's current military power was no inferior to theirs.

The only challenge was that Red Tide Territory was situated in the Northern Territory, which was desolate and dangerous.

Beastmen, Barbarian Race, bandits, and even other lords around were potential threats.

For instance, according to the Daily Intelligence System, the Snow Swearer had been frequently harassing the Northern Province lately, seeming mad, though luckily far from him.

To survive in such an environment, Louis had to be more careful and cautious, relying on his forces and resources to steadily establish a foothold here.

Standing at the high point of the training ground, Louis looked at the eight children.

These children were not only the future knights of Red Tide Territory but also his closest strength, the future Guard Corps.

Louis entrusted these eight talented children to Barnes, the Official Knight.

Barnes had rich combat experience and teaching ability, making him the best choice to cultivate this batch of future knights.

Their first lesson was training in Breathing Techniques.

"Breathing Techniques are the foundation of a knight's training, determining how far you can go."

Barnes demonstrated how to use the Breath Flow Technique, a technique from the Calvin Clan.

Though not as strong as the family core's Tidal Breathing Technique, it was powerful enough to be considered a First-class Breathing Technique.

"There are seven Qi nodes in the human body; activating them through the Breathing Technique can convert the energy in the air into Fighting Energy, enter the body, and activate the bloodline."

Barnes explained while demonstrating the breathing actions, taking a deep breath, his chest rising slightly, then exhaling slowly.

"Each deep breath is an absorption of energy from the atmosphere. This energy will ultimately be converted into your Fighting Energy."

The children earnestly mimicked Barnes's actions, striving to feel the changes within their bodies.

At first, they felt nothing, but as time passed, some began to notice subtle changes within.

Weir was the first to feel it, softly saying: "I... I feel energy entering my body!"

Barnes nodded in satisfaction: "Very good, that's the first step."

In the subsequent training, Barnes required the children to keep practicing, deepening their understanding of the Breathing Technique.

He emphasized: "Breathing Techniques are not just a means to increase Fighting Energy, but a process to temper your spirit and will."

After a few days of training, all the children could feel the changes in their internal Qi flow, having grasped the core of the Breath Flow Technique.

Barnes expressed contentment with their performance: "You have already taken the first step to becoming knights."

This was just the beginning; only by relentlessly honing these children could truly loyal and capable knights be cultivated for Red Tide Territory.

Chapter 46: Exterminating the Snow Swearers

Louis woke up and habitually opened the Daily Intelligence System.

The recent daily intelligence hasn't been of much direct use. Great Intelligence System, please provide some good intel.

[Daily Intelligence Update Completed]

[1: Due to the increasing madness of the Snow Swearers, Duke Edmund has decided to summon the vassals to eradicate them in one strike.]

[2: Knight Reserves Weir has activated his bloodline, officially becoming an Apprentice Knight.]

[3: A group of Ice Armor Bears is expected to pass through the northern part of the Red Tide Territory tomorrow afternoon.]

Louis's gaze swept over the intelligence screen, and today's updates seemed quite useful.

The first piece of intelligence caught his attention: Duke Edmund has decided to eradicate the Snow Swearers in one strike.

This news made Louis somewhat happy, yet he also felt a tinge of worry.

The Snow Swearers, being the largest terror rebellion organization in the Northern Territory, have been increasingly rampant.

Recently, they've not only attacked multiple small territories but also kidnapped nobility and knights for horrific, evil sacrificial rituals.

Although these riots are still some distance from the Red Tide Territory, what if they extend their reach there?

The massive scale and frenzied methods of the Snow Swearers stirred anxiety in Louis.

His current forces were simply insufficient to deal with such a rebellious organization.

However, Edmund Duke's move to eradicate this organization is undoubtedly a blessing for the Northern Territory.

But his gaze sank again.

According to the Northern Territory Expansion Order, he is nominally considered a vassal of Duke Edmund, or rather the entire Northern Territory is his vassals.

"I definitely need to respond to the summons," Louis whispered to himself.

The situation in the Northern Territory is turbulent and unsettling, and as a vassal, he must deploy troops to quell the rebellion at the Duke's call.

Yet, the Red Tide Territory has just stabilized, and the troops he commands are still weak.

If they engage in a rebellion suppression campaign, losses are inevitable.

But then Louis remembered one thing—he has the Daily Intelligence System.

This powerful tool had already kept him safe through many crises.

Using the system, Louis can detect potential threats on the battlefield in advance, avoiding direct confrontations.

It could even allow the Red Tide Territory to seize more resources amidst the turmoil, enhancing its strength.

"Armies throw back the invaders, and earth blocks the flood." With this thought, he felt much more relaxed.

Louis continued reading the intelligence, his eyes landing on the second update.

"Weir has officially become an Apprentice Knight, activating his bloodline."

He was slightly surprised but then a hint of admiration flashed in his eyes.

With the help of the Daily Intelligence System, he had long foreseen this moment.

Moreover, Weir's future is not just as a mere Apprentice Knight; he will become one of the strongest forces in the Red Tide Territory.

"Truly destined to be a future Peak Knight," Louis couldn't help but exclaim, nodding in satisfaction.

He then looked at the third piece of intelligence: "Ice Armor Bears have awakened from hibernation and are expected to pass through the northern part of the Red Tide Territory tomorrow afternoon."

Adult Ice Armor Bears are extremely dangerous magic creatures.

They stand at a height of 7.2 meters, their skin covered with a natural layer of Ice Crystal, almost impervious to any attack.

Their forepaws have evolved into half-meter-long Cold Iron Claws, releasing cold pulses when hunting, instantly freezing the blood of their prey.

There wasn't a hint of worry on Louis's face; instead, a faint smile emerged.

"For me, this is actually a good thing," he whispered to himself.

Although powerful and fierce, Ice Armor Bears aren't much of a threat to his current combat power.

Moreover, their meat is incredibly valuable, capable of enhancing a knight's flesh and Fighting Energy.

This serves as a perfect reward for his knights and the eight Knight Reserves under his care.

Additionally, these knights have not experienced battle for quite a while. The presence of the Ice Armor Bears can also ignite their desire for combat and training enthusiasm.

He immediately summoned Lambert: "Lambert, gather all knights and archers, prepare to head north for hunting."

Lambert asked no questions, responding promptly and going to arrange the related matters.

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An urgent report quickly flew into Duke Edmund's study.

"Report: One territory in the Northern Territory encountered a Snow Swearers attack, all civilians were killed, and the nobility and knights were taken away."

This brief line of text exploded like a massive bomb in the Duke's heart.

This is the sixth incident of its kind in the past two months.

The atrocities of the Snow Swearers are becoming more rampant, causing every inch of land in the Northern Territory to tremble with unease.

"Damn Snow Swearers!"

Duke Edmund suddenly stood up, sweeping the documents on his desk to the floor.

The Snow Swearers were once a surviving force of the Snow Country, gradually becoming desperados following the Empire's conquest.

Now, entangled in hatred, this organization is igniting their fire of vengeance across the Northern Territory.

"These aren't just bandits anymore; we need to strike hard!"

The flames of anger raged in the Duke's heart, and he knew he must eradicate this threat before the Northern Territory could regain peace.

Even if they cannot completely wipe them out, they must cut off their hands so they dare not plunder the territories at will.

That evening, the Duke summoned the senior members of his family, military advisors, strategists, and key generals for an emergency meeting.

"We can't wait any longer. Deploy all vassals, gather the army, and divide our forces to encircle and annihilate the Snow Swearers' base!"

Under the Duke's instruction, all family members began discussing in detail how to deal with the storm.

The meeting plunged into intense strategic discussions, with strategists starting to formulate specific battle plans.

"We will divide our forces to besiege the Snow Swearers' bases, ensuring no stone unturned. Meanwhile, heavy forces will guard the borders to prevent the Northern Tribe from exploiting any weakness..."

The Duke instructed, "Notify all vassals to gather and prepare to attack; make sure to depart on time."

As the meeting was drawing to a close, a strategist asked, "Duke, should we include those newly arrived Southern Pioneer Lords in this operation?"

Duke Edmund sneered, his eyes filled with disdain: "All of them! Southern Pioneer Lords?"

These people are nothing but worthless offspring of nobility; besides, when they die, those big shots in the South won't even care. Let's send them to die too!"

His tone revealed blatant contempt for the Southern Pioneer Lords.

The Emperor's original Northern Territory Expansion Order had asked the southern nobility to send sons to develop frontier lands, using their strength to stabilize the Northern Territory.

In reality, they merely sent a few dispensable corners to pacify the Emperor.

Since that's the case, let's take the opportunity of this campaign to eliminate these useless troubles.

After the meeting, the Duke immediately began implementing the plan.

The knights quickly took action, delivering orders to every vassal to ensure all armies could gather on time.

The entire Northern Territory, like a slumbering beast, began to slowly awaken, preparing for the bloody battle ahead.

Standing upon the high tower of Frost Halberd City, Duke Edmund coldly overlooked the lands about to be engulfed in flames.

Chapter 47: Hunting the Ice Armor Bear Horde

Louis stood atop the mountain, gazing down at the group of Ice Armor Bears.

Sunlight shone on their gray-white armor, the hexagonal ice crystal scales reflecting blinding light.

The claws on their front paws were as sharp as cold iron, and blue flames occasionally flickered as the armor on their backs moved.

These Ice Armor Bears were massive, each growl like a thunderous quake shaking the earth.

No matter how you looked at them, these giants were anything but cute; rather, they were extremely fierce beings.

They roamed the snowy ground, searching for prey to fill their bellies.

Beside Louis stood two children—Lilia and Weir.

They were the only two out of the eight candidate knights who had activated their bloodlines and become Apprentice Knights.

Today, Louis decided to bring them to witness this hunt firsthand.

To liberate them from the dullness of daily training, as a reward for their efforts.

Lilia's eyes sparkled with excitement, gripping a longsword almost as tall as herself, mimicking the stance of an adult knight.

Not to be outdone, Weir adjusted his gear and straightened his back to make himself look like a real knight.

"You'll stay by my side and protect me," Louis whispered.

He was actually worried that the two excited little ones might rush down to challenge the Ice Armor Bears in a life-or-death battle.

Protecting the Lord! Such an important task!

Lilia and Weir straightened their backs a little more, nodding nervously with excitement.

When all was ready, Louis waved his hand: "Prepare, the bear-hunting plan starts."

At his command, a distant commander waved a large flag, signaling the knights and hunters to stealthily move from their ambush spots.

Hunters quietly approached the activity zones of the Ice Armor Bears and discreetly sprinkled the urine of a bear in heat.

This peculiar odor could quickly attract Ice Armor Bears, especially as the male bears were extremely sensitive to it.

As the urine was spread, the bear group started slowly gathering, and nine Ice Armor Bears gradually assembled and headed towards the gorge.

Meanwhile, another group of hunters hid on distant ridges, creating sounds of falling stones to guide the bears into the pre-designated gorge.

"They're entering the gorge, everyone act as planned," signaled the commander with a flag wave.

At the low-lying areas of the gorge, a row of sharp stakes were meticulously arranged in the ground.

Under the guidance of the hunters, when the Ice Armor Bears entered the gorge,

the stakes quickly pierced the paws of a few leading bears since their paws lacked thick armor.

Sharp pain spread rapidly, and the Ice Armor Bears growled deeply, trying to pull out the stakes embedded deep within.

However, their massive size and unwieldy strength kept them from breaking free immediately.

The other Ice Armor Bears faced similar dilemmas, leading to chaos within the group.

Soon, the hunters set alight the resin and petroleum accumulated on the cliff walls, and flames devoured the mountainside almost instantly.

With a roar, fireballs fell from the cliff, accurately landing in the center of the bear group.

The sound of explosions and spreading flames engulfed those Ice Armor Bears trapped by the stakes in an instant.

Though the high temperatures of the flames ignited the Ice Armor Bears' fur, their thick ice armor didn't collapse immediately under the heat.

The flames only left burn marks on their hard scales, without delivering a fatal blow.

The bear group grew more chaotic and furious from the searing flames, pressing and clashing against each other.

At this moment, the eyes, necks, and other weak spots of the Ice Armor Bears were exposed, but it was difficult for ordinary arrows to pierce through their thick armor.

The archers hidden above the gorge began using fire arrows, shooting at the Ice Armor Bears.

The arrows barely had any penetrating power, aimed instead to drain the bears of strength and endurance.

Fire arrows struck the bodies of the Ice Armor Bears, flames spreading along the heavy armor.

While unable to tear through the armor, the sustained burning gradually wore down the bears' physical strength, slowing their movements significantly.

Despite their remaining strength, their thick armor was now riddled with cracks, some spots even melted by high temperatures, revealing the tough yet no longer impenetrable skin beneath.

At this instant, the knights ambushed all around made their move.

"Now!" the commander's command flag sharply dropped.

The knights raised longswords and spears, channeling fighting energy as blazing red light ignited on their blades.

Crimson fighting energy flowed along the weapons, the slight tremor even distorting the air.

"Charge!"

The knights' warhorses leaped forward sharply, their targets clear: the joints, jaw, throat, and eyes of the Ice Armor Bears—weak points.

The archers had greatly reduced the defenses in these areas, and the knights' task was to end the bears' lives.

An Elite Knight brandished a spear, fighting energy condensing into radiant glory at the spear tip.

He targeted a slightly smaller Ice Armor Bear, which had a fine crack in its throat from the arrows.

The knight's gaze was like an eagle, battle horse galloping in the fierce wind.

Fighting energy burned on the spear's tip, and he plunged it into that crack fiercely!

"Squelch——"

The spear thrust directly into the Ice Armor Bear's crack, blood and crimson fighting energy intertwined, like fiery lava searing through the bear's flesh.

The Ice Armor Bear unleashed a sky-shaking roar, its massive body quivering in agony, nearly collapsing.

Weir, watching, had a gleam of excitement in his eyes, jumping up: "We defeated one! The knights are so strong!"

"Don't get too excited, Weir," Louis said calmly, "This is just the first stage."

Weir was briefly stunned, confused, as the Ice Armor Bear seemed about to fall.

Just then, the tottering Ice Armor Bear raised its head, roaring in anger.

Its hard shell began to crack intensely, ice flames spreading out like demon wings, chilling mists swiftly spreading in the air!

As the ice flames met the air, they erupted in a fierce frosty explosion.

"Retreat quickly!" the commander hastily waved the flag.

The cold force swept across, covering a few knights with ice flames before they could react.

Fortunately, the fighting energy shielding prevented total incapacitation, allowing them to retreat swiftly.

However, the Ice Armor Bear's assault didn't end there.

As the Ice Armor Bear entered full berserk mode, three giant crystal spikes rose from its back.

The crystal spikes continuously released high-energy shock waves, intertwining heatwaves and explosive sounds, shaking the surrounding knights nearly to impotence.

The air around seemed to grow heavy, each intense vibration making it hard to breathe.

Chapter 48: Treasures All Over

Weir watched the situation nervously, worried for the fighting knights.

By now, the Ice Armor Bears were in a complete state of rage, seemingly freezing everything around them in their fury.

Three massive crystalline spikes protruded from their backs, emitting a scorching blue light.

The air began to vibrate violently from the distortion of intense heat, shaking the knights nearby to the point they could hardly stand.

The arrows from the archers could no longer reach the skins of the Ice Armor Bears, as the icy flames in the air evaporated them mid-flight.

"Initiate second phase of the plan!" Louis commanded loudly.

The commander waved a flag, sending out the signal.

The knights quickly divided into several small groups, starting to encircle the Ice Armor Bears.

They quickly moved out of the bears' line of sight, each provocation causing the bears to grow more agitated.

Their hexagonal eyes flashed with angry red light, as cold flames continuously leaked from their bodies.

"Keep luring them, don't let them get close!" Lambert, the on-site commander, shouted.

Each time they approached, the knights swiftly turned away, skillfully dodging the attacks of the Ice Armor Bears.

They swung their giant claws madly, but no matter what, they always struck empty air.

Frustrated roars tore through the silence of the mountains.

The crystalline spikes released ever more intense heat waves, and the air was filled with deafening energy waves.

"Their energy is about to burst!" Lilia shouted, her eyes filled with worry.

"Be patient a little longer, don't let them stop!" Louis kept his eyes on the Ice Armor Bears, observing the crystals on their backs.

At this moment, any detail could determine the outcome.

The knights' movements became increasingly precise, their provocations pushing the bears' berserk energy further each time.

The implementation of the kiting strategy continuously drove each of the nine Ice Armor Bears into a frenzied state of frenzy.

The energy within them began to overflow uncontrollably, the furious air currents almost collapsing the surrounding trees and rocks.

Rocks began to roll down, and even the distant mountains could feel the vibrations.

"Now's the time!" Lambert's eyes lit up as he saw that fleeting opportunity.

Lambert led six Elite Knights and twenty-three Official Knights to swiftly separate and charge at each berserk Ice Armor Bear.

Each bear was desperately releasing powerful cold flames, the raging air currents sweeping all around.

Temperature rose sharply, cold winds and heat waves interwove into a deadly barrier.

Lambert gripped his longsword tightly, leading his team to advance, with a clear target—the core of the berserk Ice Armor Bears.

"Slash!"

The longsword stabbed fiercely into the core of a berserk Ice Armor Bear's back.

Meanwhile, the other knights were not to be outdone, quickly concentrating their strength in successive attacks.

As the knights attacked, the crystalline spikes on the bears' backs flickered and violently shook, unleashing powerful energy like a torrential downpour.

A massive shock wave erupted instantly, almost tearing apart the entire battlefield, cold flames forming a giant storm that swept everything away.

"Retreat! Quickly retreat!" Lambert's voice was almost drowned out by the explosion's roar.

The knights swiftly retreated, avoiding the uncontrollable explosive energy.

The battlefield was shrouded in smoke, with flames scattering in all directions.

The energy burst from the nine Ice Armor Bears created a terrifying disaster, shaking the air into distortion.

The ice crystal shells shattered in the flames, fragments flying everywhere.

As the smoke cleared, in the chaos of the battlefield, the bodies of the nine surviving Ice Armor Bears lay quietly.

Although their berserk explosive force was enough to tear apart everything around, thanks to the ice crystal shell, their remains were not reduced to ashes.

Their crystalline spikes remained hard, though some had shattered, still conveying a powerful threat.

It was over, Louis stood at one side of the battlefield and surveyed the area, finally breathing a sigh of relief.

Although it was a fierce battle, his troops emerged unscathed, not even their warhorses suffered any harm.

Weir and Lilia stood aside, their eyes gleaming with longing.

They looked at the knights on the battlefield, aspiring to one day stand there as they did.

To be able to stand on the battlefield, slaying these powerful enemies for Lord Louis.

"We can do it too, right?" Lilia asked softly.

Weir didn't speak, just nodded vigorously.

With the battle concluded, the knights began to methodically collect the spoils of war.

The once feared behemoths now lay quietly on the ground, turned into trophies.

Moreover, each Ice Armor Bear was practically a treasure trove.

The knights carefully cut off the bear meat, which was firm and elastic, exuding a unique aroma.

Ice Armor Bear meat was considered a valuable tonic, selling for high prices in the South.

It effectively enhanced the knights' bodies, increasing their Fighting Energy reserves.

Every piece of meat could provide the knights with significant assistance.

There were even knights specialized in dismantling the crystals from the bears' backs.

These crystals could be turned into potent potions or magic items in the hands of an Alchemist, with prices that couldn't be matched in the market.

Louis looked at the bear corpses, his gaze tinged with a hint of regret.

If it weren't for the Ice Armor Bears being so dangerous, even unstable, he would have long considered opening an Ice Armor Bear farm.

These massive creatures, every inch of them was well worth utilizing.

Bear meat, crystals, ice armor, even bear claws and teeth held immense value, like a natural resource chest.

But it could only be a thought, any attempt to raise them might result in the Red Tide Territory being blown sky high in no time.

He glanced at the busy knights, looking at the spoils, and couldn't help but smile.

This was indeed a magnificent victory, so he prepared to reward the knights.

"Alright, everyone, stop!" he shouted loudly.

The knights all paused their work, turning to look at Louis.

"I've decided to hold a feast tonight with this Ice Armor Bear meat!" Louis announced.

As soon as he finished speaking, the surrounding knights erupted in cheers.

The tense atmosphere after the battle instantly dissipated.

"Lord Louis, this is so generous!" a knight was the first to cheer loudly.

"Indeed! This bear meat is precious, it's the warrior's boon!" another knight's eyes gleamed.

The surrounding knights raised their hands and shouted in unison, "Praise the great Lord."

Listening to the joyous laughter around him, Louis felt very satisfied.

After all, these knights weren't trained directly by him, only by providing enough resources could he ensure their real loyalty.

With sufficient rewards, a knight performing six strikes per second wasn't the limit.

Moreover, with imminent danger, the Ice Armor Bear meat could provide his troops with additional strength, giving him greater confidence in facing the upcoming bandit-clearing challenge.

Chapter 49: Barbecue Feast

When Louis rode back to the territory with his prey, the sky was already growing dark.

The battle he had just participated in was still exciting, and the good news today came one after another.

Upon returning to his residence, he received the second batch of support from his father, Duke Calvin.

"Sir, your father has replied," Bradley respectfully handed the letter to Louis.

Louis opened the envelope and began reading quickly.

Duke Calvin provided him with 6 Elite Knights, 20 Official Knights, and 60 Apprentice Knights.

This nearly doubled his military power.

Besides the knights, the letter also mentioned 3 Alchemy Apprentices, although not many, they were enough to help him establish a stable Demon Marrow extraction technique.

What surprised him the most was his father's agreement to his proposal for Demon Marrow mining and processing.

He even agreed to let the Red Tide Territory handle all the work for this project, while the family would only be responsible for sales.

It ensured his autonomy over this project.

This meant that Louis would sell the finished Demon Marrow products to the Calvin Clan, which would then distribute them.

The last line of the letter came with a reminder: "You will always be a member of the Calvin Clan."

Although it wasn't stated explicitly, the underlying threat made Louis slightly tense.

He understood it was a warning not to have too many personal thoughts.

Louis put down the letter, stretched lazily, feeling great: "Today is truly a day of double joy."

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Inside the banquet tent, the atmosphere was lively.

Louis sat at the head, in front of him was a plate of golden roasted Ice Armor Bear meat.

For this barbeque banquet, Louis did not invite ordinary subjects.

After all, the meat of the Ice Armor Bear was too precious, and this banquet was mainly for the knights.

Besides Louis and his original knights, the feast also included new knights brought from the family and eight reserve knights.

It was both a celebration of a successful hunt and a welcoming party for the newly joined knights.

Plates of roasted meat were served, emitting tempting aromas.

Every piece of Ice Armor Bear meat was roasted to perfection, with a slightly charred surface and tender flesh.

"One portion each," old butler Bradley commanded on the side.

Servants quickly distributed the roasted meat to each knight.

The atmosphere of the banquet instantly heated up, especially for the new knights who had yet to adapt to the coldness and bleakness of this land.

To their surprise, they could enjoy such a precious delicacy as soon as they arrived at the Red Tide Territory.

"This is the meat of an Ice Armor Bear, it can nourish and strengthen, enhancing Fighting Energy," Bradley explained to the new knights.

"This... this is Ice Armor Bear meat?" The eyes of a young knight almost popped out.

The preciousness of Ice Armor Bear meat was self-evident, in the South, only a very few nobility had the chance to taste such high-grade Magical Beast meat.

"We're given Ice Armor Bear meat to eat, how luxurious!" The new knight's eyes were full of amazement.

"I usually eat ordinary Magical Beast meat only once or twice a year. I never thought I would taste this premium kind right upon arrival."

Another young knight could not help but mutter softly: "In the South, even the great nobles only have the chance to eat this level of Magical Beast meat at important banquets. Such good meat, ordinary knights don't even dare to touch."

"Is this the treatment of the Northern Territory?" a new knight asked softly.

The veteran knight next to him shrugged indifferently in a Versailles manner: "Actually, this kind of premium Magical Beast meat isn't common even here, but you can eat ordinary Magical Beast meat once a month, so don't make a fuss."

The new knights were even more shocked, being able to eat ordinary Magical Beast meat once a month!

What a generous lord!

"Seems like I've come to the right place," the new knight thought to himself.

They had originally harbored some resentment upon reaching the Northern Territory, thinking they had come to endure hardship, only to find that they had actually come to enjoy themselves.

Their grievances dissipated, replaced by loyalty to the generous Lord Louis.

Louis stood in the center of the banquet, raising his glass: "Everyone, you have worked hard, today's banquet is not only to celebrate our victory but also to celebrate the joining of our many new members."

Everyone's effort is indispensable; from the hunting ground to the battlefield, we will face many challenges together and share the fruits of victory.

Remember, whenever I have something to eat, so will all of you."

The knights raised their glasses, responding enthusiastically, chanting: "Long live the Lord! Long live the Lord!"

Their eyes were filled with admiration and gratitude for Louis.

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Weir was also at the banquet, sitting among a group of knights, with an excited expression.

Being able to become a member of the Red Tide Territory Knight Order filled him with immense pride.

The atmosphere of the banquet was heated, after praising the lord together, it was time for the most anticipated part—eating meat.

He carefully picked up a knife and fork, sending the roasted Ice Armor Bear meat into his mouth.

The roast was crispy on the outside, tender inside, and full of juice.

Upon entry, a wave of warm energy spread from his stomach, quickly flowing through his limbs and bones.

Weir widened his eyes, feeling the blood in his body quickly being invigorated, an unprecedented power surging.

He hurriedly put down the knife and fork, sitting cross-legged, starting to run the breathing technique, guiding the warm flow within his body.

The warm energy shuttled between his meridians, and he could clearly feel his body being continuously strengthened, his vitality growing fuller, as if his bones had been honed again.

A moment later, his vitality finally broke through the critical point.

He broke through! Mid-tier Apprentice Knight!!

His coach Barnes next to Weir saw this, his eyes widening in shock.

He looked at Weir, unable to stop himself from muttering: "Didn't Weir just break through to Apprentice Knight yesterday? His talent... is so remarkable?"

Weir's breakthrough caught the attention of those around, but he wasn't the only one.

In the banquet, one knight after another began to feel the surge of vitality within, a strong energy flow forcing them to sit cross-legged and start running the breathing technique.

The commotion gradually subsided, replaced by the deep breathing of every knight, and the entire banquet hall suddenly became unusually quiet.

The air was filled with a subtle atmosphere, everyone was concentrated on guiding their inner force, bodies constantly strengthening.

A few minutes later, a sudden cheer broke the silence.

Several knights had broken through!

The knights congratulated each other, without forgetting to praise the lord's generosity.

"With Lord Calvin, we don't have to worry about food and clothing, and we also get to eat precious Magical Beast meat, loyalty!"

"The lord's kindness can never be repaid!"

"It's our honor to follow the lord."

Louis couldn't help but sigh in his heart; the effect of today's banquet exceeded expectations.

Chapter 50: Magic Marrow Factory

As the day to purge the bandits drew closer, Louis, accompanied by a few knights, carried two heavy chests, heading straight towards the Magic Marrow Factory, also an Alchemy Workshop, near the mine.

This factory was built by Hillco along with three newly arrived alchemy apprentices.

Though termed a factory, it was actually just a few simple sheds with alchemy equipment brought from the Southeast Province placed around.

Despite the humble conditions, it was enough to form a preliminary process for extracting the magic marrow.

"Lord, you're just in time," Hillco lazily leaned against a wooden pillar,

With the increase in talents at Red Tide Territory, he no longer had to be as busy, looking a bit more spirited than before, though still appearing languid.

"The first batch of magic marrow has just been completed."

Hearing this, Louis's interest was piqued instantly, his gaze falling on a heavy wooden barrel.

The barrel was filled with deep purple powder, its sheen subtly shimmering, looking delicate and smooth, faintly exuding a magical aura.

Louis reached out to grab a bit, feeling an extremely smooth touch at his fingertips, and couldn't help but exclaim, "Is this the magic marrow?"

"That's right," Hillco patted the wooden barrel, "This barrel alone is worth at least fifty gold coins in the market."

Louis's eyes showed a slight change.

Fifty gold coins, this is no small amount, enough to buy a hundred slaves or sustain two official knights for a year.

And this was just the outcome of small-scale trials.

Thinking about the vast magic marrow mine in his territory, Louis's excitement grew more intense.

But at the same time, he was also aware that to truly achieve large-scale production, many challenges still needed to be overcome.

The mining of the magic marrow ore itself was fraught with risk, with even slight carelessness potentially causing collapses.

Furthermore, their current equipment and manpower were far from sufficient.

This barrel of magic marrow represented the entire week's production.

"Well done,"

Louis immediately took out twenty gold coins and handed them to Hillco, also giving each of the three alchemy apprentices ten gold coins.

Upon receiving the gold coins, the few of them were momentarily stunned, followed by full excitement. For them, this was a considerable amount of money, and they all expressed their gratitude to Louis.

"Thank you, Lord!"

But a moment later, one of the apprentices muttered quietly, "But in this place, where can we spend the gold coins?"

The people around fell silent for a moment, but then couldn't help but laugh.

After the laughter, Louis began to discuss business with Hillco.

He patted the wooden barrel and directly asked, "Hillco, can this stuff be used to make Demonic Flame Bullets?"

Hearing this question, Hillco furrowed his brows slightly, and after pondering for a moment, he replied:

"The key materials for the Demonic Flame Bullet aren't just magic marrow, they also require ignition cores and other materials. Currently, Red Tide Territory doesn't have any of these materials."

"Is that so..." Louis then lightly coughed, signaling the knights behind him to open the two heavy chests they brought.

The lid of the wooden box was lifted, and a strong magical aura instantly emanated.

The box was filled with deep blue crystals.

These were the crystal spikes extracted from the Ice Armor Bear, containing extremely strong energy waves.

Hillco and the three alchemy apprentices were stunned, their eyes widening, and even their breathing became rapid.

"These are top-grade alchemy materials!" one apprentice exclaimed excitedly, "If used properly, they could be enough to craft high-tier magical artifacts!"

Hillco regained his composure and uncertainly asked, "Are you planning to..."

Louis patted the box, "With this added, can we make Demonic Flame Bullets?"

Hillco was momentarily dazed before foolishly nodding.

But the next moment, he quickly shook his head with an incredulous expression, "No way, this is a waste! The magic marrow alone is already precious, and combining it with Ice Armor Bear Crystals?

Using these two top-grade materials to make Demonic Flame Bullets... it's simply a reckless waste of nature's gifts!

If these materials were used in weapons, armor, or magical tools, their value would far exceed that of ordinary Demonic Flame Bullets!"

Louis, hearing this, merely waved his hand dismissively, "As long as you can make them, do it quickly; I need them urgently."

Hillco sighed, "Since the Lord says so, we will complete it as soon as possible."

"I need them at the latest by the day after tomorrow," Louis set a deadline.

Hillco's mouth twitched, wanting to say more, but ultimately just shrugged helplessly, waving his hand to signal the alchemy apprentices to start their research work immediately.

Louis stood aside, watching the alchemy apprentices bustle around with great interest.

Just as an apprentice carefully poured the deep purple magic marrow powder into an alchemy bottle, the rapid sound of hoofbeats suddenly echoed from outside.

"Lord!"

A knight rushed in on horseback, dismounting quickly and kneeling on one knee, "Duke Edmund's envoy has arrived, waiting at the gate of the territory!"

Louis sighed, "What must come, has come."

He turned around, adjusted his cloak, and nodded to the knight, "Take me there."

Outside the council hall of Red Tide Territory, a knight wearing a deep blue cloak awaited.

The knight was an official knight, and the armor bore the emblem of Duke Edmund's family, clearly not an ordinary messenger.

Seeing Louis approach, the knight immediately knelt on one knee, resolutely repeating Duke Edmund's words:

"Lord Louis Calvin, His Excellency Duke Edmund has ordered the gathering of all Northern Territory lords to immediately organize troops and mobilize against the Snow Swearer rebels!"

With that, he took out a letter sealed with the duke's insignia from his waist and offered it with both hands.

Louis accepted the envelope, quickly scanned the contents upon opening it.

The letter's tone was extremely stern, clearly stipulating the gathering time, and commanding all Northern Territory lords to personally bring troops to the assembly point.

Each lord was required to dispatch a certain number of soldiers; any delay or disobedience would be considered treason against the Empire.

The letter specifically noted that Louis's assembly point was Snow Eagle City.

Snow Eagle City was an important military stronghold in the Northern Territory and also Count Rivers's domain.

Count Fos was also the prefect of Snow Peak County and responsible for overseeing all the small territories within Snow Peak County.

Red Tide Territory, in name, was one of his jurisdictions.

However, due to the pioneer lords enjoying tax exemption policies and the immense expanse of the Northern Territory.

Louis had yet to formally engage with this count.

Louis closed the letter, looked up at the envoy, and said, "I will arrive at the gathering place on time."

The knight, upon hearing this, saluted, then immediately turned around and rode swiftly towards the next territory.

Only after the knight's figure disappeared into the distance did Louis look down again, seriously rereading the letter, calculating the time.

There were still a few days to prepare before officially setting out for the expedition.